



**LEA KOZEL**  
University of Primorska,  
Faculty of Education,  
“Anton Ukmar” Primary School,  
Koper, Slovenia

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## **RESEARCH ON THE CONTENTS AND ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN WHICH STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION KOPER PARTICIPATED**

*Abstract:* Teaching practice is one of the key components of teacher training, as theoretically too much oriented studies cannot meet the expectations of primary schools and social trends for teachers who are expected to be “thinking practitioners” and who can independently decide and act in concrete learning situations.

Within the perspectives of our primary schools development, vocational qualification and training has to change and provide links between theoretical and practical learning. Exactly the concentrated teaching practice is an indispensable component in the light of those endeavours. Teaching practice should be carefully reformed and implemented in the way that the highest possible qualification of candidates for teachers is achieved.

Teaching practice has been adopted as an integral part of undergraduate qualification and training which makes it possible to link academic and vocational studies which is the only way to provide efficient qualification of primary school teachers.

Following the adjustments to the Bologna Process the teaching practice is being extended and also improved. However, we still have too much to deal with the contents and organisational difficulties. The practice programme has to be both in its contents as well as in its organisational aspect in line with its objectives, it has to qualify teachers, the “thinking practitioners”, who know how to develop and research their own practice. Therefore, the emphasis is given on guided and supervised acquaintance with education-formation process as well as on verifications in different classroom situations.

How to improve teaching practice was our main question to which we wanted to give a reply in our research on the contents and organisational aspects of teaching practice in which students of the Faculty of Education Koper participated.

*Key words:* faculty of education, teaching practice, opinion of students on practice, relations among practice participants, expectations on work in practice

### **1. Introduction**

Ms. Barica Marentič Požarnik (2006) asked herself how to establish an optimum relationship and link between theory and practice and pointed out that this question had always accompanied the education of teachers. The teacher education science nowadays emphasises the inseparable complementarity of theory and practice in the qualification of teachers as “thinking practitioners”, who are capable of mastering new challenges and facing the complexity and un-

certainty of their profession. It is therefore not surprising that the EU has paid a lot of attention to the financing of projects which strengthen the partnership co-operation between faculties and schools in order to attain a more qualitative achievement of competences which teachers of future are going to need to act professionally in their work. Ms. Požarnik also underlines that besides the enlarged part of education and the students' experiences the quality of that experience is very important. The latter can be influenced and achieved by permanent link and genuine cooperational relationship between institutions and experts that work for them – as well as between the faculty lecturers and teachers of primary schools (Marentič Požarnik, 2006).

Teachers as “thinking practitioners” are in the centre of attention when planning changes in the education of future teachers within the Bologna reform. For its implementation both is important the system-organisational aspect of teachers' education and the content-implementation part.

Ms. Cirila Peklaj also agrees in her works with Ms. Marentič Požarnik; she says that there are no good teachers without systematic linking of theory with practice, i.e., without studying one's own teaching practice, without monitoring and analysing the existing state of affairs in education and without planning changes on the basis of findings, and particularly not without involvement of all participants in this process: faculties, schools, professors, mentors and students (Peklaj, 2006).

## **2. Teaching practice**

Ms. Cvetka Bizjak claims that the formation of future teachers starts with their birth, i.e., within their families where they learn how to understand the world around them, how to see themselves in that world and the people they meet. By entering school they establish their first concepts through their experiences of what instruction really is, how it is managed and what is the role of pupils. And the professional development of future teachers starts by their entering the faculty. During the teaching practice a lot of students for the first time meet with the discrepancies between their image of learning and teaching, which they got when they observed instruction from the point of view of being pupils and the modern trends which are based on constructivistic understanding of learning. The undergraduate studies therefore do not represent only the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, but to a large extent also changing the pre-established views, beliefs and concepts (Bizjak, 2004).

