

Preparation for the Profession from the Perspective of Primary Education Teachers

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Abstract: Changing societal demands and new disciplines considerably pressure on teachers. The teacher must be able to absorb these innovations and transform them into a form that can be communicated to their pupils. For this, teachers need to be properly trained in undergraduate education, equipped with the necessary professional competences. The article is conceived as a qualitative study whereby on the basis of semi-structured interviews, the aim is to find out how primary school teachers assess their undergraduate training after five years' practice. The research results show that the undergraduate training can identify the strengths and weaknesses. Training in the subject field is perceived positively. Teachers have a positive attitude towards training for the preparation and implementation of lessons. The ability to organize and manage the educational process in the classroom is equally positive. The ability to obtain feedback and work with it is one of the other benefits in undergraduate training, this benefits pupils, as well as benefitting themselves. The ability to use diagnostics and intervention is on the borderline between positive and negative perception of training. Here, teachers appreciate the knowledge component positively, but lack more practical examples and cases in order to acquire more knowledge and apply it in practice. Inadequate training in the field of psychology, i.e. practical use of psychological knowledge, is generally perceived as the negative. Criticism is also directed at disciplinary didactics, which are too theoretical for teachers. However, as a whole, the undergraduate training system is assessed more positively.

Keywords: Primary education, teaching profession, teacher training, teaching competencies, teachers' professionalization

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Introduction

Teaching is a highly dynamic profession. With changing societal requirements and new disciplines (e.g. digital education) that should be implemented in primary education, teachers are under great pressure. The teacher must be able to absorb these innovations and transform them into a form that can easily be communicated to pupils. Teaching is still in an ambiguous situation. One can speak of the contradiction of contemporary teaching, which on the one hand is the indisputable social importance of teaching, and on the other hand, as a threat to teaching regarding its ability to carry out its role (Hatch, 2015). In this context Strouhal (2016) aptly notes that addressing the issue of teaching today, first and foremost means asking how, with what and what to educate future teachers for.

Therefore, teacher training (not only) for primary education must be comprehensive, based on real knowledge, which is related to the search for truth based on knowledge and understanding. Therefore, the teacher must be able to understand the context and be able to work with it. The ideal case may be a humanistic scholar in the Humboldt tradition, for example, as mentioned by Liessmann (2006). This reasoning is based on the belief that universities not only prepare experts for a number of fields, but that they also educate citizens who, with the acquired expert knowledge and the abilities or skills that education helps to activate in them, will be able to provide human advice. Strouhal and Kořa (In Strouhal, 2016) adds the need to incorporate philosophical propaedeutic into teacher training, which would enable the idea of cultivating the spirit to be fulfilled, thereby to some extent fulfilling teachers' missions - not only to educate but also to cultivate a pupil's personality.

I fully agree with the opinion of Strouhal & Kořa (In Strouhal, 2016), who say that a teacher cannot be understood as a store of data, knowledge or, at worst, just information and as a professional knowledge interpreter. A teacher is no longer the only one who transfers knowledge. They are, or at least should be, the curriculum mediator. By enabling pupils to acquire skills and habits needed to live in today's postmodern society, who cultivates personality. More initiative, creativity, independence, art of communication is expected - a higher level of professionalism overall. This thesis is also supported by Štech (2007), who states that it is advisable to introduce dilemmas into teacher training, to show the contradictions and uncertainties that the future teacher will face. To acquaint them with a variety of ways of understanding unique processes and to gain insight into basic professional situations.

In the Czech and international context, we can find a number of articles dealing with the teacher training issue from a qualitative and quantitative perspective to cover the topic from different perspectives. This study is conceived as a qualitative study, whereby the aim is to identify respondents' opinions and to provide an in-depth understanding regarding the issue of undergraduate training for primary school teachers. Especially because the opinions of teachers who are still at the beginning of their professional career, but are already able to legitimately assess how they were prepared for the performance of the profession, are not sufficiently mapped. The aim of the article is to find out how primary school teachers assess their undergraduate training. This goal is achieved on the basis of a qualitative approach to research, where six semi-structured interviews with young primary school teachers are conducted.

Theoretical Framework

A teacher is one of the basic factors of the educational process. Historically, a teacher is a bearer of education. As society and its demands change rapidly as well as the training for teachers' profession must also change. In connection with the paradigm shift and the inclination towards the constructivist conception of education, the teacher is no longer the one who transfers knowledge, but the one who mediates it to their pupils. In this context, it points to the multiplicity of educational discourses, which translates into a difficult grasp of educational phenomena (Reboul, 1984; Fink, 2018). The result is antinomic that points to fragmented demands on today's education and today's teachers.

