School is not a factory-Interactive System of Professional Development: Networking

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Abstract

The authors question the dominant model of the practitioners' professional development by comparing mechanistic and systemic ecological models of professional development. Starting from a systemic model, the authors put forward the professional development model, symbolically presented as a 'loom' which gives the starting points (systemic changes of education, teacher as reflective practitioner, school as a learning community and partnership) and the framework (career long learning and improvement, career advancement, improvement of the practice and the education policy based on the culture of change). Such a framework provides a basis for the networking of the professional development through the interactive system of different forms (grouped in the individual forms, common forms in the working practice and the organized forms outside the practice) and through connecting of different actors.

Keywords: Professional development, systemic approach, reflective practitioner, community of learning, networking.

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INTRODUCTION

The theoretician of system and systemic changes, professor Bela Banathy (Banathy, 1991) distinguishes several types of human activity systems which can be shown on the four dimensional continuum: a) openness versus closeness b) mechanistic versus systemic, c) unitarian versus pluralistic by purpose d) simplicity versus complexity.
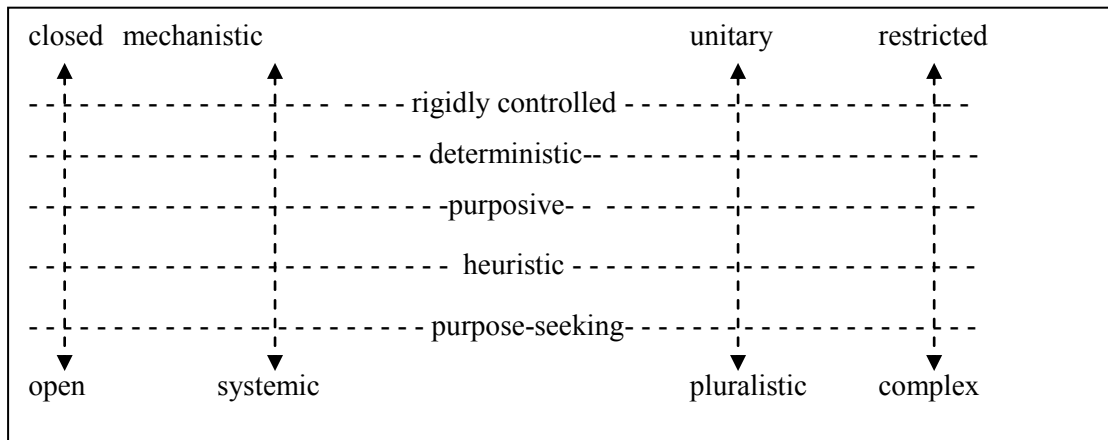
closed mechanistic		unitary	restricted
- - ⌐ - - - - - - - - - - - ⌐ - - - - - - rigidly controlled - - - - - - ⌐ - - - - - - - - - - ⌐ - -			
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open	systemic	pluralistic	complex

Figure 1. Types of human activity systems (Banathy, 1991, p. 36)

According to those dimensions, the five types of system can be distinguished: rigidly controlled (e.g. work on a production line), deterministic (bureaucratic system; strongly centralized national education system), purposive(corporations, industry, services, dominant current education system), heuristic (corporations developing entrepreneurship, research and development agencies, experimental education program)and purpose-seeking (desired education system).

Education, and education system (determined by a particular education policy) one hand reflects the dominant economic relations in a given society and on another misunderstood and established from the perspective of the dominant areas of the human activity,   such as   industry. These influences are seen at the level of understanding the nature and the function of education, at the level of organization of education institutions and teaching/learning process as well as in the approach to the educators' professional development.   Therefore, it is not surprising that the dominant model of the teachers' professional development is based on the models that are characteristic and possibly functional for the different models of the human activity systems. Some authors call this model the industrial society model. (e.g. Banathy, Hargreaves), the others neoliberal or managerial model (Doecke, 2005), and for some it is the mechanistic model (Krnjaja, 2010).*

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* It would not be fair to equalize such a model with the model of the professsional development in the entreprenurial and business corporation because the very theoriticians from those areas (e.g. Chris Argyris, Peter Senge) have significantly contributed to the understanding of the organizations as the learning systems and to the nature of the systemic changes. Nowadays, the successful cooporative systems endeavour to transform themselves from deterministic and purposeful systems into the open systems of learning organizations.

