

PEDAGOGICAL STUDENTS PRACTICAL TRAINING SYSTEM IN MODERN RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: STATE, PROBLEMS, PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The paper describes pedagogical students practical training in modern Russian Teacher Training Universities. The new requirements to higher education in Russian Federation are viewed. On the basis of the requirements the state of practical training system is analyzed. The system characteristics is accomplished on the basis of the aim and requirements of each practical training type; the principles of practical training; the content of students' work; the competencies to be taught. Practical training structure is shown. Practical training system modeling is described. Practical training process is viewed. Problems and perspectives of pedagogical students practical training are presented.

Keywords: practical training, continuous practical training, student-teaching, independent work.

Introduction

The new State Standards of higher pedagogical education in Russia set forth a new structure, a new organization and new tasks in teachers-to-be training. The tasks are based on the idea of vast implementation of students' independent work in all sorts of learning activities. Since students' training largely depends on good practical training, its structure, organization and tasks are to be revised as well. Consequently, the present paper aims at presenting the practical training system of pedagogical students in Russia viewing its modern state, analyzing its problems, anticipating its perspectives.

The part of practical training of future educators cannot be overestimated. Therefore papers on the subject appear in different pedagogical journals and monographs. The problem of new approaches to students' practical training has been considered in the works by T. Grebenuk [1], E. Glazyrina [5], Cz. Plewka [2], A. Prisyazhnaya [3; 4; 6]. Each scholar has viewed different aspects of the issue: the pedagogical postgraduates' practical training modeling [1], the part of practical training in teacher's

professional development [2], students' predictive thinking and its part in failure avoiding during the first practical training [3; 4], L2 (the Second Language) teachers-to-be practical training in Russian Pedagogical Universities [5], the importance of practical training for pedagogical students' prognostication skills development [6]. All the studied aspects help creating the holistic vision of pedagogical students' practical training in Russian contemporary teacher training system.

Characteristics of Russian contemporary pedagogical higher school system

The recent requirements to Russian teacher training are changing the system completely.

- Proceeding from the academic year 2011-2012 and till the academic year 2014-2015 Russian higher educational establishments are going to have three levels of higher education: the remnants of the five-year training program, called "*Specialitet*" and the two-level western system – undergraduate programs, graduate programs (*Federal Law "About Higher and Post-Graduate Education" Chapter II, Art. 6.2*)

[7]. Consequently, practical training is to be planned at each higher education level.

Undergraduate course will last four years for full-time students and five years for part-time students (the extra-mural department). Graduate students have a two-year course. The permission to organize the post-graduate studies will be given to the Universities, Academies and Institutes if the department has no less than six professors in the given direction (*Federal Law "About Higher and Post-Graduate Education" Chapter II, Art. 6.4*) [7], (*"Sample Statement about a Higher Educational Establishment in Russian Federation" Chapter III, Art. 33*) [8].

- The inventory of higher educational establishments in Russia includes Universities (conducting fundamental and practical research in a wide range of fields of study and considered leading scientific and methodical centres), Academies (conducting fundamental and practical research in one field of study and considered a scientific and methodical centre in this field), Institutes (allowed to conduct fundamental and practical research), (*"Sample Statement about a Higher Educational Establishment in Russian Federation" Chapter I, Art. 12*) [8]. Teacher training programs are realized in all these types of higher school, hence, each of these establishments envisages students' practical training.

- The teaching process in higher educational establishments is conducted on the basis of the State Standard. The main educational programs include the curriculum, programs of disciplines and modules, programs of practical training, guides and materials to support the pedagogical technology accepted by the institution (*"Sample Statement about a Higher Educational Establishment in Russian Federation" Chapter III, Art. 35*) [8]. Thus practical training should be based on the requirements of the State Standard, it is to be included into the curriculum and have its program, guides and materials.

