

EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICAL PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING OF STUDENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AT THE FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR

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Abstract The article discusses how students of the pedagogical study programme Geography at the Faculty of Arts Maribor are connecting theoretical academic knowledge with their pedagogical experience. The questionnaire is used to establish students' personal reflections of competences, set in the study programme and self-evaluation of their own achievements at the end of their pedagogical training. They identified the importance of three sets of subjects (a set of general subjects of pedagogical, psychological and didactic field, a geographical didactic set, and a set of elective subjects), as well as up to five different forms of pedagogical activities. Results show that the participating students are satisfied with the competencies and their achievement of them, and that they are aware of the need for further professional growth. The most important evaluated competences for the successful work of teachers are in the field of defining the learning objectives and adjusting the planning and carrying out of lessons to the needs and capabilities of students and in the field of using different methods, forms and techniques of teaching, assessing and grading knowledge. The respondents feel least competent in anticipating possible problems during pedagogical work in the classroom and when planning how to solve them.

Keywords:
student,
geography,
teacher,
training,
competence.

Introduction

The best teachers incorporate a wealth of “knowledge-in-action” into their activities, and it is therefore essential for students to gain as much practical experience as possible throughout the duration of their studies. In doing so, care must be taken to ensure that these experiences are diverse and appropriately intensified (Marentič Požarnik, 2000; Thiessen, 2002). It is stated in *Zelena knjiga o izobraževanju učiteljev* [Green Book on Teacher Education] that:

... professionalized models of teacher education enable the development of a wide range of professional activities, which teachers adapt to individual participants, objectives, tasks, content and situations. The development of these activities requires a wide foundation of knowledge, as well as a coordinated and coherent practice, which enables (future) teachers to become familiar with learning situations in which they can connect theory and competent reflective activity. (2001, p. 62)

With the academic year 2010/2011 the Faculty of Arts Maribor started to implement the double-major pedagogical second-cycle study programme Geography at the Department of Geography, in which -taking the above-mentioned into consideration -it was stated that future geography teachers need extensive and research-reflective knowledge of geography and of teaching geography, as well as proven forms and methods of the practical application of knowledge. Essential professional qualities of geography teachers include professional autonomy, pedagogical competences and, of course, the capacity for critical intellectual activity. The curriculum of the pedagogical study programme Geography is based on the recommended study structure that was provided by the Senate of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor. This study structure was developed on the basis of the results of the research project entitled “Pedagoški modul, podporne aktivnosti za implementacijo bolonjske prenovе ESS VS 06-09” [Pedagogical Module, Support Activities for the Implementation of the Bologna Reform ESS VS 06-09]. The project was carried out in 2007 by the most prominent researchers in the field of teacher education in Slovenia from all its three universities, including researchers from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. In accordance with the line ministry's working group's recommendation for the reform of the pedagogical

programmes, the “professional part” of pedagogical programmes should encompass at least 60 credits, which is the equivalent of one year of study, whereby at least a quarter of it should be teaching practice (Dvopredmetni pedagoški študijski program druge stopnje Geografija, 2019).

The double-major second-cycle study programme Geography thus consists of courses from the field of geography with the objective of learning about different spatial units (from the local, regional and continental level to the global level, 30 ECTS), as well as courses from the fields of pedagogy, didactics and psychology (the so-called PDP module), in the framework of which students acquire theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of the education and profession of a geography teacher (60 ECTS). The courses in the second set are common to both fields of studies of the double-major study programme. The programme includes practical pedagogical training of students (pedagogical practicum), consisting of an observational practicum (2 ECTS) and a subject practicum; the latter is comprised of the pedagogical practicum Geography 1 (3 ECTS) and the pedagogical practicum Geography 2 (4 ECTS). The pedagogical practicum consists of in-class observation of teaching lessons independently, and of pedagogical practice. The pedagogical practice consists of one week in a primary school and one week in a secondary school; additionally, in the curriculum, there is one week of dispersed pedagogical practice, which is carried out at different times and is optionally thematic. The share of practical training in the field of the pedagogical study programme Geography is 13.3 % (Dvopredmetni pedagoški študijski program druge stopnje Geografija, 2019).

