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**PROBLEMATIC PEDAGOGICAL SITUATIONS AT SCHOOL  
FROM THE PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS'  
PESPECTIVES**

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***Abstract***

Intensive progress changes in the society have a strong influence also on our education. The school climate can be influenced by the school management (a headmaster), teachers, pupils themselves and also the use of information and communication technologies (tablets, computers and their use). Pre-service students of the 1st grade of primary school meet with new pedagogical incentives during their teacher training at primary schools, pupils reactions, but also with problem situations which they need to learn to solve. The research aims to identify and describe problems in pedagogical practice from university pre-service student teachers' point of view and to compare these with the primary school in-service teachers' (hereinafter Primary School's (PS)) perception. It is also important to identify the preferred way of solving problem situations by the pre-service teachers. The result is a formation of categories of contentious situations, identification of the preferred way of solving such issues from the pre-service students' point of view in comparison with in-service teachers' views. The findings make it clear that the pre-service teachers find the biggest problem to be the time layout of the teaching lessons and in engaging all pupils in learning. The research also shows that the pre-service teachers look for advice and help mainly from the in-service teachers and didactic experts, who teach at the Faculty of Education.

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**Keywords:** E-learning discussion, teaching practice, pedagogical problem situations, pedagogical mismatch.



## 1. Introduction

One of the most important steps leading to improve the level of education of future teachers in the system of pre-graduate preparation in the Czech Republic is to improve the level of teaching practice and its interconnection with theoretical disciplines of teaching preparation. We are often confronted with the fact that there is still little room for a deeper reflection and analysis of individual pedagogical practices (Bartošová & Václavík, 2009).

The pedagogical situation has been defined and described in professional literature. Pedagogical situations refer to a specific cases of situations that occur in the life of a school with participation of pupils, teachers and other persons who educate pupils (Sadilová, 2006). A problem situation is a new situation, where only the goal is known, and where no well-known algorithm cannot be applied for its solution (Maťuškin, 1973). If there is a different subjective point of view at a school situation from the teacher's point of view and a pupil, a mismatch or a conflict occurs, and a so-called a problem situation occurs (Langová et al., 1992). As Hrčka (2001) states, problematic pedagogical situations may have been created by a pupil, environment or a combination of previous factors.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) play a significant role in a school environment (Bartošová & Maněnová, 2008). In terms of improvement of future teachers' preparation, we provide Moodle electronic discussion within E-learning system in the University of Hradec Králové during teaching practice among peers, teacher trainers, trainees or also practical didactic experts. Research on e-learning in the Czech Republic, held at the Faculty of Art, Masaryk University, found in paper *Reflection of professional discussions and e-learning meaning in the Czech Republic* (Paidová, 2011), that its real potential remains unused and the benefits it has for pre-service teachers and also in-service teachers.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this research is to analyse problematic pedagogical situations pre-service teachers in primary schools face in the Czech Republic and compare these with the views of in-service teachers. The research also aims to identify the preferred way of solving problem situations by the pre-service teachers.

## 3. Research Questions

We would like to compare identification of problematic pedagogical students' situations (difficulties with pupils' behaviour, evaluation during classes, with problem solving of pupils with parents or with interpretation of subject topic etc.) with that of in-service teachers. It is necessary to learn about this from pre-service teachers in order to share this with their peers and the training tutor within the context of an e-learning discussion. The following questions emerge as a result of this concern: What are the categories of problematic situations for pre-service teachers and where do they look for solutions? How do in-service teachers view problem situations faced by pre-service teacher students during their training at primary schools?

## 4. Research Methods

### 4.1. Research design

Primarily, a mixed method design comprising both qualitative-quantitative research was used (Maňák & Švec, 2014). The research was divided into three parts. The qualitative research was represented by a content analysis of discussion in the E-learning environment in Moodle, from which a diagnostics of problem situations was established. This occurred within the context of continuous pedagogical practical trainings of pre-service teachers at primary schools. The problem situations have been categorized for problems linked with a) teaching of individual subjects during practical training - methodical, b) problems with pupils' behaviour and the last area represents problems associated with c) pupils' parents.

Based on the created categories from the above analysis, non-standard questionnaires were created to obtain data for the quantitative aspect of the research from 1st grade primary school in-service teachers in Hradec Králové and for pre-service teachers who were 4th and 5th year students of the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové. The questionnaire for the in-service teachers consisted of 10 items (4 on demographic data, 5 semi-closed and one open item). There were two questions modified based on comments and there was an option of extension of the response. The questionnaire for pre-service teacher also consisted of 10 items (4 on demographic data, 5 semi-closed and 1 open item). For the pre-service teacher sample there was no adjustment. The questionnaires were distributed in March 2018. The questionnaires had been piloted on a sample of 5 in-service teachers and 10 pre-service teachers. The reliability of the questionnaires for in-service teachers and for pre-service teacher students was verified at Cronbach Alpha  $\alpha = 0.79$  and  $\alpha = 0.81$  respectively.

