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ANALYSIS OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE IN TEACHING
FIELDS

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Abstract

The paper contains an analysis of a state of pedagogical practical trainings at Faculty of Education in Hradec Králové, Czech Republic, focusing on decisive factors of pedagogical practice effectiveness. At the Faculty of Education in Hradec Králové, a structure of pedagogical practical trainings is mapped in the context of interdependent factors and present feedback information which may become a stepping stone that leads to improvement of practice in teaching professions. Specifically, the pedagogical practical trainings of a five-year master programme of 1st grade primary school teaching and a three-year course of bachelor study programme of Preschool Teaching were analysed. The structure as well as the content of practical training has undergone certain development not only towards practical training time allocation, but also more significant interconnection of practices with specialized subjects, which has led to increase of students' abilities to reflect on their pedagogical practice adequately. The study is dedicated to identifying the factors that contribute to the efficiency of practical trainings and their limits, and considers several possibilities which lead to improvement.

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Keywords: Pedagogical practice; determinants; possibilities; limits.



1. Introduction

Pedagogical practice is a part of pedagogical preparation during teaching, where integration of knowledge from pedagogical disciplines meets with practical teaching activities. This is a link between theory and practice. Mainly theoretical preparation of specialized subject is a subject of interest of educators, psychologists and didactic experts, where modern education trends in relation to new perspectives of the contemporary world meet also with new knowledge in the field of child psychology. Well, until then everything seems to be all right in pedagogical preparation. Actually, problems can occur when the field of theory stays on academic land and is not connected with school practice. Filová (1998) writes about inaccessibility that might be caused by faculty introversion preparing future teachers and separation of their teachers from practice.

When conceiving pedagogical practical trainings in the teaching fields, the question arises on how to implement individual practice and what to focus on, in order that they are beneficial and effective, as far as the content and length of individual practical trainings are concerned, as well as the focus (linking theory to practice). Furthermore, there were considerations of what qualities in teaching should be developed and what goals to target. The teacher's requirements in our legislation (School Act, 2004) are formed as a set of professional competences, which could be understood as a list of skills what a student should know so that his/her teaching was effective.

The concept of pedagogical practical trainings, which we present, is based on these contemplations and allows students to test during a school practice, what they had studied during pedagogical-psychological theory. The practice concepts have undergone significant innovation as far as efficiency improvement during years 2016 – 2017 at the Faculty of Education, in order to strengthen time subsidy and reinforcing emphasis on students' knowledge reflection gained during practical activities.

2. Problem Statement

The question of teaching practical training, its content, focus and range has become a subject of an increased interest for its key importance in professional teachers' preparation of faculties of education in recent years (Bartošová & Pecháčková, 2012; Kratochvílová & Horká, 2016). This is primarily about finding ways to increase and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of practices.

The set of factors which influence the effectiveness of pedagogical practical trainings can be divided into macro-determinants and micro-determinant (Švec, Svojanovský, & Pravdová, 2016). Macro-determinants determine effectiveness of practices at institutional level and micro-determinants relate to effectiveness on a level of partial participants. However, as these are mutually determined factors, micro-determinants can be defined as factors, which "set a level, where each participant uses potential of the setting, but also his/her gained experience and competences" (Švec, Svojanovský, & Pravdová, 2016, p. 10). In a certain way macro-determinants set the rules for functioning of practices and then students use them based on gained experience. The result is that there is mutual interaction of both determinants, which are linked with students' personality and determine the resulting quality of practice.

The effectiveness of pedagogical practices can be also assessing based on responses of students themselves. In our study fields, which we present, students discuss, exchange their experience not with

teacher trainers, but also within e-learning environment with their classmates, didactic experts, psychologists and pedagogues. Likewise, Pravdová (2013) was searching immediate experience of students by an internet survey. In both cases was found that students consider their own pedagogical experience and new knowledge about themselves as the key benefit from practices. Therefore, it is obvious, that pedagogical practices have a significant influence on formation of professional self-concept of future teachers.