Compared to the above model, the ecological system of professional development is based on the notion of the educational systems as open, complex, multidimensional, dynamic, process oriented, reflexive systems.   There are many authors who look at the issues of the professional development and study the existing systems of the professional development, their effects and the possible ways of changing them from the systemic and socio-cultural perspective (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Ellis, 2010; Brownlee, 2008; Farell, 2003; Hargreaves, Fullan, 2000; Reeves, 2010). The differences between these two models are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Industrial and systemic models of the professional development
(after Doecke, 2005; Pavlović Breneslović, 2009, 2010; Krnjaja, 2010)

Industrial model of professional development	Ecological, systemic model of professional development
A teacher has a position of an individual professional. Professional development is a matter of the individual achievements and the responsibility to meet the set requirements.	Learning and teaching are collaborative processes taking place in the network of the relationships. A teacher is a member of a community and his/her professional development is an integral process of the development of own practice in the very context of the functioning and improvement of the school/kindergarten. School as community provides the opportunities for the development of culture that fosters continuous learning as a mutual experience which changes and transforms the school practice.
Professional development is in the function of *sustaining* changes (Chrinstensen in Schlechty, 2009) in the education system. Those changes are oriented towards the extension of the existing, by strengthening the efficiency and the effectiveness through those changes that are compatible to the existing system.	Professional development is in the function of the systemic changes. Systemic changes are the *second order changes or disruptive changes* (Chrinstensen in Schlechty, 2009) oriented towards the changes in the vital functions of the system – changes in its structure and culture. The purpose of the changes is not to modify certain segments of the program of the system but to restructure and reculturate the system.
Professional learning is seen as a single looped process oriented towards the level of the event where the action is taken, problems identified, rectification or the change planned and the action implemented.	Professional learning is seen as double-looped process of changes in which the first loop opens and own practiced is reconsidered from the meta-position; the existing purpose and the way of functioning are reconsidered and new structures, mental models and values are developed. Professional learning reflects the permanent connection between the vision, purpose and action, the development of the common visions and meaning.
Professional learning is generic by its nature and the learned can be applied in the different settings regardless to its specific characteristics.	Professional learning is linked to a specific context of own professional practice. Schools/kindergartens relate to the professional learning in a unique way, without a universal recipe for all. This does not mean ignoring a solution at the level of the system policy but creating and designing the professional development on the basis of the individual choice and initiative which is the most suitable to the concrete practice.

Knowledge comes from the outside (in a form of the scientific insights or the education policy requirements) and 'delivered' through training programs. Learning is future oriented.	Knowledge is developed and made meaningful through the permanent reflection on own practice. An insight in problem, an attempt to resolve the problem, overcome the difficulty or improve something in own practice motivate the professional learning. Time-wise, learning is a past-present-future continuum.
Knowledge can be systematized in/out of the context cluster of knowledge or truth that is not problematized regardless to the socio-cultural community practice and knowledge developed by the practitioners work in that community. The practitioner is expected to uncritically apply and adjust the learned to his/her own practice.	The scientific and professional knowledge serves as the starting point and the framework to inquiry and reconsider own practice. In this process, the knowledge themselves are being reconsidered from the point of view of own experiences and practice. The practitioners are involved in a dialogue and reconsideration of own starting points and theoretical postulates through the continuous to inquiry of own practice and building the meaning, purpose and sense.
Information on practitioners' knowledge and their practice are acquired through questionnaires, tests or surveys which do not take into account the unique nature of the given school context.	Information on knowledge and practice are acquired through action and qualitative research which focus on the given context and school community characteristics.
The practice is evaluated by the pre-set outcomes, like for example pupils' test performance without taking into consideration what is measured by those tests and do they cover everything provided through the practice. The most important part of the learning is a product, the achievement.	The practitioners rely on the scientific and own practical researches to reconsider own practice through observation, listening, dialogue, documenting. The most important part of leaning is a continuous process of change and transformation.
The practitioners' work is evaluated by the others according to 'the performance culture'. The practitioners' responsibility is reduced to the narrow framework of the performance measurement in which they are required to set the goals and demonstrate achieving them.	The practitioners jointly develop a 'culture of research and evaluation' that involves everyone. Their responsibility is a part of the wider professional agreement on well being of the pupils/children in the community.

