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STUDENTS' SELF-EVALUATION IN THE CONTEXT OF PRACTICAL PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

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Abstract

In this article we investigated the students' self-evaluation in the context of practical pedagogical training in pedagogical second cycle study programmes at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education at the University of Maribor. The key research objectives were to determine how frequent the interviewed students performed self-evaluation of particular activities and, furthermore, self-evaluation of which activities students carried out the most during their practical training. 148 students participated in the research, namely 127 first year students and 21 second year students of second cycle study programmes at the previously mentioned faculties. The research results point out that less than 40 % of the interviewed students regularly self-evaluated particular activities during their practical training and that they used a highly varying number of hours for this purpose. Also, the results show a partly positive situation regarding the total performance of self-evaluation as well as regarding self-evaluation of particular activities. We believe that standardisation considering duration and scope of the students' self-evaluation would lead to an improved performance of practical pedagogical training.

Keywords

Practical Pedagogical Training, Self-evaluation, Students, Faculties of University of Maribor

1. Introduction

The evaluation and self-evaluation are essential processes at valuation, grading and identification of pros and cons in individual process implementations and also with the purpose of improving those. In educational practice the evaluation and self-evaluation are used and integrated by various persons (headmasters, teachers, educators, pupils, parents, students, other workers in education), groups (teachers' and pedagogical staff, expert working group) and at various fields, like e.g. pupils achievements at particular subjects and/or grading periods, comparison of pupils achievements, teacher's self-evaluation, subject issues and similar (Samoevalvacija vzgojno-izobraževalnih organizacij = Self-evaluation of educational organisations, 2018).

Evaluation can be described as: a process in which we identify to what extent and by which means we achieved the aims of education (Tyler, 1969); a process that is based on systematic gathering of information about a certain phenomenon with the purpose of passing a judgement which would lead to an improvement of the performed process (Marentič Požarnik, 1999); a method of identifying and improving the quality of the educational process (Ferjan, 2005); a process we perform with the purpose of assessment and determination of value, quality, applicability, efficiency or importance of the evaluated object and the identification of the required improvements (Brejc & Zavašnik Arčnik, 2010).

Self-evaluation is in a way a form of evaluation, also reflection, and happens at the level of an individual or group performing an own evaluation of a certain phenomenon. It ensures prompt feedback about the implementation of the educational programme on which basis we plan further activities. Performance of self-evaluation is also an important factor in encouraging professional development of pedagogical workers, since it contributes to an improved understanding of the own work (Vogrinc & Podgornik, 2012). The characteristics of self-evaluation are mainly that it has a clear purpose, is focused on priority tasks, proceeds in a specific context, is economical, connects individual parts into the combined whole, is user-friendly, allows integration and adaptability, ensures the model of how to do (instead of what to do), allows the possibility of changes, ensures tools for working and solving problems, its results enable discussion, is action-oriented and focused on user, institution and improvement (MacBeath, 1999). Self-evaluation of a specific progress also increases efficiency and motivates pupils to improve as well as encourages them to investigate in more detail and target higher goals (Shunk, 1996). That confirms also Maher's (2015) study, which presents opinions of interviewed students in English studies about using the self-reflection logs and measurement tools to analyse their perceptions and opinions. Results of the study (ibid.) shows that the participants described self-reflection as valuable for them, especially in regards

to aiding them with goal-setting and achieving their goals and would like to have self-reflection in other classes and continue to self-reflect their studies after this course. But like some researchers (MacBeath, 1999; van Aanholt & Buis, 1990; Vanhoof, Van Petegem & De Maeyer, 2009) exposing, self-evaluation can only work, if persons who are performing self-evaluation, are positively disposed towards it.

