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FULFILLMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Introduction

Pre-primary school (hereinafter PPS) teachers are expected to carry out quality work, improve their performance, and master a wide range of skills and knowledge. In other words, they are expected to continue their development professionally and increase their professional capacities as part of their professional development. The professional development of PPS teachers includes any activity that enhances individual knowledge, skills, abilities, and other aspects of the profession. **Professional development** has **three basic components**: it includes not only the **institutional continuing education of the teacher**, but also **self-education**, as well as **knowledge, experience, and skills acquired through the teacher's professional experience**. These three components of professional development complement one another and are all three are absolutely essential to the professional development of the individual (and the quality of the school – Kohnová, 2012).

The first component of professional development – **institutional continuing education** – is an important and integral part of each pedagogue's teaching career. It consists of education implemented after the completion of preparatory pedagogical education, and accompanies the teacher throughout their entire professional career. Continuing education for pedagogues is therefore an integral part of every teaching profession and is also addressed by legislative

documents related to the teaching profession. Specifically, the requirement for education workers to further develop their knowledge through continuing education (hereinafter PCE) is established by Section 24 of the Act on Education Workers, which stipulates that “for the duration of their pedagogical activities, education workers are required to undergo continuing education, during which they refresh, maintain, and supplement their qualifications” (Act No. 563/2004, p. 13). Experts often emphasise the goals of continuing education, including “improving teachers’ professional skills, internal development of schools, improving the educational and learning process, implementing innovations and changes in education, and the personal development of teachers” (Kohnová, 2004, p. 62). Planning the continuing development of PPS teachers is part of their personal development, and is the responsibility of the school principal. The education and development of teachers must be not only systematic, but also goal-oriented, its organisation is typically based on the goals and strategies of the organisation of the specific pre-primary school, and is planned based on the identification of the educational needs of individual teachers. Teachers have the expectation that they will acquire specific knowledge and skills that they can apply in their work, and thus receive feedback. When making decisions on a teacher’s participation in specific educational opportunities, the principal must not only keep in mind the level of educational need in relation to the duties and goals of the organisation, but must also weigh the personal needs of the specific teacher. Elements that play a significant role in the selection of educational activities include primarily its cost-effectiveness (money, time), necessary content of the programme, suitability of the facilities (venue), abilities of the participant, capabilities of the instructor, and methodological suitability. Teacher participation in this type of continuing education is necessary so that teachers do not stagnate, but continue to expand and enrich their knowledge based on their responsible evaluation of teaching situations as well as their own self-reflection.

According to current legislation, **continuing professional education of teachers** (and other education workers) may also focus on: 1. acquiring necessary qualifications, 2. expanding qualifications, and 3. broadening qualifications. Under the continuing education of teachers, we can also include acquiring teaching qualifications.

The continuing education of teachers is grounded in the educator *Kariérní systém* (Career System) that currently stands on the cusp of implementation in the Czech Republic. It is one of the fundamental appeals standing before

regional education, and is expected to lead to an improvement in the quality of the teaching profession and regional education as a whole. The continuing education of education workers is included in a section of this project, titled: *Standard učitele a jeho profesní já (A Standard for Teachers and Their Professional Selves)*, which includes professional qualifications, professional knowledge, self-reflection, and personal and professional development. The developmental career path presents teachers categorised into three levels of professional development: 1) **novice teacher**: is prepared to continue their education in the area of professional qualifications and thus maintain professional and general cultural and social awareness, 2) **independent teacher**: is fulfilling their professional development plan through their activities in formal and informal education, actively participates in PCE, professional education events, internal training courses, etc. Utilises their off-hours for self-education for individual education leading to accomplishing the goals established by their professional development plan, 3) **outstanding teacher, pedagogical leader of the school**: makes suggestions at their school for the continuing education of education workers. Monitors, seeks out, and organises the selection of educational events for their colleagues in accordance with the continuing education plan of the school. Proposes suitable internal training courses and is in contact with educational institutions as well as specific instructors. Makes suggestions and helps colleagues to create suitable self-education content so that it corresponds with the needs of the school and teachers (*Kariérní systém*, 2015).

The second component of professional development – **self-education** – is significant in that the teacher establishes their own goals, chooses their learning materials, guides themselves and monitors their own learning, and takes on further decisions. This form of education is characteristic of development of one's self by one's own means. Self-education should be included in appraisals in personnel evaluations.

