

The Teacher Called to Reform the “New” Society: The Professionalisation and Deprofessionalisation of the Teaching Profession in Socialist Czechoslovakia

El docente llamado a reformar la «nueva» sociedad: la profesionalización y la desprofesionalización de la docencia en la Checoslovaquia socialista

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Abstract: This study analyses the transformation of the roles and functions of the teacher in the socialist school system in Czechoslovakia following the seizure of power by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The analysis traces the construction of the ideal image of the “new” teacher based on the most widely circulated periodical aimed at teachers in the socialist school system – *Učitelské noviny* (Teachers’ Gazette). The analysis focuses on the years 1950–1962, that is, the period in which communist rule and Stalinism were established (1950-1956) and consolidated and on the period of political thaw (1956-62). It asks whether the definition of the “new” role of the socialist teacher, together with the practices of power that enforced this new role, support the thesis of the ideologicalisation, political instrumentalisation and overall deprofessionalisation of the teaching profession during the socialist period in Czechoslovakia. We analyse *Učitelské noviny* through the lenses of educational transfer and *histoire croisée*, treating them as a medium through which the roles and functions of teachers in the socialist education system were communicated and the “desired” image of the profession was constructed. Using content analysis, we examine selected texts in order to identify the discursive rules, patterns, and practices through which the language, behaviour, and knowledge of the “new” socialist teacher were shaped and regulated. The text shows how teachers’ everyday activities – in

classroom instruction, in out-of-school activities, and in their broader involvement in public enlightenment, cultural and political work within the community – can be seen as evidence of deprofessionalising tendencies.

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1. Introduction

The processes of modernisation and the efforts towards social, civic and national emancipation in Western society emphasised, in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the importance of public compulsory education and of its principal agent – the teacher. The socially reformist dimension of the teacher's role became internalised not only during the phase of “first modernity” (Beck & Bonß, 2001), but also in reflexive modernity in the second half of the 20th century, shaped by processes of supranational, cultural and socio-economic integration. The teacher's role, however, did not escape the attention of the totalitarian societies of the 20th century. In communist Czechoslovakia, as in other “Eastern Bloc” states, the “new role” of the teacher stood at the centre of political and ideological attention in the second half of the 20th century. As in other totalitarian and “cultural-ideological” social systems, communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe assumed, after the Second World War, the task of actively promoting the ideological, cultural and political “socialisation of the new teacher”. In this respect, communist Czechoslovakia was no exception.

The present article addresses the questions of the professionalisation and deprofessionalisation of teachers in the second half of the 20th century in Czechoslovakia, examining the transformation of the roles and functions of the teaching profession after 1948, under the ruling ideology of Marxism-Leninism and within the political totalitarianism of communist Czechoslovakia, which used education to create the “Soviet individual” (Garai & Németh, 2017; Kasper et al., 2026; Kestere, 2018; Kestere & González, 2021; Kestere & Kalke, 2018; Šimáně, 2023; Somogyvári, 2019; Stonkuvienė & Ivanavičė, 2024; Wojdon, 2015). From a chronological perspective, our attention is focused on the period 1948–1962, that is, the phase of Stalinisation (1948–1956) and the slow and highly cautious political “thaw” leading up to the 12th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1962), when questions of socio-political reform in the then Czechoslovakia were articulated more openly (1963), without challenging the fundamental premises of the communist system in the Czechoslovak Republic.

The article does not cover the period of the “prelude” to the Prague Spring (1963–1967) or the Prague Spring of 1968. The “reform” communism of that time, including the formulation of the model of “socialism with a human face”, entailed, among other things, a reassessment of the aims and form of the curriculum and of the teacher's role – both in the process of pupil learning and in the socio-political and social life of the school (Kasper & Kasperová, 2024, 2026). Although the technocratic vision of reform socialism during the Prague Spring (Schulze Wessel, 2018; Sommer, 2019) did not bring about a fundamental political transformation, it opened up “new” questions concerning the aims and challenges of education when viewed through the lens of socialist reform and the scientific and technological revolution. We draw attention to the shift in educational discourse in the years 1963–1968 precisely because, in many respects, it constituted a “reaction” to the earlier period of enforcing communist ideals in the years 1948–1956/62

analysed in this study.

2. Profession and Professionalisation – the Theoretical Framework of the Study

The professionalisation of teachers may be analysed from several perspectives: from the standpoint of the functions of pedagogical action and the activities of individuals and organisations (Combe & Helsper, 1996; Helsper & Tippelt, 2011); from the perspective of the sociology of occupations (Caruso, 2010; Kurtz, 2002, pp. 47–67); or from a developmental-historical (Enzelberger, 2001) and comparative-educational perspective (Kaelble & Schriewer, 2003). All of these approaches indicate that the work performed by teachers exhibits the general characteristics of a profession.

The concept of the teaching profession presupposes that the actions of a particular social group engaged in a specific occupation display distinctive features. A profession denotes (Bastian & Helsper, 2000; Helsper, 2021, pp. 54–59; Rothland & Brügemann, 2012; Terhart, 2000) a specific position in the performance of activity that is specialised and requires a high level of expertise, often grounded in academic training (Popkewitz, 1994, 1998). Such professional preparation legitimises members of the professional group through their expert knowledge and its application to activity (professional practice), based on knowledge acquired over an extended period and on systematically developed skills and competences (academic preparation and continuous professional development). In this way, members of the profession are granted an exclusive expert mandate, which gives them an advantage over laypeople and other members of the working community. Professional organisations ensure that the practice of the profession is carried out by “certified” experts. Acceptance of this “professional superiority” is codified both in norms and in broader societal recognition.