3. Research Questions

This study deals with an analysis of pedagogical practices at the Faculty of Education in the University of Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic, in the context of mutually determined factors. For this purpose, the following research questions emerged:

- What are the determinants of effectiveness of pedagogical practices?
- What possibilities and limits are there to improve pedagogical practices?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this paper is to analyse the state of pedagogical practices in teaching fields at the Faculty of Education in Hradec Králové, in the context of mutually determined factors: macro-determinants and micro-determinants. Furthermore, it would call attention to possibilities and limits of organization, content and focus of practices. The study presents a five-year master study programme of 1st grade primary-school teaching and a three-year bachelor study programme of Pre-school Teaching. The analysis provides interesting feedback information, which can become a stepping stone that leads to improvements of practices.

5. Research Methods

This study maps a structure of pedagogical practices by means of an analysis of pedagogical practice at the Faculty of Education in the University of Hradec Králové. It considers determinants of practices' effectiveness, identifies limits and looks for possibilities of improvement. There is a current state of implemented practices in the following study fields:

- Five year master programme of 1st grade Primary School Teaching
- Three year bachelor programme of Pre-school Teaching

6. Findings

Pedagogical practice at the Faculty of Education in the University of Hradec Králové is placed in each term of teaching programme. Sufficiently long and organizationally ensured practice is one of the key elements of successful pre-graduate preparation of future teachers. The content increase of pedagogical practice is in compliance with a trend of several European and also non-European countries. For example in the Netherlands and in Finland, teacher students have more than 700 hours of practical training (comp. Darling-Hammond, Lieberman, 2012) and in Canada teaching programmes offer 15 up to 20 weeks of

practice (Russell, Dillon, 2015, p. 163). The structure and the content of practical training at the Faculty of Education in the University of Hradec Králové have undergone certain development not just towards the increase of time subsidy of practical trainings but also to more significant interconnection with professional subject, that lead to an increase of students' ability to reflect their pedagogical practice adequately.

In the following discussion, the pedagogical practices at the Faculty of Education in the University of Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic is analyzed, specifically in the field of 1st Grade Primary School Teaching and Pre-school Teaching. Then, the determinants and limits of pedagogical practices are considered.

6.1. Analysis of pedagogical practical trainings in the field of 1st Grade Primary school Teaching programme

Pedagogical practice within a five-year master programme of 1st grade primary school teaching consists of fifteen follow-up practices, whose completion represents a prerequisite to gain necessary knowledge and at the same time it enable to create competences which are necessary for teaching professions.

For better orientation, the contemporary concept of pedagogical practice is stated in Table 01, which students of 1st grade primary school teaching programme undertake, and which is continuously changed with regard to the evaluation carried out. It is divided in five years into ten terms, when some types of practice are a part of a teaching subject or didactic field. Individual parts of practices link together and their difficulty is increased throughout the whole study programme. Efforts are made to link teaching in the theoretical field (pedagogical-psychological, didactic with general basis) as well as with the practical field.

Table 01. [Overview of practical training in the field of 1st Grade Primary School Teaching]

Year Term	Number	Practice Type and Title
I.	ZS	1. Observation practice as a part of general pedagogy
	LS	2. Enrolment to 1st primary school class, a part of developmental psychology
		3. Introductory pedagogical practice
II.	ZS	4. Assistant practical training 1
	LS	5. Assistant practical training 2
III.	ZS	6. Block practice in 1st primary school class
		7. Pedagogical practice – Maths
		8. Pedagogical practice – Czech language
		9. Pedagogical practice – Man and his world
	LS	10. Pedagogical practice in a chosen module
IV.	ZS	11. On-going pedagogical practice 1
	LS	12. On-going pedagogical practice 2
V.	ZS	13. Final block practical training
	LS	14. Continuous pedagogical practical training
		15. School in nature – during studies

Explanatory notes: ZS: winter term, LS: summer term

Only the overview of pedagogical practices cannot be considered as essential, but also the combination with other parts of didactic subjects and pedagogical-psychological preparation, which takes place in the seminars.