The third component of teacher professional development represents their **knowledge, experience, and skills acquired through professional experience**. It includes all of the teacher's professional activities that represent the areas upon which some topics of continuing education courses are built, as well as topics for the teacher's self-education. The professional activities of PPS teachers are based on **school and classroom education programmes**. In their creation, teachers utilise the national-level curriculum, the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education (hereinafter FEP PE), which

forms the basis of educational goals that monitor child development and **their professional activities**, which are listed in the FEP PE (2004).

Another important aspect in professional development planning that the teacher bases on their conscious educational needs is the diagnostic process. And by this we mean which aspects she would include oneself in. In other words, **self-reflection**, one of the qualifications of a teacher: “the ability to self-diagnose, e.g. to assess one’s own activity in diagnosis, and state the strengths and weaknesses that appear during the diagnostic process”. Through the self-diagnosis of the professional activities, the teacher has the opportunity to verify the success of his/her effect on the child, to reflect on the individual aspects of her pedagogical activities, and reflect upon the behaviour in given situations, related to a specific child, etc. The conclusions formulated from self-diagnosis should have a positive influence on the future performance, as well as the planning and implementation of the professional development. Professional activities upon which the teacher can focus in self-diagnosis and have the ability to reveal the educational needs in certain educational areas may include those that are presented by authors B. Kasáčová, S. Babiaková, M. Cabanová, E. Fipiak, A. Seberová, et al. (2011) in *Profesiografie v slovensko-česko-polském výzkumu*. The authors state that, after in-depth discussions, they have structured 27 types of professional activities that were subsequently divided into 6 basic categories: “1. activities directly related to teaching and its preparation – time-structured; 2. other activities directly related to pedagogy – time-structured; 3. activities stemming from the teacher’s other activities – time-structured; 4. learning and self-education – time-structured; 5. extra-curricular and public activities related to the profession – not time-structured; 6. other activities that were supplemented in a non-time-structured manner” (Kasáčová et al., 2011, p. 145).

Expectations of the ability of *self-reflection* in the teaching profession continue to grow. The teacher is expected to be able to analyse own professional activity, present and support teaching approach, participate in the development of the school, collaborate with colleagues, and communicate well with parents and the wider social environment. “To this, however, we must also add the ability to process and evaluate feedback from one’s own environment, accept criticism, be receptive to suggestions for change, consider their legitimacy, and consider whether to accept them” (Burkovičová, 2013, p. 38). The goal of a teacher’s **self-reflection** here is that she is able to recognise professional imperfections in the activities and use this as a basis to modify or adjust

procedures and approach to the children, and effectively plan **professional development**. The teacher expresses educational needs, whose fulfilment will allow to acquire pedagogical skills that represent the requirements defined in the qualifications for pre-primary school teachers. In defining pre-primary school teacher qualifications, today's pre-primary schools have the option of basing their definitions on a number of models (see Nezvalová, 2003; Švec, 1995; Vašutová, 2004), or to create their own model that will focus on the the philosophy of the specific pre-primary school, during which it is important to have a foundation in the current definition of education oriented toward the so-called personal development of the child (Syslová, 2013, p. 31). Qualifications represent certain requirements of the personality and work of a teacher. And it is important to emphasise here that, in addition to pedagogical, professional, psycho-didactic, and diagnostic qualifications, it is necessary to increase the prioritisation of the development and cultivation of social and socio-psychological qualifications. These include primarily communicative, personal, adaptive, and **self-reflection** qualification.

In teacher professional development, the demand to achieve **professional qualifications** has come to the forefront. Obtaining professional qualifications is not a short-term process, but accompanies the teacher throughout the duration of their professional career. Professional qualification begins to take shape during the course of preparatory pedagogical education, in which the students can prepare for the profession of pre-primary education teacher in three forms: at secondary vocational schools, higher professional schools, and higher education institutions/universities (Act on Education Workers, 2004). These educational institutions create targeted study programmes whose student profile application to the profession of pre-primary school teacher is directly defined. The level of preparatory pedagogical education is predestined by the professional and human qualities of pre-primary school teachers. These qualities include their teaching activities with pre-primary school aged children, the quality of the relationship with the legal guardians of the child and with other fellow employees at the pre-primary school, as well as the areas of management and administration. They are the foundation for the commencement of their career path and their continuing education. According to R. Burkovičová, "if a future pre-primary school teacher does not undergo a high-quality conceptualised preparatory pedagogical education in any form of education, that which we have worked towards for over a decade will not change, e.g. their approach