A professional group is characterised by additional features, including organisation and association within specific (professional) bodies and societies. Processes of professionalisation require the autonomy of professional organisations in defining new knowledge, as well as the capacity to establish it as part of professional identity and to disseminate it (Lundgreen, 1999, p. 20). A profession is also characterised by a specific ethical framework and by responsibility for the tasks “entrusted” to it by society. Membership in professional associations and institutions, together with professional ethical norms, “protects” members against deprofessionalising pressures that require members of professional organisations to “assist and perform tasks” for “broader society” (in effect, however, for structures of power).

From the above definition it is evident that the professionalisation of the teaching profession encompasses the autonomous definition of specialised knowledge (both theoretical and practical), processes of the academisation of teacher training, professional association, the delineation of an ethical framework for the professional group, and the definition, or rather the continuous redefinition, reconstruction and reflection, of the socio-reformist task or “social mission” that is not “imposed” by the state – ideology.

3. Aims, Methods and Primary Sources

The article focuses on reconstructing the efforts of educational policy to shape and enforce a transformation in the professional role and function of teachers in communist

Czechoslovakia between 1950 and 1962.¹ We analyse a specific corpus of primary printed textual materials (articles) published in what was at the time the most widely circulated journal for practising teachers – *Učitel'ské noviny*² (Teachers' Gazette) (1951–1962).

We reconstruct and analyse the tasks and activities of teachers, particularly in basic education, and in our interpretation we seek to understand the transformation of the teacher's role in the socialist school system (Keller, 2011). The analysed texts address the teacher's everyday activities – both instructional and educational – in the life of the school and in the conduct of teaching. The periodical under examination was not a scholarly pedagogical journal, but rather a professional periodical intended for the daily practice of the socialist teacher and distributed to all schools providing basic education.³ We view *Učitel'ské noviny*, in the spirit of transfer theory and *histoire croisée* (Kaelble & Schriewer, 2003; Werner & Zimmermann, 2006), as a medium for the dissemination of the functions and roles assigned to teachers within the communist educational system, and as an instrument for presenting the “desired” image of the teaching profession in the socialist school (Gardin et al., 2015, p. 238). Methodologically, we draw upon the methods of content analysis (Mayring, 2022), and in selected texts we seek to reconstruct the rules of order according to which the language and grammar of thought and action of the “new” teacher – and the “knowledge” about the teacher – were constructed and “disciplined” (Keller et al., 2018). We search for the rules of this order that determined the discourse of the “new” teacher, and attend to the practices employed in constructing and enforcing this new discourse (Sarasin, 2003).

We analysed the journal during the period 1951–1962. For the content analysis,

1. The analysis will not address one of the fundamental features of professionalisation – the development of teachers' academic education and professional training – as this constitutes a substantial and distinct topic that would merit a separate study in its own right.

2. The journal was intended for teachers at primary and lower secondary levels, that is, for teachers in eight-year basic school (Years 1–8) at the time, across all subjects. Naturally, greater attention was devoted to teachers of the social sciences and humanities, such as Czech Language, Russian Language, Civic Studies, History and Geography (National History and Geography). However, considerable attention was also paid to teachers of Primary Natural Sciences, Physics, Chemistry and, to some extent, Mathematics, who were instructed in accordance with the scientific worldview and materialist philosophy, with a view to shaping appropriate conceptions of the world and of humanity within their respective subjects. For them, too, the principles of polytechnical education were to be fundamental: this approach was intended to bring school and the child's life closer together, to connect theory with practice, and was regarded as a means of ensuring the success of the socialist economy, the modernisation of socialist life, and the overall economic triumph of the East over the West. Physical Education teachers were not overlooked in *Učitel'ské noviny*. The development of physical fitness was seen as the foundation not only of the healthy socialist individual, nation and state, but also – “implicitly” – of the defence of the socialist world. Somewhat “in the background” stood Music and Art teachers, since the aesthetic development of the socialist pupil was understood, within the Marxist conception of the world and of the communist individual's life, as a “superstructure” (even if this was not always explicitly stated). Nevertheless, socialist realism in the visual arts and architecture, as well as “music for all”, were duly elaborated in didactic and pedagogical terms and transmitted to the teaching profession. It should be noted that *Učitel'ské noviny* was not the only platform where questions concerning the “new” curriculum and the position of the teaching profession were discussed. Newly established journals – often bearing the names of individual subjects – also played a significant role. These periodicals addressed in greater depth issues relating to content, teaching methods and instructional resources within particular subjects, and thus also to the roles and tasks of teachers. All of this was overseen by the Research Institute of Pedagogy and the Institute of Pedagogy at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague, institutions responsible for the development of new textbooks and the delineation of the new curriculum.

3. Our sources do not include theoretical texts of socialist pedagogy concerning the “norm” of the “new” socialist teacher – for example, those published in the representative journal of the “new” socialist pedagogical science, *Pedagogika* (Pedagogy) (1951–1962), issued by the Institute of Pedagogy at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. These sources would warrant a separate study, complementing the present article, devoted to the construction of the ideal image of the socialist teacher within scientific discourse and in the conceptualisation of pre-service teacher training.

we selected more than 150 articles that corresponded to our predefined criteria and analytical categories. The selected articles were written by various authors, including teachers, educational scientists, and actors involved in the educational policy of communist Czechoslovakia. Some of these authors were also professionally connected with educational experts and policymakers from the Soviet Union. The selection criteria for analysing articles from *Učitelské noviny* focused on the instrumental role attributed to teachers in political and social life, as well as on teachers' professional expertise in promoting the “new and correct” image of the world through teaching practices. This included the role of teachers in language and humanities education as well as in science and mathematics subjects. The analysis also considered the teacher's role in non-formal educational processes and his/her function as an agent of social control. The texts were coded according to the following thematic categories: collective values; representations of the teacher's role in broader society; the relationship between teachers and parents; the social control function attributed to teachers; the ideologisation of teachers' professional identity; and the construction of the teacher as a guarantor of socialist values and socialist consciousness. The analysis was conducted collaboratively by all three authors. Each author independently read the selected articles, and the analytical findings as well as the hermeneutic approaches to the interpretation of the content were subsequently discussed collectively.

