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THE INFLUENCE OF WORK PLACEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF PREGRADUATE PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL-NEEDS PEDAGOGY*A INFLUÊNCIA DO ESTÁGIO NO CONTEXTO DA PREPARAÇÃO PRÉ-GRADUADA DOS ESTUDANTES DO DEPARTAMENTO DE PEDAGOGIA DE NECESSIDADES ESPECIAIS***Lukáš Stárek**

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ABSTRACT

This academic paper focuses on two key selected areas in the process of pregraduate preparation of students from university courses in special-needs pedagogy, specifically at the University of Jan Amos Komenský, Prague, s.r.o. In particular, it covers the topic of motivation for selection or choice of work placement that is an integral part of study and influences the formation of professional orientation. We therefore see work placement as an essential tool for the development of professional competencies of future special-needs educators and educators from resocialisation and penitentiary pedagogy. For this reason, we present the personal opinion and vision of the profession through the perspective of the students undergoing pregraduate preparation – specifically it involves the presentation of professional analysis of a questionnaire-based survey filled in by 501 respondents/students.

Keywords: Choice. Experience. Pedagogy. Profession. Student. Work placement.

RESUMO

Este trabalho acadêmico se concentra em duas áreas-chave selecionadas no processo de preparação de pré-graduação de estudantes de cursos universitários em pedagogia de necessidades especiais, especificamente na Universidade de Jan Amos Komenský, Praga, s.r.o. Em particular, ele cobre o tema da motivação para a seleção ou escolha do estágio de trabalho que é parte integrante do estudo e influencia a formação da orientação profissional. Portanto, vemos o estágio como uma ferramenta essencial para o desenvolvimento das competências profissionais dos futuros educadores de necessidades especiais e educadores da ressocialização e da pedagogia penitenciária. Por esta razão, apresentamos a opinião e visão pessoal da profissão através da perspectiva dos alunos em preparação para a pré-graduação - especificamente envolve a apresentação de análise profissional de uma pesquisa baseada em questionário preenchida por 501 entrevistados/estudantes.

Palavras-chave: Escolha. Experiência. Pedagogia. Profissão. Estudante. Estágio profissional.

1. Introduction

Work placement is becoming, ever increasingly, a significant topic of study as well as a crucial feature on a global scale with regard to the necessary improvement in quality and development of a given profession, specifically with an emphasis on growing trends in the proportion of practical training. In this paper, we define and understand work placement as a tool for combining theory with practice, a space for applying theoretical knowledge, and a possibility to obtain not only new/further experiences, skills and abilities, but also to form their professional vision and reflect more on the nature of the profession and the personal individuality of a student, i.e. a future graduate.

The preparation, supervision and management system, work placement implementation and subsequent evaluation are an indispensable and finely honed component of the courses at the University of Jan Amos Komenský, Prague s.r.o., since the establishment of the University itself. The pregraduate training of teachers aims to bring knowledge into line in all necessary fields that lead to the preparation of a first-rate educator, which means deep knowledge in selected fields, quality knowledge from pedagogy, psychology, public education and in practical preparation, especially in pedagogical practice (Bartoňová, Pipeková, 2011).

2. The organisation of work placement of students from the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy at the University of Jan Amos Komenský, Prague

While undertaking the supervised work placement, the student abides by the instructions in the Moggis information system. The student selects as they wish the placement location that meets the requirements of the programme being studied. In the first phase, the placement location must be approved by the academic work placement coordinator (hereinafter referred to as the “placement coordinator”). This member of staff may also be contacted concerning the selection of the facility, or the student may select from contracted facilities listed in the Moggis information system. Upon approval of the work placement location, the student fills in the agreement form and submits two printed copies of this agreement to the relevant placement coordinator, who confirms the agreement on behalf of the University. One copy of the agreement is then handed over to the selected facility. Thus, the second step is simultaneously approved in the placement system. The student collects the prepared agreement and completes the placement within the duration stipulated in the agreement, after which time the student writes a reflection on the placement done. The reflection is a written report that they submit in electronic form along with the evaluation and the work placement completion confirmation.

Considerable attention is devoted during studies on doing the placement itself. The students are simultaneously informed of the ethical principles of teaching activities and compliance with said principles and requirements to maintain confidentiality of information obtained during the work placement. These principles and instructions on the placement aims, forms and outputs are listed in the publication *Speciálně pedagogická praxe ve vysokoškolském studiu* [Special-needs teaching placement during university studies] (Klugerová, Němec, 2014).