The term 'teacher' is so obvious that its definition of professional work is almost unavailable. Most recently, the term 'teacher' is defined by the OECD, where it is considered to be a person whose professional activities include planning, organising and managing a group of activities that aim to develop student knowledge, skills and attitudes in accordance with the curriculum. Teachers can work with the class as a whole, in small groups or individually, inside or outside of the classroom. Teachers do not include a group of people not directly involved in teaching, such as teacher assistants, etc. (OECD, 2018).

Teaching profession and professional requirements for teachers

Defining a profession is not an easy matter, it is strongly conditioned by the social demand and the paradigm of the times. Teaching is a profession that has a significant place in modern societies. The status, role, and prestige of this intellectualized profession are derived from the meaning of socialization that every human individual is subjected to (Farley, 2018).

According to Štech (2007), various studies eventually agree on six criteria that characterize the profession:

- In a given field, professional skill is exclusively owned by members of the profession;
- admission to the profession is a closed process, controlled by rules set by members themselves;
- members of the profession possess formalized knowledge transferable only by special education;
- the profession has developed its own ethics and a system for colleagues to monitor compliance;
- members of the profession feel a strong sense of internal cohesion within the professional community;
- considerable autonomy in exercising the profession is connected with the formal delegation of powers by a public institution representing the society (parliament, law, municipality).

In the context of pedagogical discussions, some authors address the question of whether teaching is a profession or not, e.g. Howsam et al. (1985); Samuels (1970). Based on relevant researches, it points out that teaching does not meet all the criteria to be considered a full-fledged profession. And that a certain part of the public still thinks of teaching as a 'semi-profession' that

can be practiced by almost anyone who has the basic intellectual abilities and skills, willingness, taste and will. Hargreaves (2000) claims that the teaching profession's so-called pre-professional period is over and that teaching can be referred to as a profession. On the contrary, Etzioni (1969) or David (2000) set-out three criteria that prevent teachers from joining recognized professions:

- It is carried out in large hierarchical bureaucratic organizations, where the principle of administrative authority rules, not a professional authority;
- there are too many practitioners; and
- among them there are too many women (in terms of the profession's social recognition, women's work is still largely perceived as complementary to the role of maternity and family).

In professional literature (e.g. Selvi, 2010), teacher competences are defined as a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values important to the teaching profession's performance. They relate to the professional, content and personality component. Professional competencies usually express certain professional prerequisites. Many competence models can be found in the literature (Singh, 2010).

The competency model has been subject to considerable criticism in recent years, namely overestimating competences, which de facto carries the risk of emptying school learning. Especially in terms of teacher training, where any good teacher training must be based on clear theoretical background. Spilková (1997) defines the following competences with respect to primary school teachers: Subject-related, psycho-didactic, communicative, diagnostic and interventional, advisory and consultation and self-reflective.. It is difficult to educate and prepare teachers for competency-based teaching. However, competence is still the predominant way of looking at the quality of the teaching profession and the measure of professionalism (Noonan & Erickson, 2017).

Dodillet, Lundin & Krüger (2018) points out, that education is the most central precondition for the future competitiveness and success of both individuals and society. Teachers are coming to the fore as key contributors to economic growth, which explains the increasing attention given to their professional development. The hope of greater effectiveness through teachers' professionalisation is not, however, limited to economic interests. It includes all sorts of optimisation ambitions, concerning humanistic values such as students' empowerment, social cohesion as well as strengthening democratic institutions.

Undergraduate training of primary education teachers

Teacher qualification requirements vary from country to country. In the Czech Republic, according to Act 563/2004 Coll. a primary school teacher has to have a university master education, which is five-year, unstructured study without an intermediate bachelor's degree. The most common way is to obtain it in an accredited master's degree programme in the field of educational sciences aimed at preparing primary school teachers. Compared to other teaching fields, first-level teacher training is specific in that the study is offered as a five-year master, study, i.e. unstructured. The aim of the study programme is to provide graduates with the necessary professional competences that enable them to perform their profession in accordance with the needs of practice and current trends in the Czech Republic and abroad.