The fundamental objectives of the pedagogical study programme Geography are: (1) To educate future teachers who, by the time they complete the study programme, will have the knowledge, skills and competences which -by international standards - are considered to be fundamental in the field of educating geography teachers, and will qualify these teachers to teach geography at both the primary and the secondary school level; (2) to educate future teachers who will be qualified to identify and analyse current processes and conditions in the field of education and to transfer these findings into documents and actions that are important for the development of education in both a general sense and in the context of teaching geography; (3) to educate future teachers who will be able to critically evaluate the natural-geographical, social, economic and ecological conditions in the region/geographical area with the purpose of educating for sustainable development.

The programme also defines 15 subject-specific competences in teaching geography (Dvopredmetni pedagoški študijski program druge stopnje Geografija, 2019).

The purpose of the practical pedagogical training of students is to train them to systematically observe how teachers, experienced practitioners and fellow students teach, as well as to train them to plan, perform and evaluate lessons in accordance with modern pedagogical-psychological and didactic theoretical bases and good practice. Furthermore, the purpose is to develop students' awareness which they need to continuously reflect upon their own teaching practices, to adapt the planning and implementation of learning units to the needs of students, to collaborate with other teachers, as well as to continue their professional development and thus their professional growth. To facilitate this, a portfolio as supporting pedagogical documentation was introduced in the process of the pedagogical training of geography students, thus enabling students to self-reflect and have proof of their practical pedagogical achievements, as well as enabling their mentors (teachers-mentors and experts for didactics of the subject) to individually monitor and evaluate the students' progress and achievements (Kolnik et al., 2007). Learning in order to participate in a knowledge-based society has to be focused on forming skills of independent, critical thinking and deliberation, on the effective handling of sources and information, on team collaboration and lucid communication, as well as on presenting of ideas. The portfolio strives for the afore-mentioned and at the same time represents an opportunity to see the quality of a particular student's progress and the results of his or her work also in the field of the so-called tacit knowledge - skills, mental abilities, attitude to learning and the profession, and so forth (Klenowski, 2002; Sentočnik, 2004). By the end of the practical pedagogical training, students are expected to have developed competences related to work both in and outside of the classroom, competences related to school, as well as competences related to their own professionalism (Kolnik et al., 2007).

Study: Evaluating practical pedagogical training as part of the pedagogical competence of future geography teachers

The evaluation of practical pedagogical training as part of the pedagogical competence of future geography teachers, along with the portfolio (the map of achievements of students' practical pedagogical training), is part of a broader study entitled "Self-evaluation of the pedagogical competence of students -future

geography teachers”, which was carried out from the academic year 2016/17 to the end of the academic year 2018/19. It encompassed two generations of students of the second-cycle pedagogical study programme Geography at the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor. In this paper, the part related to students' self-evaluation of their competence in practical pedagogical work will be presented.

Definition of the content of the research

The basic research question for this part of the study was focused on evaluating the importance of the competences of students -future geography teachers -and their self-assessment of achieving these competences. They assessed competences that form part of both general and subject-specific competences but are mainly focused on the field of direct pedagogical training in the so-called practicums, and students are expected to attain them by the end of their studies. Furthermore, the students assessed to what extent they achieved these competences. A more detailed objective of the study was to establish: (1) how much importance students ascribe to individual competences that they should attain/develop during their practical pedagogical training; (2) whether there are any differences in their evaluation of the importance of the three sets of subjects (the so-called PDP module, the geographical didactic module and the elective module); (3) how students evaluate the five organizational forms of practical pedagogical training to achieve their pedagogical competence; (4) whether students of the two observed generations assess individual research parameters differently.

The sample of participants

The basic surveyed population consisted of all the students that in the academic years 2017/18 (14 students) and 2018/19 (8 students) were enrolled in the second year of the double-major second-cycle study programme Geography at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor. In total, 18 female students (81.8 %) and 4 male students (18.2 %) participated in the study.

Methodological definition of the research

The study was based on a descriptive and causal non-experimental method of empirical pedagogical research. As the research instrument a questionnaire was developed for students after they had completed two years of practical pedagogical education.