McMillan & Hearn (2008) describe self-evaluation as a part of a continuous cyclic process of self-assessment (Figure 1). Based on the self-observation pupils become aware of their thinking and performed actions. Through their discoveries and own judgements on the process they recognize their strategies in learning and working. Furthermore, they provide themselves the required information which helps in setting learning goals, strategic planning and preparation of further improving actions. Zimmerman (2002) states that it is possible to train each part of the described cyclic or so called self-regulating process, as well as for example self-evaluation, with the support of others and through role models. Namely, pupils who are successful in self-assessment and self-regulation go on searching for support of others, having the demand of larger improvement. Here, they focus on their own actions, changing and maintaining particular learning strategies in broader (social) as well as narrower (personal) context. As Zimmerman (ibid.) emphasises, learning of the self-regulating process plays an even more important role in a time where these fundamental features of lifelong learning quality are mostly absent.

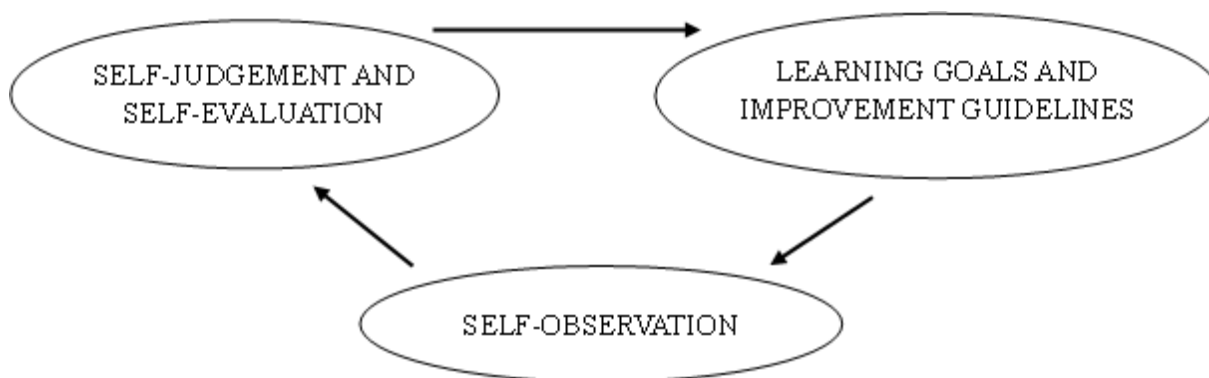


Figure 1: *Self-assessment cycle of pupils (McMillan & Hearn, 2008)*

We already described some advantages of self-evaluation for pupils. Rolheiser & Ross (2013), amongst others, also point out the following:

- Performing self-evaluation in written form strengthens pupils' writing skills (especially high progress is visible at weaker writers who do not have completely formed criteria of good writing yet).
- Pupils who make use of self-evaluation will more likely remain longer at difficult tasks, thereby gain self-confidence and take more responsibility for their work.

- Pupils' attitude towards assessment of their own work will get more positive, if they actively cooperate in the process of self-evaluation.

2. Evaluation and Self-Evaluation in the Context of Practical Pedagogical Training

If we focus only on evaluation and self-evaluation in the context of practical pedagogical training, we first need to emphasize that teaching practice is organized and performed by the principle of reflective work experience and has to enable students integrating their subject-content as well as pedagogical-professional knowledge by gradual implementation into teaching and teacher profession. In the context of practical pedagogical training, students are supposed to qualify for systematic observation of lessons and evaluation of teaching work, which is based on examples of attending mentor's lectures as well as self-evaluation. Furthermore, they should develop awareness of the necessity of constant reflection on one's own practice, adapt the planning and realisation of teaching units to the pupils' needs, cooperate with other teachers and also continuously develop their expertise in order to grow professionally (Kolnik, 2007). Therefore, reflection represents a very important part of the self-evaluation process. Students are thinking about what they already know or have learned and at the same time they identify fields which need improvement in order to achieve new goals. This is done through different reflections, like discussion about accomplished work, active participation at meetings, written feedback, noting and thinking about one's work (McMillan & Hearn, 2008). As Trškan, Komidar & Hrovat (2015) explain, the reflection of pedagogical practice is of significant importance for the start of students' professional development. Students monitor, assess, reflect and improve their work by using a journal, portfolio or folder of achievements.

