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Phase model of Slovenian teachers' career development

Abstract: The paper presents the phase model of career development which was designed on the basis of qualitative research into professional biographies by teachers at primary and secondary schools, and a comparison of empirical data with Huberman's model.

We describe the peculiarities of the S-model and present in detail, as the key deviation from the original model, the newly discovered phase of »critical responsibility« and considerable changes of the main characteristics in the phase of helplessness (or, according to Huberman, conservatism).

Key words: professional path, career, adult learning aspect of a career, teacher's career, qualitative research, S-model, Huberman's model, education and training of teachers

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Introduction

Reflecting on teachers' career development may at first appear out of date as individual theorists have given up the career concept (Cf. Brečko 2006). Yet, according to the critical analysis by D. T. Hall's in his work meaningfully entitled *Career is dead – long live the career (1996)* such conclusions are rash and do not take into account the foundations of the concept which has been developed and upgraded over the last hundred years, and that such a period is not negligible. »The career, once understood as a series of vertical shifts with steady increases in income, power, status and security – is dead. Yet people will always lead working lives that change in time, offer challenges, growth and learning. Consequently, if we perceive the career as a series of lifelong work-related experiences and personal learning cycles, then it will never die« (Hall 1996).

How should one approach the career of a teacher; from which theoretical perspective? It seems the latest reflections on the career again bring us back to the fundamental theoretical questions: what affects the professional identity of an individual, what role do values play in this process, and how do we interpret the new forms of career which are appearing independently of traditional, proven professional paths, regardless of whether one is employed or not. At the same time, we deal with dilemmas about the combination of key qualifications as normally defined in education, plus some additional questions: which are the key competencies required to survive in the unpredictable labour market (Cf. Hall 1996, McDaniels 1997, Greenhaus et al. 2000, Straby 2001, Zgaga 2006 and 2006 b, Devjak and Zgaga 2007). A new, provocative question has become topical – what should career development be like in order to realise the concept of »sustained development«. Within this context, we also need some deeper theoretical reflection on the connection between the lifelong learning and adult learning views on career development.

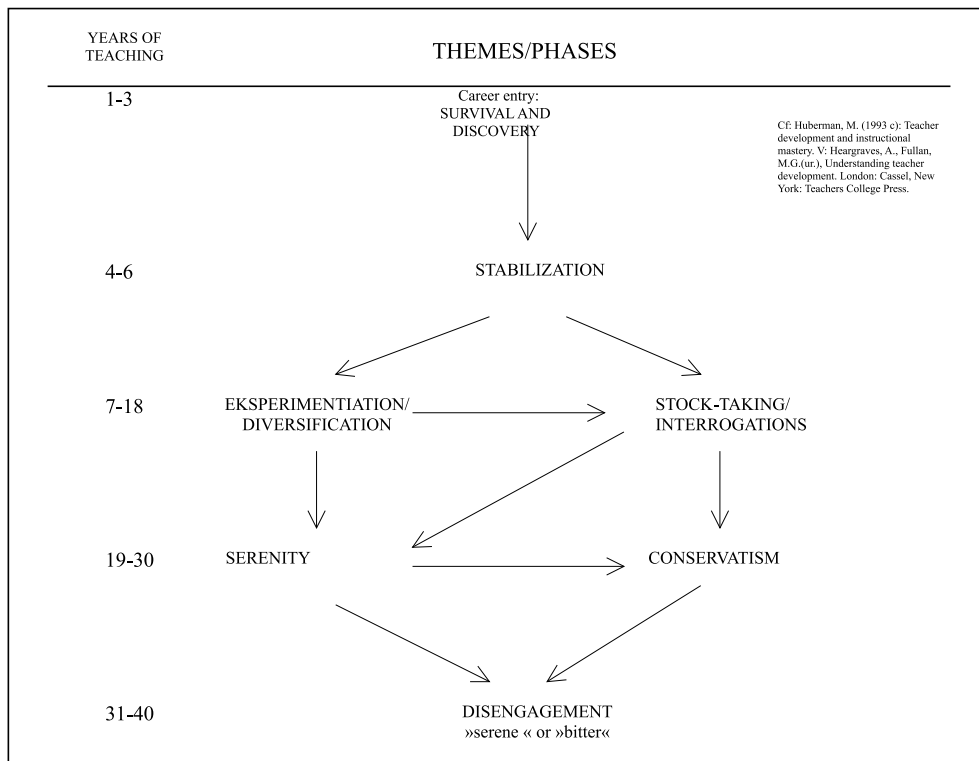
In regard to these questions teachers are not merely employees, their roles at work hold a special place – they have, despite the redefined teacher-student

relationship, the role of enlighteners as their work consists of both educating and upbringing. Their understanding and disposition towards their career not only affects their careers, but are also reflected in their work with those generations that have not yet entered the labour market (Cf. Kalin 1999, p. 19). Teachers can be strong positive or negative models for students already before one's career starts. It is thus important how teachers perceive their own careers, how much satisfaction and fulfilment they get from them. It is also important how their wider environment evaluates and perceives the significance of their work. From this perspective, teachers' careers are still an important issue and the pertaining reflection holds broader significance.