The anonymous questionnaire consisted of two sections and an introduction. In the introductory part, the purpose of the survey was explained, instructions for filling out the questionnaire were given, and respondents were asked to provide some general information about themselves. This was followed by two thematic sets, in which students were asked to evaluate their practical pedagogical training in terms of assessing their own activities and achievements. The first set of questions was related to the objectives of the practical pedagogical training and to the competences that the students achieved. The second set of questions was related to the students' assessment of three sets of subjects in the curriculum and to the students' assessment of the forms of practical pedagogical training, as well as to suggestions for the possibility of improving this training. In the first set, there were two five-point (descriptive) assessment scales, where the respondents were asked about the importance of students' individual competences. There were three questions in the second set. Two questions also included a five-point assessment scale (rank) to evaluate the relevance of both the previously set study areas and those they had added independently (their elective courses). The open-ended question regarding the extent of the practical training provided three options for a short answer. In the final part, students were asked to write down opinions, suggestions, reflections, praises, criticisms, weaknesses, strengths, which in their estimation could in the future help to further improve the activities of students, teachers and mentors in the framework of practical pedagogical training in the field of geography.

Data collection process

A broader survey encompassing two generations of students in their final year of studies was conducted between 2017 and 2019; in June 2018 (the 2017/18 generation) and July 2019 (the 2018/19 generation) students completed questionnaires. Ten students of the 2017/18 generation simultaneously completed an anonymous survey questionnaire at their final study meeting, while two, who had

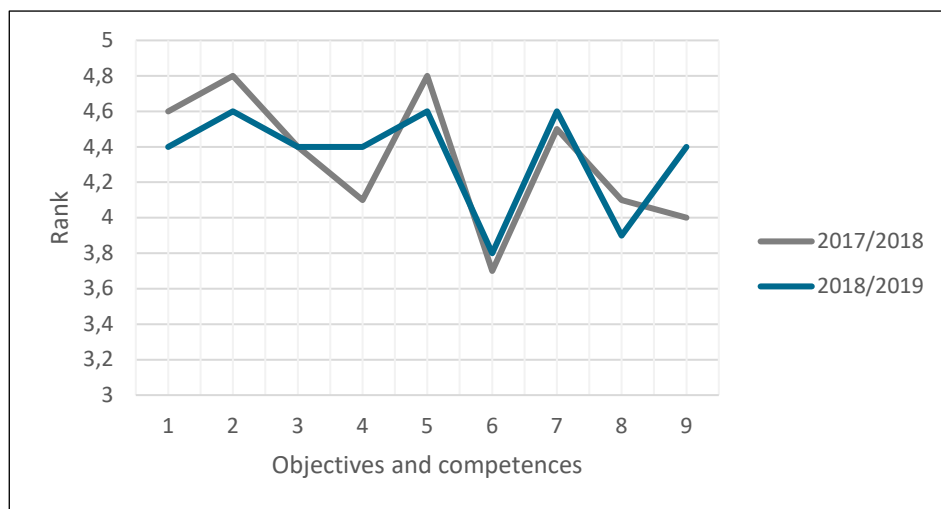
been absent at that time, did so afterwards. The 2018/19 generation of students simultaneously completed an anonymous survey questionnaire at their final study meeting at the faculty.

Processing the data

First, the data from the assessment scales were weighted: numerical values were assigned to the descriptively expressed levels, ranging from a score of 1, which signified the lowest importance, to a score of 5, which signified the highest importance. The questionnaires were statistically processed in accordance with the purposes and presumptions of the survey; due to the number of participants (14 students in the first group and 8 students in the second group), the research focused on the basic statistical parameters (mean rank and proportion of answers).