The profile of graduates is usually conceived in accordance with the findings of pedagogical research, which establish the pedagogical, diagnostic, interventional, social, communicative, subject and didactic competencies, managerial and personality cultivation for the profile of primary school teachers. These competences correspond to the content of individually taught disciplines during their studies. The provability of acquired competencies is ensured by successfully completing the study programme, as well as elaboration and defense of the diploma thesis and passing the final state examination in pedagogy and psychology for teachers, Czech language with didactics and mathematics with didactics. The condition is also completing all kinds of teaching practice, where the student demonstrates the required level of teaching skills. It is expected that learners will acquire professional key competencies during their studies.

In recent years, cooperation and networking have become key reform strategies for teacher education. These strategies have been introduced as part of educational policy and educational administrative initiatives designed to establish new learning cultures in schools (Rürup et. al., 2015). This perspective is also essential for cooperation between organizations. In the following sections, we ask which assumptions, ideas, and values are addressed by the individual participants in the cooperation between the various organizations participating in practical teacher training. In addition, we discuss the role of ministerial steering measures (DeBoer et al, 2018).

Method

A great deal of attention is paid to pedeutology. Discussions continue to be held among professionals and the general public on how well-trained teachers are, whether they are experts in the field, whether they respond to present demands, whether they are competent enough to teach children. Leading pedagogical staff, who are responsible for their teachers as well as for the quality of education, particularly direct criticism at the unpreparedness of new teachers for practice.

The motive for this research was to find out what opinions primary school teachers have on undergraduate training. The intention was not only to describe the current situation, but to understand what teachers see the pros and cons of undergraduate training at education faculties with regard to their own practical experience. Thanks to the knowledge in this work, I believe it is possible to gradually improve teacher training so that, on the one hand, the academic requirements for higher education are maintained, but at the same time the incoming teachers are well prepared for performing their profession. For this reason, the research was conceived as a case study of six teachers, deliberately selecting teachers whose undergraduate training took place at three different education faculties.

Aim of the work and research questions

The research aim is to find out how primary school teachers with four to six years' experience assess their undergraduate training. In order to be more specific, two research questions have been identified, which will help to achieve the aim of the study:

- What do teachers see in terms of strengths and weaknesses in their undergraduate training?
- What are the teachers' recommendations to adjust their undergraduate studies with regard to their practical experience?

Research design

A case study was chosen as a research strategy with regard to the work's aim and focus, because the research aim is to understand the studied phenomenon by studying individual cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Silverman, 2013). In the context of Stake's intrinsic case study (1995), I deal with the case for its own sake. The main aim is to identify this case, its relation to the more general issue doesn't matter. It is not a hypothesis testing or a theory proposal, but an understanding of the internal aspects of a particular individual or group. I describe selected aspects of the case as deeply as possible, aiming at holistic understanding of the case as well as understanding the interconnection of its individual parts.

Research sample

The research sample consists of six respondents. With regard to the work's objective, a deliberate selection was made (Silverman, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The criterion was the length of practice, which was set at five years - with a dispersion of one year. The reason for such a choice was that after five years' practice, teachers are no longer considered as beginners. It assumes that five-year teachers practice have gained enough experience to evaluate their undergraduate programs.

Respondents from two fully organised schools (a large city school, a small village school) and a small-class school were chosen for their work at different types of school. This selection was deliberate with regard to the different specificities of the individual types of schools mentioned, which ensures a wider coverage of the content of the answers. Simultaneously, emphasis was placed on the respondents being graduates of at least various faculties of education, which should ensure a wide range of answers regardless of the specifics of individual pedagogical faculties..

Data collection method

An in-depth interview method was chosen within the context of the selected project. This method's main advantage is seen by the fact that it enables understanding the respondents' views and captures the specifics of meaning in their natural form. As the aim of the study is to identify teachers' perspective with regard to their undergraduate training in the profession and to identify the reasons for their opinions, a semi-structured interview was chosen as the data collection method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Silverman, 2013).

The areas for semi-structured interviews were derived from the competency model of Spilková (1997) and Vašutová (2007), which are still most frequently used in undergraduate training at education faculties. Therefore, questions derived from it are comprehensible to the teachers, and to some extent eliminate possible misunderstanding of the context.

Data recording and analysis

Interviews were recorded and subsequently rewritten within the standard qualitative methodology. An open coding technique followed by thematic coding was chosen for content processing (Flick, 2006). This is because this approach is particularly suitable for cases where the aim is to describe views of a phenomenon in the context of a social group, such as teachers. For this reason, the codes were first categorised on a case-by-case basis and then searched for links

between individual cases. Subsequently, the parent categories were defined and appeared in all cases.