The official system of teachers' in-service training in Serbia is based on required one hundred hours of the professional training during five years and reflects industrial (mechanistic) approach to professional development.

By "fitting" the education to the models of systems that are deterministic or purposive we neglect the essence of the educational process which is, by its nature, open, multidimensional, complex, reflexive and meaning seeking. The results are usually the inefficiency of the educational system. Similarly, the professional development model based on the entrepreneurial (industrial, managerial, mechanistic) one demonstrates its inefficiency in at least two key issues:

1. Issue of (de)motivating teachers to participate and invest in the professional development,

2. Issue of transferring the professional development to the practice or, in other words, seeing the professional development as immanent to the process of the practice improvement.

Figure 2 shows the systemic model of the professional development as the 'loom' of the professional development. The loom metaphor helps us to:

- Explicate our starting education paradigm. This paradigm establishes and connects 'loom framework' with the four 'anchors' that strengthen and keep the frame together. Those anchors are: 1. Approach to the education as the process of the permanent development, transformation and improvement; 2. Teacher as the reflexive practitioner that reconsiders and investigates own practice and in the process grows professionally and transform the practice; 3. School as the learning community; 4. Partnership of the all professional development stakeholders (universities, ministries, institutes, education institutions....). The concept of the professional development, based on the idea of a reflexive practice and a learning school/kindergarten, is built on the inquiry and a change of the culture of practice from the 'inside'' which is a crucial contexts of support to the professional development of school and pre-school teachers. The practice is re-examined through the range of the forms and activities enabling critical reflection, such as action research, focus groups, collaborative observation, evaluation of the program, documenting (stories, journals, narrative interview, studies, research projects), mentoring (Reid, 2004; Farell, 2003; Webster-Wright, 2010, Caine, 2010). Partnership is achieved through a continuous dialogue of all actors on articulating the concept and the strategy of the professional development and on building the joint meaning and purpose to ensure information sharing, redefining of roles, research support, joint actions, trust building, decision making, starting the initiatives and joint progress and development.