Results and discussion

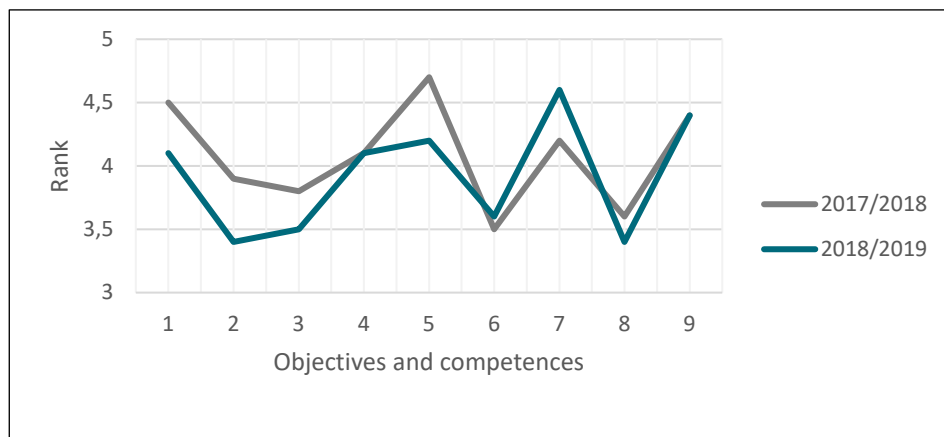
In the first set of questions, students assessed the part of their study programme that was related to the objectives of practical pedagogical training and evaluated the competences that they had achieved.



Graph 1: Evaluation of the competences of the practical pedagogical training of geography students

Legend of the objectives and competences: (1) Effectively observing and evaluating the pedagogical activities of experienced teachers and fellow students, and planning pedagogical activities based on this; (2) identifying/defining the learning objectives and adjusting the planning and carrying out of lessons to the needs and capabilities of students; (3) differentiating between students' level of cognitive, social and emotional development, learning style and strategies, and so forth; (4) applying the principles for a quality preparation, execution and evaluation of learning units; (5) using different methods, forms and techniques of teaching, assessing and grading knowledge; (6) anticipating possible problems during pedagogical work in the classroom and planning how to solve them; (7) critically evaluating one's own pedagogical performance; (8) applying a research approach to problem solving in teaching and pedagogical activities.

In accordance with the fundamental objective of pedagogical studies at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor, upon successfully completing the practical part of their studies, that is graduating, students of double-major second-cycle pedagogical study programmes should possess nine sets of competences. The surveyed students evaluated these competences on a five-point scale based on their personal assessment of how important a certain competence is for the successful work of teachers. Both surveyed generations of geography students evaluated the importance of the competences with scores ranging from 3.7 to 4.8 (the 2017/18 generation) and from 3.8 to 4.6 (the 2018/19 generation). The competences "identifying/defining the learning objectives and adjusting the planning and carrying out of lessons to the needs and capabilities of students" and "using different methods, forms and techniques of teaching, assessing and grading knowledge" were given the highest score of 4.8 by the first surveyed generation. The second surveyed generation, however, rated three sets of competences as the most important (with a score of 4.6): the same two that the first group also rated the highest and "critically evaluating one's own pedagogical performance". The two surveyed groups rated the competence "anticipating possible problems during pedagogical work in the classroom and planning how to solve them" with the lowest score.



Note: Objectives and competences as stated in the Legend of Graph 1.

Graph 2: Evaluating self-competence at the end of the practical pedagogical training of geography students

In the self-evaluation of the attained competences upon completion of the practical pedagogical training, the surveyed students of the 2017/18 generation assessed their success in the range between the lowest evaluated achievement (with a score of 3.5) for their competence in the field of “anticipating possible problems during pedagogical work in the classroom and planning how to solve them”, and highest self-assessment (with a score of 4.7) for their competence “using different methods, forms and techniques of teaching, assessing and grading knowledge”. The second group of surveyed students evaluated two sets of competences as their lowest self-achievement (with a score 3.6): "applying a research approach to problem solving in teaching and pedagogical activities" and "identifying/defining the learning objectives and adjusting the planning and carrying out of lessons to the needs and capabilities of students". In the self-assessment, the highest score of 4.6 was given to the competence “critically evaluating one’s own pedagogical performance”.

