

Ewa Musiał  
ewa.musial@uwr.edu.pl  
University of Wrocław

## **"GOOD INTERNSHIPS" – SUPPORT FOR GAINING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES BY THE STUDENTS OF PEDAGOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW**

Practice aimed at acquiring professional skills is an important component of the education of teachers. Without practical experience, the teacher's knowledge can only remain knowledge of teaching, and yet it is not enough to know how to properly carry out educational tasks in practice.  
(Włoch, 2018, p. 41)

### **Introduction**

Achieving high standards in the field of professional preparation of students – future teachers of a young child is possible only due to the synergy of theory and practice. Acquired academic knowledge is a source of planning professional activity, responsibility for designing, implementation and evaluation of all didactic and educational tasks of the kindergarten and grades 1–3 teachers. Contact with professional reality, the need for a multi-faceted application of theory in action, can become a source of reflection, personal satisfaction, or sense of helplessness. Such an experience enables the student, not only to verify their own predispositions, gain their first professional experience, and develop practical skills desirable on the labor market, but it may also be a source of information whether a given profession meets their expectations. In general, "on-the-job training is to contribute to effective and responsible professional actions, to develop the conscious activity, and to acquire and

improve a number of skills necessary to perform the role of a teacher” (Musiał, 2018, p. 52).

Citing Elżbieta Jezierska-Wiejak:

studies in the field of pre-school and early school education are organized in such a way that the student enters the next stages of initiation in the subsequent years of study. From the visitation training, during which their task is primarily to closely observe teachers’ actions and children’s’ reactions to those actions at school or kindergarten (mid-year on-the-job training during the second semester), to prepare a detailed documentation of the continuous assistant training during the fifth (a week in kindergarten and a week in class 1 or 2) and sixth (2 weeks in kindergarten and 2 weeks in school) semesters. The latter training is a diploma on-the-job training, during which students implement (if the teacher -thesis supervisor – gives them permission) their own project of educational activities being part of their B.A. thesis. (Jezierska-Wiejak, 2018, p. 101)

Participation in internship programs, alongside pedagogical on-the-job training, creates perfect conditions for acquiring and developing professional skills of future teachers through gaining personal experience. According to the EU Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on a Quality Framework for Traineeship, an internship is understood as a time-limited paid professional practice, including a component of learning and training, undertaken in order to gain practical work experience and better employment opportunities and to make it easier to find a permanent employment<sup>1</sup>. During the internship, a student may undertake a number of initiatives requiring from them knowledge – action and reflection. In this way, theory and practice are integrated and emphasize such students’ features as the inquisitiveness, creativity and openness, their active and systematic search for knowledge, research criticism, reflexivity and analytical approach to educational problems.

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<sup>1</sup> An internship is not an on-the-job training period that is part of a formal education or vocational training program, regulated by the provisions of the internal law, which is compulsory requirement necessary for completing studies or for access to specific professions (e.g. medicine, architecture). Recommendation of the EU Council of 10 March 2014 on the Quality Framework for Traineeships (2014 / C 88/01), <https://gdm.praca.gov.pl/documents/1152786/1155303/Zalecenie%20Rady%20w%20sprawie%20ram%20jakości%20dla%20staży.pdf/a14806ef-de94-4c53-acea-3968d42b7bbc?t=1421758053000> [accessed: 31.01.2018].

