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## Comparative Study Between Students' Teaching Practice Activities in Hungary and Romania

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### Abstract

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Academic teaching practice is a component of the subsystem for the faculties' initial training, which is part and parcel of the mandatory curriculum, whose target is to establish maximum bridges between the theoretical acquisitions obtained by studying the psycho-pedagogical school subjects, the specialised ones, and the training internship for the specialised subjects.

In all the European countries, the teaching practice activities are very important for the future career, because students are learning by doing how to teach and act in the classroom.

Because of the importance of this kind of activities, we initiated a comparative study between educational systems regarding initial training of students, future teachers for preschool education in Romania and Hungary. The research methods were participating observation, study of school documents and focus group discussions. In our comparative research, we used the following criteria: university entrance, the curricula for the initial training and the ways of planning and developing the teaching practice activities.

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**Keywords:** Teaching practice; study; educational system; Romania; Hungary.

### 1. Introduction

Between October to December 2015 and May 2016, we carried out a comparative trial regarding the specificity of organising and unfolding the teaching practice for the undergraduate students of the Romanian Pre-School and Elementary Education Pedagogy specialisation and the Hungarian pre-school education / Nursery school teachers.

The trial aimed at identifying the resemblances and the differences in terms of organising, unfolding and assessing the teaching practice activities for the undergraduate students – future pre-school teachers.

The goals of this approach focused on:

- becoming aware of the curriculum specific to the Teaching Practice subject and to some other psycho-pedagogical and specialised subjects;
- getting acquainted with the university entrance criteria;
- identifying the existing types of teaching practice for shaping the future kindergarten teachers;
- noticing how a daily activity of a student in the kindergarten is carried out;
- studying the methods of assessing the teaching practice course;
- taking over and adapting certain organisation methods and means, with a view of rendering the teaching practice activities more efficient at the level of the Pre-School and Elementary Education Pedagogy specialisation. (Catalano, 2013, p. 171-176).

## 2. Trial methodology

Over the aforementioned months we made the comparative ascertaining trial by using the specific research methods and instruments, namely:

- a) the *participative observation* of the students' teaching practice and also during classes and seminars;
- b) *interview- and questionnaire-based investigation*. These two instruments were used within the relationship with the professors that coordinate the teaching practice, with the mentors, who play a very important part in the students' practical training, and with the students. We used both the structured and the unstructured interview and the questionnaire was drawn up under the form of the communication skills scale, which was an instrument adapted to the Communicative Competence Scale (CCS), Wiemann (1977);
- c) *the analysis of the school documents* specific to planning and designing, which include the curriculum specific to the Nursery School Teachers specialisation and the syllabuses of the following school subjects: Pre-School Teaching Practice, Specialised and Psycho-Pedagogical Subjects (Game Pedagogy and Methodology, the didactics of the subjects existing in the curriculum etc.);
- d) *focus-group*, with an aim to collect data as to the experiences and the opinions linked to how the students' teaching practice is being carried out.

The research data were collected by arranging the sources and the events of the envisaged phenomena in due order, by objectively interpreting the noticed facts and by adopting a constructive position towards the aspects seen.

### **3. Research design**

The comparative trial initiated and carried out refers to certain clearly and logically set up criteria, in line with the trial purpose and goals and in correlation to the research methods and instruments used. Our comparison topics thus were: the selection procedure for the university entrance, the initial training over the educational years and the manner of assessing the practical activities.

The first criterion was suggested because it is the first step to success in the didactic profession. The way in which this selection takes place is utterly important, as the future teachers must have certain knowledge and prove certain skills, such as: basic knowledge of music, art, literature, the important aspects linked to health, nutrition and food safety, minimum knowledge of physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, the awareness of the basic concepts, the capacity of correctly expressing themselves orally and in written form, the ability to read and understand, then to analyse, interpret and express judgement values about a written text, practical skills, the capacity of understanding the different styles of communication, becoming aware of and understanding the differences and the resemblances between the various cultures. (Reutzel, ACEI, 1998).

The next criterion suggested takes into account the fact that the teachers' training lasts three years, but the way in which it is organised differs a lot, depending on the specific curricula and syllabuses.

In the last part we thought that the manner of assessing the teaching practice activities versus the internship development was important.