to the child, pedagogical methods, planning, and overall organisation of educational activity focused on the child, nor their work in any other area of pre-primary education” (Burkovičová, 2008, p. 114). Secondary school pedagogical education in pre-primary school education in the Czech Republic takes place at secondary schools of education, which offer the field of: “Předškolní a mimoškolní pedagogika” (“Pre-Primary and Extracurricular Pedagogy”). This field offers a wide range of professional applications. For instance, in addition to pre-primary school, it also includes formal after/before school care, recreational centres, day-care centres, children’s homes, etc. Such a wide educational conception thus predetermines the circumstance in which future pre-primary school teachers do not receive a sufficient amount of specialised education. These teachers can complement the deficiencies in their education necessary for quality performance in their field through continuing education. On the contrary, preparatory pedagogical education for pre-primary school teachers at university is of an interdisciplinary nature, and includes academic workers from more than one department. Several faculties or even university departments, institutions, or training centres all participate in their education. “A more profession- and practice-focused education on a sufficient theoretical foundation should ensure that professional necessities are covered for a successful start in the field of pre-primary school education and communication at all levels of professional practice, as well as success in problem-solving” (Burkovičová, 2008, p. 115). Preparatory pedagogical education provides students with only basic training for carrying out their profession. It gives legal authority to a teacher to work, however, she is also expected that she will duly enhance her professional qualifications and further broaden them throughout her professional career. In this way, she will have fulfilled the educational needs stated in her professional development plan.

Research

Findings. In professional development planning for PPS teachers, their preparatory pedagogical education plays an important role, in which the initial formal education for the teaching profession in the Czech Republic is closely linked with the strategic goals of the pre-primary education system, e.g. with the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education (2004). It has placed new demands on the profession of pre-primary school

teacher in their qualifications, which also entails new demands on their preparatory pedagogical education. One form of preparatory pedagogical education leading to the profession of pre-primary school teacher consists of study at a higher education institution/university. Our research was conducted at such an institution, where we investigated the expressed educational needs that represent the content of the professional development plan of students in the third year of combined study in pre-primary school education. Our goal was to determine which educational fields they would include in their professional development plan, e.g. for which educational fields they require additional education after graduation. The educational needs of students were also investigated in relation to the length of their pedagogical experience. Our aim was to determine the specific educational fields stated in the student professional development plan, for which we assumed that the structure of the educational fields in relation to the length of their work experience would be disparate. We also investigated the source of their education needs, e.g. the forms and methods of their self-reflection on their professional activities. We were furthermore interested in which obstacles that they face in the opportunities for implementation of their professional development plan and which forms of continuing education they expect and would like to complete.

The research problem

Which educational fields representing the stated educational needs of the students are included in their professional development plan, and in which format would they like to fulfill them?

Research objective

To determine which educational fields and opportunities for their fulfillment are included in the professional development plan of the students.

Research group

The research group represents women – third year combined study students majoring in pre-primary school education at the University of Ostrava Pedagogical Faculty in Ostrava, in the Moravian-Silesian Region. The respondent

sample was chosen through purposive sampling. We obtained 49 surveys to acquire all of the necessary data.

Data collection methods

For data collection, a survey formulated by the researchers was chosen. The questionnaire contained open-ended, closed, and semi-open questions.

Research analysis and interpretation

In the first question of the survey, we determined the student's length of professional experience in pre-primary school education. We established three analytical categories, which we divided into: 1) length of experience 0–2 “novice teacher”, 2) length of experience 2–10 “independent teacher”, and 3) length of experience 10 or more – “experienced teacher”.

In the second question of the survey, we determined **which self-reflection opportunities and techniques** the teacher uses to gain more insight about herself in her conception of her professional activities that form the basis of her educational needs included in her professional development plan. **Interpretation of the findings** included dividing the respondents into three groups according to length of professional experience and the most frequent responses of the students/teachers.

Application of for self-reflection opportunities – the students/teachers identified opportunities for self-reflection in the following categories: teaching feedback: informal evaluation/formal evaluation; on activities from colleagues; reflection on personal qualities.

Teachers' self-reflection techniques that help provide insight about oneself in the conception of the professional activities: self-reflection journal; observing children; observing colleagues; discussion with colleagues; discussion with parents; written reports from classroom observations; informal evaluation by the principal; observation of colleagues; photographic documentation of children's activities; video recordings; self-reflection questions; my professional portfolio; from scholarly literature; from the Internet.