Limits of study and ethical research questions

The study limit is based on the very concept of qualitative approach. First of all, a smaller research set. Furthermore, the low validity of data compared to the quantitative approach and the inability to generalise the findings. Last but not least, a possibility to influence findings and their subsequent interpretation by the researcher as a result of a subjective view of the investigated reality.

The ethical level was ensured by informed consent from all respondents involved, including familiarisation with the research objectives and subsequent processing. Furthermore, by changing the respondents' names and also by the impossibility of identifying the schools where individual respondents operate. Respondents were offered the opportunity to become acquainted with the research results of the research carried out. Two of them showed interest in the results.

Findings

In the introduction I would like to point out that the following findings are only a partial probe into the issue of undergraduate teacher training, i.e. their retrospective view of training for the teaching profession. I am aware that the research set is small and that it is not possible to generalise the conclusions within the nature of qualitative design. Nonetheless, it appears that undergraduate training at different education faculties has comparable pitfalls, from which conclusions can be drawn that can support the improving the training for future primary school teachers (Skutil, 2018).

Taking the chosen competency model defined by Spilková (1997) into account for primary education, the forthcoming text is structured according to individual competencies in order to clearly show how teachers with four to six years' experience assess their training for the profession.

Preparedness in terms of subject competence

In terms of professional preparedness, teachers do not experience shortcomings from the preparation side. The knowledge component is sufficiently represented. Whether the subjects are more theoretical, such as Czech language, mathematics, geography or natural science, or skill subjects, represented mainly by art, music and physical educations.

Upon coming into practice, it turns out that the knowledge base for teaching at the first level is sufficient. In some cases, undergraduate training is accused of being overly focused on a knowledge base that is not fully understood or appreciated during the course of study. The change occurs after entering the practice, when teachers realise that the knowledge base is an integral part of the quality of teaching:

“As for that kind of expertise, I certainly have stocks of some sort of portfolio that I can look at, and I have to say that I do look. I have to say that it might not seem to me at the time, that it's needed, but now I look into it”. (Lucie)

However, there are also opinions that criticise the exaggerated theoreticality of study. On the one hand, teachers understand that the theoretical basis is essential as preparation for the

profession, but on the other hand, they criticise the considerable focus of study on theoretical knowledge that is not applicable in subsequent practice.

“But perhaps it made sense to make one as one's own as exploring the world to the level you should have. However, I still think that more than half was absolutely unnecessary and, for that future work, almost useless”. (Jana)

Areas where the subject preparedness proves to be very good are areas of 'education'. Teachers perceive the training as good quality in art and music as well as in physical education. In art and music education they especially appreciate the skills training that they can subsequently perform with children. In some cases, there are criticisms of exaggerated claims in the theoretical foundations of disciplines. In physical education, exaggerated demands on the fulfilment of criteria are criticised regardless of individual prerequisites of individuals, which students perceive as counter-productive in the current trend in the Czech education system, which in turn supports the individual approach. In terms of overall preparedness to carry out physical education lessons, however, teachers feel well prepared.

Preparedness in terms of psychical - didactic competence

Teachers have acquired pedagogical and didactic skills. They agree that undergraduate training in this area was good quality and prepared them accordingly for implementation in the educational process. After entering the practice there are practically no problems with setting and assessing goals, choosing curriculum or choosing teaching methods and organisational forms of work. However, an essential element is that respondents are equally praised by the people who educated them on these didactic skills. They are aware of the fact that it is a significant personal input of relevant teachers, who were able to convey didactic issues comprehensibly and were simultaneously able to apply theoretical knowledge in practice so that it was understandable for students.

The influence of specific teachers on education is mentioned during the whole interview. It follows that teachers of pedagogical subjects, namely general didactics, are of great importance for the formation of pedagogical reasoning and didactic progression. They are usually rated as very knowledgeable in the field in which they teach, but at the same time they appreciate the ability to convey the curriculum clearly and provide relevant feedback. The category of subject didactics is more problematic, where the method of teaching didactics of the given field is criticised. The information obtained here has low usefulness in pedagogical practice, although it should be the basis for successful teaching at the first level. In preparation, teachers would expect greater links with current trends in teaching individual fields, i.e. a more progressive response to current trends in education.