A comparison of the questions about the importance of particular competences for the successful work of teachers and about the self-assessment of the attained competences shows that in both surveyed groups, the greatest differences in the assigned scores can be found in the set of competences from the field “identifying/defining the learning objectives and adjusting the planning and carrying out of lessons to the needs and capabilities of students”. In the first surveyed group (the 2017/18 generation), the gap between the importance of the competence for

successful work of teachers (4.8) and the achieved competence (3.9) is 0.9 points. In the second surveyed group (the 2018/19 generation), the gap is 1.2 (importance of the competence: 4.6; self-assessed achieved competence: 3.4). The 2017/18 generation of surveyed students evaluated the competence of “using different methods, forms and techniques of teaching, assessing and grading knowledge” with the highest score of 4.8, and also self-assessed its achievement of this competence with the highest score of 4.7. The difference between the two scores is minimal (0.1). The ability to “apply the principles for a quality preparation, execution and evaluation of learning units” was evaluated equally by both generations of respondents with a score of 4.1. The 2018/2019 generation of students surveyed assessed the competence of “critically evaluating one’s own pedagogical performance” with 4.6 both in terms of its importance for successful work and self-assessment of its achievement.

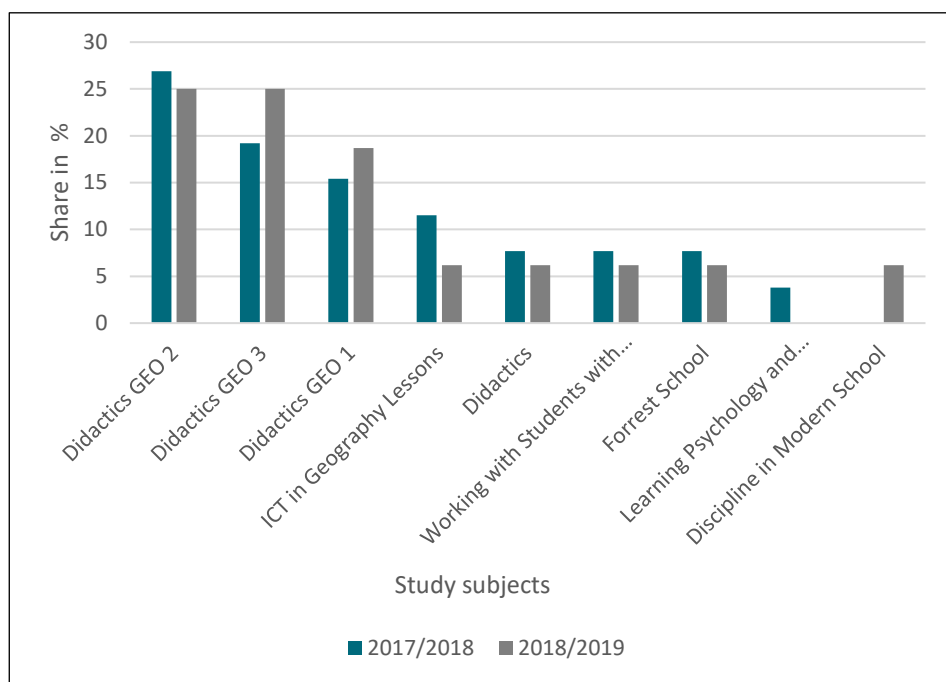
In the second part of the questionnaire three questions were posed. Two questions were based on a five-point assessment scale with which the surveyed students evaluated how important certain study fields are to them when it comes to achieving particular competences. The respondents had the possibility to add two individually selected subjects from the PDP modules to the list of compulsory study subjects and to evaluate them. The third question was related to the extent of practical pedagogical training; the respondents were able to choose one of three options for writing a short answer and justifying it.

Table 1: Evaluation of the importance of sets of study subjects (lectures, seminars and tutorials) for achieving the competence objectives of geography students

Sets of study subjects	Rank 2017/18	Rank 2018/19
PDP module: Pedagogy; Didactics; Learning Psychology and Adolescent Development; Working with Students with Disabilities	3.7	3.8
Didactics of geography set: Didactics of Geography 1, 2 and 3; ICT in Geography Lessons	4.7	4.7
PDP module electives and the number of students that selected them: <i>Lessons and Games 4</i> <i>Discipline and Managing the Class 4</i> <i>Forest School 3</i> <i>Multimedia 2</i> <i>Volleyball with Aerobic Exercises 1</i>	3.5	3.6

The geographical-didactic set of four compulsory study subjects received the highest score (4.7) in both surveyed groups assessing the importance for achieving competence. The two surveyed groups were also very much unified in evaluating the importance of compulsory study subjects of the so-called PDP module (with scores of 3.7 and 3.8) and of five elective study subjects (3.5 and 3.6) that they listed (a total of 14 entries). All 14 respondents (out of a total of 22) listed and evaluated the importance of one elective study subject that in their opinion had a significant impact on the competence of teachers. No one chose and evaluated two elective study subjects. The surveyed students had the opportunity to choose from 15 offered study subjects in the curriculum from a common list of the so-called PDP field.