In the third question, the students/teachers were asked to express which educational needs they would include in their professional development plan. They focused their stated educational needs at educational fields focusing on: 1) the education of pre-primary school aged children, 2) pre-primary school

management, 3) didactic qualifications. **Interpretation of the findings** included dividing the respondents into three groups according to length of professional experience and the most frequent responses of the students/teachers.

The fourth question determined what obstacles the students/teachers encounter in fulfilling their professional development plan/educational needs. **Interpretation of the findings** included dividing the respondents into three groups according to length of professional experience and the most frequent responses of the students/teachers. **Obstacles pre-primary school teachers encounter when fulfilling their educational needs under their professional development plan** – obstacles identified by the students/teachers are represented in the following categories: PPS organisational reasons; financial support from the organisation; lack of time; work application possibilities; acceptance of my educational needs by the organisation; insufficient range of choices of educational field at educational institutions; lack of information on continuing education opportunities.

In the fifth question the student/teachers state which options for fulfilling their professional development plan they would like to take advantage of and their frequency during the school year. Interpretation of the findings included dividing the respondents into three groups according to length of professional experience and the most frequent responses of the students/teachers.

Teacher expectations for the fulfillment options of their professional development plan – the expected options identified by the students/teachers for fulfilling their professional development plan are represented by the following categories: a) self-education scholarly literature; scholarly journals; visits to the library; feedback on my portfolio; information and studying online; b) suggestion for the number of educational activities organised by the institution per year: 2x; 4x; 5x; 7x; 10x; student/teacher suggestions for other educational activities: internships at PPS abroad and within the Czech Republic; classroom observation at their own PPS; working with an experienced pedagogue.

Interpretation of acquired data

The research findings represent the **professional development plan for PPS students/teachers** in which:

1. The utilisation of self-reflection (a) opportunities and (b) techniques to gain a better understanding of herself in her concept of her professional

activities differs according to length of professional experience. a) Regardless of length of professional experience, students/teachers most frequently utilise teaching feedback in an informal format as self-reflection opportunities to gain a better understanding of themselves and their conception of their professional activities. b) Students/teachers with 0–2 years' experience most frequently used discussion with parents, observing children, and a self-reflection journal as their self-reflection techniques. Students/teachers with 2–10 years' experience most frequently utilised discussions with colleagues and a self-reflection journal as their self-reflection techniques. Students/teachers with over 10 years' experience most frequently utilise discussions with parents, with colleagues, and a self-reflection journal and self-reflection questions.

2. The area of educational needs expressed by the teachers once again differs according to length of professional experience.
 - a) Students/teachers with 0–2 years' experience express educational needs focused on the education of pre-primary school aged children most frequently in music, piano, and art. Students/teachers with 2–10 years' experience express educational needs focused on the education of pre-primary school aged children most frequently in the areas of behavioural issues in children, the education of children under the age of 2, and art. Students/teachers with over 10 years' experience express educational needs focused on the education of pre-primary school aged children most frequently in the areas of diagnosing children and speech therapy prevention.
 - b) Students/teachers with 0–2 years' experience express educational needs focused on pre-primary school management most frequently in the area of PPS management, legal regulations in PPS, and the creation of classroom educational programmes. Students/teachers with 2–10 years' experience express educational needs focused on pre-primary school management most frequently in the area of PPS management, health safety and protection at work, and legal regulations in PPS. Students/teachers with over 10 years' experience express educational needs focused on pre-primary school management most frequently in the area of PPS management, legal regulations in PPS, and PPS climate. In this area, we can state that regardless of length of professional experience, teachers most