We are fully aware that this primary source must be approached with due consideration of its limitations. The analysed texts represent a paradigmatic example of the promoted image of the teacher within socialist schooling. They present an image that was to be achieved and that was constructed in texts defining the “proper” performance of the teacher, written both by members of the communist political nomenklatura (politicians) and by representatives of the “new” socialist pedagogical science, as well as by “model” and ideologically conscious teachers themselves.⁴ It is therefore clear that the focus of our analysis is not on the actual lived reality of teachers in socialist Czechoslovakia, but rather on the construction of the expected and prescribed image of the “new” teacher.

Although the aim of this article is not to examine the question of teacher “resistance” under socialism, it is nevertheless necessary to address the issue briefly, as it reveals the limits of attempts at the professionalisation/deprofessionalisation of the socialist teacher. In totalitarian systems, transformations of teachers' roles and functions were constrained not only by their personal ethical dispositions and their willingness to cooperate, but also by the “bureaucratic” limits inherent in systems and ideologies. Despite the terror and fear upon which totalitarian regimes relied, they were often unable fully to implement the “policy” of the Party, the system, or the ideology, and not all individuals could be broken or ideologically reshaped. Teacher resistance thus represents an important theme, pointing to the limited capacity of totalitarian states and authoritarian societies to control, direct and determine every aspect of political, social and cultural life. Although, in Czech historiography – unlike in German historiography (for the situation in the former GDR see Gerhold, 2010; Lienert, 2011) – there exists only a limited body of pedagogical research on resistance among teachers and students to the communist regime, it is all the more necessary to draw attention to examples that highlight the limits and boundaries of communist power in enforcing the image of the socialist teacher (Kudláčková, 2018).

4. Within this framework, the research task of the “profession of the socialist teacher” constituted an important component of the state scientific programme and plan.

Unfortunately, deeper analytical studies focusing on teachers' resistance to the official ideological and political power in communist Czechoslovakia are still lacking. In this respect, we refer more extensively to the study by Kudláčová (2023), which highlights the resistance of both religious teachers and those teachers who, in contrast to the dogmatic interpretations of Marxism-Leninism, placed emphasis on the individuality of the child, the specifics of the teaching situation, and more liberal and humanistic perspectives on schooling and education. These perspectives stressed civic rights, human values, and human dignity even under the conditions of a totalitarian regime.

Communist society soon became divided into distinct groups: a camp of leading teacher figures representing the new social model; a group characterised by quiet acceptance/conformity and loyalty; a camp of silent resistance; and a group of active critics of the “new” regime. We know the stories of those who, even at the centre of socialist schooling and within the processes of the new education, managed – at least before themselves and their pupils – to preserve a degree of personal space, creative environment and contacts that supported natural communication.

4. Research Questions and Context of the Topic

As indicated above, one of the defining characteristics of a profession is the long-term, systematic and specialised education of its members, marked not only by expertise but also by the autonomous participation of the professional group in defining and developing education. The grounding of a profession in specialised knowledge is intended to protect it against the “fluctuations” that may be generated by political and ideological expectations directed at the performance of a given profession. In the long term, the expert basis of the profession may be replaced by one's own “scientific” and “professional” principles in the practice of the profession, without this basis being supported by free scientific research and free discussion within the professional community. The school organisation may then require of teachers not only knowledge and competences, but also political and ideological convictions, appropriate political consciousness, moral convictions and values.

We ask whether educators in communist Czechoslovakia (1948–1962) lost autonomy in the development of professional knowledge and became “activists” of the new society (Kluchert, 1999), educators (at the expense of their educational mission) of the new individual both in school and out-of-school activities (Kluchert, 1999, pp. 236–238, 243–245), whether or not they reflected upon this fact (Reh, 1999; Zounek et al., 2017). We ask whether the expert role of the teacher receded in favour of a political-instrumental mission (Heite & Kessl, 2009, p. 685), and how the role of the communist teacher was subordinated above all to political and social directives, supervision and control (Kreutzer, 2001, pp. 123–148).⁵ It is questionable whether teachers' work was expected at all to respond to the needs of the pupil as an individual and to the specificities of the school as an organisation (Oevermann, 2008, pp. 55–78). We analyse whether the teacher –

5. Whereas in the free world, during the second phase of modernity in the latter half of the 20th century, the sphere of occupations and professions faced challenges in terms of balancing the consequences of transformations in work, the labour market and professions, alongside the challenges of civic emancipation and development in a “risk society” (Beck & Bonß, 2001, pp. 123–148), professions and occupations within the socialist camp were expected to overcome the effects of “alienation” in the context of occupation, work and professional formation; they were to liberate the new working individual, in the spirit of Marxism, from the constraints of one-sided subjugation imposed by the power of capital, the pursuit of profit, monotony and the inadequate use of technology in production and working life.

conceived as a manager and technocrat of the new society and of the socialisation of the socialist individual – was also required to embody the model of a socialist personality, socialist consciousness and socialist thought.