Huberman's Model of Career Phases

Among the most prominent and established views on the teacher's career, which corresponds to the described view, is the model of career phases by M. Huberman (Huberman 1993). It was designed according to the results of the »Swiss study«¹. When we evaluate it according to the original categorisation which was developed for the needs of our research (Cf. Javrh 2006), it turns out that each phase of his model comprises the entire learning cycle: entering a phase, characteristic experiences, developing skills and attaining knowledge, consolidating the position and role within an organisation, new goals and challenges. From the perspective of general, universal laws governing a career, as defined by different authors (Super 1957 and 1995, Schein 1978; also see: Goodson 1992 and 2000, Butt 1992), Huberman's model can in short be defined as a model in which the career includes all universal elements (sequences, phases, stages) and is divided into three main periods. Compared with other authors (Cf. Javrh 2006), the specifics of the model are in the middle career period, approximately between the 10th and 30th year of working, which is in the middle and first half of the mature career period, where we come across the phases which are characteristic of teachers' careers. Of particular importance is the law which stems from Huberman's model: the »harmonic« and »problematic« direction in the development of teachers' careers which are on their own sides of the model. During a career we can thus, according to the particular phase a teacher is going through, evaluate and also predict the final outcome: satisfaction and fulfilment in the profession or embitterment and a feeling of being cheated and dissatisfaction upon retirement.

¹ Many researchers who study the life and work of teachers (Woodward, Goodson etc.) value the »Swiss Study« by Michael Huberman as an important work which, due to its approach and extent, reliably and in detail shows a fairly authentic picture of teachers' reality in career development. A. Heargraves says in its introduction: »Michael Huberman has been one of the foremost architects of and contributors of the field, and this book, *The Lives of Teachers*, is undoubtedly the most systematic and extensive study yet published on the subject« (in Huberman 1993, p. viii). Some criticise his model of phases yet most recognise his exceptional contribution to the understanding of teachers' perceptions of their own careers.



Presentation 1: Huberman's schematic model of teachers' career development²

Huberman, like others, tried to better understand those factors which determine whether teachers are successful in their careers or not. He defined career success as *teachers' satisfaction* and emphasised several times that this view corresponds with the developmental aspects of a career (Cf. Huberman 1993 c, p. 128). He was convinced that »a large part of individual development is 'teleological', that is, individuals observe, study and plan out the sequences through which they pass, and can thereby influence or even determine the nature or succession of the stages in their career« (1993b, p. 94). Huberman departs here from the traditional understanding of a career, according to which career development was perceived as a kind of (usually vertical and successive) development from one phase to another. Teachers are in Huberman's context perceived as responsible for their own careers, while adult education or continuing professional development are perceived as support for their personal efforts and for their roles as facilitators of positive processes in an organisation – in their schools.

² Huberman points out that the model is schematic – it does not display all possible paths but only those which are the most common.

Qualitative Research on Teacher's Careers³

We wished to find out to which extent Huberman's model of phases can be applied in Slovenia (here we had to take local specifics into account: the national system of promotion and the wage scale). Due to the relative similarity of teachers' positions in both school systems we supposed that modal phases in the careers of Slovenian teachers are most probably quite similar to the modal phases in Huberman's model. We were interested in their differences.

We carried out qualitative research which included 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews with teachers working in primary and secondary schools⁴. The main topics of the semi-structured interview were: general notions of teachers' careers and their understanding of the word 'career'; individual histories of employment and work experience; present situation and plans for the future, the influence of continuing professional education and further training for career development.⁵

Already the pilot part of the research showed that a considerable overlapping between the Slovenian model (S-model) and Huberman's model could be expected, so we decided to collect highly diversified professional biographies of teachers to make checking against the original model more reliable. The teachers in the sample were, besides independent variables (age, work experience, sex), also selected according to the level or subject they taught⁶. If we distribute teachers according to Huberman's criterion for ranks⁷, we arrive at the figure below. Approximately one-sixth of the teachers in our sample were well advanced in a late career or about to retire.

Career period	Work experience in years	M	F	TOTAL work experience	TOTAL career periods
EARLY	5–10	0	2	2	2
MIDDLE	11–19	3	5	8	8
LATE/ MATURE	20–29	4	11	15	20
	30–39	0	5	5	

Table 1: Work experience – distribution of the teachers by rank according to Huberman's criterion and according to standard career periods

³ Here we should emphasise that the results are not representative, which calls for a study based on a representative sample (for a detailed description of sampling and methodological approaches, see Javrh 2006).