- A new characteristic feature of modern higher education is a wide implementation of independent work. It is assumed that it will penetrate all types of students' activities in Russian higher schools, including independent work in class, after classes, creative independent work, e.g. students' independent research [9]. So alongside with the practical training program it is required that student-teachers' independent work be specified.

The above mentioned characteristic features of the Russian higher school system and their impact on practical training lead us to defining the structure of pedagogical students' practical training.

Structure of pedagogical students' practical training

The majority of higher schools would have a four-step practical training during the five-year training program of "Specialitet". The first step is a so called "continuous" practice, which takes place simultaneously with the learning in the semester. The aim of the practical training is observing school teachers' work and helping in organizing activities of pupils after classes.

The second step is learning to teach the subject to primary school pupils. The third step envisages student-teaching the subject to secondary school pupils. Consequently, the fourth step is teaching the subject in high school. One more optional type of practical training was conducted by departments of pedagogy at children's summer camps (3 weeks).

The next part of the paper will describe the actual work of the faculty which has traditionally been implemented in the majority of Russian Pedagogical Universities to prepare students for these types of practical training.

The work of the faculty to prepare students for practical training

The system of work to prepare student-teachers for practical training has so far envisaged, first of all, classes in *Methods of teaching a profile subject*. The classes include lectures with theoretical material and technologies to be implemented, seminars aimed at discussing the theoretical material, practical classes where students plan and act out parts of lessons.

In case of double majoring the course consists of *Methods of teaching a profile subject* and *Methods of teaching an additional subject*.

The second element of the system is the University competition of student-teachers called *Pedagogical debut*. Student-teachers compete to represent the department. Later on the competition is held among the representatives of different faculties. The competition allows to heighten students' interest towards their work at practical training, motivates them to master teaching skills.

The third element in the system is the annual questionnaire proposed to students who are to have their first practical training as student-teachers. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out how students assess their readiness to practical training, what difficulties they expect, to what kinds of work they feel well-prepared, in what kinds of work they need assistance. The above mentioned system is followed by practical training process described below.

Practical training process

The practical training process in modern Teacher Training Universities has so far had certain stages and procedures. Much depends on the individual work with students.

At the preliminary stage the instructor provides the students with the place to have practical training. The procedures include consulting the school principals and headmasters/headmistresses as to the number of student-teachers in the training group at each school. Students choose places for practical training from the recommended list of educational establishments.

The faculty organizes the preliminary practical training conference. At the conference students meet the instructors from the departments of pedagogy, psychology and the profile subject, who will help students in performing tasks as well as in planning classes during the practical training. The instructors explain the requirements, comment on the tasks given. Students are also instructed in matters of work safety. During the conference groups of students from different choose the monitors and get the information about the time and place of meeting the school administration.

The meeting with the school administration is the third stage of practical training at which each student-teachers becomes responsible for a given class of school students. Student-teachers get acquainted with the profile subject teacher and the teacher responsible for the class, gets the time-table, learns the plan of upbringing.

The main stage of practical training consists of planning and giving classes, working with the pupils on the basis of the plan of upbringing, doing tasks. During the stage student-teachers get assistance from all the instructors responsible for their practical training. The instructors also supervise the classes given by student-teachers. Classes observed by the instructors are documented and discussed with

student-teachers. The procedures is as follows. The class is observed by the instructor and the rest of student-teachers' group. First the student-teacher who has just given the class explains the objectives, justifies the tasks he/she has given, analyzes the results. Other student-teachers analyze the observed class from three points of view: the organizational work of the student-teacher, the didactical characteristics of the class, the student-teacher's profile subject knowledge. After that the school teacher makes remarks and comments, then the instructor gives his/her analysis of the lesson and gives the mark for the class.

The fifth stage of practical training envisages the final practical training conference.