We assume a similar level of “involvement” of the totalitarian state in professional group ethics. As noted above, a profession is grounded in a specific ethical framework that is “independent” of the state or other organisations within modern society. If professional ethics is degraded and reduced to discipline and obedience towards the system, organisation or individual authority, the profession loses its autonomy and becomes an instrument for socio-political goals. Unfree, undemocratic and totalitarian societies in particular seek to subordinate many professions to their socio-political goals, replacing independent professional ethics with their own value ideas and goals. In our case, we ask whether – and if so, how – the ethics of the “new” teacher were instrumentalised in accordance with the interests of the “people’s democratic” system, the promoted Marxist view of the world and humans, the materialistic worldview and the collectivist conception of social life.

Last but not least, it is essential in our topic and analysis to take into account the processes of association, the “new” organisation of socialist teachers. A sign of the deprofessionalisation of the socialist teacher was the effort to achieve total unification of teachers across all educational levels and types of schools within a single “union”, that is, politically oriented trade unions. We ask how the totalitarian state’s attempts to control teachers’ consciousness were presented within broader social relations – in cooperation with families, the media and socialist economic institutions.

Underlying our questions is the assumption that, in transforming the professional role of the teacher, the Czechoslovak communist system targeted all age cohorts within the profession, but sought particularly intensively to instrumentalise young teachers, as is often characteristic of totalitarian systems of control (Gruner, 1999, pp. 222–228; 2000).

The analysis is structured into three thematic blocks: first, we examine the image of the teacher as guarantor of new communist consciousness; second, as mediator of historical and cultural knowledge; and finally, as educator of socialist society.

5. Analysis

5.1. The Teacher as “Guarantor” of Socialist Consciousness and Action

In *Učitelské noviny* (which regularly published, explained and commented upon official decrees of the Ministry of Education and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), the teacher was presented as a professional obliged to co-shape the ideological-political identity of the new generation and to contribute actively to the consolidation of the “socialist order”. This requirement was embedded in the rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism and supported by all the fundamental resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which referred to the resolutions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - CPSU. If one follows political developments in the USSR and also in Czechoslovakia, it becomes clear that this demand was voiced loudly throughout the entire period under analysis (1948–62). (K dalším úspěchům, 1951, p. 1; Význam politické literatury, 1951, p. 6) Nevertheless, it is clear that the forceful, even aggressive rhetoric portraying the teacher as a key figure in the construction of socialism, subordinate to the Communist Party

and its organs, was heard particularly in the years 1948–56. (Za výchovu, 1952, p. 2) After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the emphasis on this demand in *Učitelské noviny* began to wane relatively soon. The teacher - still a “guardian of socialism” (with increasing intensity, including with the help of non-school educational organizations) - was portrayed after 1956 as a person supporting socialism in accordance with the political demands of the state and the “people,” but also with pedagogical regard for the needs of the student. (O našich úkolech, 1957, p. 2; Několik poznámek, 1958, p. 3) In the years 1956–62 (following the official so-called condemnation of the cult of personality), the demand for the development and promotion of socialist consciousness among the younger generation in the teacher’s work by no means disappeared, but its intensity and rhetorical style were milder compared to the period of Stalinization. (Popelová, 1957, pp.2-3; Vytváříme, 1959, p. 2)

In the task of developing socialist consciousness, the teacher was called not only to transmit knowledge (the achievements of socialist science), but above all to carry out ideological mobilisation, combining the “scientific worldview”, proletarian internationalism and socialist patriotism among pupils: “What you want to ignite in others must first burn inside yourself, said Lenin. In the spirit of this slogan, we must draw all our teachers into a determined struggle for a socialist school educating our youth as patriotically inspired builders of socialism.” (Grus, 1952). One of many similarly formulated appeals, this statement demonstrates that teachers were expected literally to inspire pupils and colleagues emotionally towards the active development of socialist society. Within this logic, the teacher was to embody political faith; personal conviction was understood as a necessary precondition for effective influence upon youth. (O kosmopolitismu, 1951, p. 4) Teachers were expected to demonstrate loyalty to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was presented in *Učitelské noviny* as a firm and infallible “elder brother”. The Soviet teacher served as a model, characterised above all by “unreserved devotion to the Soviet government and authority, the originator of all victories of the socialist people, devotion to Marxism-Leninism, and the ability to apply this knowledge in daily work” (Výchova, 1952, pp. 5-6). It is evident that the role of the teacher was defined in close conjunction with political loyalty and ideological discipline. (Projev tajemníka, 1952, p. 7) Teachers were expected above all to apply Marxist-Leninist “knowledge” in everyday practice, thereby demonstrating loyalty to the political regime. (Po konferenci strany, 1956, p.1)

Contemporary texts in *Učitelské noviny* further described the teacher as a creator of the socialist collective, emphasising that the educator was not an isolated individual but part of a broader “social organism”: “Every teacher is but one link in the million-strong army of truly people’s intelligentsia, emerging from the people, bound to the people, and serving the people.” (Setkání, 1953, p. 2). The intention was for teachers rapidly and successfully to identify with collective goals, limiting space for individual autonomy in their actions. The teacher’s mission was defined primarily in terms of service – to the people, the Party and socialism – conceived as participation in a broader political struggle. (Význam, 1951, p.6)

Teachers’ socialist consciousness was to be further demonstrated through participation in numerous economic campaigns, such as collecting wastepaper, herbs or secondary raw materials. These activities were intended not only to contribute materially to the strengthening of the socialist economy and its “victory over capitalism”, but also to show children that, together with their teachers, they too could become

active participants in "building" the socialist state. (Usnesení, 1953, p. 3)

