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Radmila Burkovičová
Radmila.Burkovicova@osu.cz
Uniwersytet w Ostrawie

Teaching practices as a factor in becoming a teacher

Introduction

One's stay in the future working environment, completion some of the tasks and associated activities or providing assistance during key activities, has always been and currently is considered as one of the best methods of one's preparation for full-fledged job performance. The origins of the teaching consolidation and the practical preparation of the individual sub-groups of future teachers has been specific and different during the various historical periods. Consequently, it also differs in the individual states.

Every study program designed for teacher's education deals with the relationship between theory and practice. V. Švec believes that, "Connecting theory and practice should be the purpose of teaching preparation" (Švec, 1999, s. 32). Theory and practice should not be counterparts in teaching preparation and both theory and practice should enjoy adequate attention. Ideally, they should blend (Švec, 1999). According to J. Průcha, **in connection with teachers' professional preparation,** it is understood that theory contradicts the teaching practice, and that the relationship between teaching theory and teaching practice should be discussed as a key issue (Průcha, 1997).

Teaching theory may be seen as a specific form of organization of findings on upbringing and education (Janík, 2005), which creates knowledge, i.e. a knowledge system (Hartl, Hartlová, 2004). Knowledge is mostly cognitive and individually peculiar system of ideas and terms, theories and comprehensive knowledge structure created by an individual during his own activities.

It is a results of perception processes, learning, thinking, memorizing, practical experimenting, and life experiences (Walterová, Mareš, Průcha, 2013). Knowledge obtained by the student during her „education" process is either integrated into her original knowledge structures or it forms a new knowledge scheme foundation.

Knowledge schemes then form a key component of effectively completed rational activities (Tondl, 2003), set of professional activities completed by the student during upbringing and teaching a preschool child. We see them as a teaching skill. A student's skill is presented through acquired knowledge of the skill, experiences with its application, and ideas on how it should be realized. Skills are usually more complex. Consequently, one's skill "code" is created and applied during performed activities.

One of the most critical thoughts on teaching was expressed by Josef Maňák and Vlastimil Švec when they wrote that: "The future teacher's set of teaching skills should be based on educational programs for which the students are prepared. Changing educational programs will result in changing key teaching skills". (Maňák, Švec, 2004, s. 106)

General Background of Research

While respecting so-called realistic approach of Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, and Wubbels (2011), we believe that student-observed teachers' ways of solving children's issues, teachers' communication with children, and the teacher's way of organizing their space and activities are extremely valuable for the students' own teaching practice, especially during the initial stages of their own teaching. The proof comes in the form of the students' own unsolicited statements leading to organization of the individual types of teaching practices.

During the first *continuous* teaching practice, upon one's familiarization with the teaching environment, children, and coworkers, the students, first of all, experience their first contact with selected children. Then, they expand their circle of contacts with children. Every student individually meets the children in unique and non-recurrent situations. One's knowledge of organizing the child's activities during the day, knowledge of the environment, specific personal familiarization with each of the children as well as theoretical knowledge of methods of attracting a preschooler, activities to be offered to the child, and how to lead them are the assumptions of successful teaching.

The students gain their knowledge of the right responses to the child's specific behaviour in the form of authentic findings and skills.

For their subsequent *continuous* teaching practice, the students prepare their activities with children as the assignments with specific contents in mind. Resultantly, they may think their activities through and comment on them during the workshops. The students directly interact with children under their professor's and cooperating teacher supervision, following individually prepared and consulted with their university professor plan. Therefore, theoretical knowledge must lead to the refining of of one's teaching skills that were based on it.

During the continuous teaching practice block-based workshops, the students undertake the challenge of deep and responsible self-reflection. They also review the children's activities and behaviour. They may ask their professor and cooperating teacher various questions and discuss it with them. They obtain items to think about and mull over.

The last teaching practice is continuous again. Before its starts, the student prepares elaborated teaching project that features prepared activities for children for the period of three weeks. However, the student cannot prepare for socio-educational situations that occur during the activities and games completed with the children.

In the end of the studies, upon graduation, we presume that the young graduate enters teaching environment equipped with so-called starting competences. These competences include the necessary components like knowledge, skills, first experiences, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs the teacher definitely needs at the beginning of the career in order to succeed. The society finds the pre-school child's kindergarten attendance and kindergarten teaching very important and the requirements faced by future teachers focused on preschoolers are growing; therefore, the requirements for their starting competences keep growing as well.

Research Methodology

Research Group. The research group was created during the academic year's summer semester in 2012–2015. The research survey included 20 full-time students who obtained their kindergarten secondary school qualifications and 20 education students, working as kindergarten teachers with secondary school qualification. Both groups completed their teaching practices

during their secondary school education. These are two groups who are to graduate within the same period of time. The combined forms of education students continuously develop their competences in the teaching terrain, while the full-time students utilize various types of teaching practices.