## Theory and practice in educating early school education teachers

Theoretical pedagogical knowledge, as Janusz Gnitecki (2006, p. 284) writes, is a dynamic system of information transformations enabling the student to explain causes resulting in specific educational effects in a constant context, using a paradigmatic way of thinking and the descriptive language, and interpretation of the sense of educational changes in a changing cultural context, using a narrative way of thinking and predicative language, it also enables taking an attempt to explain the causes resulting in specific educational effects and interpretation of the sense of educational changes in the conditions of shaping a balanced mind, that is, the mind allowing for a single and repeatable use of concepts and judgments related to both constant and changing socio-cultural contexts. On the other hand, students' on-the-job training, in early school and pre-school education, both in the form of an interim and continuous training, firstly verify the predisposition and whether the choice of faculty and speciality is proper, and then test students' knowledge and skills (or the lack of them). The confrontation of the academic and practical view on reality, a fusion of academic thinking and action in solving real problems also favors the construction of trainees' own educational theories. In addition, it combines two learning strategies: before and during the action, constituting a kind of bridge between academic knowledge and educational reality. Such a procedure serves to bring together two areas of knowledge distant from each other: one creates declarative, fragmentary and memorized knowledge, the second type of knowledge is procedural, integrated and aims to understand what is important in the prospective functioning on the labor market. Participation in internships, as a complement to academic on-the-job training, deepens, and even enables, breaking already imposed institutional limits and ready-made operating schemes. It activates students' - future teachers' readiness to freeing themselves from the stereotype of the role, inspires their reflexivity, openness, criticism, which are the most important features building the professional competence of teachers. Jolanta Szempruch (2018, p. 15) points out that the relationship that exists between theory and practice is reduced to three categories of linkage. Asymmetrical linkage, meaning that the transition from enriching knowledge to enriching pedagogical experience is possible, but not inevitable. However, any change in practical activity leads to an increase in knowledge. A commensurate linkage, means that the individual's knowledge and skills must match with the

richness of practical actions with their diversity and richness, and the enrichment of human practical action must lead to the appropriate enrichment of the forms of their cognitive dispositions, reduction of the growing ambiguity and increasing indeterminacy in the sphere of objects and means of practical action. Despite the multidimensionality, complexity and non-standard character of their own actions, the student-the future teacher of younger children, must pursue strictly defined objectives, and be guided by the rationality and moral responsibility. In the ever-changing new situation, it is necessary to operate in a different way and to apply the new theoretical principle which students create themselves.

### **Image of professional competences of a graduate of the faculty of the early school and pre-school education**

In linguistic terms, competences are understood as “the scope of powers, powers of attorney [...] the scope of someone’s knowledge, skills or responsibilities” (Szymczak, 1978, p. 197). These are potential abilities that appear at the moment of performing a given task or abilities predestinating/predisposing to performing it (Goźlińska, 1997, p. 47). Meanwhile, in the professional context, it is first and foremost “a specific disposition to properly perform a role, solve unpredictable problems, analyze previously unknown situations” (Ratajek, 2001, p. 25). It is an ability to perform activities related to a given profession well or effectively, in accordance with the standards required at the workplace, supported by specific areas of skills, knowledge and psychophysical features that an employee should have. The statement that competences ensure that tasks are carried out at the expected level is connected with the conviction that these behaviors are not characteristic only for the best employees, but also for all those who occupy a given position. After completion of initial training preparing for the teaching profession in terms of general objectives – the graduate has psychological and pedagogical knowledge that allows them to understand development, socialization, upbringing and teaching-learning processes, as well as didactics and detailed methodology of pedagogical activity, supported by experience in its practical use. The graduate has also the skills and competences necessary for the comprehensive implementation of didactic, educational and caring tasks of the school, including preparation and adapting the curriculum to the needs and abilities of schoolchildren. The candidate for the teaching profession demonstrates the ability

to learn and improve their own pedagogical workshop using modern means and methods of acquiring, organizing and processing information and material, and communicates skillfully using various techniques, both with people who are subjects of pedagogical activity, with other people cooperating in the didactic-educational process and specialists who support this process. They have features like ethical sensitivity, empathy, openness, reflexivity, pro-social attitudes and a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, they are also practically prepared to carry out professional tasks (didactic, educational and caring) resulting from the role of a teacher. Full pedagogical qualifications enable employment in pre-school institutions and at the stage of integrated education in primary schools, as a kindergarten teacher or integrated education teacher in pre-school departments, pre-school education groups and in grades 1–3 of primary school.

### **"Good Internships" – key information about internship programs**

The project is aimed at achieving the objectives of the *Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (2014)*, including, above all, a specific objective of raising the competences of people participating in higher education, corresponding to the needs of the economy, the labor market and society as part of *Measure 3.1 Competences in Higher Education, Axis III Higher Education for Economy and Development, Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development 2014–2020*. It is a project aimed to facilitate students' debut on the labor market by gaining practical experience supplementing the knowledge acquired during studies. As a result, the content scope of the internship must be directly related to the effects of education at the given university faculty, and ensure their practical use in the course of the internships.