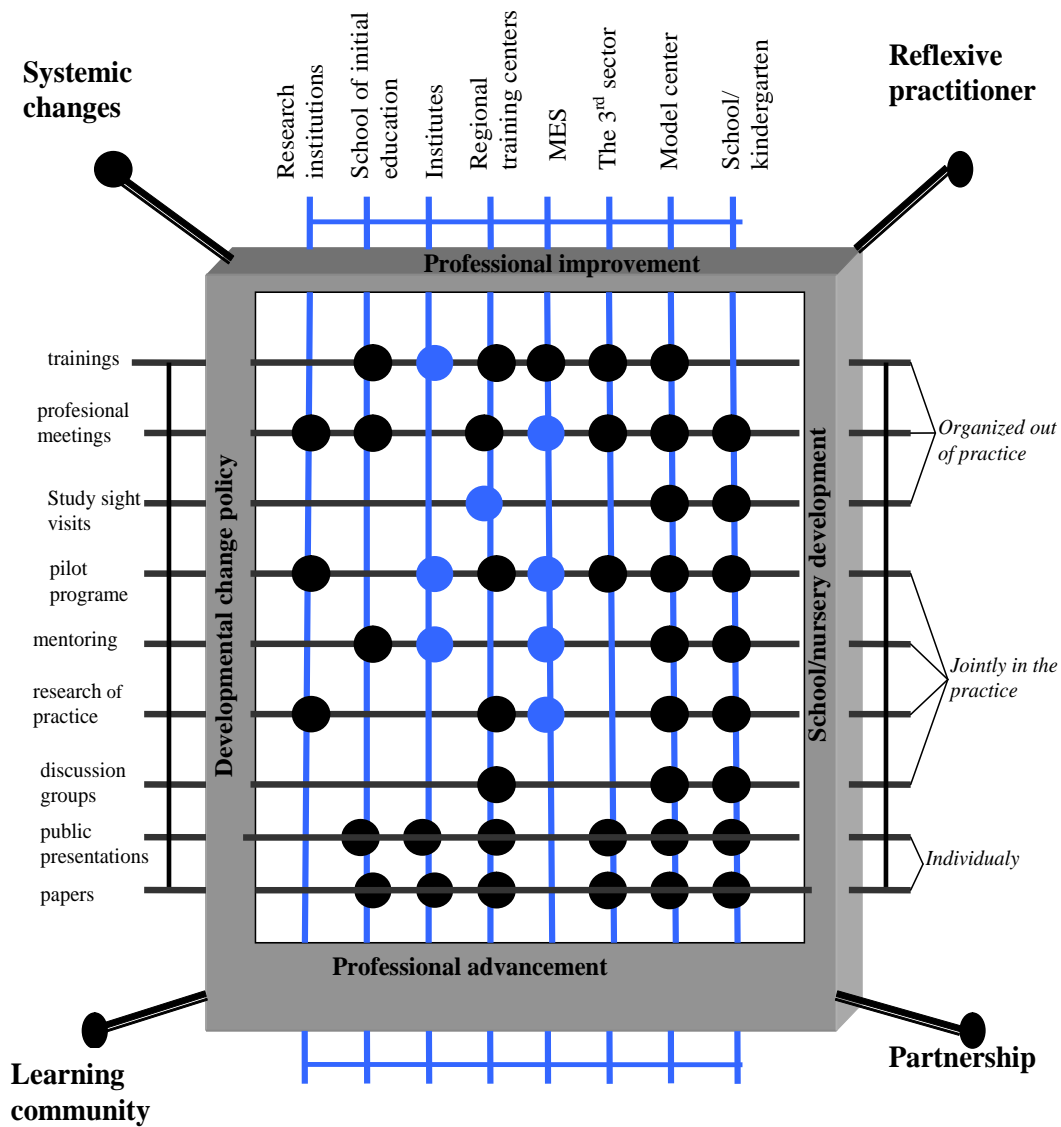
Figure 2. "Professional development loom"

- The professional development framework („loom frame") is framed by the four interconnected and interdependent dimensions: 1. Teachers' professional improvement, 2. Professional advancement 3. Improvement of the practice and 4. Education policy that promotes the culture of change and development throughout the entire education system (the policy of education development through the permanent process of change). A true professional development is not about the individual achievement – it is inseparable from the improvement of the school/kindergarten practice and possible only if the change, development and the improvement of the education policy structure are present at all levels and in all the segments.

- Professional development is a grid of the interwoven threads which, on one hand represent the different forms of learning and development and on another the professional development agents threads (e.g. university, non-government sector, school itself...).The forms of professional improvement can be individual (e.g. reading and analysis of literature, writing professional papers, keeping journal), joint (formal, informal and spontaneous learning and development)within the context of practice (e.g. discussion groups, mentoring, collaborative observations, action research, focus groups)and organized out of the practice context (e.g. organized trainings, professional gatherings, study visits to other institutions). A loom thread metaphor suggests that: 1. All the forms are equally important in the professional development grid2. All the forms could be inter connected and build upon each other (e.g. the efficient trainings are followed by the research in the practice; collaborative observations may be followed by discussion groups etc.); 3. There are different agents (providers) of the professional development which network from the different positions and roles and professional development is not a matter of the teachers' individual responsibility only.

