

Teaching Practice as a Means of Forming Professional Skills of Pre-service Teachers

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Abstract

Modern society suggests that a teacher should have well-founded theoretical and practical knowledge and teaching skills. Teaching practice of pre-service teachers can meet this challenge. The authors examine the role of teaching practice of pre-service teachers and claim that pre-service teaching practice is an effective means of forming professional skills of pre-service teachers. This paper states the main requirements for compulsory teaching practice of pre-service teachers and offers them a step in their professional development as future teachers and

professional methodological recommendations how to organize and plan foreign language classes at school. Pre-service teachers are encouraged to keep a portfolio, a record of their professional development and reflections on their teaching with the aim in view to analyze how their teaching impacts on their students' learning.

Introduction

Researchers in education and language teaching agree on the point that teaching practice is a complex process that implies involvement of pre-service teachers in all kinds of activity defined by the profession. It is a part of pre-service teachers' training for language teaching, which is supposed to help and form professional teaching skills. According to Khutorsky (2001), any practice represents itself as an active process of realizing and transforming the reality, therefore it is important to well organize teaching practice of pre-service teachers since it provides them with the opportunity of real pedagogical interaction with school students and familiarization with the reality of school as a teacher. Kodzhaspirova, Borikova and Bostandzhieva (2000) and Slastenin (2002) believe that teaching practice contributes to the development of pre-service teachers' professional self-consciousness, pedagogical interaction culture and personal-motivational components of professional competence formation. Moreover, during teaching practice pre-service teachers develop their skills of teaching foreign languages and their personal creative style of teaching.

Pre-service teaching practice: goals and objectives

Pre-service teaching practice is aimed at developing professional skills required of future teachers. Its main goals are as they follow:

- to improve adaptive skills of pre-service teachers in school environments;
- to teach pre-service teachers to diversely use theoretical knowledge they acquired at university in the course of learning pedagogy and psychology disciplines, specific teaching methods, and fundamental disciplines reckoning with the age characteristics of students;
- to motivate pre-service teachers and keep them interested in the teaching process;
- to form professional skills in organizing the educational process at school.

Pre-service teaching practice accomplishes the following objectives:

- improves and consolidates theoretical knowledge of pre-service teachers gained at university;
- develops pre-service teachers' skills to observe and analyze teaching and educational activities;
- teaches pre-service teachers to apply their knowledge of pedagogical, psychological and physiological features of students to school environments;
- trains pre-service teachers to conduct lessons of different types applying diverse teaching methods;
- develops and consolidates pre-service teachers' affinity for the profession, stimulates their aspiration to study specific pedagogic disciplines and improves their professional abilities and skills;
- improves pre-service teachers' skills in conducting social and career guided activities at school;
- introduces pre-service teachers to different types of educational institutions and the system of education on the whole.

Rights and responsibilities of teaching practice participants

In accordance with the offered concept and program, pre-service practice implies interaction of the following participants: a university professor who is responsible for teaching practice organization; university professors who guide pre-service teachers directly during the practice (methodologists on pedagogy and psychology); supervisors / school teachers; and, finally, pre-service teachers themselves.

A university professor organizes teaching practice and provides systematic control; allocates pre-service teachers to educational institutions and verifies grades.

The main goal of a methodologist is to guide pre-service teachers. A methodologist consults pre-service teachers, attends lessons conducted by pre-service teachers. On the teaching practice completion, he assesses and grades their work.

A schoolteacher provides pre-service teachers with the methodological guidance on planning and conducting lessons. He is also supposed to encourage pre-service teachers to use modern technologies and effective teaching methods at the lesson. Besides, he attends all extracurricular

activities carried out by pre-service teachers. A schoolteacher assesses pre-service teachers' performance in a letter of reference which must be signed and sealed by a school master.

The pre-service teacher must spend not less than 6 hours at school. During this time, the pre-service teacher conducts lessons and runs extracurricular activities. He prepares the pre-service teacher's report.

Assessment criteria and grading

A pre-service teacher gets the grade "excellent" if he carries out the entire volume of work in accordance with the program of teaching practice; demonstrates excellent knowledge of theoretical and practical skills and abilities to ensure the effectiveness of the process of teaching foreign languages; conducts lessons and extracurricular activities at a professional level.

A pre-service teacher gets the grade "good" if he carries out the entire volume of work in accordance with the program of teaching practice; demonstrates good knowledge of theoretical and practical skills and creativity.

A pre-service teacher gets the grade "satisfactory" if he completes 80% of the program of teaching practice; demonstrates restricted knowledge of theoretical and practical skills.

A pre-service teacher gets the grade "unsatisfactory" if he fails to complete the program of teaching practice.