⁴ In 2002 and 2003 the pilot part of the research was carried out, in 2004 and 2005 the field research with respondents in which we applied a custom-made tool for data collecting. The semi-structured interviews lasted on average two hours (from 90 to 170 minutes), they were recorded on audio tapes. Soundtracks were transcribed using the conventional procedure.

⁵ The sample (n = 30) included a wide variety of possible positions within a school/organisation so different potential career developments could be established through the analysis.

⁶ We tried to achieve a cross section of all subject fields.

⁷ Here one should bear in mind the historical, political and cultural differences between the Swiss and Slovenian systems of employing teachers.

Slightly more than a quarter of the respondents were in the middle career period, while only a small share (6.6 %) were in the early period. The sample covered most of the subjects – which corresponds to Huberman's sampling⁸. The two biggest groups were teachers in secondary schools and teachers in the second and third three-year periods in primary schools, which corresponds to the structure of Huberman's sample.

The analysis of empirical material was carried out using traditional approaches characteristic of qualitative methodological procedures (Cf. Javrh 2006). Each phase of Huberman's model is saturated with individual characteristics (Huberman 1993, 1993b, 1993c), on average 27 of them describe one phase. In the qualitative analysis an individual characteristic was regarded as a single category. The process of selecting relevant statements in our interviews was adjusted to Huberman's way of selecting and we applied the so-called »approach with variables« (Miles and Huberman 1994, pp.173-176). Due to the sheer amount of collected empirical material we chose a stricter criterion for selecting the enciphered units – statements. We carried out multi-level axial coding, which was performed in three stages with codes of the first, second and third order. The third-order codes reached the level of categories in Huberman's model and thus became the basic categories of the S-model. This crude adjustment to Huberman's research procedures enabled us to take further steps to allow a comparison. We carried out a comparative analysis of Huberman's characteristics in individual phases and our empirical data, which was arranged in a hypothetical model (Cf. Titmus 2004).

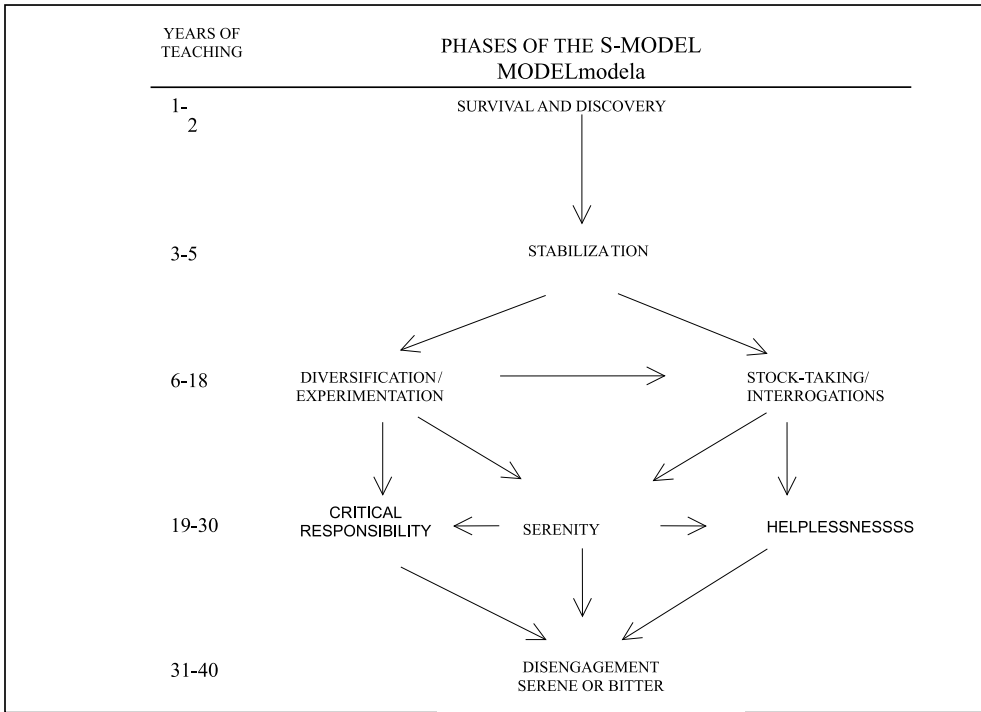
Designing a Slovenian Teacher Career Model

When we made the detailed comparative analysis of the results of the empirical material and Huberman's descriptions, certain phases displayed characteristics which considerably differ from Huberman's model. We thus prepared a modified S-model, which can be presented similarly.

The S-model reveals the quick conclusion of the first phase and early stabilisation, which considerably shortens the early period (by approximately one-quarter). Here one needs to be cautious as the research was not quantitative.