Assessment is an important part of the educational process. It appears that within the undergraduate training framework great emphasis is placed on evaluation methods and its use in practice. Teachers appreciate the theoretical knowledge of evaluation obtained during their studies as well as the ability to actively apply individual types of assessment during their studies. They see it as a positive that they are forced to carry out self-assessment right from the start of their studies and therefore they de facto learn what and how to assess correctly, because at the same time they

receive feedback from teachers. This procedure is then transferred into practice, where it is applied in the same form.

“I was ready for it because they wanted it from us over and over again. Reflection and self-reflection and reflection of that and somebody else's reflection and reflection to the teacher and reflection of the whole weekend, actually it was interwoven with reflection completely, everywhere, so I thought it was automatic for me to do it from day one then entered the school. And it lasted for me, I do it all the time”. (Radka)

However, even in this case, teachers can imagine an improvement in preparation, for example in the form of verbal final assessment, which is becoming increasingly popular in Czech schools, but they have only met with it at the theoretical level.

Teachers critically approach preparation from the perspective of psychological aspects of education. Although they are aware of the importance of the psychological component in teacher training, they point to too much theoretically in the training and the consequent need to try everything by “trial-error” method during their practice. They are aware of the importance of motivation in education, and have heard and talked about motivation in a number of subjects, and have had the opportunity to try for themselves what motivational factors work or not.

“I don't think (psychological preparation) was actually carried out. If I go back to what I remember from psychology, it was those six years. I remember only the child's developmental stages, the theory simply, nothing more. So, it probably wasn't there, or I forgot it was there.”
(Kristýna)

As in other situations, great emphasis is placed on teachers' personal dispositions. It particularly concerns learning and respecting the individual possibilities of pupils and their needs. Although the areas of pedagogical-psychological diagnostics were discussed during the study, teachers largely build on empathy and communication with pupils. In some cases, they are aware of the connection with the theoretical foundations of their studies, but above all they base their decisions on the prerequisites for the teaching profession, on intuition they consider to be very important in working with younger school children.

Preparedness in terms of communication competence

It is not possible to precisely define what attitudes teachers take to prepare for communication in school practice. In the undergraduate training they lack specific courses aimed at acquiring communication skills. On the other hand, they recognise that communication practice is practically throughout their studies, as they were forced to present and defend their views publicly, especially in seminars, which helped them in their future practice. What they consider to be essential for communication skills are the teachers' personality presumptions. Anyone who wants to be a teacher must naturally be communicative and should be able to communicate even without any special training.

“Well, we had girls who couldn't talk at all. We always wondered what they wanted to do at that school when they couldn't talk properly. After all, learning is about communication, and they just couldn't learn it. Well, they don't teach today, of course”. (Radka)

Teachers are well prepared to communicate with pupils. Finding a suitable communication style is also helped by quite frequent pedagogical practice, where communication is practiced in various situations. Although each teacher is naturally different and prefers a different communication style, there is a belief that teachers can choose the right strategy for the class they are currently teaching.

Communicating with parents is more difficult. In the course of undergraduate training, teachers rarely encounter the possibility of try to communicate with parents. Although they receive a theoretical basis on how to deal with pupils' parents, in practice they often don't know what to do and rely on their natural communication skills. There is a consensus that they would welcome courses of assertiveness or how to respond to aggressive parents. However, even in this area, as a professional the teacher should have presumptions to be able to communicate.

“Well, there is some kind of assumption that parents somehow have it in them and either they develop it or not. And if they don't have it in them, they can't really do much about it, and there is probably not much that the school can do about it. This is a social skill that university is not supposed to teach you”. (Hana)

When communicating with colleagues, teachers agree that it always depends on the team. They do not expect the university to prepare them with regard to how they communicate within the teaching staff. If the team inside the school works, it is very easy for a novice teacher to become part of the teaching staff. If it is not functional, the best training for inclusion will not help.

Preparedness in terms of organisational and management competence

Preparing for classroom management is one of the components that teachers assess positively in undergraduate studies. They feel confident in organising classroom activities. They can organise activities as they need when they start working. Switching activities between frontal instruction, group, or individual activities does not cause them problems. They are able to respond adequately to stimuli and situations that arise in classroom activities and to change operationally.