Govekar Okoliš & Kranjčec (2012) describe evaluation in the context of practical pedagogical training as measuring success and effectivity of training, education and practical work of a trainee in the institution, at which the purpose and goals of it are the following (ibid.):

- Using feedback to determine the quality of the whole process of practical pedagogical training;
- Determining the effectivity and deficiencies of practical training as a basis for improved quality in planning and execution of further practical pedagogical trainings of trainees;

- Detection and correction of the student's mistakes, assessment of the student's and mentor's work as well as the educational institution itself;
- Determining to what extent and in which way the training goals are achieved;
- Detecting the value of the acquired practical knowledge and its connection to the theoretical knowledge, also the value of the trainee's acquired experiences and the achievement of competencies.

As the authors quote (*ibid.*), we can evaluate practical training regularly and/or at the end of the training. We can as well evaluate from different perspectives in order to determine e.g. the achievement of teaching goals set in curriculums, the achievement of students' competencies as well as the achievement of practical training quality.

Attending lectures is one of the frequent activities and tasks for students in the context of practical pedagogical training. The students analyse the process and realisation of the lesson by defined criteria (depending on the particular study programme). In the following, we present an example of criteria for assessment and self-assessment of a lesson (Kotnik, Konečnik, Ivanuš-Grmek, & Javornik Krečič, 2007). It applies to (*ibid.*):

- Articulation of the lesson,
- Learning content,
- Methodical-didactical concept of the lesson,
- Material-technical realisation of the lesson,
- Achievement of teaching goals defined in planning and
- Communication and speech.

Regarding the previously mentioned criteria, students assess each particular criterion with the grade from 1 to 5 in the context of assessment and self-assessment of the lesson.

In the following, we will present the results of the research for single-major and double-major second cycle study programmes at Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education UM (hereafter: FNM UM, FF UM and PEF UM).

3. Research Issues

3.1 Problem Identification

In the previous chapters the importance of student's self-evaluation for the whole process of practical training has been described. However, there is only little knowledge about the student's perception regarding their own performance at the Faculties of University of Maribor.

3.2 Research Objective and Scope of Study

The research objective was to find out how often the interviewed students performed self-evaluation of activities as well as self-evaluation of which activities students carried out the most and the least during their practical pedagogical training. In this paper we present one aspect of a greater empirical research, conducted in 2014/2015 (Rus, 2016).

3.3 Gap Identification

148 participating students represent more than 50% of all signed up students in the relevant studies. Even though this number gives a sufficient statistical sample, as shown in the later interpretation, a higher participation share would ensure our derived conclusions.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Method

A descriptive and causal-non-experimental method of empirical pedagogical research was used within the empirical research.

4.2 Research Sample

The survey was carried out during April and May 2014. 148 interviewees filled in the questionnaire, 127 of them were first year students and 21 were second year students of second cycle study programmes at FNM UM, FF UM and PEF UM. Each questionnaire was filled in unguided and anonymously.

4.3 Methodological Characteristics of the Questionnaire

The validity of the questionnaire is ensured by expert review of its content and formal side as well as review of appropriate literature. The survey questionnaire is mainly composed on the basis of thorough research of all second cycle study programmes of above mentioned faculties, which include practical pedagogical training. This approach ensured that the survey questionnaire was composed according to the goals of practical training as well as consistent with general competencies students should acquire during this training. The impartiality of the survey questionnaire is ensured by uniform and unambiguous fill-in instructions for the interviewees, while the impartiality is based on unguided surveying.

4.4 The Procedure of Data Processing

The data is processed by the software for statistical data processing SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 21) at the level of descriptive and inference statistics. Following methods were used for data processing in this article: frequency distribution (f , $f\%$), χ^2 -test, arithmetic mean (\bar{x}) and Mann-Whitney test.

5. Results and Interpretation

5.1 Students' Estimates on Frequency of Performed Self-Evaluation of Activities during Practical Pedagogical Training

Hereinafter are presented the results from the students' estimates on frequency of performed self-evaluation of activities during practical pedagogical training (Table 1), followed by results on the differences of these estimates depending on the type of study (Table 2). Students have answered closed questions regarding the frequency of performed self-evaluation of activities during practical training (never, occasionally, frequently, always).