Like Huberman, we distinguish the »desirable« and »undesirable« aspects of the model; the S-model also displays the »neutral« or »usual« career path. The desirable aspect is on the far left arch of the model, the undesirable goes along the line stabilisation-stock-taking/interrogations–helplessness–embittered disengagement. The neutral development path represents a kind of balancing of all experiences during the mature period. The S-model in this regard well sum-

⁸ The career development of teachers who teach »main« subjects can be due to job opportunities in other professions different from that of those teaching other subjects. A specific position with regard to this is that of information technology teachers and language teachers as they have better chances of getting a job outside the teaching profession, despite the fact they have been in the profession for more than ten years. The demand for this expertise in the labour market is still high.



Presentation 2: The S-model which takes Slovenian peculiarities into account

marises the three typical teachers as can be defined in the mature career period: the critical enthusiast who maintains youthful activity and makes ever wider connections, the mature relaxed teacher who instead focuses on classroom work and professional excellence, and the helpless, increasingly embittered teacher who wants to quit and leave the profession as soon as possible.

Entry into Teaching

Upon entering the first phase (Surviving and Discovering) some of our respondents experienced a period which firmly convinced them that they had chosen the right profession. Others reported difficult beginnings accompanied by unpleasantness, fear, the uncertainty of whether they would be able to perform the task, sometimes even a real »shock« if they were thrown into a certain situation for which they were not prepared and had not expected.

A peculiarity detected when comparing the two models is the attention our teachers paid to the questions of why they decided on this profession and why they entered it in the first place. Some chose the profession already in their »childhood«, others began their careers in other professions and later realised they wanted to be teachers, some became teachers by pure chance and had never

really considered becoming teachers, yet some teachers chose teaching among several possibilities at a given moment. Later in their careers crucial differences appear among them, namely in the degree of »contact« they are able to establish with students. The first two groups do not encounter problems with regard to this, despite ageing and generation gaps in the mature career period. The two other groups encounter considerably more difficulties as some teachers find it very difficult to establish genuine contact and lose it entirely in the late period. Teachers emphasise that the first experiences upon entering the profession can be very important and extend much further than one expects – they also affect their work in the mature career period.

The group of teachers who lack formal requirements for employment is much more insecure and experiences more difficulties in the stabilisation phase that follows. These teachers have been exposed to comparatively more negative experiences than their colleagues who began their careers with all the required formal qualifications. This uncertainty has negatively affected their professional self-image. Female teachers who were simultaneously students, workers (teacher), young mothers and housewives more often report that they had at that time deliberately given up furthering their careers. Their main strategy was thus to minimise any additional input required for quality work. A group of teachers, primarily men, reports that they were »on their own«. The headmaster merely told them which classes they would teach, they were then given »chalk and the roll call list« and sent to the classroom unescorted. Some were not even introduced to their colleagues in the staffroom and had to do this by themselves. Teachers reminisce about these first steps in the profession with chagrin, bitterness and a feeling of deprivation which have hardly worn off. This begs the question: to what extent have these first experiences in fact defined the teachers' professional self-image?

The mentor's initial support provides newcomers with self-esteem because they are thus appropriately and timely familiarised with skills they could not acquire during their formal education. A good mentor is also a model and represents a benchmark of quality. Beginners set for themselves standards of excellence and get to know the professional and human qualities required for quality work.

The respondents' comments fairly well reflect which inhibiting factors hinder a fast and quality transition from the first to the second phase. These are: overburdening due to the combination of three cycles (career, personal development, family); entering the profession without an appropriate introduction by headmasters, superiors and later mentors; and the fact that some teachers had their first work experience outside school settings. These teachers complain about the inappropriate practice of headmasters who traditionally regard such teachers as experienced workers, even though they are in fact complete beginners. The help available to other beginners is non-existent, yet they are »not expected« to make beginner's mistakes. The S-model at this point warns about the systemic gap as the status of such teachers is not explicitly defined in practice. Such an entry into the profession causes major problems also later in their careers.

Stabilisation in the Profession

Entry to the second phase (Stabilisation) is experienced by our respondents in two different situations: they are formally employed as they will work in the profession for a longer period of time and build their career, so they »take roots«; yet some do not commit themselves as they keep on thinking of other career possibilities. In a given moment this seems »the easiest way« as they are formally trained for this kind of work. They conclude this is the easiest and at the same time an economically safe way to make a living.

Teachers already feel certain self-confidence and independence, some even confront their environment with this attitude. Huberman describes these characteristics no earlier than in the third phase of professional activity and experimenting. It seems that the first year of teaching without monitoring and interventions in teachers' work – after they get over the initial shock – equips them with marked self-confidence and independence. Yet there are certain pitfalls in this independent attitude of young teachers. They often become loners, find it difficult or impossible to establish relationships with their fellow workers, get into conflict with the headmaster who is no longer perceived as a positive pedagogic leader. The initial independence may in extreme cases turn into opportunism.