The proper content level is ensured by the university obligation to include in the course of the project the recommendations contained in the *Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on the Quality Framework for Traineeship*. Additionally, in the course of the project implementation, the beneficiary is obliged to conduct permanent monitoring of the internship in terms of guaranteeing its high quality in the scope of its compliance with the above mentioned recommendations. The monitoring must include at least the following elements:

- choice of the internship location in a transparent way and guarantying the trainee new skills and experience in a new work environment,

- compliance of the internship extent with didactic goals of the trainee's education,
- fulfilment of the real needs of the internship host by the trainee's internship-related tasks,
- appropriate working conditions and equipment at the trainee workplace,
- a real and effective role of a trainee supervisor,
- summary of the results of the internship (Terms and Conditions of the Competition No. POWR.03.01.00-IP.08-00-SP2/17 *in the program "Studies? Praktykuj!" related to the implementation of high-quality internship programs*).

### **Project implementation aimed activities carried out by the Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Wrocław**

The internship should be directly related to the scope of knowledge, skills and social competences acquired by the student in the education process, consistent with *the Internal Qualifications Framework*. Students make full use of the university offer, and the effects of their education will be strengthened by practical elements in the course of which they will be obliged to use the acquired knowledge in practice. The scope of the tasks is determined by the university in cooperation with the internship host organization. (Pawlikowski, 2017). With reference to students specializing in Pedagogy, speciality: early school and pre-school education, it is particularly important that during the internship they have the opportunity to:

- gain knowledge about the methodology of performing typical tasks, as well as standards and procedures used in a selected area of pedagogical activity (K\_W24),
- learn to assess the suitability of selected methods, procedures and good practices for specific educational activities (K\_U10),
- gain skills to work in a team performing different roles; taking and assigning tasks, acquire organizational skills allowing to achieve goals related to selected areas of educational, supportive, therapeutic and intervention activity (K\_U14),
- gather competences for conscious and responsible preparation for professional work, by a responsible diagnosis of educational situations and designing and performing educational activities in the field of the studied speciality (K\_K09).

Basing on the Regulations of the Internal Student Internship as part of the project "Good Internships" – increasing the professional competences of students of the University of Wrocław by participation in high quality internship programs "aiming the Faculty of Historical and Pedagogical Sciences, announced by the Rector of the University of Wrocław, for the period from 26 January 2018 to 30 September 2018, the Dean of the Faculty appointed the Faculty Recruitment Commission (Regulation No. 3/2018 of the Dean of the Faculty of Historical and Pedagogical Sciences of the University of Wrocław (Zarządzenie Nr 3/2018 Dziekana WNHIPUWr). The commission has created a body of 44 units (including 36 for the faculty of pedagogy and 8 for the faculty of special pedagogy) offering conditions for doing an internship, filtered according to the following criteria:

- the extent to which the offer allows to forecast achievement of assumed innovative skills,
- the extent of the compliance of the internship offer and tasks with the didactic objectives of education within the given speciality,
- the achievements of the proposed internship supervisor<sup>2</sup>.

The next stage of the Commission's work is to make a diagnosis based on documents submitted by students interested in the internship, i.e. a computer-filled application form, cover letter addressed to the Faculty Recruitment Commission, containing detailed justification for choosing specific internship offers, needs and expectations concerning the acquired during the internship competences and the student's CV. The selection of candidates is based on the criteria:

- a relationship between the practical activity of a trainee in the selected internship host unit with the profile of studies and speciality,
- the individual justification for the selection of the internship offer contained in the cover letter,
- student's academic performance understood as the arithmetic average of grades from the last examination session (Regulation of the Faculty Recruitment Commission Annex to Ordinance No. 3/2018 of January 30, 2018 (Regulamin Wydziałowej Komisji Rekrutacyjnej Załącznik do zarządzenia Nr 3 /2018 z dnia 30 stycznia 2018 r.).