The aim of the conference is to sum up the experience gained by student-teachers. Consequently, the conference begins with brief presentations of interesting techniques and tasks which student-teachers learned at practical training. Each group of students makes one presentation. Then instructors from different departments comment on the tasks performed by student-teachers analyze the results and distribute the papers. Each student-teacher gets the marks for each task separately and for the whole practical training. In the end the students are asked to suggest improvements in practical training organization. The Dean of the faculty makes a conclusion.

The new two-level system requires to teach students the way all the aims would be achieved on the level of the undergraduate program. Hence, certain tasks are to be accomplished by means of students' independent work. This assumption is to be envisaged in the new content of practical training.

Pedagogical students practical training system: new content

The practical training system for two levels of higher pedagogical education will include all the existing types of training: continuous practical training as well as student-teaching in all types of schools (primary, secondary, high). Since Russian higher pedagogical education envisages four years of undergraduate day-time program / five years of undergraduate extra-mural program and two more years of graduate program, at least three types of practical training are to be planned for undergraduates and at least one – for graduate students.

The system may be characterized from the point of view of:

- the aim and requirements of each practical training type;
- the principles of practical training;
- the content of students' work;
- the competencies acquired.

The State Standards envisage the following practical training aim: teaching the major professional skills and habits in teachers-to-be, preparing them to fulfill the tasks in each of the spheres – instruction, upbringing, research, management.

The general requirements to students are obvious from the Pedagogical University graduates qualification characteristics. It is required that they know the basic pedagogical notions, concepts, theories and laws, creatively implement them in practice. Nevertheless to meet the requirements, institutions have to work out a separate list of requirements for each practical training. They are different and become more complex in each new academic year.

The analysis of the new State Standard made it possible to distinguish the following principles to be implemented in practical training [4, p. 244], disclosed below.

1. *The principle of complex aims of practice.* The new State Standard has reduced the length of practice, hence, it states to reason to set several goals to be achieved at each practical training. Earlier the practice was structured so that it to set one aim for each of the four types of practical training. In present conditions the aim should be more complex for student-teachers to master all the necessary competencies.

2. *The principle of practical training multi-structured tasks.* The complexity of goals is realized in a more complex structure of tasks. The previous structure could focus students on one level of school education or even one aspect of teachers' work. Now it might prove difficult to specify types of school or focus on one definite aspect of teacher's work.

3. *The principle of multi-profile-training.* Modern Russian high school is based on profile training. Its realization begins at the secondary level in the form of pre-profile education. Consequently, student-teachers should learn how to plan and conduct lessons in profiles training classes.

The content of students' work at practical training depends on the subjects the students

have mastered and the degree of their being prepared to fulfill certain tasks in student-teacher's work. For example, at the continuous practical training it is obligatory for a student to observe at least one class of a foreign language, to organize one extracurricular class. The rest of the tasks are connected with upbringing. During the other types of practical training students begin their practice with intensive observations and teaching a subject. Consequently, it should be required that the total amount of observed classes be no less than twenty, while the total amount of the conducted classes be about thirty.

As a result student-teachers are to master the whole range of competencies, which any qualified teacher possesses. These competencies are to be taught and developed in the new two-level system of higher pedagogical education. In connection with this task scholars and educators put forward new models of pedagogical practical training.

New practical training modeling

Dynamic and static models of graduate students' practical training have been worked out by T. Grebenuk [1, p. 13]. While proposing a practical training system it states to reason to study the experience.

According to professor T. Grebenuk, the static practical training model contains five components. The analytical component includes the analysis of requirements to teachers-to-be. The axiological component envisages choosing the professionally relevant competencies to be mastered by students. The subject component is working out tasks for student-teachers to be performed during the practical training. The practical component means choosing tasks by each student and, therefore, determining the individual trajectory of learning during practical training. The reflective component consists of students' self-evaluation of being prepared for practical training.

The dynamic model includes three stages. The initial stage is studying the subjects to be the basis for practical training. The preliminary stage envisages students' independent work. While doing it student-teachers are to single out the competencies to be mastered by them, design tasks to be done, propose the monitoring system. At the final stage students self-evaluate the professionally relevant competencies they

acquire. Each student-teacher chooses the trajectory of his/her practical training.