Teachers in this period intensively develop various professional competencies. Fluctuation is common among those who still search for the right type of school. They have enough youthful vigour and self-confidence to take this step. Teachers often think about continuing their studies. Their ambitions are far from being achieved in this regard. They are averted from re-entering formal education by similar hindrances as encountered in the results of the research on adult participation in education (Mohorčič Špolar 2001). Huberman reports that teachers in the phase of stabilisation tend to withdraw into the intimacy of their own classroom. This has also been described by our respondents, but there is another group of teachers who already in this phase reach outside of school settings and establish contacts with other colleagues and try to share experiences so it seems they will soon (considerably sooner than in Huberman's model) enter the phase of professional activity/experimenting.

The influence of mentors on young teachers now takes a back seat, while co-workers become increasingly important. Some fail to establish positive contacts with their fellow workers, some are not in good terms with the headmaster. Teachers as a rule prefer to withdraw than to risk conflict with the school's management. This relationship in most cases improves in the next phase of professional activity/experimenting, when teachers have proven themselves and found their place among the school's staff. In this phase teachers are hindered by being »tested and observed«. In this phase they eagerly seek a balance between domestic demands and the demands of work, this is true particularly of women.

Lively Activity and Experimenting

Activism is characteristic of this phase (Diversification / Experimentation). Teachers spend a lot of time pondering the question of further studies. From beginners they change into teachers who have certain rules, demands and a recognisable place in their schools. They »resist headmasters«, set boundaries on students and parents, they are also independent in their dealings with the local community. These teachers are safe from doubt and insecurity in the fourth phase, they will most likely advance along the positive line of the model.

Another group of teachers at a certain point in this phase experiences a »breakdown«. It is a traumatic experience leaving long-term consequences. This breakdown is brought about by an open conflict with students/parents, the headmaster's inadequate response to a teacher's mistake or because a teacher is »let down« by his/her co-workers. A teacher in a concrete situation thus becomes a scapegoat and »fails« as a professional authority. Fear, uncertainty and isolation begin to degrade their professional self-image. The consequences are serious – teachers who were once preparing classes during their holidays and »could not wait« to begin teaching are now increasingly threatened in their role. They feel an aversion to certain classes, try to »forget«, avoiding conflicts at all costs. The problems at work interfere with their domestic life, they are shunned by their co-workers.

A teacher who has experienced such a crisis and successfully overcome it will normally progress along the positive side of the model.

The development of teaching has several peculiarities in this phase of experimenting. Teachers gradually test, tinker and began to build their personal repertoire of »holds« and understandings of the pedagogical process. At this point, they become firmly rooted in their careers despite their uncertain beginnings. They come into profoundly deep contact with »the magic generation«. The teacher thus emotionally connects with the students and finds it difficult to part with a particular generation, unlike in other cases, when he/she normally do not have problems with parting. These are »the best years of one's teaching«. Teachers cannot understand the causes of this intense relationship. They are exceptionally successful with students and cannot repeat this success with other generations despite their increased efforts. Yet this »contact«, this experience, remains in the teacher's memory as an ideal, as the standard of truly quality work. Some teachers have still not established constructive relationships with management and their co-workers. These teachers gradually slip into isolation and misgivings, they will almost certainly enter the fourth phase of uncertainty/review or even immediately slip into the sixth phase of helplessness, which is the most undesirable. They do not feel protected enough by the headmaster in case they make a mistake in their experimenting or activities so they dare not take risks. They also do not find the support of their co-workers since they have not experienced the friendly relationships which normally develop at least among younger colleagues.

Young, ambitious teachers have so far made a considerable effort to advance their careers and have already reached a plateau: the highest rank due to their

achievements, the highest wages, the professional peak. Such teachers have two possibilities: to stay and teach while investing surplus energy elsewhere, or to consider becoming a headmaster or some other manager. Only those remain who exceptionally appreciate the »contact« with their students.

Teachers also report the first signs of »burnout«, which is a consequence of their strenuous efforts due to the overlapping of the three cycles. Huberman does not mention this.

An Unwanted Slip Into Uncertainty

Teachers enter this phase (Stock-taking / Interrogations) when they increasingly frequently experience negative feelings and attitudes, general dissatisfaction, a fear of routine and »dying out in the profession«. A wide variety of negative experiences can be detected: disappointment, monotony, middle-age crisis.

The S-model's peculiarity is its descriptions of burnout by teachers who invest a lot into very demanding tasks. Huberman also reports similar experiences yet his examples are not so extreme and, as a rule, belong to the subsequent phase of helplessness. Teachers who gather enough strength to leave the profession and start anew before they become helpless are rare in Slovenia. If they have been teaching for more than 10 years, they lack the strength to take this step, although they want to. They become embittered, which is the most undesired resolution of their careers.