The final continuous pedagogical practice is placed in the system of pre-graduate preparation of students of 1st grade primary school teaching programme in the last tenth term. It is a practice which is the longest by its content and approach to real conditions in terms of its features and is linked with on-going and final block practice. The student takes part in all school and classroom activities during the period of four days and works in a multigrade class in a small-scale primary school for one week. There are Small-scale schools are being declined due to economic reasons, however students find training there very beneficial and interesting. The objective of continuous pedagogical practice is to have teaching experience for the period of 1 month in a fully organized school (24 hours of outputs + 16 hours of sitting in a class) and 1 week in a small-scale primary school with multigrade pupils (6 hours of outputs + 4 hour of sitting in a class). In total the student has 30 hours of outputs and 20 hours of sitting in a class. The student is involved in school and classroom work during the whole practice time and takes teacher's duties over within a reasonable extent, prepares for individual educational activities and improves his/her teaching skills in several different situations in a classroom. Further aims are attendance as an auditor, participate in school events, whole teaching day and to improve teaching skills and various conditions and situations during classroom and school work.

A Pedagogical Notebook (for 1st- 3rd grade) and a Pedagogical Notebook (for 4th – 5th grade) represent further didactic means that make the concept of pedagogical practice), which is support element and a bridge between theoretical disciplines and partial pedagogical practices (Košek & Bartošová 2014). A pedagogical diary is a basic material, which student has throughout the course of his/her studies, which is a clue to think about educational situations, where the student was an actor or a co-actor, leads to acquiring trainees' pedagogical competences. A portfolio creation, that complements the whole concept, represents a developing element for students.

The significant link of cooperation between the Faculty of Education and a training school should be emphasised, where there is on one side a didactic expert of teaching areas and on the other side a teacher trainer. Their role for a future teacher is irreplaceable (Bartošová & Pecháčková, 2012).

The use of e-learning Moodle environment is another possibility that can be used to improve students' computer literacy, but mainly to help solve issues of insufficient reflection of students' experience from pedagogical practice. Students usually use e-learning during assistant practice 1 and 2, during on-going pedagogical practice 1 and 2. Since 2014 this environment has been also used by students within final block practice and continuous pedagogical practice. Moodle e-learning environment enables students discuss about their obtained experience and to gain feedback from teacher trainers, didactic experts and faculty educators.

6.2. Analysis of pedagogical practical trainings in Pre-school Teaching Course

Pedagogical practice within bachelor field of Pre-school Teaching course consists of six subsequent practices, whose completion, similarly as in the 1st grade Primary School Course is a prerequisite to obtain

essential knowledge and at the same time it enables to create necessary competence for teaching profession. Table 02 states an overview of individual practices by each year and terms.

Table 02. Overview of practical trainings in the field of Preschool Teaching

Year	Term	Number	Practice Type and Title
I.	ZS	1.	Introductory practical training (part of Preschool Pedagogy)
		2.	Assistant practical training
II.	ZS	3.	On-going practical training 1
	LS	4.	Project practical training
III.	ZS	5.	On-going practical training 2
		6.	Continuous practical training

Explanatory notes: ZS: winter term, LS: summer term

Pedagogical practice in three-year bachelor field of Pre-school Teaching course is an important part of professional development of a kindergarten pedagogue. It is planned together with valid legislation (RVP PV, 2018) and together with the following disciplines in the framework of bachelor study field of Pre-school Teaching programme. The pedagogical practice escalates during studies, links with seminars, where there is reflection and is related to field programme subjects. The practice is organized in various types of pre-school facilities and in several variable forms (in a pair, individually and group) so that it could contribute to development of necessary study professional competences.

Here the students are introduced to continuous practice in details, which takes place in the last term of the study course. It represents a complete two-week practice in a common kindergarten, where a student together with a teacher trainer organizes, prepares, leads educational activities with children and participates in other kindergarten activities (e.g. cooperation with parents, trips, educational seminars etc.). The student has in total 60 hours of practice, where 6 hours represent sitting in a class and 54 hours of individual educational activities with children. The practice objective is to broaden didactic, communicative as well as personal competences by the means of individual outputs, but also to meet with school documentation and teacher's administration.