The main aim of supervised placement within the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy is to provide a student the basic insight into the activities of a special-needs educator or educator / social worker engaged in resocialisation and corrective services (depending on the choice of the bachelor’s course Special-

needs Pedagogy OR Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy). A component of the placement is also the preparation of the progress of the placement itself, including in particular the study of the materials of the organisation where the placement will be done, of the special needs of the children/pupils/clients/users of the service that the student will come into contact during the placement, as well as the preparation of the student's scheduled professional activities themselves. Each student must meet the pre-specified requirement in the form of a submitted credit paper with the relevant requirements.

Attention is also paid to the forms of student involvement in placement, the ways of evaluation of the course of the placement and the expected forms of placement outputs. In the Moggis information system, the student is furthermore informed of the ways of carrying out each step as part of the placement as well as of the basic work safety rules and rules for the protection of all personal data that the student should comply with during the placement.

Upon completion of the placement, the student writes up and submits each semester through the Moggis information system of the University of Jan Amos Komenský (hereinafter referred to as "UJAK") a credit paper intended as an overall reflection of the placement completed. It discusses the benefits of the placement, points out its problematic areas and possibilities to resolve them, thus evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the placement, threats to it and opportunities to develop it in the future. Included in each credit paper is a confirmation of the completed placement and an evaluation by the placement mentor. Records from sitting in the class, observations and other activities done over the placement or in preparation for working with children/pupils/clients/users of services or other set activities.

The student also has the possible option to consult at the given workplace the topic of their bachelor's thesis related to issues pertinent to the facility. At selected facilities, other events of the University – professional seminars, conferences and other activities connected with practice and professional education of the students – are held thanks to reliable cooperation. It infrequently happens that as a result of the work placement at a given facility, the student is offered employment.

Finding work placements at the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy – a selected staff member at each facility serves as the work placement supervisor (hereinafter referred to as the “supervisor”). They oversee the progress of each work placement directly at a given facility. They are available to the student over the whole placement, and students may contact them at any time. This supervisor cooperates and answers to the relevant placement coordinator of the course (academic staff member).

At the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy, a division of the department in the form of a so-called work placement department is set up for the tasks of the placement coordinator/s. Regular consultation arranged for the interaction of students and placement coordinators or supervisors is held at the department. Selected, high-quality credit papers are available here as examples of good work placement and examples of the results of practical activities of students generated over the placement.

3. The scope and outline of the placement content within Special-needs Pedagogy – UJAK

The work placement for the bachelor’s course *Special-needs Pedagogy* is divided into five semesters of study. The length of the work placement is set at 14 weeks (8 hours/day) in total for the period of study. This length includes both the placement itself and the preparation for the placement and the reflection on it. Students do the placement in the second through to the sixth semester of the given course. A student completes 560 hours of the required placement for the whole course.

The structure of the activities done within the actual work, which is the core of the placement, is focused initially on the observed lesson, through to the assistant activities and in conclusion on carrying out special-needs teaching activities. Additional activities focused on indirect activities connected to the placement – consultation with the coordinators of the placement and writing the credit paper – are incorporated in the whole orientation of the course for quality work placement.

Over their studies, students may actively seek facilities to do their placement or may use contracted facilities that enjoy long-term cooperation with the University, both in work placement and project and academic activities. Each student must have the selected facility pre-approved in UJAK's information system (Moggis) by the given year's placement coordinator. The student may consult with the relevant placement coordinator in choosing a specific facility for their placement.

The student contacts the selected facility and discusses the possibility of the placement with regard to their time possibilities and those of the given facility, and the residential or employment address. (This step has proven especially important in other courses in the case of students doing part-time studies.) Based on the requirements of the department of the placement and the selected facility, the student submits the appropriate documents (placement agreement) allowing entry into the facility and carrying out the placement. The student may contact the coordinator during the placement, as individual or group consultation, by telephone or electronic means.

Possible choice of workplace for placement in the Special-needs Pedagogy course:

- teaching, counselling or training work in the special-needs facilities for children, youth and adults, especially of a psychopaedic and etopaedic nature (centres for early care, kindergartens, early primary school grades, special-needs schools, vocational apprenticeships, diagnostic institutions, children's homes, children's homes with schools, and training institutions);
- social work in the context of residential, outpatient and field social services, including counselling activities;
- non-government, nonprofit organisations focusing on selected, threatened target groups.