The third part highlights possibilities related to where pre-service teachers have recourse during solving their problems connected with practice and whom they turn to solve situations.

From these three parts, all the problem situations mentioned in the E-learning discussion were identified and categorized, while the data from the questionnaire survey of the pre-service and in-service teachers' were compared.

### 4.2. Research sample

The research sample consists of 24 pre-service teachers who were students from the 4<sup>th</sup> year and 40 pre-service teachers were students of the 5<sup>th</sup> year primary school teaching course, who filled a questionnaire survey. The questionnaires were given in person during a common colloquium in March 2018 (100% returned). Primary school in-service teachers completed anonymously 22 questionnaires (62.8 % returned by an electronic form) in April 2018.

Data from E-learning discussions represented further material for our research, which were obtained in Moodle both from pre-service teacher students, and faculty in-service teachers during 2014 up to 2018. Also didactic experts from the Faculty of Education took part in a discussion in 2014-2017 (Table 01).

**Table 01.** Number overview of respondents participating in E-learning discussion in years 2014-2017

Continuous teaching practice (year of completion)	Number of participating students in E-learning discussion	Number of participating teachers in E-learning discussion
2014	45	8
2015	31	5
2016	26	1
2017 (winter term)	29	0

Although in previous years, there was a slow decline in the number of participating pre-service teachers in Moodle environment discussion, an increase was noted this year 2018 to 38 pre-service teachers and 10 in-service teachers and didactic experts (which is not part of this research).

## 5. Findings

Pre-service teachers are confronted with various types of problems during their teaching practice. Our research objective was to categorize individual guidance or educational pre-service teachers' problems and identify where the teachers look for solutions.

As stated previously, the research had been divided into three parts.

According to the scope of the paper, we focus only on selected results of the extensive research results.

### 5.1. Identification and categorization of pedagogical problems and situations

From the pre-service teachers' questionnaire, information was obtained from the following items: *"What problems did you face the most during your practical training?"* "The questionnaire for teachers had already had categories given: *"In your opinion, what are the most frequent problem situations that student teachers face or try to solve in terms of teaching process during their practice? Are there any further problems (problem situations) according in your opinion that student teachers most often try to solve during their practice?"*

The field connected with *teaching and didactic subject* is shown in Table 02. Only the categories where more than one respondent responded are displayed.

**Table 02.** Categories overview related to pre-service teachers

Related Issues	4 <sup>th</sup> year students	5 <sup>th</sup> year students	Faculty teachers
Problems with a new curriculum topic implementation.	3	5	7
Insufficient curriculum review.	1	0	7
Problems with lesson time structure organization.	3	0	9
Problems with assessment of pupils.	1	2	2
Implementation of new teaching forms for pupils.	1	0	2
Bad pupils' cooperation while teaching.	2	1	0
Problems with keeping attention of pupils while teaching.	1	1	0
Work for skilful/slow pupils.	2	6	0

Problems with didactic procedures in individual subjects.	0	3	0
Engaging all pupils into the learning process.	0	0	8
Problems with suitable question formulation for pupils.	0	0	4
Solving pupils' discourse during lessons.	0	0	3
Problems related to teaching (music, art lessons).	0	0	2

As we can see, students do face various problems. The issue which students try to solve most often, is the *problem with implementation of a new curriculum*. Then next most frequent issue is *problems with rightful assessment of pupils*. This issue is very complicated and awkward.

The problematic situation which students most agreed on are *related to big differences among pupils* (either knowledge or social). Creation of activities for skilful or slow pupils is demanding also from the time point of view.

On the contrary, the in-service teachers assume that student teachers face the biggest problem with *organization of a lesson plan, time structure* (frequency 9) and *problems with engagement of all pupils into learning process* (frequency 8). Many teachers assume, that student teachers do not have enough *curriculum overview, which they learn in individual years* or also *do not know how to explain new curriculum*, where they concur with students' opinion (frequency 7).

Problems related to *pupils' behaviour* occur in every teaching lesson and is faced by all respondents (Table 03).

**Table 03.** Categories overview related to pupils' behaviour

Issues related to pupils' behaviour	4 <sup>th</sup> year students	5 <sup>th</sup> year students	Faculty teachers
Disciplinary problems during lessons.	2	7	1
Inappropriate behaviour of pupils during lessons.	3	3	0

As table 03 shows, some student teachers do not know how to solve problems related to pupils' behaviour.