Table 1: *Number (f) and structural percentage (f%) of students on frequency of performed self-evaluation of activities during practical pedagogical training*

Frequency Of Performed Self-Evaluation Of Activities:	f	f%
Never	5	3.4
Occasionally	42	28.4
Frequently	44	29.7
Always	57	38.5
Total	148	100.0

The results in Table 1 show that 38.5% of interviewed students always performed self-evaluation of activities during their practical training, whereas 29.7% of students performed self-evaluation frequently and 28.4% occasionally. 3.4% of interviewees never performed the self-evaluation of activities. The above mentioned results indicate a partly positive situation regarding the performance of self-evaluation during practical training. Here, we want to highlight the advantages of performing reflection and self-evaluation of activities, like e.g. identifying quality, effectivity and weaknesses of the entire process, detection and correction of failures, identifying to what extent the set objectives are achieved, determining the value of acquired practical knowledge (Govekar Okoliš & Kranjčec, 2012), identification of improvable areas (McMillan & Hearn, 2008) as well as monitoring, evaluation, reflection and improvement of one's own work (Trškan et al., 2015). Based on the middle-rate shares of students who always or frequently performed self-evaluation, we conclude that just over half of the surveyed students realises the importance and benefits of reflection and self-evaluation of activities for a high-quality practical pedagogical training.

Table 2: χ^2 -test results concerning students' estimates on frequency of performed self-evaluation of activities during practical pedagogical training, depending on the type of study

FREQUENCY OF PERFORMING SELF-EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES	TYPE OF STUDY					
	single-major		double-major		total	
	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%
never	2	3.0	3	3.7	5	3.4
occasionally	22	32.8	20	24.7	42	28.4
frequently	21	31.4	23	28.4	44	29.7
always	22	32.8	35	43.2	57	38.5
total	67	100.0	81	100.0	148	100.0
χ^2 -test result	$\chi^2=2.052$ $P=0.562$					

Considering the results of the χ^2 -test in Table 2, there is no statistically significant difference ($P=0.562$) of students' estimates on frequency of performed self-evaluation of activities, depending on the type of study. At double-major studies, the share of students who always performed self-evaluation (43.2%) is slightly larger, compared to students of single-major studies with the same self-evaluation frequency (32.8%). On the contrary, the share of students who performed self-evaluation frequently and occasionally is slightly larger at single-major studies (frequently: 31.4%, occasionally: 32.8%), compared to double-major studies (frequently: 28.4%, occasionally: 24.7%). The shares of students, who never performed self-evaluation of activities, are very similar for both types of study (single-major study: 3.0%, double-major study: 3.7%).

Hence, we conclude that students of both types of study performed self-evaluation to a similar extent. The results in Table 2 also show that some more students of double-major studies performed always and, furthermore, some more students of single-major studies performed frequently and occasionally the self-evaluation of activities during their practical training.

5.2 Students' Estimates on Performing Self-Evaluation of Particular Activities during Practical Pedagogical Training

This section starts with presenting the average values over all students' estimates on performing self-evaluation of particular activities (Table 3). Following, Table 4 show the differences in the students' estimates, whereas these differences are based on the type of study. Based on a five-step rating scale (not performed, small, medium, large, very large), the students evaluated to what extent they performed self-evaluation of particular activities in the context of practical training.

Table 3: *Distribution from highest to lowest average value of students' estimates on performing self-evaluation of particular activities during practical pedagogical training*

PERFORMING SELF-EVALUATION OF:	\bar{x}
Teaching	4.36
Teaching Observation	3.97
Final Meeting With The Mentor	3.80
Introductory Meeting With The Mentor (Overview Of Training Material And Preparation Of Working Plan)	3.54
Learning About And Participating At Institutional Activities (Circles, Supplementary Work, Projects, etc.)	3.24
Observing The Adaptation Of Work To Special Needs Education	3.06
Learning About School Documentation And Legislation	2.93
Observation Of Lessons	2.92
Learning About The School Counsellor's Work	2.88
Discussion With The Headmaster Or Assistant Headmaster (Learning About The School's Tasks)	2.53
Participation At Pedagogical Staff Meetings	2.35