Ms. Bizjak continues that it is not enough for teachers to be familiar with theory. Theory is only a system of generalised cognitions which are relatively independent in context. Theoretical cognitions are therefore widely applicable –

in various contexts. And that is at the same time also its weakness as it lacks pragmatic component. So, in the professional development of teachers, besides theoretical knowledge and training, skills an important part play also experiences. It is a question of holistic models of understanding and acting which are closely linked with concrete situations and mean an indispensable completion of theory.

All teachers begin their professional career by rich experiences from schools, from learning and teaching. Even those who did not have a chance of having a concise school practice managed to establish, through several years of their schooling, a more or less clear vision on how lessons are managed, on what is the role of teachers in this process, and what is the role of pupils. Those laic concepts, often automated to such an extent that they have become almost sub-conscious, compose the personal theory of teaching. In the process of planned expert development those laic theories are supposed to change and upgrade gradually to attain the level of professionalism. (Bizjak, 2004).

According to Mira in Majda Cencič the theoretical basis of learning from experience is the Kolb's system of classifying learning, which says that learning is a cyclic process of combining basic process of learning, observing, adopting examples, active attempts and theoretical conceptualisation. The authors therefore ascertain that the most adequate for the teachers' profile is the combination of theoretical and experience learning (Cencič, Cencič, 1994).

Ms.Valentič Zuljan (2001) refers to the existence of several attempts of illumination and determination of teachers' changing and development. The three phase model of Frances Fuller is one of the first where the teachers' development is linked with the changing of teachers' thinking about the vocational dilemmas and anxieties. In connection with the characteristics of teachers' vocational development were later on developed the so called Berliner Model (1989, 1992), Sheckley and Allen (1991) as well as model of brothers Dreyfus (1991). Each of them presents the teachers' professional development in separate phases from a beginner to an expert. Ms. Valentič Zuljan (after Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1989; Fox, 1983) resumes that the teachers' vocational progress along different phases is not automatic and inevitable, since it is not a question of linear but a very complex model (Valentič Zuljan, 2001).

Ms. Valentič Zuljan (2001) resumes that most phase models try to follow the time dimension and that often the quantitative aspect is underlined, as for example number of service years (Fuller,1965, after Kagan, 1992), whereas the quality of experiences is left behind which is really a more credible basis for determining and promoting vocational development (Valentič Zuljan, 2001).

The year 2003/2004 was in Slovenia marked by the beginning of the “Bologna Process”, which was supposed to bring Slovenia into the common European Higher Education System by 2010. Common European principles are based on the fact that a teacher's profession requires a diploma of higher education institution and that teachers have to have a proper education from their vocational area and an adequate teaching qualification and that the programmes for teachers' education and training have to be available at all three levels (undergraduate, masters and doctorate) and that it is above all necessary to encourage teachers' readiness to do the research work and to demonstrate their own practice leading to the development of new knowledge (Valentič Zuljan et al, 2007).

Ms.Tančing and Ms.Devjak (2006) emphasise that the renovation of the studying programmes is based upon the change of the paradigm, i.e., the shift from input concept of studying programmes, based on contents and objectives determined by teachers, to the output concept of studying programmes, i.e., the studying achievements expressed through the competences that students acquire through studying programmes (Valentič Zuljan et al, 2007).

### 2.1. The significance and the role of teaching practice in developing competences of future teachers

Ms.Valentič Zuljan (2001) argues that teaching practice is an important part of teachers' training. In her work “The initial monitored teaching practice and students' professional growth” she makes difference between the traditional model of teaching practice and the model of teaching practice oriented towards research work and thinking. She compares both models and claims that a shift in teachers' education is needed if we want to put in place “thinking practitioners”. In this process reflection plays an important part as it is an important factor of vocational growth of teachers (Valentič Zuljan, 2000).

It is urgent to have a permanent and genuine cooperational link among the institutions and experts who are working there, i.e., among faculty lecturers and teachers of primary schools, if we want that students acquire more qualitative practical experiences during their education period (Marentič Požarnik, 2006).