The participants of the internship program will be students of the second and third year of the faculty of Pedagogy and Special Pedagogy, selected

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<sup>2</sup> The commission informed the institution offering internship post about the acceptance of the offer via e-mail.

on the basis of recruitment. Recruitment for an internship takes place on the basis of competition. The number of students completing the internship cannot be greater than the number of internships offered. The condition of participation is the submission of the required within the prescribed period documents. The dates of internship calls are placed on the website or faculty. Students entitled to participate in the competition are those who passed the previous semester. Students interested in completing a paid internship fill the form with a computer application, in which they indicate 3 offers of internships selected from the list of Units of internships, according to your preferences (in order from most to the least preferred). Signed application form with CV and cover letter addressed to Faculty Recruitment Commission containing a detailed justification for the choice specific internship offers should be submitted to the Substantive Coordinator. Application forms and traineeship offers are available on the website direction or faculty. The selection of Candidates is based on the following criteria:

- qualifying (0/1): the status of a student/full-time students on the yearly basis and the level covered by the project;
- point (maximum number of points to get – 90 points): academic performance (decided by the average grade from the last completed semester) – maximum number of points – 60; declared lack of work experience other than compulsory university studies number of points – 10; relationship of the internship with the profile of studies, the specialization described in the CV and in the cover letter and justification for selecting an internship offer contained in the ;
- additional (+10 points): lack of participation in internship financed under POKL and / or POWER (to increase opportunities for students who have not previously been supported by the ESF; Regulamin krajowego stażu studenckiego w ramach projektu „DOBRE STAŻE – podniesienie kompetencji zawodowych studentów i studentek UWrocław poprzez udział w wysokiej jakości programach stażowych” dla Wydziału Nauk Historycznych i Pedagogicznych).

The internship covers 120 hours (1 hour/60 minutes), implemented within no less than 20 hours per week. Trainees receive the remuneration for their work paid by the University of Wrocław from the project budget. Guidance over the trainee is payable in the amount of PLN 330 gross for each trainee, paid from the project budget after the internship is completed. The institution can offer more than one internship depending on offered chances of achieving



the internship objectives and the capabilities of the facility, etc. A trainee supervisor is indicated by the employer. The institution in which the internship will be implemented concludes a contract with the University of Wrocław, thanks to which it becomes a partner in the implementation of a project co-financed by the European Union. All matters which are not regulated by the above mentioned Regulations are covered by the Regulations of the Internal Student Internship under the project "GOOD INTERNSHIPS" – increasing the professional competences of students of the University of Wrocław by participation in high quality internship programs aimed at the Faculty of Historical and Pedagogical Sciences.

A detailed schedule of activities at the Institute of Pedagogy, University of Wrocław, is as follows:

- December 2017–January 2018 – creating a list of employers offering internship posts – based on the employer's offer form
- January 2018 – publication of the list of employers selected by the faculty recruitment commission, as the adequate places for internships meeting the purposes and requirements of the process of education in the field of pedagogy and special pedagogy,
- January 2018 – development of individual internship programs by employers offering internship posts.
- February 2018 – the selection of places of internships by students
- March–May – students are sent to specific institutions chosen by them from the list of the internship employers,
- September 2018 – completion of internships.

## Conclusion

More and more students tend to combine learning and work. Young people, well aware of the expectations of employers and their lack of work experience, prefer not to prolong the period of entering the labor market, but to strain their strength and develop at a faster pace. Such approach should not come as a surprise. In a situation where many graduates cannot find a job after graduation, and employers complain that applicants have no experience, it is useless to wait for the completion of studies. Instead, it is much better to start to use the possibilities of gathering professional experience as soon as possible. Professional internships undertaken by students during their studies give them an opportunity to expand professional knowledge and acquire greater awareness

