THE ROLE OF THE SELF-REFLECTION IN THE UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING PRACTICE IN VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

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Abstract
The paper discusses about the preparation of the future teachers of the vocational subjects and the vocational training at secondary vocational schools. The research survey is focused on the students of Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. The teaching practice in the undergraduate study program represents its integral part. The acquired educational and professional experience is a best way how the future teachers can learn to apply their theoretical knowledge and pedagogical skills in the real work with students. The practice has two parts: Observation of a lesson taught by an experienced teacher and the lesson taught by a student himself. From our survey, we believe that a great advantage bring the follow-up seminar after completing the practice in which students discuss their experiences from the implemented practice at school. Interesting are the personal opinions of the students on the organisation of the lesson taught by an experienced teacher at the secondary vocational school. The essential part of this seminar is a self-reflection of each student. The goal of the self-reflection is that students are able to critically evaluate the lesson taught by themselves. We present some benefits from this approach.

Keywords: teaching practice, teacher training, vocational subject, vocational training, self-reflection.

1 INTRODUCTION
Undergraduate teaching practice, which is realized by students of the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, is an integral part of study programs [1]. Within teaching practice, which is performed by students at the cooperating secondary schools, knowledge and skills are enhanced in connection with the acquisition of pedagogical skills [1]. We can characterize pedagogical skills as a more comprehensive teacher's ability to solve a certain set of pedagogical situations. Thus, pedagogical skill can be understood as the activity of the teacher, which achieves success in pedagogical communication with pupils, as an activity that the teacher anticipates controls and manages the teaching process [2]. Pedagogical skills are related to the content of the pedagogical situation in which they are applied. That is why we encounter different skills to address specific educational situations. We also encounter different didactic skills that are specific to individual subjects at a certain level of school education and outcome of valid educational programs [3].

Individual pedagogical skills are mutually intertwined and it is difficult to say which skills are crucial. We can define some groups of pedagogical skills that are a prerequisite for a successful pedagogical activity of the teacher [2], [4], [5]:

- Planning skills, ensuring the preparation of the lesson;
- Implementation skills required to actively engage pupils/students in learning activities during the lesson;
- Management skills consisting in organizing pupils/students' learning activities during the lesson;
- Skills contributing to the creation and development of a favourable climate in the classroom;
- The skills necessary to maintain classroom discipline and to resolve educational situations;
- Diagnostic skills to allow for the control and evaluation of pupil/student learning activities;
- Self-diagnosis skills, consisting of self-assessment of pedagogical activities.

Undergraduate teaching practice should draw a future teacher's attention to pedagogical skills in a real school environment. This teaching practice is unique in this sense; it follows the theoretical and practical training in the study course at the faculty, i.e. in a model environment. We can use staging methods to prepare future teachers to simulate a real learning environment. [6], [7] However, the
staging method only facilitates the transition from the artificially created training environment to the real environment at the school.

2 TEACHING PRACTICE IN EDUCATION OF FUTURE TEACHERS OF VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

Students within the study program “Teacher of vocational subjects and training” at the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, implement teaching practice at selected secondary vocational schools. “Teaching practice 1” is planned in the autumn semester and “Teaching practice 2” in the spring semester; always in 3rd year of study. The aim of teaching practice is to verify the theoretical knowledge and pedagogical skills in specific subjects according to their professional orientation. [1]

Subject Teaching Practice 1 is realized in the time range of 10 hours of instruction. Future teachers perform pedagogical sessions with experienced teachers at selected secondary schools. [1] Students observe the teaching process and make a written record (seminar work). The record of the observed lessons has to be focused on the following information:

1. Used teaching methods, teaching aids, didactic technique;
2. Discipline in the classroom, teacher's approach to pupils, evaluation of pupil activity;
3. Assessing whether the objectives set in the curriculum have been achieved;
4. Own opinion on the process of the lesson;

Students have the opportunity to express what they like about the lesson or what to improve. The following part of the teaching practice is a reflection in which students discuss past attendance under the supervision of an assistant supervising the subject Teaching Practice 1.

Follow-up is subject Teaching Practice 2, the scope of which is further develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of students for the teaching profession. The subject Teaching Practice 2 is scheduled for 35 teaching hours and is implemented at selected secondary vocational schools according to the professional orientation of future teachers. [1] The timing of the implementation of teaching practice is as follows:

1. 2 lessons - preparation for the realization of teaching practice;
2. 12 lessons – attendance of lessons taught by an experienced teacher;
3. 8 lessons - preparation for own instruction (methodical and content preparation for teaching);
4. 6 lessons - own realization of the lesson;
5. 6 lessons - processing of the record of the attendance, assessment of own teaching;
6. 1 lesson - reflection;