Teaching practice is an integrated part of the education-formation process by which students qualify for the initial independent performance of their profession. Namely, students are more in-depth familiarised with the education-formation process in those areas of primary schools for which they are being professionally trained for. They implement in practice the acquired educational, psychological, expert and didactic knowledge and they can follow the life and the work at schools (Cencič, Cencič, 1994).

## 2.2. Implementation of teaching practice

The authors Mira in Majda Cencič presented various implementations of teaching practice in their work, namely:

- a) Periodical learning practice each school year provides a systematic and gradual implementation of introductory, observational, assistant and independent practice. The objectives of each practice are in stages and concrete which allows students to be oriented to individual elements of instruction and to an opportunity of developing at least certain basic skills of good teaching as well as social, communicative and other characteristics. Several higher education lecturers participate in the practical qualification. The combination of introductory, observational, assistant and independent practice has advantages in particular in the fact that it enables linking practical experiences with theoretical contents. This linking gives encouragement, the readiness to contemplate on practical experiences, it teaches us to overcome obstacles in realizing ideas, promotes initiative and independence of students, as well as gives incentive for a creative action and does not lead to repetition of patterns.
- b) Concise practice which is carried out once in the studying period in a separate semester is more suitable for successive model of vocational qualification since it is an additional vocational educational training in psychology as well as practical training after the finished expert education. Practice organised this way may be holistic, individual and based on experiences and it does not provide reflection on the experiences from the practice.
- c) Students may perform individual and team practice individually or joint in groups. In the individual practice students are trained each with his own teacher – mentor and in the team practice students are distributed into groups. Students work with each other within a group, they consult and help each other and they organise educational work so that they acquire as much educational experiences as possible (Cencič, Cencič, 1994).

## 3. Mentorship

In order to carry out a successful teaching practice it is necessary to have a committed cooperation of all stakeholders in the process, i.e., mentors, other workers at schools, professors of the Faculty of Education and other students. The quality of cooperation between mentors and students is a very sensitive area, which is among others significantly influenced by the personal characteristics of

participants involved – mentors and students, other teachers at schools and headmasters as well as outside partnership workers of schools, in particular teachers from the Faculty of Education.

Students expect a lot from their mentors. They want their mentors to be open and democratic, that they cooperate as their assistant deputies, that they would introduce them to teaching, help them to reflect and improve their teaching, feelings and their work in classes as well as to better motivate pupils.

The ways and the forms of students' teaching offer to mentors information which they analyse together with students. The ways the data and the decisions are interpreted depend on the mentors. Mentors' approaches and leaderships are different. The mentors' control and their expression of power has to be replaced by the mentors' relationships which is defined by the encouragement and incentive, by a permitted independence, following up students' ideas and feelings, by enabling students to be independent in thinking and other actions as well as by accepting even the "unacceptable" ideas of students (Cencič, Cencič, 1994).

At this stage the role of mentors to future teachers becomes more and more important and also more demanding and complex. Teachers' mentors have to be qualified in several abilities/competences in order to better support their students in the vocational growth, to challenge their reflection and to encourage them to various types of acting, to evaluate their progress and to cooperate all the time with the faculty teachers. Mentors are not only role models for their students and those who only give advice and "recipes" for acting and teaching in classes, but also and above all function as promoters of students' learning from their own experiences, they make links between the theory and practice where an important part is reflection and clarification on incompatibilities in convictions (Marentič Požarnik, 2006).

According to Ms. Marentič Požarnik the main task of mentors remain to "help students to learn how to teach" by way of helping them to learn from their own experiences through planning, implementing and analysing the instruction (Marentič Požarnik, 2006).

