COMBINING THEORY & PRACTICE: CRITICAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE FINAL STATE EXAMS

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Abstrakt

Hodnota teorie byla ve vzdělávání učitelů vždy předmětem sporů. Přestože zvyšování kvality přípravy učitelů je v rukou všech zainteresovaných stran vzdělávacího procesu, porozumění tomu, jak studenti teorii vnímají, může být klíčovým bodem, který by nás vedl. Cíle: Tento článek zkoumá, jak studenti vnímají státní závěrečné zkoušky (SZZ) z hlediska kritérií hodnocení. Byla zvolena kvalitativní výzkumná strategie s využitím metody sběru dat polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s osmi studenty-učiteli před a po jejich státních závěrečných zkouškách. Z výsledků výzkumu vyplývá, že učitelé v přípravné fázi studia vnímají teorii a praxi jako oddělené záležitosti. Diskutujeme některé možnosti dalšího rozvoje předmětů pro učitele tak, aby teorie a praxe byly chápány a hodnoceny jako vzájemně propojený proces.

Klíčová slova: *Teorie a praxe, příprava učitelů, učitelé před nástupem do zaměstnání, perspektivy*

Abstract

The value of theory has always been a point of contention in teacher education. Even though increasing the quality of teacher training is in the hands of all stakeholders in educational contexts, understanding the way students perceive theory may be the key point that could guide us. This paper investigates the students' perceptions of Final State Exams (FSE) in terms of the assessment criteria. In the context of qualitative we have research carried out semi-structured interviews with 8 student-teachers before and after their FSE. The research findings indicate that pre-service teachers perceive theory and practice as

separate issues. We discuss some possibilities for further development of teacher education courses so that theory and practice can be understood and assessed as an interconnected process.

Keywords: *Theory and Practice, Teacher Training, Pre-service Teachers, Perspectives*

1 INTRODUCTION

Theory and practice are usually separated in Teacher Education, with didactics and teaching practice on one side and content on history and school subjects on the other. Although university teachers are aware of the importance of both theoretical and practical knowledge as interconnected, pre-service teachers usually prioritize the practice.

2 THEORY

Higher education institutions aim to train teachers to become successful practitioners in their future life by integrating theoretical and practical knowledge, as teaching requires both to be effective (Squires, 1998). The theory provides students with the scientific foundation for a planned teaching activity that includes the entire process from beginning to end (Chaudhary, 2013). Whereas practice allows them to put the theory they have learned into action. Freire (1970) proposes an educational praxis in which theory and practice are combined in an ongoing process of reflection and action to transform the world in order to help them achieve this goal.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research (Creswell, 2009) was conducted between April and May 2021. Eight students participated and were interviewed before and after their FSE. One student did not answer the follow up emails and was interviewed just once. The interviews were semi-structured, because this interview setting allows for a dialogue in which the information is contextualized and clarified (Zanette, 2017). The interviews were analyzed through Thematic Analysis (Norton, 2008).

4 RESULTS

Research findings showed us that students perceived theory as a completely distinct idea from practice, questioning its utility, viewing it as a set of definitions with no clear application, or defining it as a far-fetched concept. Even those who thought theoretical courses were important couldn't discern a clear connection between classroom practice and their study. Three of them referred to their teaching skills as being developed only in practice, apart from the content they learned at university. The intrinsic link between theory and practice was mentioned by two students who perceived it while working as school teachers. When they debated whether the FSE was reaching its purpose of assessing their readiness to become school teachers, they concluded that the FSE should evaluate their practical knowledge and skills, not theory.

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study offers evidence that student teachers have yet no clear comprehension of the interconnectedness of theory and practice in teachers' training in terms of their assessment processes. Discordance between these two concepts has always been an issue in teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2017) and a great number of research (i.e. Hennissen, Beckers, & Moerkerke, 2017; Moon, 2016) has been done aiming to overcome the mismatch however, it does still exist. Theory and practice in education are two sides of the same coin (Berry, Depaepe & van Driel, 2016), therefore, practice not only is based on theory but also can build new theories when critically reflected and discussed based on previous knowledge. To make it possible; students need to first define the notion and determine how theory and practice are related in order to develop techniques to achieve course assessment (Villa-Ochoa, Sánchez-Cardona & Rendón-Mesa, 2021). We suggest that university teachers use rethinking strategies for presenting theoretical concepts by making a more explicit connection to students' practice.

6 LITERATURE

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