As it was already mentioned Teaching Practice 2 is implemented at secondary vocational schools under the guidance of experienced teachers. Students can therefore discuss their pedagogical issues directly with the teachers of the approving subject in practice. At the same time, students can discuss pedagogical situations with supervisors at the Faculty of Education. For reflection, students prepare an analysis of the pedagogical follow-up and methodical preparation for their own teaching, which they implemented within teaching practice. In the final discussion, the teacher and students also draw on self-reflection. Self-reflection assesses the teaching of future teacher's students in teaching practice. Self-reflection is very difficult for students because students have to evaluate their own level of pedagogical skills. Students in self-reflection are looking for positives in the application of pedagogical skills or, on the contrary, they reveal their shortcomings in the implementation of teaching in school practice. The authors believe that self-reflection is essential for the teaching profession. If students are capable of critical self-reflection they have the assumption that they will constantly improve in their teaching profession and will be able to receive new knowledge in lifelong learning.
3 RESEARCH SURVEY

3.1 Objective and Methodology of the Research Survey

As we stated above the realization of pedagogical practice in real school environment is beneficial for future teacher students. Based on this claim, a research survey was conducted. The aim of the research was to answer questions:

*How do students - future teachers evaluate the course taught by experienced teachers from secondary vocational schools?*

*How do students evaluate their own learning?*

The main issues were to find out the real contribution of teaching practice.

Respondents were students of the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, in the Czech Republic. A total of 96 respondents were surveyed, of which 67 women and 29 men. Of the total of 96 respondents, there were 19 respondents who had already worked in the teacher's profession (without pedagogical qualification). Of the 19 respondents there were 11 men and 8 women. The length of pedagogical practice in the average of 3 respondents was 3 years and 6 respondents had pedagogical practice from 11 to 17 years.

The data for the research survey was collected from February till April 2017. During that period, the *Teaching Practice* 2 was realised. A quantitative method, a questionnaire technique, was used for the research survey. As a questionnaire, a processed record of teaching practice was used and targeted. The record tracked the benefits of pedagogical practice among respondents. At the same time, the record served as a didactic tool for determining relevant pedagogical skills of respondents, which was not the subject of this research. The questionnaire was responded during the implementation of the teaching practice and after its completion. The recording form was created specifically for opened answers and was divided into three parts: a processed record of the attendance a lesson taught by an experienced teacher, the creation and presentation of own methodical preparation for teaching, and self-reflection on the actual realization of teaching.

Recording forms were not filled in anonymously, respondents agreed to this condition. This had lead to 100% returned records. All 96 records were carefully filled in by all respondents.

The submitted respondents’ records were gradually analyzed and evaluated. The evaluation of the recording forms was focused on answering research questions. The items that respondents had to record during the attendance lesson with experienced teachers then were used for the evaluation their own pedagogical performance. It is important to mention the length of pedagogical activity of experienced teachers who guided teaching practice at secondary vocational schools. A total of 72 experienced teachers from 26 different secondary vocational schools, 48 women and 24 men, with a length of pedagogical practice of 23 years, in average, participated in teaching practice. These were practitioners with different professional orientation, according to respondents' vocational needs. Some experienced teachers from secondary vocational schools have guided more than one student in teaching practice.

3.2 Results of Research Survey

First, the part of the recording form, which dealt with the attendance in the lessons of experienced teachers in practice, was evaluated. Respondents watched a lesson and recorded their findings. Most respondents did not have experience with their own teaching. However, on the basis of theoretical knowledge and practical skills from individual pedagogical, psychological and vocational subjects, respondents were able to communicate their views on the teaching of experienced teachers from practice. As a summary, the following opinions can be made: “*The teacher has very often used examples directly from the practice, on which he demonstrated the subject under discussion.*”; “*I must say that I was surprised by the peaceful atmosphere of the training course. The teacher's approach was professional and human. I would not change anything at the lesson, it was obvious that at the school they have vocational training sufficiently mastered, and the number of ten pupils was absolutely perfect.*”; “*I liked the day of schooling very much. I was excited about the nice school equipment. The students actively participated in the lesson. Teacher engages in activity with students, which is very motivating.*”; “*I liked the teaching materials management system - each student had his own binder in which he had other, colour-coded cover sheets. There was one thematic unit in each cover sheet, in*
which the students also stored the practical demonstrations they had worked out in the class. This system comes to me primarily for students of 1st grade vocational school clear."