#### **4. The opinion of the students of the faculty of education Koper on the course of teaching practice**

##### **4.1 Determination of the problem and the objectives of the research**

The teaching practice is for the students of the Faculty of Education Koper an urgent "stage" they are required to do in order to complete successfully their education process. By the research we wanted to find out what is the opinion of students of the Faculty of Education Koper on the education practice. We were

interested in how the education practice should be conceived, what they expected from their mentors at schools or kindergartens and what should be the responsibilities of students in doing practice. Through the research we tried to find out the inter relationship between individual variables.

## 4.2 Description of the research methodology

In our research we were using the multivariate method – the factor analysis.

### *4.2.1 Description of the instrument and the sample*

In order to find out the opinion of students of Lower Class Level and the Pre-School Education about the education practice at the Faculty of Education we put in place and implemented a five grade assessment scale composed of 35 statements. Solving the scale was anonymous. Students were solving it so that they made a cross to indicate their level of agreement with the written statements, which were related to education practice.

The research took place in April and May 2007 when students returned from various »types« of education practices in the way that the questionnaire was distributed among the students.

The collected data were calculated by a computer programme SPSS.

The sample was a non-accidental as it was solved by the students from one of the three faculties of education in Slovenia. We distributed 176 questionnaires among the students from the 2nd to 3rd academic year of department of Pre School Education and among the students from the 1st to 4th year of department for Lower Class Instruction. All 176 filled in questionnaires were returned.

## 4.3. Results and interpretation

### *4.3.1. Presentation of variables*

After the elaboration of data by factor analysis by using the computer programme SPSS we got nine factors with which we managed to explain in total 63,9 % of the entire variance. According to the Thurston's criteria, which says that a variance should not be explained by a high number of factors (Fulgosi, 1998), the number of factors in our case is adequate, i.e., we can explain with the first factor 8,6 %, with the second factor 8,4 %, with the third factor equally 8,4 % of variance, with the fourth 7,8 %, with the fifth factor 7,2%, with the sixth 6,9 %, with the seventh factor 5,6 %, with the eighth 5,6 % and with the ninth factor 5,4 % of the entire variance of correlation matrix.

**First factor: Relations in practice.** The first factor explains 8,6 % of the entire system variance. Its highest projections are as follows:

- Pupils accept students in practice positively;
- Students look forward to practice;
- Students are trained for independent teaching through the implementation of teaching practice;
- Mentors in schools/kindergartens are pleased to take students on practice.

The above stated variables are related to relationships that are established when students begin with teaching practice, namely, it is very important that how pupils accept the students, since this to a great extent influences the response of pupils towards students during their teaching process. The relationship of mentors to students and the first touch between students and mentors are also of essential importance. Students doing their practice have to feel that they are well accepted by the mentors and that they are going to »back them up« during the teaching practice by their advice and knowledge. Hence, if the students feel acceptance from the part of pupils and mentors, they would look forward to teaching practice and would enjoy performing it. And that is obviously linked with students' training in practice for an independent teaching.

It is evident from our research that most of the students consider they are well accepted by the mentors of the schools/kindergartens to take practice. Only a low proportion of (6,8 %) students does not have an attitude to that aspect which perhaps means that they had negative experiences with mentors in teaching practice.

Very important is the information that almost all the questioned (91,5 %) look forward to the teaching practise which means that teaching practice is not a burden to them.

Students are also convinced that pupils accept students in practice positively, since up to 93,2 % of the questioned agree that pupils are happy with the students in practice and take them positively. On the basis of those findings we can make a conclusion that most of the students (89,2 %) consider that by doing teaching practice they are trained for the independent teaching, since most relationships among students - pupils and mentors are positive.

**Second factor: Mentors' burden.** The second factor explains 8,4 % of the entire system variance. Its highest projections are as follows:

- Students' mentors are psychologically burdened during practice;
- Students' mentors are physically burdened during practice.