As in the field of Primary School Teaching of 1st grade, a supporting publication has been published for students entitled *Pedagogická praxe aneb jak se připravit na praxi v mateřské škole* (Hornáčková, Pecháčková, 2014), (*Pedagogical practice or how to get ready for practice in kindergarten*), that accompanies them through individual practices and helps them not just to create a complete overview, but also offers them to think and to be creative. In addition to essential background information to individual practices and sources drawn from legislation, there are also inspiring themes in publication of pedagogical practice where students find inspirational ideas from teachers and also students.

Moodle e-learning environment is used during all practices and similarly as in the above mentioned field, also here presents an integral part of practices' concept, where students gain immediate feedback during discussions and learn to reflect their work. Of course, there is a gradual creation of a portfolio that contains a set of preparations, materials, didactic material, self-reflection and results for the student as a foundation of all gained experience from educational activities in kindergartens.

6.3. Determinants and limits of pedagogical practices

A whole range of determinants enter into pedagogical practices (summary of factors), which have an influence on their effectiveness. These can be defined as the institutional summary of factors as macro-determinants and partial participants as micro-determinants (Švec, Svojanovský, & Pravdová, 2016). The way the institutional rules are set for functioning of practices (macro-determinants) undoubtedly has an impact on how individual participants use such setting (micro-determinants). All in all, this involves not only the organizational support of students, when the Faculty cooperates with faculty schools and teacher trainers, but also the direct support of students within theoretical preparation, seminars, discussion, sitting in on classes at school and portfolio creation, where students can implement various professional tasks and reflect their work.

One of the key determinants of teaching education is the ability to evaluate and reflect on one's work. This reflective competence is developed in interaction with social class context and therefore means an ability to evaluate one's work adequately, depict the essential and to suggest concrete steps for improvement. The teacher's professional readiness seen in not just to understand one's work but also to know how to communicate with teacher trainers or didactic experts throughout a professional dialogue (Kratochvílová & Horká, 2016). Due to the fact that conscious self-reflection contributes to creation of student's self-concept, individual practices cannot be imagined without this self-reflection. For this reason, in each practice, there is a considerable time devoted to reflection how the student assesses his/her practical activity and at the same time how he/she is evaluated by a teacher trainer as a practice leader. During each practice and in its result, there is the student who meets with his/her professional outputs with pedagogical reality and learns them to evaluate them. The teacher trainers influences student's self-concept as far as the cognitive, emotional and conative component, therefore the teacher trainer's personality plays a significant role in the way how the student is motivated, how s/he perceives him/herself and his/her profession.

The lack of quality training for teachers is a limiting factor, who would be motivated to do this job and to be professionally competent at the same time. Their further education and training to work with students could be a certain starting point. It is also considered important to develop evaluating criteria based on professional competences, which would contribute to broaden understanding of those, whose participate on evaluation, i.e. a student and a teacher trainer. Insufficient cooperation with didactic experts is concerned to be another limiting factor, because they educate students on professional and theoretical basis, but then the interaction stops there. Interviews with students and teacher trainers shows that the presence of these professionals in didactic practices would lead to an overall increase in the practicing student's achievement level. Hence, these days, ways how to optimally implement and connect all participants of professional preparation of teaching students into the practice are being considered.

7. Conclusion

Even though there is a strong emphasis on a higher number in our programmes of practical teaching hours at schools, the range of practices of above mentioned examples from abroad has not been dealt with. Everything is related to the overall concept of teaching fields, with schools' possibilities and economic background. Successful and effective running of teaching practices does not depend on the quantity but also on the quality. Therefore, it is necessary to interconnect pedagogical-psychological disciplines and

field didactic experts with pedagogical practice and to provide teaching students sufficient background for feedback and reflection of their work.

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