Lesson planning

A pre-service teacher must plan a lesson according to the following scheme (Slastenin, 2008):

1. *Setting the aims of the lesson:*

- the main aim (e.g. the teacher's main aim in a lesson could be to develop listening skills);
- a stage aim (e.g. to develop listening for gist);
- a subsidiary aim (e.g. it could be the language or skills learners must be able to use in order to achieve the main aim of the lesson or a skill or language area which is practised while focusing on the main aim);

- a personal aim (what the teacher would like to improve in his/her teaching, e.g. *to reduce the time I spend writing on the whiteboard*).
2. ***Choosing aids*** (e.g. handouts, pictures, flashcards, visual aids, etc.).
 3. ***Defining lesson stages:***
 - greetings;
 - phonetic/lexical/speaking warm-up;
 - home assignment check;
 - new linguistic and communicative material introduction;
 - new linguistic and communicative material consolidation;
 - lesson outcome discussion;
 - students' assessment;
 - home assignment instruction.

At the lesson a pre-service teacher must demonstrate:

- comprehensive and accurate knowledge of the syllabus;
- familiarity with the full range of concepts, terminology;
- language skills;
- the range of methods, tasks and activities available to the language teacher;
- an ability to relate existing knowledge to both familiar and unfamiliar classroom situations;
- options available for classroom management in order to promote learning.

Psychological and pedagogical school students' portrait drawing

General data

Age and gender characteristics.

Students' background.

Students' status.

Research methods: observation; survey; questionnaire.

Student group structure and interpersonal relationships

General characteristics.

Peer relationships.

Distributing responsibilities and roles.

Leaders and followers.

Peer pressure / bullying.

Research methods: observation; survey; questionnaire; Seashore-Hanin method.

Students' social activities

Motivation.

Students' interests and preferences.

School traditions.

Extracurricular activities.

Research methods: observation; survey; questionnaire.

Classroom teacher's monitoring style

Classroom teacher's background and education.

Classroom teacher's roles: assessor, contributor, counselor, diagnostician, facilitator, language resource, manager, observer, narrator, planner, reflector.

Classroom teacher's performance: authoritarian, democratic, liberal.

Students and classroom teacher's relationships.

Research methods: observation; survey; questionnaire; Seashore-Hanin method.

Students' classroom activities

Motivation.

Students' interests and preferences in classroom activities.

Cheating in class.

Students' ability, proficiency or progress assessment, including self-assessment.

Discipline problems.

Research methods: observation; survey; questionnaire; reviewing students' copybooks, workbooks, etc.

The psychological climate in class

Students' moral values.

The intellectual climate in class.

Problem children.

Research methods: observation; survey; questionnaire; Seashore-Hanin method.

Pre-service teacher's report

1. Pre-service teacher's portfolio.
2. School visiting card.
3. Essay "Is a teacher career your future?"
4. 20 Lesson Outlines.
5. Psychological and pedagogical school students' portrait.
6. A questionnaire.
7. Assessment results.

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Appendix A. A questionnaire (to be included into a pre-service teacher's report)

1. What is the ratio between the terms "teacher" and "educator" (Bim-Bad, 2002)? Find and write down some statements by public figures, scientists, writers, and celebrities about the teacher.
2. What increases the teachers' role in modern society? What are teachers' social and professional functions?
3. Point out the ratio between the terms "profession" and "qualification" (Polonsky, 2004).
4. What do you think teaching is?
5. What are the components of a lesson plan?
6. What is the goal of a multi-leveled pedagogical education?
7. What is an ideal teacher today?
8. What do a teacher's roles include?
9. What are the main aims the teacher wants to achieve at the lesson?
10. What is classroom management?

Appendix B. Tips for pre-service teachers

- ✓ Be always in time in a classroom and check if everything is ready for the lesson.
- ✓ Make your lesson effective with the help of attention spread: keep your eyes open and focused on everybody in class.
- ✓ Use a supportive approach in teaching.
- ✓ Remember timing: the likely time different activities or stages in a lesson plan should take.
- ✓ Be sure that lessons fit logically together.
- ✓ Observe the balance of language, skills, topics and activities at your lesson.
- ✓ Remember the beginning of the lesson should always be dynamic: a good lesson always keeps students busy.

- ✓ Try not to reprimand students a lot.
- ✓ Use words of approval as often as possible: "great", "well-done", "a well-structured answer", etc.
- ✓ Set an example for students in everything, including your manner of speech.
- ✓ Remember that a wise, cordial and warm word can heal a wounded soul of a child and overcome the psychological barrier.
- ✓ Do not forget to give assessment on learners' ability, proficiency or progress at the end of the lesson.
- ✓ Do not let conflicts appear. If a conflict does appear, do not let it escalate and linger, find the ways to overcome it.
- ✓ Remember the statement by Dobrolyubov N. A. "A just teacher is the teacher whose actions are justified".

Please check the **How to be a Teacher Trainer course** at Pilgrims website.