The graduate from the Special-needs Pedagogy bachelor's course is a university trained educator prepared in the theoretical and practical field for the direct training work with individuals with special education needs and in managing activities for the level of middle management. Their professional overlap

is also welcomed in the field of social work. The graduate of the course should adequately accommodate the individuals with special education needs, be prepared to contribute to their socialisation, education and training, respect their anatomical-physiological and developmental peculiarities, entailing the use of special methods and individualised forms of care of these persons.

Furthermore, the graduate's profile is characterised by the professional and specialist skills for teaching work in the special-needs educational facilities in the school system, in social service facilities, in foundations and other nonprofit organisations. Additionally, communication with people with disabilities, their parents and professionals involved in comprehensive care as well as leadership and management of the educational staff group is established. The graduate is prepared for carrying out prevention of addictive behaviour and collaboration with the relevant specialists in performing special-needs educational and counselling activities connected to a child and adult and their families.

4. The scope and outline of the placement content within the Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy - UJAK

The work placement for the bachelor's course Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy is divided into four semesters of study. The length of the work placement is set at 12 weeks (8 hours/day) in total for the period of study. This length includes both the placement itself and the preparation for the placement and the reflection on it. Students carry out the placement in the second through to the fifth semester of the given course. A student completes 480 hours of the required placement for the whole course.

The structure of the activities done within the actual work, which is the essence of the placement, is focused initially on the observed lesson, through to the assistant activities and in conclusion on carrying out resocialisation and corrective activities. Additional activities focused on indirect activities connected to the placement – consultation with the coordinators of the placement and writing the credit paper – are incorporated in the whole orientation of the course for quality work placement.

Over their studies, students may actively seek facilities to do their placement or may use contracted facilities that enjoy long-term cooperation with the University, both in running work placement and project and academic activities. Each student must have the selected facility pre-approved in UJAK's information system (Moggis) by the given year's placement. The student may consult with the relevant placement coordinator in choosing a specific facility for their placement.

The student contacts the selected facility and discusses the possibility of the placement with regard to their time possibilities and those of the given facility, and the residential or employment address. (This step has proven especially important in other courses in the case of students doing part-time studies.) Based on the requirements of the department of the placement and the selected facility, the student submits the appropriate documents (placement agreement) allowing entry into the facility and carrying out the placement. The student may contact the coordinator during the placement, as individual or group consultation, by telephone or electronic means.

With regard to focusing on the course, it is necessary to notice the legal issues contemporary tendencies in the history of democratic and legal states represent the requirements to the active participation of citizens in the creation of an environment of legal stability and legal certainty, especially in the relation to protection of human rights and freedoms. Highly complicated systems of legal regulations with an obligation to guarantee the full and uninterrupted exercise of human rights and freedoms and on the other hand the fulfilment of legal obligations are created (Víšek, Kroupa, 2020).

Possible choice of workplace for placement in the Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy course:

- the Czech Prison Services (prisons and remand centres, preventative detention centres);
- probationary and mediatory service;
- municipalities, municipalities with extended powers, municipal offices,
- authority for Sociolegal Protection of Children (OSPOD);
- administration of refugee facilities (detention facilities);

- non-government, nonprofit organisations that are focused on resocialisation and counselling activities.

The most significant cooperating organisation for completion of the work placement is Czech Prison Services with which an agreement on undertaking the supervised placement in selected prisons, remand centres and Preventative Detention Units is made. Students may do the placement in the territorially closest prison or custodial facility under an agreement with the General Directorate of the Czech Prison Services. The work placement is done under the supervision of a member of the prison staff who is experienced with supervised work placement of the newly recruited staff in the prison services and has prepared procedures and methods for supervising work placement. An additional partner for completing the placement of students of the course Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy is the Administration of the Refugee Facilities that offer students their facilities in Zastávka u Brna, Bělá-Jezová, Kostelec, Jaroměř, Vyšší Lhoty, Havířov, Brno and Prague.

The graduate of the bachelor's course Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy is described in line with findings on the development of the profession, including all the social and special-needs teaching activities, i.e. resocialisation and penitentiary ones, where its output is resocialisation and penitentiary pedagogy shared across all remits in areas of the public and private sector. The graduate should be capable of fully accommodating the individual entrusted to their remit, be prepared to contribute to his/her resocialisation, reintegration as well as education and training, respect his/her anatomical-physiological and developmental peculiarities, gender, nationality, language, religion, socio-cultural customs and traditions and other specific needs, entailing the use of special methods and individualised forms of resocialisation and other care of these persons.