- frequently expressed their need to learn about PPS management and legal regulations in PPS.
- c) Regardless of length of professional experience, students/teachers express educational needs focused on didactic qualifications most frequently in the area of proficiency in motivational techniques, and utilising information technology.
3. In the area of obstacles that teachers encounter in fulfilling their educational needs under their professional development plan, the students/teachers with 0–2 and 2–10 years' experience agreed that the most frequent obstacle is lack of time. The obstacle that ranked second for students/teachers with 0–2 years' experience is an insufficient range of choices of educational fields at educational institutions, and for students/teachers with 2–10 years' experience, it is the financial support of the organisation. For students with over 10 years' experience, the only expressed obstacle was financial support from the organisation.
4. In the area of expected implementation opportunities that would thus fulfill their professional development plan, students/teachers, regardless of length of professional experience, stated that they would like to take advantage of self-education by visiting the library, studying scholarly literature and journals, finding information online, and they stated that they would also participate in organised PPS continuing education. In the area of other opportunities for continuing education, students/teachers with 0–2 years' experience stated that they would like to participate in a PPS internship abroad and within the Czech Republic, and classroom observation at their own PPS. In the area of other opportunities for continuing education, students/teachers with 2–10 years' experience stated that they would also like to participate in a PPS internship abroad and within the Czech Republic, and would like to work with an experienced pedagogue. In terms of how often during the school year continuing education should take place, students/teachers most frequently answered in the following manner: with 0–2 years' experience: 4 x a year, 2–10 years' experience: 2 x a year, 10 or more: 5 x a year.

Conclusion

In our study, we identified the educational fields that third-year combined study students in pre-primary school education would include in their

professional development plan, which obstacles they expect in its implementation, which form they would like to utilise for its implementation, and how often during the school year they would like to participate in pre-primary school continuing education that is also part of their professional development plan. Our findings have indicated that the presented investigated areas differ according to the students' length of professional experience.

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REALIZACJA PLANU ROZWOJU ZAWODOWEGO NAUCZYCIELI PRZEDSZKOLA

Streszczenie: W artykule podjęto się analizy składowych zawodowego rozwoju nauczycieli edukacji wczesnoszkolnej, w których nauczyciel planuje przebieg rozwoju zawodowego w zakresie kształcenia ustawicznego. Podstawę do podejmowania takich działań stanowi świadomość nauczyciela dotycząca potrzeby dalszego kształcenia, jak również własne przemyślenia w odniesieniu do działalności

zawodowej. Podczas planowania rozwoju zawodowego nauczyciela przedszkola ogromną rolę stanowi również kształcenie przygotowawcze. Jedną z form kształcenia przygotowawczego, którego celem jest zdobycie zawodu nauczyciela edukacji wczesnoszkolnej, są studia na uczelniach wyższych/universytetach. Taką formę studiów obejmują nasze badania naukowe. Badamy wykazywane potrzeby kształcenia ustawicznego, które przedstawiają zakres planu kształcenia zawodowego studentów trzeciego roku studiów łączonych na kierunku nauczanie wczesnoszkolne. Przedmiotowy plan kształcenia zawodowego obejmuje studentów określonej specjalizacji, w której wykazują potrzebę dalszego kształcenia również po zakończeniu studiów. Potrzeby kształcenia ustawicznego studentów badałyśmy również w kontekście ich praktyki pedagogicznej. Naszym celem jest określenie konkretnego obszaru kształcenia w planie rozwoju zawodowego studentów przy założeniu, że struktura obszarów kształcenia w zależności od czasu trwania ich praktyki będzie zróżnicowana. Badałyśmy również źródło ich potrzeb kształcenia, a zatem form i metod postrzegania przez nich aktywności zawodowej. Przedmiotem naszych zainteresowań były też przeszkody, które dostrzegają w możliwościach realizacji własnego planu rozwoju zawodowego.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel edukacji wczesnoszkolnej, rozwój zawodowy, kształcenie ustawiczne, autorefleksja

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Summary: This document presents the components of the professional development of pre-primary school teachers, in which the teacher plans her own professional development in educational fields. These are based on the teacher's conscious educational needs stemming from her self-reflection on her professional activities. A teacher's preparatory pedagogical education plays an important role in pre-primary school teacher professional development planning. One of the forms of preparatory pedagogical education leading to the profession of pre-primary school teacher is study at a higher education institution/university. This form of study has been included in our investigation. At this institution, we investigated the expressed educational needs that represent the content of the professional development plan of students in the third year of combined study in pre-primary school education. This professional development plan includes students' statement of educational fields in which they have a need for further education following the completion of their studies. The educational needs of students were investigated in relation to the length of their pedagogical experience. Our aim was to determine specific educational fields for the students'

professional development plan, for which we assumed that the structure of the educational fields in relation to the length of their work experience would be disparate. We also investigated the source of their educational needs, e.g. the forms and methods of their self-reflection on their professional activities. We were furthermore interested in the obstacles that they face in the implementation opportunities of their professional development plan.

Keywords: PPS teacher, professional development, continuing education, self-reflection