Some teachers experience a »breakdown«. This is an unexpected, unfortunate disruption in the otherwise normal career development which then turns into a negative direction. This traumatic experience is appropriately termed a »breakdown« as it essentially differs from other unpleasant experiences in their career. Teachers who experience this change have self-doubt, doubt about the system, they are often afraid and develop various strategies to hide this fear⁹. Their teaching practice displays major problems: »doubting that the subject one (unwillingly) teaches has any sense«, problems with discipline in the classroom. Few manage to dismantle these doubts quickly and efficiently, find satisfaction in their work and turn away in time from the undesired direction. An important role in such an experience is played by the headmaster, who has left the teachers to their own devices and is thus on the opposite side. Teachers cannot establish a relationship of co-operation with the headmaster – their relationships with the management are tense, pessimistic, they only see mistakes, while the active distrust of the headmaster, who doubts their professional competence, pushes them further downwards. Teachers distinctly experience isolation from their

⁹ »Conflictive« and »stubborn« teachers also resist and with their actions show their dissatisfaction, yet their activeness distinguishes them considerably from »broken« teachers, who become increasingly passive. The very wish to do something still provides conflictive teachers with opportunities to turn their career development into a more positive direction, into the phase of relaxation. It seems that in this regard a lot depends on whether they will know how to overcome negative relationships with the headmaster and their co-workers, and deepen their »contact« with the students.

peers who are beginning to penetrate the inner circles of decision-making in the school. Thus emerges a vicious circle of mistrust and deteriorated interpersonal relationships. Teachers' problems at work affect their family life. Few manage to leave the profession at this point.

Teachers do not easily give up and become inactive at once. Some systematically find commitments outside their profession, while in the classroom they perform only the minimum, they invest in teaching the smallest possible amount of time and energy. Some start lucrative activities and »improve« their economic situation with extra income. Those who are successful in business outside their profession have possibilities to change their career. Yet some experience nothing but failure even when searching for opportunities outside the school. They can only resign to it. In this regard men are especially vulnerable, as has already been established by Huberman.

The Teacher Has Relaxed

The entry into the phase of relaxation (Serenity) is the same in both models – it is a change in mood, opening to the outside and a balance of one's actions.

A peculiarity of the S-model is teachers who still report vivid experimenting and professional activeness; they participate in numerous activities, they experiment and always search for new methods, though they are no longer so »rash« and inexperienced.

They have many original proposals, they plan improvements, try to share them with others and thus gain support for changes, no matter how limited they may be. They experience »ageing«, which is reported by the majority of our respondents. The slightly younger teachers who have recently entered the phase report different strategies to cope with the first signs of physiological problems connected with ageing. The common denominator is »being wrung out«, as they say. Some experience this more intensively than others, especially if they have already approached the phase of disengagement or if they are about to make the transition.

Years of teaching have brought experience, teachers are thus more relaxed in applying methods, approaches, materials and techniques. They are autonomous within the profession, they have learnt to maintain the appropriate condition for dynamic teaching. For this purpose they incessantly change and to some extent also change fields of work, approaches – they keep on »tinkering«, which Huberman identifies as a reliable indicator of career satisfaction.

A peculiarity of the S-model is the pronouncedly intensive »contact« with the students. The teachers in Huberman's model already describe a certain reserve in relationships, while the teachers in the S-model experience genuine »contact« with the students.

Teachers' career ambitions begin to diminish considerably, they adjust less while towards the end of this phase they also withdraw. They invest more in their domestic life, personal growth and leisure. Teachers primarily ponder

what »remains for them«, what is reasonable to plan for the future. An overall impression is that teachers in the S-model are much more determined to remain active. Some teachers work towards an »alternative« career and take stock of the possibilities for change that have remained. Those who have reached a high level are particularly open to proposals, yet far more restful and cautious.

The most satisfied teachers are those who have entered the inner circles of decision-making as they can exert an influence on their collectives, the selection of headmasters, norms of the organisational climate... They can really say that the school is their »second home«. Some of them start preparing for a vertical promotion soon after entering this phase. They systematically work in this direction since they feel mature enough to successfully perform new tasks as headmasters/directors. They welcome a promotion as a challenge, a test, and believe this will enliven their careers.

Helplessness

Helplessness and »conservatism« – as they call their experiencing and acting – are connected with emotional distress. Teachers are disappointed, hurt, they cannot really change anything for the better. A special group is »broken« teachers. They entered this phase after the period of doubting and pondering what to do after a traumatic experience, normally in the third phase of professional activity and experimenting. These are teachers who »suffer from nervousness«. They face the dilemma of what to do and where they could be successful if they changed profession. They become thoroughly slack in order to keep their peace, yet this proves counterproductive. They cannot handle the generation gap, the »contact« which once filled them and motivated them for work is less genuine and ever more permeated with uneasiness and a fear of making a mistake again. They are constantly on guard and tense. Here the S-model considerably differs from Huberman's model. Huberman emphasises that deeper middle-age crises – which are in many ways fairly similar to »broken« teachers in the S-model – were not described by his informants, nor experienced as dramatic. He explicitly emphasises that this is the period of revision which conservative teachers resolve by letting go, giving up their plans and rejecting novelties. Those of our respondents who have been classified as »broken« undergo a personal crisis.