5. Methodology

A questionnaire-based survey was incorporated into the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy's research project called Research Analysis of the Strategy

for Handling and Running Work Placement at the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy. The aim of the analysis was to survey the attitudes of bachelor's students in the Department of Special Education of Jan Amos Komenský University, Prague s.r.o. and thus to create a comprehensive insight into the professional practices carried out within the study of subjects from the perspective of the students themselves.

Beside this, sub-aims were established:

- to determine the motivation for study in general and to study of these specific fields;
- to survey what types of facilities students choose for their work placement and what is their motivation for the selection of the given facility;
- to describe what are the positive benefits of the placement from the students' perspective, what are the benefits of the placement for students, what new findings and experiences do they obtain in the placement.

6. Data collection

We used a questionnaire as the research method. This is a widely employed technique in the fields of pedagogy, sociology and psychology. What the questionnaire primarily does is obtain information, opinions and feelings on the given issue. According to Chráska (2016), the questionnaire is a means of asking questions in writing and obtaining written responses. It primarily means a system of preprepared and carefully formulated questions in a deliberate arrangement, and the individual-respondent answers to each in writing. Punch (2008) adds to it an emphasis on the major positive in the choice of the questionnaire, which sees the possibility of reaching more respondents. Everyone received the questionnaire in the same form, which means it is important to subsequently evaluate and process data. The respondents may also use the questionnaire to provide answers to more sensitive questions that would not have to be felt as appropriate in face-to-face contact. The attempt to obtain a large cohort of diverse respondents for our research was the reason why we selected the questionnaire as one of the research methods. The respondents were students at the University of Jan Amos Komenský s.r.o., specifically in the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy, and they are

studying the bachelor's course Special-needs Pedagogy and Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy, whether full-time or part-time. The questionnaire was formulated as open and closed questions. A pilot phase of the questionnaire, where the questions were fine-tuned, was conducted. The questionnaires were collected online using Microsoft forms from November 2020 to February 2021. 628 students in total were surveyed. The response rate was 501 questionnaires, thus approx. 80%, which we consider a huge success.

Encryption and description of the output data set – transformation of input data set, i.e. cleansing data, the output data set was created through the transformation and encryption of values of all variables. The data set is user friendly, and if needed, it can be further used and expanded. The output data set was further analysed. The basic frequencies and dependencies among variables were determined by a descriptive analysis. All the results were subsequently presented in the form of tables and graphs. All the results, i.e. the tables and graphs listed in the section results are based on this questionnaire.

7. Results

Sociodemographic structure of students

501 students in total filled in the questionnaire. Of these 41 were men (8%) and 459 were women (92%). The age pyramid in Figure 1 depicts the age breakdown of respondents. Only a third of the 1st to 3rd year students are up to 26 years of age. The remaining the two thirds are older. 6% of students are at 42 years of age. Almost 5% of students are older than 50. The average age of students is 33 years old. The average and median age is higher in the case of students from special-needs pedagogy. The age median that divides the population of students exactly into two thirds is in the case of students from special-needs pedagogy even 6 years older than in the case of students of resocialisation of penitentiary pedagogy (34 vs. 24 years).

Therefore the study is not, in contrast to other fields or schools, attractive only for young students after secondary schools but rather for middle-aged working people who likely need additional education for reasons of their job. This claim is supported by Table 2. Just as the structure of respondents by education

shows that a fifth of students have already studied some form of continuing education at secondary school (i.e. at least a secondary school extension or higher vocational education). The greatest proportion (59%) of students have, however, completed secondary education. The overwhelming majority of respondents study the field Special-needs Pedagogy (92%), with only 8% of them studying Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy. It is necessary to point out here that the bachelor's course Resocialisation and Penitentiary Pedagogy is a new course since 2019 and does not have this kind of history compared to the Special-needs Pedagogy course. Half of respondents study 1st year, more than a quarter 2nd year and 22% 3rd year.