An important role in this positive perception is played by the fact that all respondents manage to acquire and maintain natural authority. They consider this to be the basis of successful classroom management, in addition to theoretical knowledge associated with practical experience. The key point is that everyone is aware of their role as a teacher in the classroom. Although they are trying to implement partner teaching, they perceive classroom boundaries as an important step in successful management. On the one hand, to make pupils aware that teachers are at school to help them in their education. But on the other hand, they treated them with respect and did not treat them as friends.

“When I joined a real school, I knew I wanted to be a partner with the kids. I knew that if I didn't sit on the rug in the community circle with them, I would hardly be a partner. I actually

knew that theory. I also knew that they could easily call me by my first name, and that it would be a problem to manage, limit it. But we agreed, it went through, and it works great for me". (Jana)

Although teachers feel well prepared to continuously manage classroom activities, they see limits in the preparation and implementation of long-term projects. In the undergraduate training framework, it is usually the preparation of short-term outputs that are processed into one, at most two teaching units. However, in many schools they work on projects for a week, a month or a year. To carry out such activities, teachers must draw on experience from older colleagues in practice or experiment and, when implementing a longer-term project, possibly improvise in unexpected situations. They see the implementation of similar projects in the length of one semester as a meaningful step, where there would be continuous assessment of individual steps and at the end there would be one completely processed project that could be subsequently used in practice.

Preparedness in terms of diagnostic and intervention competence

In the diagnostics area, teachers do not feel fully prepared for pedagogical reality. They appreciate high-quality theoretical training especially in the special education field, thanks to which they have a broad theoretical overview of what learning disabilities or health disadvantages they may encounter in practice. Simultaneously, they question the necessity of transferring a large amount of information, which is not so important for the actual diagnostic activity.

Teachers are quite critical of the practical application of theoretical knowledge gained during their studies. The greatest problem they find is that although they have theoretical knowledge, but they are not really able to know or at least estimate what diagnosis a particular pupil has. Here they see undergraduate training as severely lacking, where they lack greater links with practical demonstrations selected from real school.

"I know we had some seminars then, but it was still like, probably, possibly. I would absolutely welcome it if we were to get a description or case reports of those children and we should say ... Or maybe I don't know, some snippets, maybe videos, or a description of the child and say it has. Really very practical like that". (Michaela)

All teachers agree that they acquire real diagnostic competence only during their own teaching practice. The first few years at school are more of an intuitive diagnosis of pupils, where teachers take notes on individual cases and on the basis of this, they learn how individual symptoms manifest themselves in practice. In the initial phase of the profession, they consult with older, more experienced teachers, with educational counsellors or school psychologists, and gradually learn to identify pupils and their special needs.

"For example, I don't know if I was able to diagnose a child with clear dyslexia for the first year, two, three, I guess I couldn't. Now I would probably manage it and I think, as in the first class actually every year I see exactly the child, who in the third grade will be diagnosed and then it will be confirmed. But that's what practice teaches." (Lucie)

In connection with the arrival of new legislation in 2016 (explicit promotion of inclusive education), teachers hope that undergraduate training at education faculties have changed with a

shift from theoretical training to a more practical concept. Not only in terms of diagnostics, but also within the administrative solution of interventions in education. From their experience, they respond to the fact that they have no foundation in developing pedagogical support plans and individual educational plans, neither from the university nor from teaching practice.

Teachers are positive about recommendations they receive from pedagogical and psychological counselling centres. Once teachers have a concrete idea of what to do with pupils with special needs, they have no problem integrating the proposed interventions into teaching. In this case, they take it for granted that they will implement an individual approach. The didactic aspect of implementing interventions does not seem to be an obstacle, but more likely a diagnostic aspect combined with the choice of appropriate support.

Readiness in terms of self-reflection and further professional development

The readiness to further educate is well developed. Teachers are motivated to further education. They realise that for another professional life it is necessary to further educate themselves, to take various courses and trainings. The undergraduate study provided them with sufficient insight to be able to identify in what area they need further education. At the same time, they are well oriented in the offer of courses, which simplifies their path to further education. Knowing that undergraduate training cannot provide a professional foundation in all that teachers can experience in practice it is common for teachers to choose courses that they wish to take after entering practice.

Two types of motivation can be identified for further education. Internal, based on the interest of the students themselves. And external, based on the school's needs, where the new teacher enters as a graduate. What is important is that both types of motivation are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. Undergraduate training enables students to get to know different methods for implementing education, therefore opening up space for the development of individual interests of students. They then profile in their professional focus. In many cases this is reflected in the choice of school where they want to enter after graduation. However, some of the requirements of schools are specific, so graduates have to take various courses before starting school to be able to teach according to the philosophy of the chosen school.