Graph 3: Study subjects that provided the best insight into the future profession and work of a geography teacher



The respondents listed those two study subjects from the previously indicated fields of training for the profession that in their opinion gave them the best insight into their future profession and the work of a geography teacher. Respondents from the 2017/18 generation made a total of 26 responses, attributing the largest share of

influence to the geographical-didactic set (Didactics of Geography 1, 2 and 3; ICT in Geography Lessons) with 67.7 %. With 19.2 % of all responses, the respondents attributed the second highest importance to three study subjects (out of four in total) from the so-called PDP module. Also on the list of the study subjects which the surveyed students of geography considered to have offered the most insight into their future profession was the elective study subject Forest School, which was listed twice (7.7 %). The second group of respondents also ranked the geographical-didactic subjects the highest with 74.9 % of all answers. Of the four compulsory subjects of the so-called PDP module, only two were selected (Didactics and Working with Students with Disabilities); combined they were attributed 12.4 % of influence on the respondents' insight into the future work of geography teachers. Two elective study subjects were included in the list, i.e. Discipline and Managing the Class and Forest School, with each of them being listed once. None of the respondents included the compulsory study subject Pedagogy in the list of study subjects, and two of the 15 pedagogical elective study subjects were included.

Table 2: Evaluation of the organizational forms of practical pedagogical training and the extent of their realization by geography students

Organisational form	Rank of importance		Preserve		Increase		Decrease	
	2017/18	2018/19	%		%		%	
			2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19
Supervised in-class observation	4.5	4.7	54.5 %	50 %	45.5 %	50 %	0 %	0 %
Observational pedagogical practice	4.4	3.9	81.8 %	87.5 %	18.1 %	12.5 %	0 %	0 %
Continuous pedagogical practice	4.0	4.9	0 %	12.5 %	100 %	87.5 %	0 %	0 %
Dispersed pedagogical practice	4.5	4.8	45.5 %	37.5 %	45.5 %	62.5 %	9 %	0 %
Teaching lessons independently	4.5	4.5	54.5 %	100 %	36.5 %	0 %	9 %	0 %
Number of students	14	5						0 %

In accordance with the curriculum, the practical pedagogical training of the surveyed students was carried out in five organizational forms. The respondents indicated on a five-point scale how important each organizational form is for them in achieving pedagogical competence. They also indicated whether the extent of a certain organizational form should be expanded, reduced or preserved to the present extent. The students of the 2017/18 generation rated the continuous pedagogical practice with the highest score of 5; the respondents of the other group also rated it the highest with a score of 4.9. Both surveyed groups gave the lowest score to observational practice (4.4 and 3.9, respectively), although their assessment differed more, by 0.5.

Respondents in both groups stated in the highest proportion of affirmative answers that they would like to expand the extent of continuous pedagogical practice, whereby respondents of the 2017/18 generation choose this option in 100 % and the other group of respondents in 87.5 %. They also showed a high degree of agreement as far as preserving the present extent of observational practice is concerned (81.8 % and 87.5 %). There are differences between the groups with regard to the proportion of those who would like to increase the extent of dispersed pedagogical practice; a substantially higher proportion (62.5 %) of respondents from the 2018/19 generation than from the 2017/18 generation (45.5 %) was in favour of this. 9 % of respondents from the latter group also expressed the opinion that the extent of dispersed pedagogical practice should be reduced. Opinions regarding the reduction of the number of teaching lessons independently were also in the same proportion.

Furthermore, this study wanted to establish how the respondents substantiated their opinions regarding preserving, expanding or reducing certain organizational forms of practical pedagogical training. In total, 16 respondents answered this question, with two respondents substantiating three organizational forms, two substantiating two organizational forms, and the other twelve substantiating one organizational form. Seventeen substantiations referred to increasing the extent of a certain organizational form, no one justified preserving the extent, and one respondent wrote a substantiation for reducing an organizational form. Their replies are listed in Table 3 in a somewhat abbreviated format, which, however, does not change their informational value.