Research Instrument. The respondents were provided their research instrument for self-reflection purposes. Its items are focused on the respondent's ***direct*** work with a preschooler, not on her ***preparation*** for teaching activities or teaching skills ***related*** to the respondent's direct teaching activity with the child. The instrument's contents cover all the areas of one's work with a preschooler and correlates to the current curriculum document on preschooler teaching.

Korthagen and Wubbels argue that a future teacher must master his *initial competence* that features the basic technical competence character. It may be found that one's self-reflection precondition since the teachers' strong foundations of technical skills increase their self-confidence and let them concentrate on self-reflection (Korthagen, Wubbels, 2011). The research instrument derives from this thought. The research instrument items describes specific skills that we believe the students already mastered during their education. Therefore, they are capable of responsible self-reflection.

Research Problem, Goal, and Assumption. The research survey goal was to obtain subjective evaluations of mastered teaching skills in student groups through two education methods.

Since the survey was anonymous, the respondents were provided with a calm and quiet environment and unlimited time for their self-reflection and evaluation. Created conditions allowed every respondent to evaluate her mastered skills truthfully.

The research problem was as follows:

Are the combined forms of education of students evaluative as far as their mastered skills as, "I know how, and I can" more often than the full-time education students?

It was assumed as follows:

The students using both methods of education will differ in their frequencies of their "I know how, and I can" evaluations.

The evaluation categories are specified as follows:

One's evaluation: "I know how, and I can" means that the student believes that she is able to successfully use her professional skills evaluated at this level under any circumstances.

One's evaluation: "I know, but I cannot" means that the student believes that her practical skill has not correctly or successfully worked in all the cases.

We also presume that the respondents "know how". The means is one's self-reflection, decision-making, and self-evaluation. Decision-making activities, selecting from available evaluation alternatives, etc. represent a quite legitimate component of science (Tondl, 2003).

It is necessary to consider that one's evaluation is affected by the students' personal qualities, responsibility during self-reflection, and self-evaluation. However, we rely on the students to be frank, not embellishing their evaluations or pretending anything.

Procedures. These are categorical variables. Their relationships are expressed; therefore, during the first phase, cross-tabulations were created for every research instrument item, separately for every year (table 1). The first line of the table shows the data collection year. The 2nd line below the year says as follows: "Education type" and the next field say "Total". The 3rd line of the table features letters that mark the table columns. On the 4th line of the table, KS = Combined form of education, PS = Full-time education. The fifth line in column "a" specifies the research instrument item wording. Column "b" features the "I know, and I can" evaluation, and the column "c" shows the number. Column "d" below letter K indicates the number of combined form of education students who evaluated themselves as "I know, and I can" during their self-reflection. Column "e" below letter P indicates the number of full-time education students who evaluated themselves as "I know, and I can". Column "f" features the total number of students of both forms of education who evaluated themselves as "I know, and I can". The 6th line indicates the percentages for the combined form of education in column "d" and for the full-time education form in column "e". A similar approach was used for the "I know, but I cannot" evaluation. In this case, the chi-square test is used in two categories in order to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists between the expected frequencies and observed frequencies. It is true in the case of a null hypothesis.

Table 1

Example of a chi-square calculation for year 2012 and a specific item

1				Year 2012		
2				Type of education		Total
3	and	b	c	d	e	f
4				KS	PS	
5	...adapt a newly coming child to the classroom environment and climate	I know, and I can	Number	20	12	32
6			%	100.0%	60.0%	80.0%
7		I know, but cannot	Number	0	8	8
8			%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%
9	Total		Number	20	20	40
10			%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			Chi-Square Tests			
11		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
12	Pearson Chi-Square	10,000[b]	1	.002		
13	Continuity Correction[c]	7.656	1	.006		
14	Likelihood Ratio	13.112	1	.000		
15	Fisher's Exact Test				.003	.002
16	N of Valid Cases	40				
b. 2 cells (50.0%) have the expected number less than 5. The minimum expected number is 4.00.						
c. Computed only for a 2x2 table						

Source: own.

Research Results

Table 2 summarizes the results. The table always features item wording, its serial number, results obtained in the combined and full-time form of education in %, χ^2 calculation, and identification of group whose students mostly evaluated themselves as "I know, and I can".

Table 2

Overall results

Serial number	Research instrument item	I know, and I can		Sig. Chi-square	Group whose students mostly evaluated themselves as „I know, and I can"
		KS	PS		
1	**I know, and I can** adapt a newly arrived child to the classroom environment and climate	100.0%	57.5%	.000	KS
2	...integrate a child to a child social group	98.8%	68.8%	.000	KS
3	foresee and prevent potential social collisions early enough	53.8%	32.5%	.007	KS
4	solve an actual problematic social situation among the children	52.5%	43.8%	.268	
5	stimulate the child's social activity	67.5%	36.3%	.000	KS
6	lead the child to understand his experiences	80.0%	77.5%	.699	
7	provide the child with suitable conditions for thinking and expression	66.3%	56.3%	.194	
8	develop the child's personality through game didactically focused activities	100.0%	47.5%	.000	KS
9	lead to the creation of healthy lifestyle habits	61.3%	80.0%	.009	PS
10	individually develop the child's self-care skills	98.8%	92.5%	.053	
11	use all the opportunities to create and develop the child's communicative skills	76.3%	48.8%	.000	KS
12	satisfy the child's conversational needs	92.5%	72.5%	,001	KS