Further problem situations which were highlighted by respondents and were not connected with the problem of the teaching process were included into the *category of other issues* (Table 04).

**Table 04.** Categories overview related to other problems

Other issues	4 <sup>th</sup> year students	5 <sup>th</sup> year students	Faculty teachers
Problems with pupils, who have individual plans, learning disabilities, ADHD.	2	8	0
Problems in communication with parents.	0	8	0
Not providing enough school aids.	4		0
Time demanded for teaching preparation.	2	0	0
Problems how to call a pupil with an assistant.	1	1	0
Problems with a pupil who does not attend school.	0	2	0
Problems with students' speech.	0	0	10
Problem with own stage fright.	0	0	9
Problem with additional activities for gifted pupils.	0	0	5
Problems with slang.	0	0	4
Problem with low authority.	0	0	2

Respondents from the 5<sup>th</sup> year highlighted problems *related to pupils who have individual education plan, learning disabilities or ADHD syndrome*. This problem was mentioned by 8 students. The same number of students stated that they tried to solve problems *related to approach and behaviour of pupils' parents*. This issue is demanding for students but they gain more experience in handling this during professional practice.

In comparison with the in-service teachers, we see that they do not fall into the given categories. In fact, they perceive completely different problems, which student teachers do not consider a problem. There were nine teachers who concurred that students have *a problem with their own stage fright and with their voice speech* (frequency 10). Also *making of additional activities for talented pupils* is not yet managed well by the students (frequency 5).

## 5.2. Identification and categorization of teaching problems and situations in the E-learning discussion

Within the course of Primary School Teaching, we created an E-learning environment for a discussion forum dedicated to pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and didactic experts, in order to improve the quality of pre-service teacher students' preparation. Since 2014, they have been exchanging their observations and experience. They also send photos, write their suggestions or ask questions, search for answers and look for solutions for their professional problems. Based on these discussions, we did a content analysis throughout the period of three years focusing mainly on the monitored field of problematic situations.

A total of 145 respondents were involved in the discussion, with 237 pre-service teachers' narrations and 19 in-service teachers' and didactic contributions within one question area: *What did they need help with?* and *what is their knowledge of teaching practice experience?*

Similar with the questionnaire, a categorization of listed problem situations was done: a) related to teaching, b) focused on pupils' behaviour during lessons a c) other problems. *Categories related to teaching* are the most extensive (see Table 05).

**Table 05.** Categories overview from E-learning related to teaching

Issues related to teaching area	2014	2015	2016	2017
Introducing new curriculum.	7	4	12	3
Correct didactic site of teaching.	0	6	25	0
Organization of lesson time structure.	6	0	1	1
Preparation of an interesting lesson.	0	4	0	6
Engagement of pupils in activities.	3	3	0	0
Additional activities for pupils.	2	4	0	0
A little curriculum overview.	0	4	0	0
Work with slow pupils.	0	1	0	2
Too many/few lesson activities prepared.	2	1	0	0
Reaction to pupils' notices.	0	2	0	0

In the category *implementation of new curriculum*, we can find certain conformity with questionnaire replies in the discussions (26 respondents, in questionnaires 15 respondents) and *proper*

*didactic leadership* (31 respondents and in the questionnaire 3 respondents). As stated in the questionnaire, students do face problems with *correct lesson plan time line*.

11 respondents highlighted *pupils' behaviour* during three-year survey in the e-learning discussion.

Table 06 describes individual problematic situations in e-learning discussion under *other issues*.

**Table 06.** Other issues overview in the E-learning discussion

Other issues	2014	2015	2016	2017
Importance of meticulous preparation for the lesson.	0	5	0	0
Work with speech.	0	1	0	0
Insufficient space for expression of pupils' views.	0	1	0	0
Teacher's intervention into student's teaching.	1	0	0	0

In comparison with the questionnaires, we find conformity again with *work with students' voice*. In the discussion forum, a new category of *a question of a written preparation for teaching and dissatisfaction of students with teachers' intervention into teaching*.

### 5.3. Searching for answers to problem situations (from the questionnaires)

An important finding of the research was where students have recourse to problem solving situations arising from practice. Obtained information from the questionnaires is listed in the tables. The issue where students have recourse was divided into the field of teaching and pupils' behaviour and into problems with pupils' parents.

Table 07 shows, where the respondents most often have recourse during *solving pedagogical situations* and where they look for help according to teachers.