Table 3: Substantiations for expanding/reducing the extent of the forms of practical pedagogical training for geography students

Organizational Forms	Substantiation: Increase
Supervised in-class observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more opportunities to learn about different types of schools as well as different types of teachers - each teacher has his or her own way of working and managing the class -it would be good to have more insight - with in-class observation one can get different ideas on how to teach, which is very important, especially in the beginning - each class is ‘a world of its own’; the more of them one sees, the better one can prepare for diversity
Observational pedagogical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - first contact with practical work - as a student one has rarely had/has had little insight into how the school as a whole works - providing more insight into how one interacts with parents, co-workers, etc.
Continuous pedagogical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - currently there are many activities and a high workload over a short period of time -for both students and mentors - the most direct contact with the future profession - merely after one week one gets used to the rhythm and the students - not enough time to get to know students of different ages - the opportunity to learn about different good practices - in a week one cannot try out some of the more extensive teaching methods, e. g. project work
Dispersed pedagogical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at least once more for a longer period, since the diversity of the teacher's work also changes throughout the school year - to gain experience in teamwork - opportunities for participating in school projects - one can widen the circle of pedagogical acquaintances, which may prove useful later, when searching for a job
Teaching lessons independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - because one has both a teacher at school and an expert at the didactics of the subject at one’s disposal and one can get good feedback
	Substantiation: reduce
Teaching lessons independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it is very stressful because one is being evaluated

In the concluding part, students were asked to freely write down messages, opinions, suggestions, reflections, praises, criticisms, weaknesses and strengths that they thought could help improve the work of students, teachers and mentors in practical pedagogical training in the field of geography. All of the students responded, but

their messages differed both in scope (from a few sentences to a full A4 page) and in content. The following are four examples of messages.

Example of message 1: *“Especially during the pedagogical practice in the last semester, I devoted a lot of time to self-reflection and to the planning of my professional development. Although the work is inspiring, I had to weigh my options as far as my competences and employability are concerned. Sometimes planning one’s professional development requires giving up (at least temporarily) one’s personal ambitions or the desire to have a higher purpose. Such stories can have a very tragic ending. Therefore, one’s career path should be formed slowly, carefully and honestly. I have learned that although fears lead to sleepless nights, they send us messages from our sub-consciousness that are worth paying attention to.”* (male student, June 2018)

Example of message 2: *“In the course of all the lectures and seminars I would have liked to have had more guest lecturers/practitioners, as was for instance the case with the subject ICT in Geography Lessons, where in addition to lectures we had practical exercises in the classroom or in the form of fieldwork (GPS, mobile applications). I really like it if experts from different fields come and talk about their experiences.”* (female student, June 2019)

Example of message 3: *“Teaching lessons independently could be assessed immediately after the pedagogical practice, when one still has a true sense of how it is to be in the classroom.”* (female student, 2018).

Example of message 4: *“I am satisfied and everyone from the professors to the mentors deserves praise. If 5 years or 2 years ago someone had asked me whether I can imagine myself teaching a class, I would have said no, but now I hope to get a job as a geography teacher.”* (male student, June 2018)

Conclusion

At the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor we encourage students to self-reflect by means of various forms of study, in individual and group dynamics, and especially with the method of putting together a portfolio. The most important part of the portfolio is the student's critical thinking and assessment of his or her own work and results. The results of the present study clearly show self-reflection to be an element of professional development that was firmly embedded in the personal and professional image of future geography teachers. We deem this to be a significant achievement.

The present study had four objectives. With regard to the first research objective, which was to determine how much importance geography students ascribe to developing particular competences during their practical pedagogical training, it can be concluded that both generations of surveyed students decidedly confirm the importance of all competences, since scores range from 3.7 to 4.8. Students ascribed the highest importance to the following competences: “identifying/defining the learning objectives and adjusting the planning and carrying out of lessons to the needs and capabilities of students”, “using different methods, forms and techniques of teaching, assessing and grading knowledge” and “critically evaluating one’s own pedagogical performance”.