Both variables of the second factor are related to the mentors' burdening. It is very important that students are fully aware that despite the fact that they perform teaching practice by themselves, mentors are burdened both physically and



psychologically. Certainly, mentors are less physically burdened when they have students in practice than when they are alone, since they have »assistants« who perform a part of their work: they make applications, prepare teaching charts, write detailed preparations,... However, students' mentors are certainly psychologically burdened, since they are responsible for students to carry out a certain learning item correctly in terms of didactics, to elaborate that item completely, to use appropriate terms during teaching practice, to keep their documentation straight,...

It is evident from the results, that most students (63,6 %) do not agree at all or do not agree in general with the point of view that students' mentors are physically burdened during practice. From that finding we could make a conclusion that students do not notice any physical efforts at the assigned mentors.

Almost one third of the questioned students (27 %) could not determine their attitude to the statement that students' mentors are psychologically burdened during practice. Perhaps we could find the reason in the incapability of empathy to their mentor. Almost half of the questioned students (42,9 %) however thought that having students in practice does not represent a big effort for teachers – mentors.

**Third factor: Faculty guidelines.** The third factor explains 8,4 % of the entire system variance. Its highest projections are as follows:

- Faculty guidelines are clear to mentors of the students in practice.
- Faculty guidelines are clear to students in practice.
- Students in practice consistently follow the guidelines which are provided by the faculty.

All three variables of the third factor are related to the guidelines provided by the faculty to all the students and their mentors. It happens many times that the guidelines which both students and mentors get are merely a formality to which they only roughly stick to. There might be two reasons for that, namely, the guidelines are not entirely or are only partly clear to the participants of the teaching practice which results in a superfluous and inaccurate implementation. And the second reason may be the deliberate disrespect of the guidelines since they do not find any sense in them and therefore perform only the tasks that provide to students the accomplishment of teaching practice.

From the acquired results it is evident that the faculty guidelines are clear to more than a half of the questioned students in practice (59,7 %) which means that students have, prior to going to the practice, different views on the question what they are going to do in the practice and what are their responsibilities to be fulfilled in the practice. To a quarter of the questioned students (25,6%) the

guidelines for teaching practice are not clear or they are not entirely familiar with them and it therefore happens that they follow the guidelines, that were provided to them by the faculty, inconsistently.

More than half of the questioned students (59,7 %) also agree with the statement that the faculty guidelines are clear to the mentors of students in practice. That means that students in practice got a feeling that their mentors are sovereign in their performance of mentorship to students in practice. Slightly more than one fifth (21,6 %) of the questioned students agree that their mentors know and understand exactly what is their task in the teaching practice, and they perhaps work according to their personal judgement, which causes students' uncertainty and does not influence positively on their further qualification for the teachers profession.

**Fourth factor: Students' burden.** The fourth factor explains 7,8% of the entire system variance. The highest projections are as follows:

- Students are psychologically burdened in teaching practice.
- Students are physically burdened in teaching practice.

Both variables of the fourth actor are related to the burden of students during teaching practice.

Besides a challenge the teaching practice represents to students by all means also physical and psychological burden. The first in terms of making preparations, concrete materials and helping tools which students should make to demonstrate pupils as clearly as possible the learning subject. And this means several hours of sitting, thinking, finding appropriate separate didactic steps... And according to our opinion the psychological burden means the responsibility of students that they present a certain learning subject during the teaching practice in the way that pupils would understand it and master it.

Despite the above stated we can make a conclusion from the research that more than a half of students (63,6 %) generally consider not to be physically burdened during the teaching practice. This means that for them the teaching practice does not represent a special physical effort. Only a large one tenth (12 %) of students consider teaching practice to be an effort.

When establishing the point of view whether students in teaching practice are psychologically burdened/loaded almost half of the questioned students (48,9 %) answered that they agree entirely or mostly with it. Up to one third of students (32,4 %) does not take over a part of the responsibility for the teaching practice saying that the teaching practice for them does not represent a psychological effort.