Serial number	Research instrument item	I know, and I can		Sig. Chi-square	Group whose students mostly evaluated themselves as „I know, and I can"
		KS	PS		
13	pedagogically communicate with the child in his understandable and acceptable way	91.3%	38.8%	.000	KS
14	satisfy the child's actual needs for downturn and stimuli saturation	66.3%	11.3%	.000	KS
15	balance spontaneous and didactically focused activities per the children's needs during the day	95.0%	72.5%	.000	KS
16	select and offer the children various games and activities that they find acceptable and that satisfy their individually different needs to be active	65.0%	60.0%	.514	
17	suitably motivate through games and didactically focused activities for children	82.5%	51.3%	.000	KS
18	provide stimulation to a specific child at a level and quality he needs	53.8%	52.5%	.874	
19	select and use a suitable game as a diagnostic and therapeutic means	57.5%	55.0%	.750	
20	adequately and individually evaluate every child's behaviour, based on the situation	88.8%	46.3%	.000	KS
21	utilize the child's experience for his personality development	72.5%	42.5%	.000	KS
22	express confidence in the child's capabilities he is able to understand while in contact with the child	77.5%	55.0%	.003	KS
23	satisfy the child's specific interest without limiting others during the day	52.5%	50.0%	.752	
24	handle a group of children in an unlimited external environment or environment that is new to the children	100.0%	45.0%	.000	KS
25	continuously analyse the pedagogical situation in an assigned group of children	60.0%	8.8%	.000	KS

Source: own.

Data Analysis

What becomes clear from the specified results. The last column of table 3 only features group data when a statistically significant difference is identified. Otherwise, the results are either identical or the difference is only random. Then, it is impossible to state which group achieved better results. These are items No. 4, 6, 7, 10, 16, 18, 19, and 23. Therefore, a total of 8 out of 25 items. Items No. 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, and 25 feature statistically significant differences between groups of students. The frequency of combined form of education students declaring "I know, and I can" is greater. It is a total of 17 out of 25 items.

Discussion and Conclusions

The hypothesis was thus confirmed. The students using both methods of education differed in their frequencies of their skills evaluations, "I know how, and I can". Regarding practical skills of the same contents, the KS students often declared a higher "I know how, and I can" evaluation frequency than the PS students.

However, no specific conclusion may be made per the items' characters.

Since these are unique human beings who evaluate specific situations with original children, multiple variables may affect both the situation results and evaluations. For example, the participating individuals' actual medical, mental, and emotional condition, current effort, will, core of contents, etc.

The real acting effective „transporter" between one's acquired knowledge and skills will be her teaching practice, which, in the case of the KS students, rests in their daily professional activities. Therefore, it is the only different; however, significant fact that differentiates the KS and PS groups in the professional life. And since the research survey took place a year after the students' start of education, the impact of their teaching practice as a factor significantly supporting the teacher's professional development, was effective.

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Praktyki pedagogiczne jako element stawania się nauczycielem

Streszczenie: Celem publikacji jest zaprezentowanie wyników badań przeprowadzonych w dwóch grupach studentów, które w czasie odbywania studiów miały jednakowe wyjściowe warunki zawodowe, jednakowe wykształcenie, jednakowy wiek, jednakowy sposób dalszego pogłębiania wiedzy. Różny był tylko sposób studiowania, który był uwarunkowany wybraną częstością prowadzenia działalności zawodowej, to znaczy czy student pracował już zawodowo. W częstości oceny „wiem jak i potrafię" swoich umiejętności zawodowych studenci obu form kształcenia różnili się. W kwestii umiejętności praktycznych o tej samej treści studenci kombinowanej formy kształcenia deklarowali częściej ocenę „wiem jak i potrafię" niż studenci prezentujący jednolitą formę kształcenia.

Słowa kluczowe: studentka, praktyka pedagogiczna, umiejętność, wiedza, pozycja

Teaching Practices as a Factor in Becoming a Teacher

Summary: The goal of the article is to present the results of research survey completed with two groups of students who faced identical professional conditions when at the beginning of their studies. Both groups featured the same education levels, ages, and identical further learning methods. The only differences rested in their initiated method of education, deriving from their selected frequency of professional activities, i.e. whether they already had their jobs. The students using both methods of education differed in their frequencies of their professional skills evaluations, "I know how, and I can". Regarding practical skills of the same contents, the combined form of education students often declared a higher "I know how, and I can" evaluation frequency than the full-time education students.

Keywords: student, teaching practise, skill, knowledge, item