**Table 07.** Solving of pedagogical situations

Where respondents have recourse to problems solving in terms of teaching	4 <sup>th</sup> year students	5 <sup>th</sup> year students	Faculty teachers
To teacher trainers	21	34	18
To practice didactic expert of the Faculty of Education	6	3	8
To mutual discussions	0	4	4
To professional publications	2	4	1
To internet	10	16	6
To social media	2	8	2
To parents and relatives	3	4	1
Somewhere else; peers	4	4	1

According to the replies in the area of teaching process, students most frequently turn to their practice teacher trainers and then to internet and to their peers as well.

*Field of pupils' behaviour* is shown in Table 08.

**Table 08.** Problem solving with pupils' behaviour

Where respondents have recourse to problems solving in terms of pupils' behaviour	4 <sup>th</sup> year students	5 <sup>th</sup> year students	Faculty teachers
To teacher trainers	23	36	21
To practice didactic expert of the Faculty of Education	4	3	5
To mutual discussions	0	6	4
To professional publications	0	3	0
To internet	3	4	0
To social media	0	7	2
To parents and relatives	4	3	0
Somewhere else, to: peers	1	4	2

During problem solving in the field of pupils' behaviour, we assumed which was also confirmed, that students have recourse to their practical training teachers. They spend the time with them during practical training and also teachers know their students well and can give them good advice.

Students, as stated before also face *problems while communicating with parents*.

Table 9 depicts that a qualified teacher is a direct student's mentor.

**Table 09.** Problem solving during communication with parents

Where do respondents have recourse to problems solving in terms with parents?	4 <sup>th</sup> year students	5 <sup>th</sup> year students	Faculty teachers
To teacher trainers	23	32	21
To practice didactic expert of the Faculty of Education	2	3	5
To mutual discussions	0	5	4
To professional publications	1	3	0
To internet	1	2	0
To social media	0	4	2
To parents and relatives	3	7	0
Somewhere else; peers	1	1	2

Pre-service teachers have recourse to the in-service teachers, because they get immediate and the best solutions, according to the long term practice of teacher trainers and knowledge of the environment.

Parents and relatives who work in education represent further sources, as well as various web sites on internet can be an inspiration for teachers.

## 6. Conclusion

Our main research objective was the identification and categorization of problematic pedagogical situations solved by pre-service teachers during their pedagogical practice, comparison with in-service teachers' views and searching sources and ways of solving the problematic situations by pre-service teachers.

After the in-service teachers' questionnaire assessments, we can say with certainty, that the in-service teachers presume that the most frequent pre-service teachers' problem is correct time line of the

lesson plan. Another common problem is the engagement of all pupils in the teaching process, where students manage with certain difficulties in their outputs.

Other obstacles that the pre-service teachers face are their indistinctive speech, their nervousness and providing extra work for gifted pupils.

The pre-service students agree with in-service teachers in the questionnaire as far as the issue of lesson time structure is concerned and also engagement of all pupils in the lesson.

Based on an analysis of e-learning discussion content in the last three years, we have classified the categories of issues in the previous discussion.

During teaching practice, the pre-service teachers most often solved issues related to engagement of all pupils in activities and inappropriate behaviour of pupils during lessons in 2014. However, in 2015, the problematic situations involved implementation of interesting lessons for pupils and additional activities for the skilful (gifted) pupils.

After the overall analysis of discussions, we can evaluate the issue related to didactic point of view as the most feared and the most frequent one. The pre-service teachers struggle with difficulties such as: transmitting knowledge (curriculum) to pupils; implementation of new curriculum and creative activities into lessons. Pre-service teachers are challenged that they do not have a comprehensive overview of pupils' knowledge in each year of school and what they should manage.

From the results is clear that teaching the 1st grade primary school should be strengthened mainly in terms of didactics of individual subjects and to gain a comprehensive overview of what students learn in individual years. It would be worthwhile to introduce a subject called communication skills with possible mock problems solving situations which occur at primary schools. Another important addition would be participation of student teachers doing their practice to share their experiences with the students who have yet to go for their teaching practice.

As other results show, pre-service teachers look for help and advice from teacher trainers and didactic experts. We presumed correctly that problematic pedagogical situations will be solved by the pre-service teachers directly with an in-service teacher or with a didactic expert within university seminars. Pre-service teachers also do tend to use social media and parents and try to find solutions there.

The contribution of this study relies on the knowledge gained from the questionnaire and analysis of the discussion forum during three years at Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic. With this information, we believe we can improve the quality of pedagogical practice and preparation of future teachers for teaching profession by sharing these results with students, relevant teachers and didactic experts in individual areas of preparation.

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