Great emphasis was also placed on preparing young people for the "defence" of socialism and peace. Civil defence education (introduced both as a new subject and as a general orientation of educational work in schools) was understood in defence-military terms. Teachers were to guide pupils towards political awareness and physical readiness to defend the homeland. (Váňa, 1952, p. 4) As *Učitelské noviny* stated in 1952, all teachers were to strive "for a school that is joyful, combative and patriotic; for a socialist school; for world peace; for the building of socialism in our homeland; for the accelerated strengthening of the defence capability of our people's democratic state" (Výchova, 1952, pp. 5–6). School education was thus to be firmly interconnected with the military-political dimension. The school was conceived as one of the principal means of mobilising the younger generation for the defence of the state and the ideals of socialism. Teachers were expected actively to "assume" these tasks and to support them – in classroom instruction (in History, but also in Physics or Chemistry), in out-of-school activities, and in cooperation with various contemporary organisations promoting defence readiness within society. (O koncepci, 1960, p. 4)

Moreover, the teacher's role extended beyond the school and was closely intertwined with the economic tasks of the state. Contemporary discourse stressed that teachers had to be prepared to participate actively, for example, in assisting with agricultural labour, or in work activities within socialist enterprises and cooperatives: "There are other ways in which teachers contribute to the success of this year's harvest. These comrades often give up their holiday comfort. Their reward, however, is that they assist where help is most needed in these weeks. And most importantly, they will be able to use the experience gained from the harvest in their educational work." (Učitelé, 1955, p. 1). Participation in the harvest was presented as a continuation of teachers' ideological mission – economic assistance was not an end in itself, but served to legitimise their role as educators who transferred practical experience back into the education of youth.

Teachers were further expected to embody arguments concerning the moral superiority of socialism and to serve as models of a new type of interpersonal relations: "Socialism is an incomparably higher new relationship between people, which must necessarily develop within it. Unified agricultural cooperatives are founded not merely for higher yields, but for a more moral, more humane relationship of one peasant to another." (Čejka, 1957, p. 6). Teachers' work thus involved legitimising the economic reforms of nationalised industry and collectivised agriculture, emphasising their significance for the "well-being of the socialist people". (Vesniční učitelé, 1955, p. 3; Kahuda, 1958, pp. 3-4) The teacher's task was not simply to state economic results, but above all to interpret them as evidence of socialism's moral superiority over capitalism – an interpretation to be made evident to pupils both within and beyond the classroom: "In practical exercises in the school workshops, we carried out with sixth-grade pupils in the first term two excursions: in the topic of woodworking, an excursion to the local steam sawmill, and in the topic of metalwork, an excursion to a socialist blacksmith's and mechanical workshop." (Adamec, 1957, p. 5).

From the perspective of ideological development and control of socialist teachers, emphasis was placed on "education in criticism and self-criticism". (Zásady práce, 1962, p. 3) These practices cannot be understood merely as organisational tools of instruction, but as mechanisms of disciplining the individual through the collective, to which the individual dimension of personality was always to be accountable. (Kahuda,

1959, pp. 1-4) *Učitelské noviny* repeatedly stressed the subordinated position of the individual to the principles of “socialist morality”: “The development of criticism and self-criticism, and ensuring their functioning in our school, can best be achieved by the principal, by constantly creating all necessary preconditions for criticism and self-criticism. In our school collective this year we are devoting increased attention to developing criticism and self-criticism.” (Kůstka, 1953, p. 4).

A specific instrument of ideological socialisation and communist consciousness-building was also the aesthetic-symbolic dimension of the school. Classroom decorations, notice boards and thematic panels served to visualise Party goals and to naturalise them in everyday life. This aspect suggests that the school functioned as a comprehensive space of identity formation, in which communist ideology and the Marxist worldview were to become omnipresent and self-evident. In this regard, pupils’ practical activities were also utilised as instruments of aesthetic-political mobilisation: “As can be seen, practical exercises have become for us a starting point for developing cooperation between school and the public. Initiatives for decorating municipalities and homes from which pupils commute to school are the foundation upon which the pupil collective grows. In pupils there arises a sense for selfless public service and a proper attitude towards public socialist property.” (Hankovec, 1957, p. 7).

The internationalist dimension of teachers’ work was likewise significant. Summer camps, excursions and cultural exchanges with other socialist countries were perceived as means of shaping a collective identity transcending the national framework. (Radostné, 1954, p. 1)

Analysis of the pedagogical periodical indicates that the control mechanisms to which teachers were subjected served not merely organisational purposes, but functioned as instruments disciplining thought, opinion and personal self-regulation. (Micha, 1957, p. 3) Classroom visits by colleagues and principals, as well as external school inspections, were to evaluate above all the political preparedness and loyalty of teachers. Ideological discipline also encompassed supervision over compliance with school regulations emphasising collectivism, responsibility and willingness to sacrifice for society. (Hospodaříme, 1962, p. 1) Teachers were to participate in managing pupils’ self-governing bodies and to cooperate with youth organisations, acting as intermediaries between the school and Party structures. (Sýkora, 1953)

5.2. *The Teacher as Mediator of Historical and Cultural Knowledge in the Service of Socialist Consciousness*

“In fulfilling all the tasks facing our educational system, teachers have a decisive and leading role, particularly in the ideological orientation of instruction.” (*Učitelstvo...*, 1955, p. 7). This brief quotation from 1955 illustrates that teachers in *Učitelské noviny* were regarded as actors who, in their didactic mediation of subject matter, were not to neglect its ideological-political significance as the primary task of learning. (Cipro, 1961, p. 3) Didactic methods and teachers’ activities were expected to employ “pedagogical rituals” designed to consolidate ideological norms in the thinking, feeling, and behaviour of children and young people – not demonstratively, but through repeated, omnipresent and often subtle everyday influence.