Table 1
Structure of respondents by education, field and year

Highest level of completed education	Grad.	%
Secondary specialist education	293	58.5
Secondary general education	100	20.0
Higher specialist school or secondary extension	87	17.4
First level of tertiary education (Bc.)	10	2.0
Full tertiary education (Mgr., Ing. atd.)	11	2.2
Completed postgraduate study (Ph.D.)	0	0.0
Field		
Special-needs pedagogy	461	92.0
Resocialisation and penitentiary pedagogy	40	8,0
Year		
1st	258	51.5
2nd	133	26.5
3rd	110	22.0

Motivation for study and selection of a given profession

The motivation to study and select a given profession was determined among others in the questionnaire. As Table 2 shows, almost a half of respondents selected high qualification as the main motivation, whereas almost a third to obtain or broaden knowledge and understanding in the field. More than 6% of respondents chose the creation of professional identity as the most important motivation. Only 5 respondents (1%) selected the increased financial reward, and

only 2 respondents hoped to be more competitive on the labour market, i.e. not even 0.5%. Determining the motivation to choose the given profession (Tab. 2, second section) is also noteworthy. Each category of motivation is in this case more equally spread than in the motivation to study in general. The largest group of respondents (34%) selected this field so as to be able to help and support the target group, and almost a quarter of students view these fields as professionally appealing. The main motivation for 18% of students is the necessity to supplement the education required by the current profession. Also 18% of students also have personal experience with the target group from the family or nearest around them.

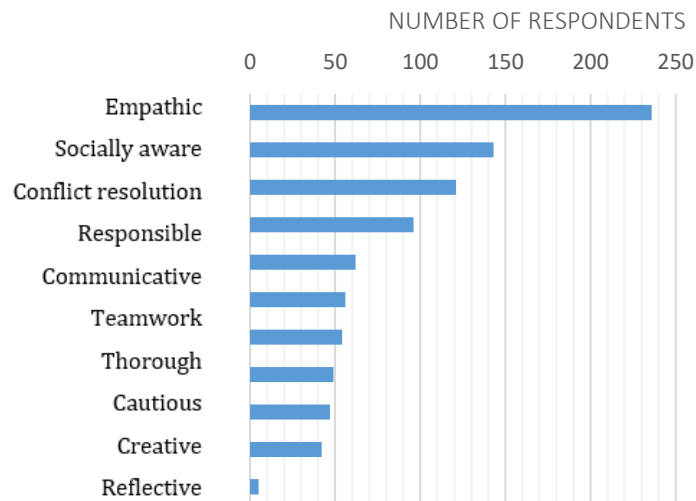
Table 2
Structure of respondents by motivation to study and motivation to select a given profession

Motivation to study	Grads.	%
Increased qualification	244	48.7
Obtain or broaden knowledge and understanding a field	154	30.7
Impulse to further education	39	7.8
Creation of professional identity	32	6.4
Development of personal qualities in lifelong education	21	4.2
Increased financial reward	5	1.0
Establishing new contacts in the field	2	0.4
Improved competitiveness on the labour market	2	0.4
Personal motivation – family member with a disability	2	0.4
Motivation to select a given profession		
Motivation to help and support the target group of the field	169	33.7
Professionally interesting work I want to do	119	23.8
I need to meet the necessary level of education for the profession	91	18.2
Personal experience with the target audience from family or nearby	89	17.8
Previous experience in volunteering or charity work	18	3.6
This is a field in which I can always find a job	12	2.4
Prestige of the given profession	3	0.6
Exposure in mass media	0	0.0

One of the further questions of the questionnaire was the evaluation of personality prerequisites of a student in the given fields. Almost half of students (47%) view empathy as the most important personality characteristic. As Figure 1

illustrates, no other personality characteristic or ability comes even close to these values. The second most important is social perceptiveness, which 29% selected and a third is the ability to handle problematic situations and conflicts (24%). However, responsibility, communicativeness, thoroughness and teamwork are also important.

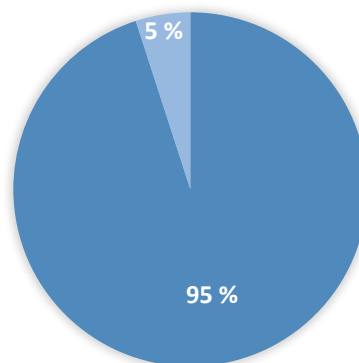
Figure 1
Evaluation of personality prerequisites of a student from a given field



Motivation to select the facility for placement

The largest portion of the questionnaire concerned the students' work placement, its selection and evaluation. For the vast majority of students answering this questionnaire, work placement is important; only 5% of students do not consider work placement as important.