- The interweaving of the forms and the actors of the professional development indicates that a single element of the network (form and actor/participant) cannot ensure the professional development by itself alone. The point of networking is to bring cohesion into the concept of the professional development as opposed to its fragmented and hierarchical structure. The network is configured on the principles and guidelines of the professional development that result from the above conceived education paradigm. It includes: recognition of the relevance of the all network parts for the professional learning, provision and integration of the resources, harmonization and integration of the all actors/providers' plans of the professional development (articulation of the mutual expectations, joint exploration of the alternatives, building the awareness of the complex relations between the change and professional learning), facilitation of including those parts of the network that correspond to the concrete education practice context, acceptance and coordination of each actor initiative to have it contribute to the common concept.

- "The knots" are the meeting points of the coherent aims and values of the professional development shared by the all participants. They are operationalised through the individual forms and specific roles, activities and responsibilities of the individual actors. They show who and how participates in the realization of the concrete forms. The "loom" picture shows that the majority of such points is linked to the practice context (school, model centre) what underlines the support to the professional development in the context of the practice. The education policy defines the "knots" as the potential networking points –e.g. who and under which conditions can organize the training; who can be the partner in the practitioners' action research. In this

way, the support to the professional development is established while it is up to the teacher to choose his/her own route of the professional development and make his/her own 'ornament' on the loom.

CONCLUSION

The "loom" model represents a dynamic concept of the professional learning and development which underpins a permanent re-examination and search for the strategies to support the practitioners' professional development where all the actors in this process simultaneously restructure and develop themselves regarding their positions and roles as well as through the relationships built with the others. This model points out that the improvement of the professional development system is a matter of the comprehensive redefining and changes. Therefore, the introduction of a new form as a single 'thread' without 'tying' it to the all four sides of the 'loom frame' will result only in its 'entangling' or 'swaying' because there is no 'anchor' it can be tied to. In our practice, it can be best illustrated by the recently introduced obligatory mentorship. In the contemporary literature and practice, the mentorship is recognized as a successful and potentially the most effective form of the professional development. However, the way of introducing the mentoring in our practice (the legislation change and training of the mentors without substantial consideration of the all 'loom' dimensions) reduces it to the formal realization of the mentoring tasks and meeting the novice teacher's requirements. To have a true contribution of the mentoring to the professional development and improvement of both, mentors and novices, the entire framework defining a new paradigm of the professional development has to be changed.

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Okul fabrika değildir - Etkileşimli Bir Mesleki Gelişim Sistemi: Ağ Oluşturma

Özet

Bu çalışmada, mesleki gelişmenin mekanik ve sistemli çevre modelleri karşılaştırılarak uygulayıcıların mesleki gelişmeleri için bir model araştırılmaktadır. Sistemik bir modelden başlanarak sembolik olarak başlangıç noktası (eğitimin sistemik değişiklikleri, yansıtıcı uygulayıcılar olarak öğretmen, bir öğrenim toplumu ve ortak olarak okul); çerçeve (kariyer boyu öğrenim ve değişim kültürü esaslı öğrenim politikası) belirlenmiş ve bir 'ilmek' olarak sunulan mesleki gelişme modeli ortaya koyulmuştur. Böyle bir çerçevede, farklı formların (bireysel formlar, uygulamadaki ortak formlar ve uygulama alanı dışında düzenlenen formlar) etkileşimi ve farklı etmenlerin birleştirilmesi, mesleki gelişim ağının oluşturulması için bir temel sağlar.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Mesleki gelişim, sistemik yaklaşım, yansıtıcı uygulayıcılar, öğrenim toplumu, ağ oluşturma.