The distribution of average values in Table 3 shows that the self-evaluation of teaching is the highest rated activity ($\bar{x}=4.36$), followed by less high rated activities, namely, self-evaluation of teaching observation ($\bar{x}=3.97$), self-evaluation of the final meeting with the mentor ($\bar{x}=3.80$) as well as self-evaluation of the introductory meeting with the mentor ($\bar{x}=3.80$). The lowest evaluated activity by the students is self-evaluation of participation at pedagogical staff meetings ($\bar{x}=2.35$). Nearly as low evaluated is self-evaluation of the discussion with the headmaster or assistant headmaster ($\bar{x}=2.53$). Considering the five-step evaluation scale, the difference between highest and lowest average value is quite large (2.01).

On this basis we conclude that the students performed self-evaluation of the particular activities to a varying extent.

The analysis of teaching observations as well as self-conducted teachings is one of the students' priority tasks and duties during training (Kolnik et al., 2007). Therefore, the high rating of these activities in Table 3 was fully anticipated. At the same time, students are involved in further class and institution activities, where self-evaluation is just as intended. Since the students do their practical training at different institutions, their access to pedagogical staff meetings most probably varies and consequently also the self-evaluation of this participation.

According to the theoretical knowledge (Govekar Okoliš & Kranjčec, 2012), the evaluation of practical training can be seen as measurement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the trainee's education, practical work and training itself, whereas this happens along the way and/or at the end of the training. In the theoretical part we presented in detail the criteria for the assessment or self-assessment of lessons, which we consider to be one of the most important tasks and duties of students in the context of practical training. Here, students have to analyse and assess the most important elements of the lesson: articulation, content, methodical-didactic design, material-technical execution, achievement of learning objectives, communication and speech (Kolnik et al., 2007). Therefore, we state that the classification of assessment and self-assessment is extensive indeed, but precise and targeted. By highlighting the importance of all the students' duties and tasks, we derive that also the self-evaluation of lowest rated activities is important and required for a successful reflexion within the training.

Table 4: Mann-Whitney test results of the difference of students' estimates on performing self-evaluation of particular activities during practical pedagogical training, considering the type of study

Performing Self-Evaluation Of:	Type Of Study	n	\bar{R}	P
Introductory Meeting With The Mentor (Overview Of Training Material And Preparation Of Working Plan)	<i>single-major</i>	67	78.10	0.335
	<i>double-major</i>	81	71.52	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Discussion with the headmaster or assistant headmaster (learning about the school's tasks)	<i>single-major</i>	67	65.89	0.022
	<i>double-major</i>	81	81.62	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Learning about school documentation and legislation	<i>single-major</i>	67	76.87	0.527
	<i>double-major</i>	81	72.54	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Learning about the school counsellor's work	<i>single-major</i>	67	59.66	0.000
	<i>double-major</i>	81	86.77	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Learning about and participating at institutional activities (circles, supplementary work, projects, etc.)	<i>single-major</i>	67	70.90	0.336
	<i>double-major</i>	81	77.48	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Observation of lessons	<i>single-major</i>	67	75.68	0.755
	<i>double-major</i>	81	73.52	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Observing the adaptation of work to special needs education	<i>single-major</i>	67	64.75	0.010
	<i>double-major</i>	81	82.57	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Teaching observation	<i>single-major</i>	67	73.93	0.875
	<i>double-major</i>	81	74.98	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Teaching	<i>single-major</i>	67	73.49	0.765
	<i>double-major</i>	81	75.34	
	<i>total</i>	148		
Participation at pedagogical staff meetings	<i>single-major</i>	67	68.52	0.110
	<i>double-major</i>	81	79.44	

Performing Self-Evaluation Of:	Type Of Study	n	\bar{R}	P
	<i>total</i>	148		
Final Meeting With The Mentor	<i>single-major</i>	67	79.46	0.181
	<i>double-major</i>	81	70.40	
	<i>total</i>	148		

