

Professional ideal

The Danish Union of Teachers has adopted a professional ideal at its congress 2 - 4 October 2002. Before that, the professional ideal has been the subject of a comprehensive member debate and, in general, it has been well received.

The intention with the professional ideal was to express the core of the teachers' job in the "Folkeskole". It is the manifestation of the ideal of a teacher, to whom the job is more and other things than just a traditional salaried job. It also draws the picture of a school, where the aim is to educate the pupils - not only to a working life, but also to an active and committed life in a democratic society.

With the professional ideal we now have a common language for describing our work. It gives us a better basis for going into a dialogue with others. When we inform the parents at the individual schools why we have a public "Folkeskole" in Denmark, it is obvious to include the professional ideal. At central level the professional ideal will be a part of the union's basis for future negotiations of pay and working conditions.

The discussions about the basis of the teaching profession are not over because the professional ideal has been adopted in its present form. On the contrary, the ideal will be discussed continuously in the union, at the schools, and at the teachers training colleges.

I hope that many members will receive the professional ideal and use it in future - and in this way take an active share in making the professional ideal an asset for the Danish Union of Teachers.

Anders Bondo Christensen

Professional ideal for the Danish Union of Teachers

I

The aims, learning objectives and principles established through democratic processes are binding for the teacher. However, a measure of interpretation and adjustment to prevailing conditions is required, which makes considerable demands of the teacher's professionalism and independence of judgement. Thus, the teacher can never simply follow a charted course but will always be responsible for providing proper teaching within the framework of the aims and principles.

The teacher will live up to the aims and learning objectives of the Danish Folkeskole to the best of his/her ability.

II

In his general educational activities, the teacher makes a considerable contribution to introducing the new generations to the basic structures and functions of society as well as the principles of democracy. The teacher's responsibility not only requires communication of the requisite understanding, knowledge and skills but also a clear commitment to the basic values of society. The teacher will explain, illustrate and on a continuing basis practice Danish, democratic principles such as the principles of equality of status, respect for the individual, the ideas of social and human responsibility, the principles of freedom of

thought, respect for the opinions of others and peaceful solution of conflicts. The teacher will describe various tensions between these values and present views on their relative importance. By introducing the pupils to the principles of Danish democracy, the teacher will always endeavour to develop their ability and determination to commit themselves.

The teacher will introduce the pupils to democratic life in Denmark and teach them the principles and values of democracy.

III

The teacher aims for the individual pupil to leave school as an independent, well-informed, socially responsible and vigorous human being who has learnt how to learn and who has acquired the requisite general knowledge and skills. The teacher will consider the development of the individual pupil as an end in itself and organise the teaching objectives in accordance with the pupil's abilities and needs. The teacher will create a relationship with the pupil which is based on trust, equality and mutual respect. The teacher will take care of the pupil and be accessible, open and attentive, and will endeavour to make the pupil think of the teacher as someone to confide in. The teacher will respect the pupil's individuality and endeavour to strengthen the pupil's self-esteem. The teacher will respect the pupil's personality, family honour, social and cultural background, integrity and dignity. The teacher will protect the pupil from abuse, defeat or the loss of self-esteem. The teacher will always strive to strengthen the pupil's belief in his/her own abilities and potential, also when evaluating the pupil's performance and proficiency.

The teacher will only resort to recognised sanctions as a last resort and in such cases always observing the principle of minimum intervention in the pupil's best interests. In guiding or advising the pupil, the teacher will exclusively act in the pupil's best interests and completely independently of external interests.

In his/her activities as teacher, educator and advisor, the teacher will endeavour to encourage the individual pupils in their valuable growth and development as human beings.

IV

The teacher will refrain from any kind of arbitrary discrimination among the pupils and will guarantee the pupils full and unconditional equality of status. The teacher will divide his/her time and attention according to the pupils' needs and will always endeavour to enable the individual pupil to develop to the full of their potential on the basis of individual abilities and with due concern for the needs of others. The teacher will promote community of spirit among the pupils and instil into them an understanding of the values of community and the proper relationship between the community and the individual. The teacher will cultivate human diversity among the pupils, promote their respect for such diversity and strive to ensure that relations between pupils are based on equality and mutual respect.

In assuming co-responsibility for the upbringing and teaching of pupils, the teacher will be equally committed to all pupils.

V

The teacher will offer the parents binding and confidential collaboration based on the principle of their individual responsibility for the development of the pupil concerned. The teacher will be available to the parents for consultation, advice and assistance as regards the pupil's development and well-being at school. The teacher will present his views to the parents and explain what

he/she considers to be in the pupils best interests while remaining responsive to the views of the parents. The teacher will always endeavour to comply with the parents' views and wishes while maintaining his/her responsibility to attend to the pupil's best interests as he/she sees them. The teacher will endeavour to make the parents understand and accept the educational aims and means and the expectations of parent co-operation, which is part of their responsibility for the pupil.