**Fifth factor: Use of theoretical knowledge.** The fifth factor explains 7,2% of the entire system variance. The highest projections are as follows:

- Students know how to implement the acquired theoretical knowledge during teaching practice.
- Students during their studies acquire all theoretical knowledge necessary to do the teaching practice.
- Students upgrade their acquired theoretical knowledge during teaching practice with practical knowledge.

All three variables of the fifth factor are related to the use of theoretical knowledge which students acquire in the course of their studies.

It is important that the majority of students understand that they can qualify for teachers' profession only through the theoretical knowledge that they have to adopt first of all inwards and later on to use it knowledgeably over practical experiences. We can assume that from the results of the research, since almost all questioned students (90 %) agreed that students upgrade the acquired theoretical knowledge with the practical knowledge in the teaching practice. This can be explained by the fact that students link theoretical and practical knowledge and that listening and deepening the fundamental pedagogical subjects and certain didactics at the Faculty of Education Koper is not really unnecessary and useless in the preparations for teaching and the expected profession.

It is not simple to provide an answer to the question how to put in place the theoretical knowledge in the pedagogical process; it depends on different factors. The proof for it are the results obtained by the research since only three quarters of the questioned students (68,8 %) think that students know how to use the acquired theoretical knowledge during the teaching practice. In the remaining quart of the questioned there are (22,7 %) of those who do not know whether they can use the acquired knowledge in practice and almost one tenth (8,5 %) of the asked think that they cannot use the acquired knowledge in the teaching practice.

We sometimes think that studying certain theory is self satisfactory as we do not see any sense in theory until we try it out in practice. However, this kind of thinking does not »roam« the mind of more than a half of the questioned students (63,1 %), since they consider that students in the course of their studies acquire all theoretical needed for performing the teaching practice. Only a low proportion of the questioned students (17,6 %) are not satisfied with their knowledge acquired during their studies and consider it is insufficient and find it useless for the performance of the pedagogical profession.

**Sixth factor: Link between theory and practice.** The sixth factor explains 6,9 % of the entire system variance. The highest projections are as follows:

- Students' desire in which grade/group they would like to do the teaching practice is respected.
- Mentors are during practice completely devoted to students and help them.
- Teaching students in the teaching practice brings novelties and freshness in the learning process.
- Experiences students acquire during practice are more useful than the theoretical knowledge acquired at the faculty.

All the variables of the sixth factor are related to the links between the theoretical knowledge students get in the course of their studies and the practical experiences with which they upgrade and complement the acquired knowledge.

People are different. They possess various potentials inside them which are exploited to various extents. And potentials are not used at all if we do not do what we want. Each of us knows very well what suits us, in what area we feel strong, what we can do with ease and what tasks can burden us. Consequently, more than three quarters of the questioned students (78,4 %) think that the wishes of students in what grade/group they would like to do their teaching practice should be respected. More than one tenth of the questioned (13,6 %) did not agree with the before mentioned statement. The explanation for such a high level of disagreement can be found in the fact that students were thinking of the actual state of affairs, i.e., that they could not have any influence either on the selection of the grade/group, where they would like to perform their practice or on the possibility of selecting the grade/group by themselves.

Interesting are the views of students on the statement that teaching students in the teaching practice brings to their studies certain novelties and freshness, since up to three quarters of the questioned students (87,5 %) totally agreed or mostly agreed with that statement. Only 3,4 % of the questioned students are not sure about themselves and think that it does not bring any novelties and freshness.

A vast majority of questioned students (94,9 %) totally agree or mostly agree with the statement that experiences acquired through practice more useful from the theoretical ones they get at the faculty. Only 1,7 % students do not agree with that statement meaning that for them theoretical knowledge is more important than practical experiences.

Majority of students (83,5 %) wish that their mentors were totally devoted to them during their practice and that they would help them. Only a small propor-

tion of students (4,6 %) who participated in the research does not need such a large devotion and help of their mentors during their teaching practice.