A significant instrument of this process was the teaching of history and literature, where historical and cultural figures were to be appropriated as means of political propaganda. Teaching materials and methodological guidelines interpreted history in the

spirit of Marxism-Leninism, presenting to pupils a narrative of continuity in the "people's" struggle against "capitalist" oppression. *Učitelské noviny* published numerous articles pointing out and explaining this "educational" level of historical figures and events to teachers, who were in turn expected to present it to pupils in the same spirit: "We shall show our pupils that Hus was the first modern revolutionary, that his social programme was the social programme of the new age, for which the common people fought in the following centuries up to the present day, and in recent decades above all the working class." (Sedláček, 1953, p. 4). Historical personalities were reinterpreted so that their newly assigned roles legitimised the socialist project. The teacher became a mediator between past and present: his or her task was to demonstrate that historical development necessarily culminated in socialism, and that significant figures of the past were direct predecessors of the workers' movement and the communist revolution.

In this context, teachers were commended when they were able explicitly to articulate the Party-political dimension of the curriculum within instruction: "I was recently in the classroom of the Czech Language teacher S. Hrůša in the ninth grade, and there, after a long time, I once again heard the sentence that socialism is an incomparably more moral order than capitalism." (Čejka, 1957, p. 6). Articles in *Učitelské noviny* demonstrate that the quality of a teacher's work was measured according to the ability to reproduce ideological formulas and to employ them actively in everyday teaching practice. (Marii Majerové, 1962, p.8)

Equally important was participation in celebrations of significant "socialist" anniversaries, such as the Great October Socialist Revolution, the "Victorious February" of 1948 (the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, which culminated on 25 February 1948), and the birthdays of Lenin and Stalin. In this context, teachers appeared in the analysed texts as organisers of ideological rituals intended to strengthen pupils' loyalty to the regime. For example, a decree of the Ministry of Education dated 17 December 1948, marking the 25th anniversary of Lenin's death, instructed teachers to conduct commemorative programmes celebrating his life, work and significance for socialism in Czechoslovakia (Věstník, 1948, pp. 581–582).

Teachers were also expected to assist in transforming established and widespread traditional holidays. Earlier Christian or family rituals were portrayed as "bourgeois survivals", and the socialist school was to reformulate them in accordance with ideological aims. Christmas celebrations were gradually stripped of religious and private dimensions and reshaped into organised charitable events for children from socially disadvantaged families. The symbolic figure of the Soviet "Ded Moroz" (Father Frost) replaced the Christ Child, serving simultaneously as visible proof of cultural and political orientation towards the Soviet Union. Ministry of Education Decree No. 22292/51-I/2 of 10 November 1952 explicitly required schools to participate in the "Ded Moroz Event with the Lighting of the Republic Christmas Tree" (Věstník, 1952, p. 413). Activities were to include discussions using maps, photographs and films about Ded Moroz's journey from the USSR to the Czechoslovak Republic, sticker campaigns in children's magazines tracing Ded Moroz's journey to the Czechoslovak Republic, and public celebrations designed to attract the attention of children and parents to the "new" meaning of Christmas. Similarly, the traditional celebration of Mother's Day was gradually displaced in *Učitelské noviny* and replaced by International Women's Day, framed within the appropriate political-ideological narrative of the role of women and mothers in the "development of communism". Women were to be celebrated primarily

as “builders of socialism”, and teachers were to emphasise their role in both working and political life: “Czechoslovak women and teachers can, following their example (that is, Soviet women), educate enthusiastic, courageous builders of socialism and, if necessary, defenders of the homeland.” (Procházková, 1955, p. 1) The educational effect of these “new” anniversaries lay in the transformation of the personal sphere of family relations into a collective and ideologically defined framework.

5.3. *The Teacher as a Member of a Network of Actors in the “New” Socialist Society*

One of the defining features of the transformation of the teaching profession under socialism was its strong orientation towards cooperation with parents and the wider community. This element cannot be understood merely as a “supplement” to teachers’ pedagogical work, but rather as an attempt to create a systemic and functional integration of school and everyday social life, establishing networks through which teachers could exercise educational influence in broader society. *Učitelské noviny* regularly provided justifications for why schools should intervene in the family environment: “If the school assists in upbringing within the family and if parents are in contact with the school, our teaching and educational work and socialist influence become easier.” (Individuální..., 1954, p. 7). Teachers were thus portrayed as unable to achieve sufficient educational effectiveness unless their efforts were accompanied by parallel activity within the family. Parents were not merely “passive recipients” of teachers’ pedagogical advice, but a key component in a process in which school and family were jointly to ensure an ideologically unified direction and goal of upbringing: “The success of children’s upbringing depends on creating and constantly strengthening the unified educational influence of school, family and the public.” (Valný, 1955, p. 1).

Discussions on school–family cooperation were to be conducted directly within parents’ workplaces. Appeals for a “symbiosis of school and family” in shaping socialist consciousness were to reach parents in their employment environment. Teachers’ periodicals therefore called upon factory councils and other workplace bodies – structures in which parents were obliged to participate – to support this connection: “We also wish to address members of factory councils in enterprises where parents are employed, so that they may speak with parents about the importance of cooperation between school and family.” (Individuální..., 1954, p. 7). This model envisaged a system in which the socialist employer was to support the teacher’s new role in coordinating school and family life, reinforcing the notion that upbringing and education were a collective task of society as a whole. Family and public space were thus interlinked within a unified educational framework.