According to the individual biographies, we can talk about teachers who had been as a rule successful up to a certain point in their careers, even very successful. Among such teachers is even a case of a school's »model teacher« who significantly contributed to the prestigious image of the school. It seems that these additional efforts and expectations completely exhausted the teacher. At a certain point he was left alone, especially in the case of conflicts (e.g. with the headmaster, inspection, parents and students). The situation of the teacher is here very similar to that described by Morris et al. (2000) whereby teachers in Hong Kong, facing similar quandaries, left elite schools as they preferred career degradation to the constant exposure to such pressures.

Teachers spend most of their strength to maintain the lowest level of acceptable discipline in classrooms, though they clearly feel the lack of »contact«. The generation gap can no longer be bridged. They are hurt because students »storm in, demolish«, do not appreciate the subject – teachers take this personally.

This builds up a feeling of helplessness in teachers, sometimes also a feeling of inadequacy. This phase is also experienced by those teachers who have preserved their »contact« with the students since they do not find these relationships difficult. They are hurt in their relationships with their co-workers and the headmaster, they may also have gone through a bitter episode trying to penetrate deeper into the education system's structure. These are usually burnt-out teachers. The overall impression is that those teachers who are conservative in the way described by Huberman do not prevail in this phase of the S-model.

Teachers in the S-model in this phase describe its characteristics as »resignation«, »breakdown« or »burnout«. They had great plans, expectations and ambitions; they were committed. In their careers they experienced a major or a series of lesser negative experiences which robbed them of their self-confidence, will to work and élan. Huberman reports primarily the disappointment caused by extensive investments in school reforms.

Despite the feeling of failure, some teachers still entertain plans of going to another profession, they see other possibilities because they are still active (especially outside the profession). They socialise primarily with those colleagues who support them, while withdrawing from other relationships. We cannot speak of real isolation in the S-model, except in very extreme cases (it is interesting that the two of these cases are both males). Isolation is manifested rather indirectly: as a wish to withdraw from decision-making and participating in the variegated everyday school activities, as well as from making strategic decisions – such teachers are before their retirement excluded from the inner circles of decision-making and information.

The New Phase Of Critical Responsibility

An entry into the newly formed phase is determined by two predominant characteristics: »commitment« and a »positive critical attitude«. Experienced teachers detect deficiencies and this makes them committed. They have reached the level of autonomy which enables them to act according to their views and values, regardless of their habits, expectations, obstacles. A positive critical attitude is in this phase the characteristic which decisively sets such teachers apart from all the others – they clearly see mistakes on different levels, yet this does not make them resigned or passive. On the contrary – it encourages them to reflect, take transparent stands and responsibilities in regard to particular and general issues. They participate in discussions of the teachers' place in society, by which they risk losing their position in their schools. They act according to higher values as they believe their primary mission is the »democratic transmission of knowledge«, and not compromising due to different political and economic inte-

rests. Teachers have experienced many confirmations in their careers so they feel genuine autonomy, they are consequently aware of the significance and value of the profession, which they advocate outwardly ever more strongly. Teachers also experience satisfaction due to their personal growth which is in fact facilitated by minor conflicts and a lack of understanding in their environment for their different and somewhat unusual attitude.

The mission these teachers talk about relates to different levels of work. They are always, without exception, committed to their basic mission: »to make students learn«. This protects them from careerism, although they may cherish considerable ambitions with regard to their career. They have a good command of their subject and their »contact« with the students keeps them well balanced. It is this »contact« that makes them work consistently and responsibly in the classroom, rather than their firm commitment.

Teachers have developed a teaching practice as they are familiar with »all the tricks of the trade«. Autonomy at work gives them élan, they also have sufficient experience so they penetrate deeper levels of teaching. They test, search for new approaches, consider new contents – all of this is similar to the third phase of professional activity/experimenting, yet these challenges are deeper, professionally more demanding and extensive. Teachers are in the role of innovators as they deal with areas which have been neglected or insufficiently articulated. They are critical of superficial solutions, yet they can easily take on the role of students and listeners in education – despite their status of experienced, fully responsible teachers in their prime. It is this that distinguishes them from self-appointed »experts«. Such teachers want to enrich others with their insights and experience so they have a natural wish to become mentors. This fits in with Schein's (1978) description of this characteristic which comes in the »mature career« phase in his model.

They also differ from others in the role they take on within the organisation. They have made themselves a name and are among the better teachers in their schools. They have managed to penetrate the inner circles of decision-making, although they may encounter certain obstacles due to their zeal in the relationship with the headmaster. They feel reluctance on the part of the management who do not know how to respond to such teachers.