**Seventh factor: Need for mentorship.** The seventh factor explains 5,6 % of the entire system variance. The highest projections are as follows:

- During their practice students need the advice from the competent person for a certain subject at the faculty.
- During their practice students need the leadership of an experienced mentor.

Both variables of the seventh factor are related to the students' mentorship, i.e., students are in their teaching practice led by their appointed mentors in the grades; when needed, they can consult and ask for help their mentors from the Faculty of Education Koper, who are competent for a certain subject at the faculty.

A vast majority of the questioned students (90,9 %) considers that they need leadership of experienced mentors during their teaching practice. On the basis of the obtained results we can assume that students still cannot manage their independent teaching in the classrooms by themselves and therefore need directions and constant confirmations.

From the obtained results we can also conclude that the largest proportion of all questioned students (28,4%) cannot take any view on the statement that students need advice of a certain competent person for that subject at the faculty during their teaching practice. A weak half of the questioned students (44,3 %) do agree with that statement or they agree entirely, which again shows that students are not really so independent in their teaching practice and that they need confirmation that their work is correct. A weak third of the participants of the research (27,3 %) consider that they do not need advice from the competent person for the subject at the Faculty of Education Koper.

**Eighth factor: Access to personal data.** The eighth factor explains 5,6 % of the entire system variance. The highest projections are as follows:

- Students have an insight into certain personal data of pupils during their teaching practice which means that their right of personal data protection is violated.

That is the only variable related to the students' access to pupils' personal data where they carry out their teaching practice.

The relevant legislation changes all the time. The need of the society to protect and prevent the inadequate and unjustified "intrusion" into the private life of each individual is becoming bigger and bigger. In order to protect the weakest

members of the society, i.e., children, most of their personal information have become secret and therefore untouchable without prior consent of their parents.

The majority opinion of the questioned (58%) was that the right of pupils to the protection of their personal data has been violated by the access of students to certain personal information of their pupils during their teaching practice. Maybe this question is related to the special task which students of higher academic years have to accomplish during the teaching practice, i.e., they have to select one pupil, they keep observing him closely and note their observations on the pupils' school performance. Perhaps they feel this assignment as an intrusion into the pupil's privacy or even into the privacy of his family. Only one tenth of the questioned (15,9 %) does not agree with that statement.

**Ninth factor: Practice work.** The ninth factor explains 5,4 % of the entire system variance. The highest projections are as follows:

- Pupils' parents accept students in practice.
- Students are left alone to themselves in the time of their teaching practice.
- Students fill in school documentation during their teaching practice (diary).

All three variables of the ninth factor are related to students' work in the teaching practice.

During their practice students meet many people, they have different relationships with them, they establish and use various ways of communication. Students are fully aware of that since three quarters of the questioned (73,8 %) think that they are not left alone during their teaching practice. Hence, we can make a conclusion that they feel the support of their mentors at schools and the professors of the Faculty of Education Koper; maybe the reason lies in the fact that three quarters of the students found a perfect harmony with their mentors.

Besides that the majority of the questioned students (63,6 %) had a positive relationship with the parents of children they were doing the teaching practice with, since the results of the scale of views clearly shows that they consider that their pupils' parents accepted them well in their practice.

As regards the administrative work during the teaching practice, we can say that there is more and more such work. The amount of work is in direct proportion with the administrative work teachers have in performing their pedagogical work. More than a half of students who were performing their teaching practice (54 %) totally agree or mostly agree that school documentation (diary) has to be filled in during the practice. This can be explained by the fact that students may feel a need to be faced with certain documentation during their teaching practice and to understand it as well as to be able to fill it in so that they can use that

knowledge later on. Almost one third of the questioned (30,2 %) does not agree that students keep documentation in their teaching practice. This can be explained in two ways; firstly, mentors perhaps did not allow those students to keep a dairy or secondly, this percentage of questioned students thinks that it is not right that students are during their teaching practice »loaded« also with this responsible task.