Figure 2
Perception of the importance of placement by respondents



When selecting an individual facility for placement, respondents evaluated several factors and assigned them importance. These were the workplaces themselves in general, transport accessibility to facilities, personal ties to facilities and professional level of facilities. As Table 3 and Figure 3 clearly show, what was the most decisive factor was the professional level of the facility that scored an average mark of 4.35, with a median value of 5. Two hundred and eighty-three students, i.e. 56% of students, considered it an entirely decisive factor. The second most important factor was the workplace itself, followed by transport accessibility and personal connections. However, we can see that all of the factors assessed were on average perceived as important by the students, as shown by both their average grade and the calculated median, which better describes the distribution of values.

Figure 3

Perception of individual factors in the selection of a facility for each type of placement (1 = is not important at all; 5 = very important)

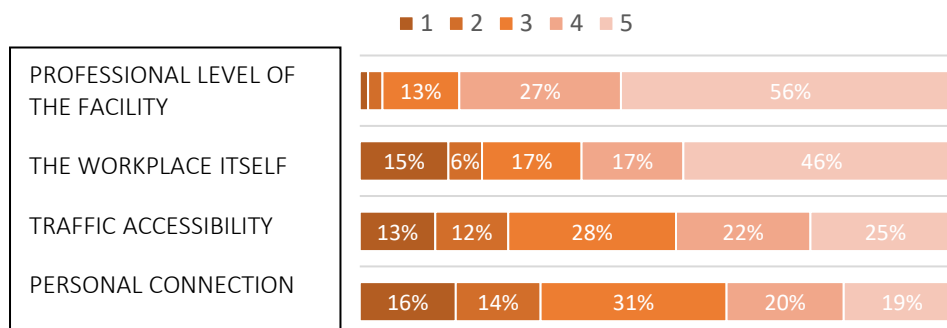


Table 3

Perception of individual factors in the selection of a facility for each type of placement (1 = is not important at all; 5 = decisive factor)

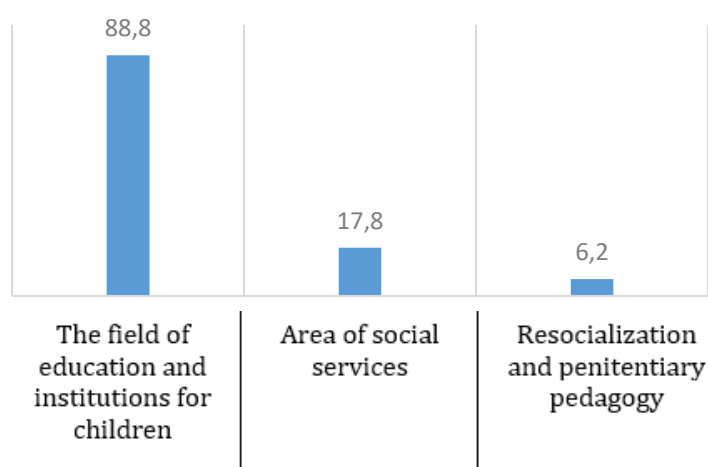
Motivation to select facility for each type of department	1	2	3	4	5
Workplace itself	74	28	83	85	231
Traffic accessibility	63	61	140	112	125
Personal connection	80	71	155	98	97
Professional level of facility	7	12	64	135	283

Selection of work placement

The great majority of students primarily selected work placements in education and institutions for children (89%), then almost 18% in social services (Figure 4) and only 6% of students in resocialisation and penitentiary pedagogy, which relates to the lower number of students from this field and its period of opening.

Figure 4

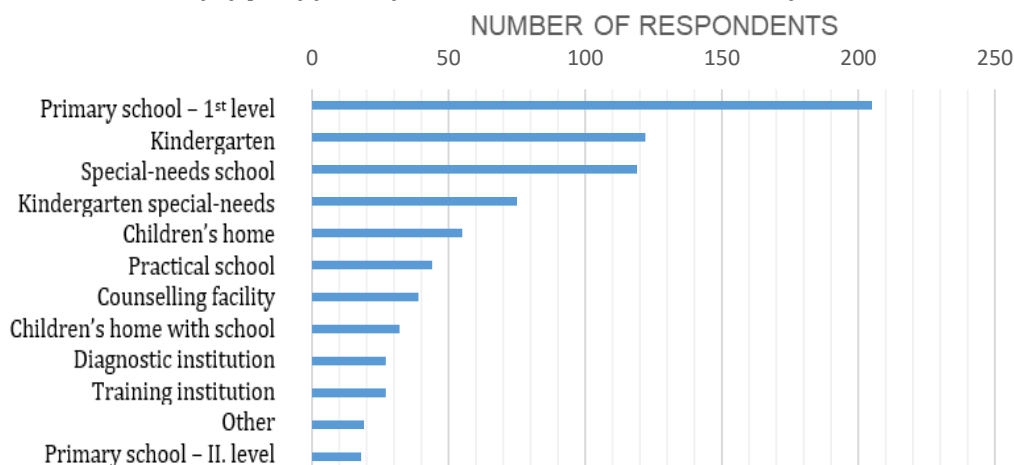
Share of students by type of facility in which they did the placement (%)