Based on equality and trust, the teacher will assume joint responsibility with the individual pupil's parents for the pupil's development, education and upbringing.

VI

As the school of the community, the Danish Folkeskole (primary and lower-secondary school) is an important prerequisite for democracy in the Danish society. The teacher will work to ensure that all pupils see themselves as committed to a community which provides them with such knowledge, skills, opinions and forms of behaviour as to constitute a real contribution to securing a place for everyone. In order to create the basis for democratic dialogue, the teacher will endeavour to ensure that everyone acquires common knowledge and basic cultural techniques as the foundation for independent evaluation and critical thought.

The teacher will work to ensure that the individual pupil learns to appreciate the significance of the community to the individual as well as society. The teacher will strengthen the individual pupil's qualifications for assuming his/her share of the responsibility for the development of society.

The teacher will be true to him-/herself and will unequivocally demonstrate his/her professionalism and personality. The teacher will make professional use of the freedom of choice in teaching methods and will independently and in community with colleagues assume concrete responsibility for the content and form of the teaching.

The teacher will contribute to the development of the pupils' human, social and political education to provide all pupils with the prerequisites for putting an active stamp on both their own lives and the life of society.

VII

In order to handle the responsibility for the pupils' human development, their introduction to society and culture the teacher must develop his/her own personality and perspective on things with a view to using the individual subjects, the being together and the dialogue at school to inform the pupils of the conditions of human beings, in general as well as in terms of Danish culture. The teacher will strive to appear to his/her pupils as a well-informed and committed human being who invites reflection, debate and independent contributions. The teacher will ensure that the teaching is characterised by intellectual liberty, so that the pupils may freely and safely test their opinions and have access to the culture's different interpretations of the life of human beings, its import and values.

The teacher will endeavour to advance his growth and development, involve himself in universally human questions as well as in society and culture.

VIII

Since the basis for the teaching is predominantly the teacher's own reflected

experience of teaching, and since the teacher should never rely on routine but must always exercise judgement and be open to change and innovation, the teacher will continue to develop his/her professional personality as a teacher. Through reflection, dialogue with colleagues and participation in in-service programmes, the teacher will work on his/her self-perception as a teacher, his/her values and opinions, maintain and develop his/her knowledge, pedagogical skills and abilities to enter into mutually rewarding co-operation.

The teacher will reflect on and actively develop teaching practices.

IX

Since the teacher is predominantly personally responsible for carrying out his/her duties, the teacher must always be conscious of that responsibility and be accountable to the parties concerned. Through dialogue the teacher will account for his/her aims, methods, assessments and priorities and will be open to other possibilities for explaining his/her work and illustrating its quality. The teacher will safeguard the freedom of choice in teaching methods in terms of the organisation of teaching activities and to the best of his/her ability evaluate and adjust the teaching on an ongoing basis.

The teacher will always safeguard and assert his/her credibility, independence and integrity as teacher, educator and advisor of children and young people. The teacher will never accept to employ teaching methods, pedagogical methods or to impart subject matter for which the teacher cannot personally vouch. The teacher will refrain from contributing to exerting any kind of influence on pupils which in the teacher's opinion will be to the detriment of the pupils' development. The teacher will refuse to communicate information, teaching material etc. which in his/her opinion fails to live up to the requirements of truthfulness, comprehensiveness and respect for the pupils.

The teacher will personally guarantee to perform his/her duties in the best possible way.

X

The teacher will seek, to the best of his/her ability, to establish a close working relationship with colleagues concerning their common pupils and their joint teaching responsibilities.

The teacher will use relations with colleagues to continually evaluate his/her own teaching, assist colleagues in their evaluation and carry out common professional and pedagogical projects and reflect on their own performance.

The teacher will be available to colleagues with advice on good teaching practices and will recognise having a special responsibility for counselling and assisting young colleagues.

The teacher will refrain from making any statement designed to reflect negatively on the reputation of a colleague in the eyes of pupils or parents. If a teacher considers a colleague to have failed in his duties towards pupils for whom they are both responsible, the teacher will make sure that such failure is taken up with the colleague in question.

The teacher will enter into partnerships with colleagues based on equality and loyalty and accept co-responsibility for joint professional and pedagogical reflection and development.

XI

The teacher will actively contribute to the democratic conventions and forms of management which must characterise everyday life if the school is to live up to its aims and values. The teacher will exercise his/her right and duty to advance

criticism to the management and in the event of conflict to use the school's formal bodies to present his/her views and contribute to solutions. Ultimately, the teacher will be compelled to inform the public of any serious and unresolved imbalances in the school's activities.

The teacher will loyally and responsibly fulfil his duties as an employee of his school and accept joint responsibility for realising its values.