With regard to achieving particular competences, the surveyed students’ self-assessment is that they achieved a high degree of all the competences, with scores ranging from 3.5 to 4.7. The competences in the following areas were ranked the lowest: “anticipating possible problems during pedagogical work in the classroom and planning how to solve them”, “applying a research approach to problem solving in teaching and pedagogical activities”, “identifying/defining the learning objectives and adjusting the planning and carrying out of lessons to the needs and capabilities of students”. Students expressed the opinion that the competences they developed best were “using different methods, forms and techniques of teaching, assessing and grading knowledge” and “critically evaluating one’s own pedagogical performance”.

In educating future geography teachers at the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor the following are some of the key questions that we, as educators, ask ourselves: whether we successfully teach students how to think actively; whether we lay good foundations for their further professional development; whether we meet their individual needs. Based on how the students in the present survey assessed their own competences, it can be confirmed that the pedagogical study programme of Geography corresponds to the professional needs as perceived by students.

The self-assessments of competence attainment show that in the process of the second-cycle study, we sufficiently stimulate and direct professional development. Perhaps most important is the realization that students consider “critically evaluating one’s own pedagogical performance” as one of the most important competences, as well as one of the competences they manage to achieve best.

This research has established that in the framework of the pedagogical study programme, some more attention could be devoted to working with students in order to develop a “research approach to problem solving in teaching and pedagogical activities” and to develop the ability to “anticipate possible problems during pedagogical work in the classroom and planning how to solve them.” In the case of the latter competence, we, first and foremost, see opportunities in the framework of the so-called PDP module, while in the case of the former competence, opportunities exist in the framework of all study subjects. Grimmet (1994, as cited in Niemi & Kohonen, 1995, p. 73; see also Ivanuš Grmek et al., 2007) emphasizes the idea of progressive teachers who primarily see themselves as learners in the process of teaching and learning. The classroom is both a place where the teacher encourages students to learn and a place where they themselves learn a great deal about teaching. The teacher's most important characteristic is therefore the ability to constantly learn through their work -teaching, which he or she is constantly exploring. Eraut (1998, as cited in Day, 1999, p. 58) also points out that in addition to developing competences in the field of accomplishing various exercises, tasks and roles, teachers need to develop the need for continuous professional learning and development both on the individual level and in a social context.

The study also identified whether there are differences in assessing the importance of the three sets of study subjects (the so-called PDP module, the geographical didactic module and the module of electives) for attaining the target competences of geography students. The results affirm the concept of the pedagogical study programme at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor, where the general contents of the so-called PDP module form the basis, while subject-specific didactic content is an upgrade of the pedagogical training. According to the surveyed students of geography, the latter is what comes closest to a real professional competence; therefore it is of exceptional and irreplaceable importance for the quality training of students of specific subject areas.

With regard to the research objective of wanting to find out how respondents assess the five organizational forms of practical pedagogical training in order to achieve their pedagogical competence, it can be concluded that the surveyed students value all forms of practical pedagogical training very highly, with continuous practice being valued the highest. Although there are minor differences between the surveyed generations of geography students, our research also shows that students want to

increase the extent of all practical forms of study, which they substantiated in diverse and meaningful ways.

The need for a greater share of practical pedagogical training is not new; on the contrary, it has regularly been expressed by many generations of students in various forms of self-reflection. With the recent introduction of the Bologna study programmes at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor, there have been positive developments, such as the introduction of dispersed and observational practice (Dvopredmetni pedagoški študijski program druge stopnje Geografija, 2019), however, this trend needs to be developed further in the future -the extent of all forms of practical training needs to be increased. Unfortunately, in the structure of pedagogical study programmes the focus is still on teachers having a good command of their field of expertise, that is the content that they will teach. However, *how* they will teach they are, to a large extent, expected to learn while already teaching. Thus, a limited number of hours are devoted to general pedagogical–psychological and special-didactic subjects and to pedagogical practice (see, e.g. Ivanuš Grmek et al. 2007; Marentič Požarnik, 2000).

As a basis for increasing the extent of practical pedagogical training there is a need to implement systemic changes that would more satisfactorily regulate the cooperation of faculties and schools.

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