The media – particularly radio – were presented as key co-creators and active participants in shaping a unified socialist consciousness, their voice intended to resonate with the efforts of schools and parents alike. *Učitelské noviny* therefore featured formulations such as: “The possibilities of influencing parents pedagogically through radio are undoubtedly extraordinary.” (Individuální..., 1954, p. 7). Radio broadcasts were expected to place particular emphasis on popularising pedagogical literature, educational manuals and the methods of forming the socialist individual contained within them: “It is noteworthy that it is not only the listener’s voice that calls for the reading of pedagogical works, especially those of Makarenko and Vigdorova.” (Individuální..., 1954, p. 7). In this way, *Učitelské noviny* constructed an image in which the demand for pedagogical texts appeared as a spontaneous expression of public

interest. In reality, however, this was a carefully designed and orchestrated strategy intended to legitimise the role of teachers as cultural and ideological authorities.

Equally important in shaping the socialist convictions of children and young people was the teacher's out-of-school activity. Teachers were expected to assist with tutoring pupils and thus enable them to participate in the successes of socialism. (Štejgerle, 1954, p. 5) They were also meant to cultivate the values of the socialist individual in children's leisure time. (Sedlář, 1960, p.5) For this reason, teachers were expected to engage actively beyond the classroom and to take part in leading interest groups and leisure activities. These were to be deliberately conceived not merely as spaces for satisfying children's need for creativity or amusement, but above all as instruments for shaping the values of socialist morality and collective life. (Pavlásek, 1952, p. 3) *Učitelské noviny* repeatedly emphasised explicitly that "the teaching staff, in cooperation with parents, will organise, lead and educationally utilise the activities of interest groups, within which children's creativity and their desire for socialist activity will find expression" (Valný, 1955, p. 1). Such groups were understood as an institutional tool designed to ensure supervision over the value formation and personal development of the child during leisure time. In this way, the school was to gain the possibility of observing those spheres of children's lives that might otherwise become potential sources of "undesirable" influences. (Novotný, 1955, p. 2).

An important sphere of out-of-school education was the Pioneer organisation, which was conceived as the most significant institution of children's ideological socialisation. *Učitelské noviny* emphasised that "in Pioneer education we must see the first battlefield from which the school can organise the advance of determined activity against all negative influences" (Staněk, 1957, p. 3). Pioneer units were therefore not intended merely to function as leisure associations; rather, they were presented as a key instrument in the struggle against "bourgeois" or "individualist" tendencies. Within this framework, children – under the guidance of teachers acting as unit leaders – were expected to learn collective discipline, obedience, ideological firmness and loyalty. At the same time, activities within Pioneer organisations were meant to correspond with the goals of classroom instruction and to intertwine with the curriculum: "[...] the Pioneer exhibition will be devoted to the People's Republic of China and the struggle of Asian nations for freedom and peace. The exhibition will form part of a Pioneer thematic assembly on China. Exhibitions prepared jointly by pupils help us to increase interest in the subject matter studied and bring unfamiliar countries and events in them more vividly to the pupils." (Chodníček, 1954, p. 6).

Another dimension was the teacher's direct involvement in socio-political life. The organisation of cultural and public enlightenment events, as well as the production of agitational materials, shifted the teacher's role towards the sphere of public activism: "Many teachers are involved in out-of-school activities in various capacities. However, it is possible to speak of such work only if the teacher lives in the community and knows well the people and the conditions in which they live." (Boháč, 1961, p. 2). The teacher's familiarity with the local environment and personal relationships was seen as ensuring the effectiveness of educational and ideological influence. In other words, the teacher was not perceived merely as a school employee, but as a representative and guardian of socialist opinion within the local community: "The best and most trustworthy agitator is the teacher whom citizens know as the educator of their children." (Koukola, 1954, p. 3). The teacher was therefore portrayed as a figure of trust and

friendship, through whom the boundaries between the sphere of the family and the public sphere “disappeared”.

A distinctive feature of this model was the close link between the school and political campaigns. As *Učitel'ské noviny* reported at the time, “teachers prepared thousands of performances by school youth for agitation centres and for the wider electorate” (Koukola, 1954, p. 4). The school environment thus became a direct component of political life, and children were from teachers encouraged to participate in agitational activities from an early age: “A considerable number of pupils joined harvest patrols. Municipalities trained them as a ready young fire brigade. Most pupils also assist in local unified agricultural cooperatives, not only in manual work maintaining machines and tools, but also in agitation and propaganda – for example in preparing bulletin boards, radio broadcasts, discussions and similar activities. It is precisely in this work that one can best see how the school has prepared them.” (S pocitem..., 1950, p. 1).

6. Conclusion

Signs of deprofessionalisation (loss of professional autonomy) in the role of the socialist teacher:

The analysed discussion of the tasks and aims of the teaching profession during the establishment and consolidation of communism in Czechoslovakia (1950–1962) demonstrates that Party and state authorities made considerable efforts to politically and ideologically instrumentalise the “new” socialist teacher. As the analysis of one of the most important teachers’ periodicals (*Učitel'ské noviny*), which disseminated the ideal image of the “new teacher”, has shown, the pedagogical and didactic work of the socialist teacher was expected to be aligned with political and ideological demands, presented, among other things, in unity with the research agenda of the “new” socialist pedagogical science. The teacher was to teach in accordance with the scientific worldview, anti-religious conviction, a materialist conception of the world, and an emphasis on the polytechnical development of the individual serving the victory of the socialist planned economy. Furthermore, the “new” teacher was expected to frame both teaching and education in a collectivist and internationalist spirit and in friendship with the celebrated Soviet Union. “Proletarian internationalism” did not preclude conceiving instruction in a way that celebrated national heroes, national historical events and national culture, which was to shield pupils from the danger of “errors of bourgeois nationalism”, of capitalist “imperialist powers and enemies” during the Cold War. In everyday pedagogical practice and classroom teaching, the teacher was to “rewrite” national cultural identity in accordance with these “prescribed” aims and to promote and consolidate Czechoslovakia’s new geopolitical position after the Second World War, as also emphasised by the socialist school curriculum. In both teaching and out-of-school activities, as well as through engagement in the broader socio-political life of the community, the teacher was to serve as a model of the “new” ethics of socialist life and of the communist individual loyal to Marxist-Leninist conceptions of society and humanity. The teacher’s knowledge (subject-specific and pedagogical alike), personal competences, ethical standards and overall mindset were all to be subject to ideological and political control. They were to be stripped of self-reflection, professional reflection and individual as well as social criticality. The “new” teacher stood “in the service of the people”, while the autonomy of professional

associations and societies was deliberately to be weakened.