Concerning the type of study, the results in Table 4 indicate for three particular activities a statistically significant difference in the students' estimates. These are the self-evaluation of: discussion with the headmaster or assistant headmaster ($P=0.022$), learning about the school counsellor's work ($P=0.000$) and observing the adaptation of work to special needs education ($P=0.010$). Furthermore, the comparison of the average rank values shows for all these three activities the highest values for students of double-major study programmes. Several of the surveyed students were from the double-major study programme Pedagogy, where learning about the school counsellor's work is one of the priority tasks during practical training. Hence, we state that particularly these students were highly active at this tasks, while also addressing themselves to the teaching activities in the other major subject.

6. Conclusion

Practical pedagogical training is an important factor at the initial development of future experts in education in Slovenia as well as around the world (Krek & Metljak, 2011). During this training students get involved into working in class or at school, they observe the teaching of their mentor and colleague students, teach independently or in teams and evaluate the teaching as well as other activities related to their training. Performing self-evaluation of particular activities is one of the intended tasks of the students. Many authors emphasize the importance of evaluation and self-evaluation as the essential processes at the assessment, grading as well as identification of pros and cons in individual process implementations. (Brejc & Zavašnik Arčnik, 2010; Ferjan, 2005; Marentič Požarnik, 1999; Tyler, 1969). Self-evaluation is a form of evaluation and happens at the level of an individual or a group, which performs an own evaluation of a certain phenomenon. It ensures prompt feedback about the implementation of the educational programme, on which basis we plan further activities (MacBeath, 1999). Performing self-evaluation is also an important factor in encouraging the professional development of pedagogical workers, since it contributes to an improved understanding of the own work (Vogrinc & Podgornik, 2012).

In the theoretical part of this article we discussed evaluation and self-evaluation in general as well as in the context of practical pedagogical training. The presented outcome was

the starting point for the empirical research. Here, we determined how frequent the interviewed students performed self-evaluation of particular activities and, furthermore, which activities students self-evaluated the most and the least during their practical training. The results show that around 40% of the interviewed students always performed self-evaluation, whereas nearly a third performed it often and another third sometimes. Considering the medium or low shares, we conclude that students performed self-evaluation of particular activities in an average or rather small extent during practical training.

Students differently estimated their performance of self-evaluation of particular activities. They self-evaluated their teaching to the largest extent and also to a large extent the teaching observation, the final as well as the introductory meeting with the mentor. The lowest estimated activity is self-evaluation of participation at the pedagogical staff meetings. Similar low estimated is self-evaluation of discussion with the headmaster or assistant headmaster. Considering the rather high range between the largest and lowest average value (2.01), we conclude that the students performed self-evaluation of the particular activities to varying extents.

The results, presented in the empirical part of this article, point out that students do not have uniform standards regarding the duration and methods of performing self-evaluation of activities and, furthermore, that they are spending varying effort on this. We conclude that, in the context of practical pedagogical training, the strain of the students varies depending on the particular study programme. Hence, we recommend to unify the scope of the self-evaluation of particular activities for similar study programmes (e.g. considering type of study). This could support to align the performance of self-evaluation and, last but not least, improve the comparability of study programmes and harmonise the strain of the students during their practical training. Regarding the presented and analysed students' estimates, we propose to emphasize on performing self-evaluation of completely all activities. Furthermore, we recommend a stronger focus on the lower estimated (but just as important) activities, like e.g. self-evaluation of: observing the adaptation of work to special needs education, learning about school documentation and legislation, observation of lessons, learning about the school counsellor's work, discussion with the headmaster or assistant headmaster and participation at pedagogical staff meetings. We believe that self-evaluation of all activities which students perform is necessary and important, since it provides them critical insight into their own (more or less successful) work as well as into the planning of future work. We also think that standardisation of the self-evaluation regarding duration and scope leads to its improved performance during practical training. Furthermore, it supports to establish greater unity in the

organization of second cycle study programmes at the faculties of University of Maribor, which train future professionals in education.

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