The second part of the research evaluation was focused on the self-reflection of the respondents. Within the self-reflection, respondents evaluated their performance and expressed their opinion on the contribution of incorporating teaching practice into the study program of future teachers. When evaluating their pedagogical skills, the respondents were critical and objective in most cases as it could be judged from the context. Respondents said, "I would definitely use PowerPoint presentations next time, I did not ask for a computer and a data projector, which was my fault." We also chose the following interesting interpretation of self-reflection: "I realized how important it is to get the necessary authority. It has been confirmed to me that organizing a new subject following to the principle from simple to complex is important. Unfortunately, the tempo of my interpretation was unadjusted at the beginning of the lesson for all students; I realized this in time and corrected my mistake."; "I have been preparing my lesson for a long time; I created a worksheet for my students, which has been appreciated. The course of the lesson took place exactly according to my ideas of teaching practical training; I was surprised by calmness during the lesson."; "The students surprised me very much. They worked together; they tried to answer the questions asked and they were actively engaged in training. Unfortunately, the same students always answered."; "I tried to present the inter-subject links in my teaching, and the students were interested."; "I was well prepared for the lessons both in material and didactic terms. I see the problem in the wrong timing of the individual parts of the lesson; I have not achieved everything I had planned. I noticed that some of the students were tired at the end of the lesson."; "I used my previous work experience (machine mechanic) in the lessons with students. I have found that I still have deficiencies in the field of teaching methods; I had to choose more appropriate teaching methods for my teaching."; "I found out that some of the students did not complete their activities for lack of time; I realized that the cause could be in the chosen organization of the lesson."; "I have verified that written preparation for teaching is very important."; "Self-evaluation is always difficult, but I have been able to hold authority and respect by the students, I and students have behaved mutually friendly and none of them disturbed the lesson too much. Personally, I would improve my speech. Since I have not yet learned, this experience has made a huge contribution to me."

We can generalize the results of self-reflection. Most of respondents expressed their fear of realizing their teaching. Respondents who have already had experience of teaching expressed their concerns as well because they should have to teach at another secondary school, i.e. for them also in an unfamiliar environment. For the illustration, let us present the following selection of opinions: "Even though I am 40 years old, I felt very badly in the first lessons in front of 30 eighteen-year-olds students. However, I have a really good feeling of experience from my teaching practice; I had opportunity to try myself to teach."; "It was interesting for me to try teaching at a secondary vocational school other than ours. I also had an opportunity to exchange experience."

At the same time, the authors of the research evaluated the respondents' opinion on the contribution of teaching practice. In the text of 83 recording forms there was only positive evaluation of the contribution of teaching practice to the developments of the teaching skills. In the rest of the records, ratings were insignificant, but not negative. The respondents stated: "I find that the great contribution of teaching practice is in the opportunity to try and to apply the acquired knowledge from the theoretical study in the real environment of the school. Personally, I can say that through pedagogical practice I have strengthened the conviction that I really want to teach that I enjoy it and that it fulfill me"; "Teaching practice for me was a great benefit because I had no opportunity to teach until now. I would like to be less nervous in the next lessons."; "Overall, I appreciate my teaching practice as very beneficial to my future professional life. I have learned a lot of new and important knowledge that I will surely apply in the future teaching profession."; "Overall, this experience has left me a good feeling."; "There are many things that I have to improve, I am so far only preparing for the role of the teacher, teaching practice has been a great experience for me I appreciate it."

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research survey aimed to find answers to two questions. The first question was: How do students - future teachers evaluate the course taught by experienced teachers from secondary vocational schools? Respondents had the opportunity to observe teaching in the chosen vocational subject with experienced teachers at secondary vocational schools. Although respondents as just future teachers are not able to assess the learning process sufficiently, they have confronted their theoretically acquired knowledge and skills with the actual teaching process by the method of observation. The
benefit in particular is that each respondent has evaluated different unique pedagogical situation and the results of the records could be discussed among them. The answer to the research question is unambiguous; the respondents appreciated positively the course of teaching by experienced teachers. From the responses, it was clear that each respondent focused on another area of pedagogical skills of experienced teachers. Respondents were thus able to see the integration of pedagogical skills in a real learning process. The authors of the research also see the attendance of such a lesson as positive by the fact that students - future teachers observe of the teaching process as a whole.

The second question was: How do students evaluate their own learning? Respondents have critically evaluated their teaching, sometimes surprisingly for the authors of the research. This critically self-reflection was a great advantage of the teaching practice. The respondents were sufficiently motivated to realize their teaching and their aim was to succeed from the experienced teachers. Respondents were able to see the positives, but also the negatives, of lessons taught by themselves. Already this respondent approach is of great importance for their future teaching profession. From the respondents' answers, it is obvious that the teaching practice at secondary vocational schools has an important contribution for them. The research authors' assertion that the subject Teaching Practice was appropriately methodologically prepared in relation to other study program subjects was also confirmed and that the subject Pedagogical practice must be incorporated as an essential part of education of study program for future teachers. The course forms, in its content, form and methods, a very suitable preparation of students for the teaching profession. On the other hand, it is necessary to mention the high difficulty of preparation, organization and evaluation of this subject for the staff at Faculty of Education.

REFERENCES