This “new role” of the socialist teacher was not to remain merely a matter of the school. It was communicated widely and intensively through other institutions, with significant impact on public opinion and on perceptions of the teacher’s role in communist Czechoslovakia. The image of the new teacher conveyed in the analysed periodical *Učitelské noviny* was also meant to be, and was, further disseminated through radio broadcasts and through internal communication and “enterprise culture” at workplaces where parents of school-age children were most commonly employed (large industrial enterprises, cooperatives, mines, power stations, etc.). We may therefore conclude that the role of the new teacher was a matter of society-wide and political concern – both in terms of its definition and the propagation of this image.

Within professional associations themselves (particularly the Union of Cultural and Educational Workers and the Teachers’ Employees’ Union), autonomous development was likewise curtailed, while platforms and institutions beyond the control and influence of teachers gained prominence. Control over teachers’ conduct was not intended to be merely internal (through shaping consciousness and professional thinking), but also external, exercised directly within schools. Forms of interaction among teachers were encouraged that led to mutual informing and monitoring of activities and opinions.

We have to emphasise that ideological control and, in particular, political instrumentalisation did not necessarily result in the deprofessionalisation of teachers. During the period under study, we can also identify processes contributing to the development of teacher education, the establishment and growth of new important organisations in educational science, as well as the emergence of numerous pedagogical journals and publishing houses that supported professional educational discussions. However, it is important to underline that these processes were initiated, shaped, controlled, and directed towards political goals by the state authorities. Teachers themselves did not have the autonomy to define the purposes and direction of these developments, which we consider to be a crucial aspect of successful professionalisation.

6.1. Limitations of the Study

As indicated in the introduction, the study analyses a specific corpus of primary materials – a journal issued, content-defined and controlled by political power and by the new teaching “elite” of communist Czechoslovakia. It is evident that the image presented was a construct intended to be realised, but not necessarily one that was fully implemented in practice. Indeed, the very fact that many of the demands concerning the transformation of the teacher’s role were reiterated and increasingly emphasised in published texts suggests that the ideal image was realised only with considerable difficulty and more slowly than anticipated and expected. We may conclude that efforts by state and Party authorities, as well as by the “new” expert “elites”, to establish a new role for the teacher were partially fulfilled (change as a symbol of discontinuity), yet they also encountered resistance and continuity in teachers’ thinking and practice. Teachers’ professional identity proved more stable than the new regime had anticipated; neither the political rupture nor the “new” scientific perspectives were able to transform it fundamentally or rapidly (continuity). The duality of continuity and discontinuity was a defining feature of the promotion of the “new” role and profession of the socialist teacher during the period under examination in communist Czechoslovakia.

6.2. Directions for Further Research

The analysis of the ideal image of the socialist teacher may be supported by additional primary sources that constructed and reinforced this image. These include, in particular, contemporary textbooks of pedagogy, which formed the basis of instruction at secondary teacher-training schools and faculties of education. The personality of the teacher (pedeutology) was among the developing subdisciplines of pedagogical research during the socialist period. Another source of the ideal image of the socialist teacher lies in numerous methodological publications concerning both school and out-of-school activities, reflecting the Ministry of Education's decrees on teachers' work as well as scholarly publications produced by researchers at pedagogical institutes and universities. Last but not least, it would be desirable to analyse the substantial body of film and radio material that contributed to shaping the public image of the new teacher. Within the framework of state broadcasting and television, a considerable volume of radio and film production addressed the teaching profession.

In light of the study's limitations, it is also important that the ideal image of the "new" socialist teacher be confronted and compared with other – particularly "unofficial" – sources. These may include teachers' diaries and notes, as personal testimonies can no longer be obtained. Moreover, archival materials relating to the resistance of teachers and students during the 1950s and 1960s in Czechoslovakia warrant more intensive examination. Such primary sources could illuminate how state power monitored teachers' actions and thinking, and how it dealt with those who pursued "undesired" or "unexpected" activities. Analyses of this kind would help reconstruct the deeper dynamics involved in promoting the "new" role of the socialist teacher.

Last but not least, it would be desirable for the Czech – or rather Czechoslovak – case to be compared with examples from other countries of the socialist bloc and analysed from a transnational perspective. A historical-comparative investigation of the transformations of the teaching profession under the constraints of the communist regime and totalitarian power should, using the case of Czechoslovakia, be analysed and reconstructed with regard to the development of socialist Czechoslovak society: the period of rigid Stalinisation; the phase of political and social "thaw"; the "prelude" to the Prague Spring; the Prague Spring; the period of political and social "normalisation" of the 1970s in Czechoslovakia occupied by Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops; and finally the period of loosening within the framework of the perestroika (restructuring), when the system had in many respects already become "dysfunctional". Such tasks, however, clearly exceed the scope of a single study and a single team of authors. It must nevertheless be noted, in conclusion, that this type of analysis is entirely absent from Czech pedagogical debate, and the lack of "processing" of the country's own past probably limits, in many respects, the current discussion on the goals and tasks of Czech teachers in the context of European and global pedagogical "challenges".

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