## 5. Conclusions

In the modern education of teachers the teaching practice during the studying period is getting a key role and significance in Europe and in the World, since students have the issues in the practical experiences and this way by a critical consideration verify the provided theories and principles in practice and build their vocational skills and knowledge. In the reformed curricula the teaching practice therefore occupies the key role and importance and for its implementation are responsible both the high education institution as well as the school where the teaching practice takes place.

We accomplished a research work related to the opinion of the students' teaching practice that they do within the regular undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Education Koper. The latent components explaining the largest proportion of the variance are: relationships during practice; mentors' burdens; faculty guidelines; students' burdens; the use of theoretical knowledge; the link between theory and practice; the need for mentorship; access to personal data and practice work.

The above enumerated components are related to the opinion of students about the sense and objectives of teaching practice as an important component of teachers' qualification and training. They consider relations among all the participants of the teaching practice (students – mentors – pupils) as very important and therefore they cannot be indifferent to how they are accepted during practice as they mostly look forward to it. Besides that they take practice very seriously as they feel physical as well as psychological burdens both with themselves and in their mentors. They are also fully aware that they have a specific objective in their practice which is to benefit from it as much as possible. Besides, they are also limited by certain general guidelines provided by the faculty which they are expected to stick to in order to accomplish their practice successfully.

In general terms, it seems that students trust in their theoretical knowledge they get within their studies and what is more, they are capable of linking and implementing it with their practice.

The students' opinion on teaching practice seems important because in case students had a negative opinion on the mentioned contents, they would see no sense and no use in doing teaching practice, or they would even consider practice as something inevitable and self satisfactory. And if students themselves see benefits in teaching practice and attribute to it a major importance, and this way take all the benefits of those positive elements which practice brings, they can learn a lot from their practical work with pupils.

It would be extremely interesting to carry out another research to verify the opinion of mentors to students in the teaching practice. It would sound necessary to send them the same scope of attitudes in order to verify what their opinion on all the covered components of the teaching practice is.

We can make a conclusion by saying that it would be an intolerable conservative approach to maintain the present model of various types of teaching practice and it is therefore legitimate and compulsory to change the practice towards the modern, professional models which have been today confirmed throughout the world as very successful models of qualification and training of students as future expert teachers.

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Lea Kozel  
Univerzitet u Primorskom,  
Pedagoški fakultet i Osnovna škola „Anton Ukmar“,  
Kopar, Slovenija

#### ISTRAŽIVANJE SADRŽAJNIH I ORGANIZACIONIH ASPEKATA PRAKTIČNE NASTAVE U KOJOJ SU UČESTVOVALI STUDENTI PEDAGOŠKOG FAKULTETA U KOPRU

*Rezime:* Praktična nastava je jedna od ključnih komponenti obuke za učitelja, s obzirom da previše teorijski orijentisane studije ne mogu da ispune očekivanja osnovne škole i društvene trendove koji od učitelja/nastavnika očekuju da budu „refleksivni praktičari“ koji mogu da donose odluke i delaju samostalno u konkretnim situacijama učenja u učionici.

U okviru perspektiva razvoja naše osnovne škole, stručno osposobljavanje i obuka moraju se promeniti i obezbediti vezu između teorijskog i praktičnog učenja. Tačnije, fokusirana praktična nastava je preko potrebna komponenta u svetlu ovih nastojanja. Praktičnu nastavu bi trebalo pažljivo reformisati i implementirati na takav način kako bi se postigla najviša moguća osposobljenost kandidata za izvođenje nastave.

Kako poboljšati praktičnu nastavu je bilo glavno pitanje na koje smo želeli da odgovorimo u ovom našem istraživanju o sadržajnim i organizacionim aspektima praktične nastave u kojoj su učestvovali studenti Pedagoškog fakulteta u Koprju.

*Ključne reči:* pedagoški fakultet, praktična nastava, mišljenje studenata o praksi, odnosi među učesnicima prakse, očekivanja vezana za rad na praksi.