Teachers become even more committed if they conclude that the school lacks an appropriate vision. At this point, they essentially deviate from the characteristics in other phases – they become even more committed and do not react with inhibition and resignation. It is a distinctive characteristic of such teachers that they are »outspoken« as they go public, which sets them apart from all the others. They perceive commitment as a part of their mission and are not discouraged by unfavourable reactions. On their own initiative, teachers take on the task of »evaluating the work and status of teachers on the national level« – they do it of their own accord, without structural support and solely out of conviction.

Gradual Disengagement

This concluding phase comprises two large groups which differ considerably: »serene« and »embittered« teachers. They both start to »withdraw from the frontlines«, they no longer accept bigger tasks, workloads and responsibilities.

The peculiarity of the S-model is cheerful teachers which are somewhat withdrawn with respect to everyday school life, yet still committed in a new way. They feel a wider responsibility, they have a keener sense of identity, be it that of a teacher or a broader, national identity. They see deficiencies in the education system and are constructively critical. They suggest a number of concrete measures and improvements. Some of them have thus decided to become activists in a wider sense, while others merely carry on as they feel they have done more than enough in the previous phase (critical responsibility).

Descriptions of mature teachers by their younger colleagues show and confirm that cheerful teachers remain »professional until the end«. Despite their age they are still able to preserve enough relative strength and energy for quality work. Embittered teachers also feel the responsibility towards the system, yet they see no solutions. They are only critical, even »obnoxious« and »prissy towards the collective«, above all, they are visibly tired and exhausted. They mourn about the past and are worried because they do not trust the younger generations.

Both relaxed and embittered teachers – and this is one of the main peculiarities of the S-model – mention problems with vocal cords and overall tiredness, which displays many signs of professional burnout. Voice problems have already been reported in previous phases, now these professional troubles become more prominent. Some of them have developed ingenious strategies which help them stay fit.

Embittered teachers still have some other, bigger troubles. Their overall condition, physical and emotional, can be fairly degraded. They describe tiredness that requires prolonged periods of rest to restore their strength. They run out of energy at the end of a week so they usually spend their weekends preparing for the next week. This is the reason (especially in women) they neglect their domestic responsibilities, some even experience sleeping disorders which indicates stress (Slivar 2003). Cheerful teachers search for other possibilities, while the embittered try to conceal their exhaustion, especially in front of their students.

Serene teachers have preserved their vivid, dynamic »contact« with students. This is also the motive they still experiment with, which is a major deviation from the Huberman model?. Teachers find this experimenting pleasant, they apply a broad range of skills and at times combine them with their personal style and approach to teaching. Embittered teachers at this point differ considerably – they can no longer establish the »contact« on the same level as the cheerful teachers. They often have disciplinary problems with students, in the classroom and outside it. They feel neglected and experience that their professional work is not respected, for which they blame others.

Teachers in this phase still participate in school life yet they move into the background, although the management often seek their advice when major deci-

sions are made. A specific feature of the S-model could be the relationship between a mature teacher and his/her successor. It is remarkable that mature teachers settle down if they know who will replace them. They are satisfied because they can influence their younger colleagues with their education and authority. Now they really feel that they are someone's senior, as a key role described by Schein (1978) under *late career*.

Relaxed teachers maintain their relationship with the headmaster as cooperation, while the embittered criticise a lot, distance themselves or even become opportunistic. Some of these teachers resort to the traditional »status of an old teacher«. This means they isolate themselves and slacken off. Still others spend for their work inordinate amounts of time and energy, which shows that in this phase teachers' strength naturally declines. Relaxed and cheerful teachers who have managed to preserve their good condition are »reluctant to retire« as they still feel strong enough to teach. They differ considerably from the embittered who develop physical illnesses, become overly critical, distanced and are awaiting »the end«. A key peculiarity of the S-model is the question of »further career development«. This issue has a new significance as it is strongly connected with the question of the last transition in view – retirement. Embittered teachers are at this point very similar to Huberman's descriptions. Serene teachers are an exception because they still have career ambitions. Some of them at this point feel strong enough to even start a new career, e.g. in politics.

Conclusion

In education and especially in the continuing professional training of teachers one must take the period of one's career and its specific demands into account – this has also been confirmed by research into the career paths of Slovenian teachers (Cf. Javrh 2006). The S-model proved an efficient tool for establishing individuals' needs.

Empowering through education and training can best help teachers on their career path. Special attention should be paid to embittered teachers and those who are well on their way to becoming embittered. The presented model offers answers with regard to the work and lives of those teachers who have in many years of teaching reached relaxation and satisfaction in their careers. In the paper we have presented the phase model of teachers' career development which was designed on the basis of qualitative research into the professional biographies of teachers employed in primary and secondary schools, and by comparing our empirical data with Huberman's model. We have presented many peculiarities of the S-model and detailed, as the main deviation from the original model, the newly discovered phase of »critical responsibility«.

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