As part of the placement, students most often fully selected the first grade of primary schools, kindergarten schools or special-needs school (Figure 5). However, it is necessary to note that students undertook several work placements. Therefore, the sum of all students by type of work placement facility does not equal the total number of respondents.

Figure 5

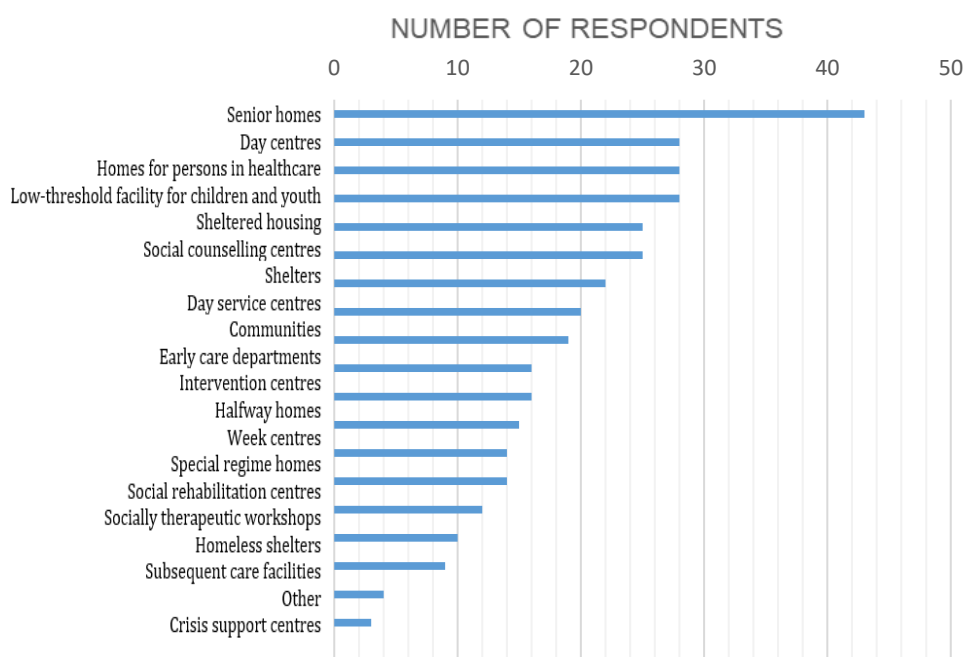
Choice of type of facility in education and institution for children



In the area of social services, facilities were more evenly spread, but at the present time, students most often opted for work placement in senior homes. Furthermore, day care facilities, homes for people with disabilities or low-threshold facilities for children and young people were often represented (Figure 6). Crisis relief facilities, aftercare facilities and dormitories were the least represented.

Figure 6

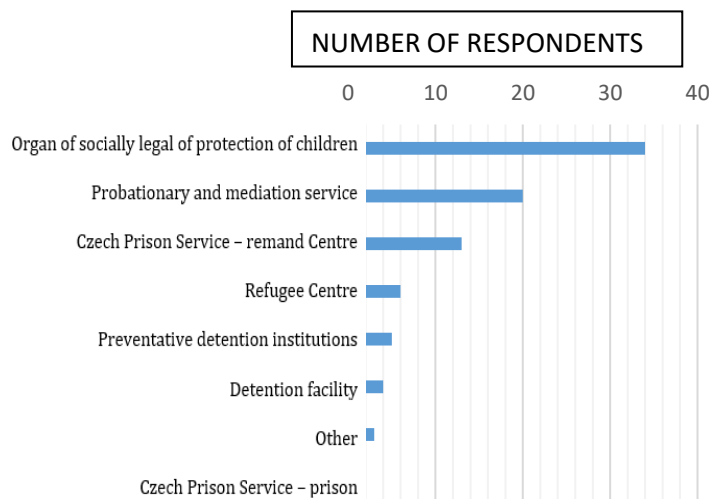
Selection of type of facility in the field of social services



In the field of resocialisation and penitentiary pedagogy, facilities were most often represented in the Authority for the Sociolegal Protection of Children (Figure 7) and subsequently in the probationary and mediation service.