“Since I graduated, I had to take three courses before I started first grade. The font, the reading method and the mathematics method. And then actually, since then, I feel like I'm still in training somewhere, but I'm grateful for that, because it is incredibly beneficial to me. Of course, I'm trying to choose a training that really gives me something, which is great. And I think a lot of people are moving forward in that profession”. (Hana)

Reflection and self-reflection, which is strongly supported at education faculties, is an important element in the search for professional motivation and profiling within the study. Teachers perceive them as a formative element that not only help to shape their views on teaching and forces them to think about what and how they would like to do in school in the future. But it also helps them shape their personality, providing them with space to find themselves and realise their future role.

Part of the reflections and self-reflections are mainly pedagogical situations. In this respect, teachers are adequately trained. However, teachers point to shortcomings in their training for

copied with teacher stress, pressure from the parents and the difficulty of the teaching profession at all. Although they know what a burnout syndrome is and, theoretically, how to prevent it, in practice they cannot deal with this issue too much. In undergraduate training, they lack practical training to work with stress, how to prevent it, how to deal with it. They are not afraid of their own burnout, probably due to the shorter length of practice. However, they admit that they do not always cope easy and well with the workload.

Assessment of undergraduate preparedness of primary school teachers

Undergraduate preparedness is seen as a springboard for further education. Teachers agree that they have acquired an appropriate theoretical foundation in their studies at university, and have acquired certain competencies that need to be developed in practice. As part of the reflection on the question, they reflect on what all the university training should cover. They believe that higher education cannot cover all situations that may arise in school. They expect that universities should provide a general basis to enable them to master standard teaching. At the same time, they accept the fact that, without further education, it would not be possible to perform the teaching profession well.

“University cannot prepare for everything, but in practice, at the beginning, the foundation I had was enough for us. Well, I was counting on taking courses. And I did it right from the start, I enjoy it and I am satisfied. The school was definitely good for the outlook”. (Michaela)

They see as the greatest benefit of undergraduate training as the possibility to realise whether they really want to pursue the profession of teacher at the first stage of primary school. They appreciate the opportunity to practice learning within pedagogical trainings, which they consider very well organised in their undergraduate training. In terms of continuing education, they perceive positively that they have the opportunity to discuss their views with experts during their studies and gain insight into specific areas in which they can take selected courses after (or even during) their studies.

“Pedagogical practice was great. I think that it depends, of course, who gets who as a teacher. But it's definitely good. It's more about the one teacher who led me on that journey, finding someone at that school like this, so good like this. I've drawn from it until today”. (Kristýna)

The low practicality of teaching is perceived negatively. Although teachers understand that a theoretical foundation is necessary, they lack greater connectivity with practical use. They particularly criticise the teaching of psychological disciplines, which they consider very theoretical.

“Well, as far as psychology is concerned, I probably learned the most psychology when I was learning for the state exams, and I was looking for the stuff myself, and I just found out more about it. But actually, I think that psychology is needed from different courses, what I am attending now is a really practical matter, so I would appreciate it, if it was really more practical and whether it concerns the communication or whatever, that would be, it would be better”. (Radka)

There is an ambivalent attitude towards justifying the amount of theoretical knowledge required during study. On the one hand, the professional quality of information and lecturers is appreciated. On the other hand, it memorising a large amount of theoretical knowledge is criticised, which in practice is not usable and not usable even for a wider understanding of the content in preparation for teaching.

“Fact like half of those things I haven't used in my entire practice. What was the point that in minus ten degrees we were running in a meadow and search some beetles? I'll never use it in primary school. Like yeah, I need to know some kinds, but why do I have to know several kinds of ground beetles? It's not even in the Framework Education Program for the first grade of primary school”. (Jana)

There is a similar ambivalent attitude to the assessing physical, music and art education. Criticism is mentioned above all in the area of small preparation for practical activities at the first level, where the requirements were often the same as for the secondary school teaching fields, regardless of what is useful for younger school children. However, in the overall assessment teachers appreciate that in practice they do not have problems to implement these subjects.

In order to improve the quality of undergraduate training, teachers recommend focusing more on subject didactics. The concepts of these subjects are often very theoretical, without deeper connection with real practice. There are also opinions that in particular subject didactics should be obliged to work in the first stage of elementary school in order to be able to practically carry out theoretical knowledge. This is a reaction to specific individuals, as it is also appreciated that many discipline didactics have earlier experience of teaching at the first level of primary school.