### **4. Data analysis and interpretation**

Further on, we shall comparatively analyse the data obtained by using the abovementioned methods and instruments and we shall interpret the results according to the specified criteria.

#### *4.1. University entrance*

In Hungary, the entrance consists in a written test, whose goal is to see the future students' training level in the field of the mother tongue and mathematics. Apart from this written test there are three practical tests of musical education and culture, Hungarian language, literature and folklore, plus physical education.

In Romania, the entrance for the Pre-School and Elementary Education Pedagogy specialisation is based on a written test, which targets the same things : the level of the linguistic knowledge, the capacity of interpreting a literary text and basic mathematical skills. Half the entrance grade is represented by the average of the secondary school leaving examination.

Upon comparing the two entrance means for these specialisations, we see that the eliminatory tests existing in the Hungarian system are salutary. Their introduction amongst the entrance tests in Romania would be a best thing. It is imperative for the kindergarten teachers and the schoolmasters to be very well prepared theoretically in the field of the mother tongue language and literature, as well as mathematics and not only.

## 4.2. Initial training

### 4.2.1. The analysis of the curricula in the two countries:

The curriculum of the Faculty of Child and Adult Education – the Teachers for Pre-School Education specialisation – comprises six semesters and specialised, psycho-pedagogical and methodological school subjects, on the one hand, and teaching practice on the other.

On making a comparative analysis of the two curricula, we notice the following resemblances:

- The students study similar subjects in terms of the topics tackled with: General Pedagogy, Theory and Methodology of Game, Pedagogical Research Methodology, Psychology of Development, Teaching Practice, Music Teaching Methodology, Mother Tongue Teaching Methodology, Mathematics Teaching Methodology, Physical Education Teaching Methodology, Fine Art Teaching Methodology, the Foreign Language.
- The number of hours of teaching practice increases in the last semester.
- There are optional school subjects besides the mandatory ones, which exist somehow in the Romanian curriculum, as well.

### 4.2.2. Specific aspects to the teaching practice planning and deployment

In Hungary there are two kinds of teaching practice : the group one and the individual one. The group teaching practice takes place on a weekly basis, one day, from 8 a.m. to noon, and the year I students attend the activities carried out in the kindergarten. Apart from the fact that they need to fill in the daily monitoring charts, the students have got individualised tasks, depending on the semester topics, which are suggested by the teaching practice tutor. The monitored activities are upheld by the mentoring professor, who suggests activities for the students jointly with the teaching practice tutor. In this period of year I, the students' internship is observative and they put down their notes in a journal notebook. (Dávid, Podráczky, 2012, p.14-15).

The individual internship takes place during a whole week, when the student has also got clear tasks to put into practice and different aspects to trace.

In Romania, internship takes place under the form of individual practice, in semester I or III, depending on the curriculum embraced by each faculty, by observative practice, where the students have got very clear responsibilities, during a certain day per week, at a group of pre-school pupils or in a classroom, alternatively : one semester at the kindergarten and one semester at the school. In year III – semesters V and VI – there is the group teaching practice, where activities and classes actually take place.

### 4.2.3. Teaching practice activities assessment

In Hungary, the teaching practice activities are assessed by scheduling a day where the student carries out a final activity, analysed by the mentor, the didacticians and the teaching practice tutor.

In Romania, within the 'Babeş-Bolyai' University – the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences – the Pre-School and Elementary Education Pedagogy specialisation, the teaching practice activities are assessed during the two semesters, by writing down the didactic activities carried out, and at the end of each semester, by the assessment of the teaching practice portfolio.

## 5. Conclusions

This study has both advantages and limits. The advantages of it are the following: we found out a lot of precious information about the peculiarities of initial training of the students, future teachers for preschool education and also about preschool education in Hungary. These information were given by teachers and students which are directly implicated in the program and we could discover important data about all the issues that we were interested in. We can use these for making some readjustments in Romanian Educational System regarding this training. The limits of this study are: the period for studying the documents was short and the fact that the students' answers may be subjective. For the following study, we intend to use some of these activities and ways of organization of practice activities in the teaching practice activities in Romania for finding out if these ones are suitable in our educational system and also to get more specific information about these subject.

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