of their pedagogical impact. The internships are designed to enable the trainee to acquire knowledge in the field of functioning business entities as well as gaining professional experience facilitating the entrance to the labor market, including through getting to know your own professional predispositions and linking theoretical knowledge gained during studies with practical skills. During the internship, candidates for the profession of early education teachers gain an additional opportunity to explore new and unknown spaces, transform and even create them according to their individual concepts within, for example: learning about the organizational structure of the facility, applicable procedures and documentation, participation in caring and education classes, organizing and conducting individual and group educational and educational classes, observing and supporting psychomotor development of children, recognizing the responsibilities of various specialists in the field pedagogy. These activities may result in increasing their readiness to learn, depriving of fear and stress in educational situations, internal sense of agency, the belief that success is the result of their own efforts, skills and application of knowledge, increasing faith in their own resourcefulness or entrepreneurship. While experiencing things, trainees attribute various functions and shape the space in which they find themselves, by which they somehow domesticate, tame it. Thus, they change that space into their own place, which is real and consistent with their experience and which arouse emotions in them. Smooth transition from the education stage to the employment stage is indispensable for increasing the chances of young people on the labor market. Since students are completely conscious of that, the interest in participation in the discussed project is great.

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### **„GOOD INTERNSHIPS” – SUPPORT FOR GAINING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES BY THE STUDENTS OF PEDAGOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW**

**Summary:** Achieving high standards in the field of professional preparation of students-future teachers of a younger child is possible only thanks to the synergy of theory and practice. Participation in internship programs creates, alongside pedagogical on-the-job training, perfect conditions for acquiring and developing professional competences of future teachers through personal experience. During the internship, the student may undertake a number of initiatives requiring knowledge – action and reflection. In this way, academic theory and practice integrate and accentuate, filling the space of professional competences, in which the inquisitiveness, creativity and openness of the student, its active and systematic search for knowledge, criticism of research, reflexivity and analytical approach to educational problems are of great importance. Scientific confrontation and practical viewing of reality, a fusion of scientific thinking with action in solving real problems also favors the construction of own educational theories. In addition, it combines two learning strategies: before and during the action, constituting a kind of bridge between academic knowledge and educational reality. It is a circumstance for the emergence of the category of “becoming a teacher” through getting to know oneself, one’s possibilities and limitations, as well as a conscious development of a working technique.

**Keywords:** teacher of a younger child, teacher education, theory and practice, professional competences, internship

## **„DOBRE STAŻE” – WSPARCIEM KOMPETENCJI ZAWODOWYCH STUDENTÓW PEDAGOGIKI UNIWERSYTETU WROCŁAWSKIEGO**

**Streszczenie:** Osiągnięcie wysokich standardów w zakresie profesjonalnego przygotowania studentów – przyszłych nauczycieli dziecka młodszego możliwe jest tylko dzięki synergii teorii i praktyki. Uczestnictwo w programach stażowych stwarza obok praktyk pedagogicznych, doskonałe warunki do nabywania i rozwijania kompetencji zawodowych przyszłego nauczyciela poprzez osobiste doświadczenie. W trakcie stażu student może podejmować szereg inicjatywy wymagających od niego wiedzy – działania i refleksji. W ten sposób teoria akademicka i praktyka integrują się i akcentują, wypełniając przestrzeń kompetencji zawodowych, w których docieklivość, twórczość oraz otwartość studenta, jego aktywne i systematyczne poszukiwanie wiedzy, krytycyzm badań, refleksyjność i analityczność jego podejścia do problemów edukacyjnych mają istotne znaczenie. Konfrontacja naukowego i praktycznego oglądu rzeczywistości, przeniesienie naukowego myślenia do działania przy rozwiązywaniu realnych problemów sprzyjają też konstruowaniu własnych teorii edukacyjnych. Ponadto łączy dwie strategie uczenia się: przed działaniem i w trakcie działania, stanowiąc swoisty pomost pomiędzy wiedzą akademicką a rzeczywistością edukacyjną. Stwarzają okazję do zaistnienia kategorii „stawania się nauczycielem” poprzez poznawanie siebie, swoich możliwości i ograniczeń, a także świadome rozwijanie warsztatu pracy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** nauczyciel dziecka młodszego, kształcenie nauczycieli, teoria i praktyka, kompetencje zawodowe, staż