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

Pedeutology is a widely discussed topic. Likewise, the question of how best to prepare teachers to be able to respond to developments in all areas of human knowledge and communicate it adequately to pupils or students. The aim of this study was to find out how primary school teachers with approximately five years' experience assess their undergraduate training. In view of the need to understand the respondents' views, a qualitative approach to research was preferred in order to achieve the objective. In order to make the research areas more comprehensible, one of the competency models was chosen, which shows the professional qualification of teachers. Since the research was carried out on a set of primary school teachers, a competency model was chosen, adapted for the needs of primary education by Spilková (1997).

The research results show that the undergraduate training can identify strengths and weaknesses. Preparation in the field is seen as positive. Teachers have a positive attitude towards training in the preparation and implementation of lessons. This conclusion is also confirmed, e.g., by Wassermann and Migdal (2019), who emphasize the benefits of in person education. In terms of basic didactic categories, the preparation shortcomings are not mentioned. Equally positive is the ability to organise and manage the educational process in the classroom. This confirms the earlier findings of Houtz and Weinerman (1997), who found, based on data from experienced teachers, that great emphasis must be placed on the readiness of teachers to organize classroom

work and choose the right didactic practices. The ability to gain feedback and work with it for the benefit of pupils as well as themselves is one of the other benefits in undergraduate training. In this context, a high level of reflection throughout the study is appreciated, which teachers internalise and then automatically apply in their practice. Illanlou and Zand (2011) also view the development and acquisition of professional competences in a similar way, who confirm that there is a link between acquired competences and the quality of education.

On the borderline between positive and negative perception of preparation is the ability to implement diagnostics and intervention. Here, teachers appreciate the knowledge component positively, but lack more practical examples and cases in order to acquire more knowledge and apply it in practice. As Rieu, Leuders & Loibl (2022) mention in this context, that both the identification of the problem and the subsequent intervention must be based on knowledge-based training of teachers, which so far proves to be insufficient.

Insufficient training in the psychology field, i.e. practical use of psychological knowledge is perceived as negative in the field of undergraduate preparedness. As indicated by Lohse-Bossens, Kunina-Habenicht and Kunter (2013), the issue of the content of psychological disciplines in teacher education, in this case pedagogical psychology, is still complicated with respect to the overlap into pedagogical practice. Criticism is also directed at disciplinary didactics, which are viewed by teachers too theoretically, which limits the practical training for teaching individual subjects. Communication with parents is considered to be one of the more complicated activities in a teacher's work, and there are also opinions that teachers are totally unprepared in this area.

It appears that specific teachers who prepare students for the profession are of great importance in undergraduate education. If they are professionals, capable teachers, and personally mature teachers, their impact on the performance of future teachers is considerable. This also confirms the conclusions of Korthagen and Kessels (1999), who point to the necessity of a change in undergraduate teacher training, especially with regard to the new paradigm in education, which is based on reflective learning to a much greater extent than it used to be.

Interestingly, teachers emphasise the personality prerequisites for the teaching profession. This is particularly evident in the application of psychological knowledge to pupils, but also in communication skills, which they more or less take for granted, as a prerequisite for anyone who wants to become a teacher.

As far as the recommendation is concerned, teachers consistently support putting more emphasis on linking theoretical and practical training. Another recommendation is to consider the meaningfulness of the range of knowledge that primary school teachers acquire in undergraduate training. Given that the target group of their pedagogical activities are younger school age pupils, they would welcome more intensive practical training with adequate feedback rather than a number of concepts.

The acquired knowledge is an interesting, and perhaps useful probe into the teachers' perspective of undergraduate training. I believe that the research under review fulfilled the stated objective and gave answers to the research questions set out. I believe that the results presented are a useful insight into the issues of undergraduate teacher training, although it is a qualitative probe whose conclusions cannot be fully generalised.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

- To put more emphasis on practical teaching of psychology, so that not only mechanical knowledge is acquired, but that the student is able to apply the acquired knowledge in practice.
- To connect the theoretical knowledge of individual subjects with practice more so that they can be better applied in practice.
- To use modern educational elements, such as formative assessment, in undergraduate teacher training, as this will also teach students its practical implications and make it easier to apply in their practice.
- More focus on teacher-parent communication training for future teachers, as in this category students feel quite weak and unprepared.

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