The models consider the practical training system thoroughly, but they are applicable mainly for graduate students, as each model requires a certain degree of students' experience in teaching, in choosing competencies and cooperating in the process of learning with the instructor. Consequently, practical training system should be made more universal to be applicable for undergraduate students as well. And this search for practical training universal character is one of the problems which the system faces at the stage of transformation. Below more problems of the system are shown.

Problems of pedagogical practical training system

1. The first problem is connected with *practical training structure*. As mentioned before, the former practical training consisted of four periods of time. One-week continuous practical training was meant for the second-year "Specialitet" students. It aimed to teach them how extracurricular activities might be organized. Four-week practical training for the third-year students envisaged teaching classes in primary school. The five-week practical training was to teach the fourth-year students to conduct classes at the secondary level. The last practical training in "Specialitet" programs (seven weeks long) required from student-teachers teaching two subjects, the main one in high school. The present moment, when the length of overall practical training has been reduced to twelve weeks, requires the new structure of practice.

2. A peculiar feature of practical training according to the new State Standards is relying on *student-teachers' independent work*. Student-teachers' independent work with practical training materials requires the samples and electronic forms of documentation to be available to students. The materials that student-teachers hand in after practical training are: the diary of practical training, lesson planning, notes of observed classes, plan of extracurricular work. The list of documentation largely depends on the requirements to documentation at school rather than the requirements of the State Standard.

3. Modern situation in education is characterized by the reduction of time for

classes. Hence, student-teachers have to intensify their teaching in class by applying different technologies. Practical training is the time for student-teachers to implement *innovation technologies* when conducting classes. The present-day requirements make the implementation of new technologies obligatory. Problems are to be solved. The possible future of pedagogical practical training system is viewed in the next subchapter.

Perspectives of pedagogical practical training system

1. The number of practical training types will definitely be reduced. Since the qualification of Bachelor of education envisages four years of training, it states to reason to divide the twelve weeks of practical training, envisaged in the new State Standard, by three practices. The first practice (one week long), as previously, will be meant for the second-year students to learn how extracurricular activities are organized. The second one (five weeks long) will be meant for the fourth year students working at the primary and secondary levels. The third practice (six weeks long) will include students' work in high school. This practice should envisage working in profile classes.

2. Practical training needs organization of independent work. Consequently, special sites with aims, tasks, terms and deadlines of documentation delivery as well as forms and necessary materials is to be available to students.

3. Innovation technologies are expected to be implemented by student-teachers while conducting classes. They are: student centered technologies (projecting, differential teaching, tandem, cooperative learning, language portfolio); interactive (group work, moderation, brainstorming, case study, role play); technologies, based on chunks of material (modular technology, integral technology).

Conclusion

Since the aim of the paper was presenting the practical training system of pedagogical students in Russia and viewing its modern state, problems and perspectives, the following conclusions can be made.

1. The former pedagogical higher education had developed an effective practical training system, consisting of continuous practical

training and student-teaching at different types of schools as well as practical training at children's summer camps.

2. The new structure of higher education leads to the revision of practical training types.

3. The new requirements to higher education emphasize students' independent learning, which will result in more independent work during practical training.

4. The new practical training will be based on the principles of complex aims of practical training, practical training multi-structured tasks, the principle of multi-profile-training.

5. Practical training modeling is being proposed by educators at the present moment. Dynamic

and static models of graduate students' practical training worked out by T. Grebenuk, are samples of effective practical training organization.

6. Practical training organization cannot but lead to certain problems, among which planning the new structure, envisaging much independent work and implementing innovative technologies in teaching are to be mentioned.

7. The above mentioned problems require solutions which will determine the perspectives of practical training system. The basic task of these problem solving is to preserve and strengthen the quality of teacher training.

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