Figure 7

Selection of type of facility in the resocialisation and penitentiary pedagogy



Benefit of the placement

In the other part of the questionnaire, they rated the benefit of the placement to their studies. They assessed several criteria as the general level of obtained practical skills, access to information from the field of the studied field, work communication, degree of obtained knowledge and skill and verification of obtained learning. As Table 4 and Figure 8 shows, all criteria were evaluated by students on average as important to very important. The highest evaluation was reached by the field of the obtained knowledge and skill, including verification of skills in practice. They gained access to information and work communications only a marginally lower rating on the scale of importance.

Table 4

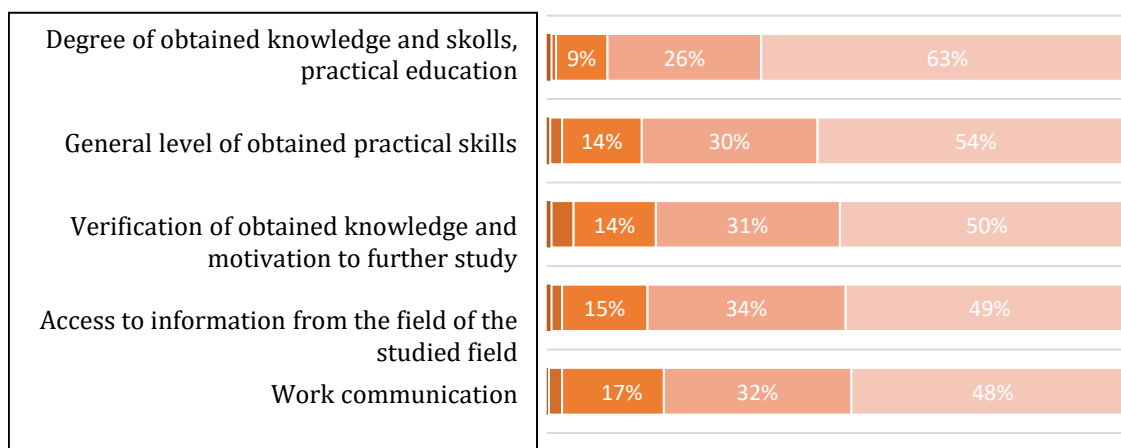
Perception of the benefit of individual criteria of pedagogical work placement for study (1 = is not important at all; 5 = very important)

Benefit of pedagogical work placement	1	2	3	4	5	Average rating	Media
General level of practical skills obtained	3	10	68	150	270	4.35	5
Access to information from the field of the studied field	4	9	73	169	246	4.29	4
Work communication	2	11	87	160	241	4.25	4
Degree of obtained knowledge and skills, practical education	4	4	44	131	318	4.51	5
Verification of obtained knowledge and motivation to further study	4	19	70	157	251	4.26	5

Figure 8

Perception of the benefit of individual criteria of pedagogical work placement for study (1 = is not important at all; 5 = very important)

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5



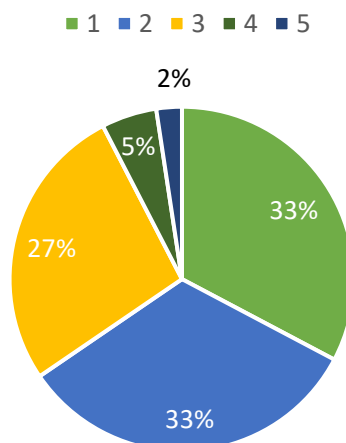
Total evaluation of placement

The students evaluated the placement as very good in total (Figure 9). A third of students evaluated it with the rating “excellent” and a third with “very good”.

More than a fourth then good and a mere more than 7% satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Figure 9

Total evaluation of placement (1 = excellent; 5 = unsatisfactory)



8. Research evaluation

As stated at the beginning, the main aim of this research was to survey the attitudes of students of bachelor's fields of study at the Department of Special-needs Pedagogy so to create a comprehensive insight into the professional placement carried out within the study of subjects from the perspective of the students themselves. The aim was fulfilled within the aforementioned presentation of determining where all answers of the whole questionnaire were analysed in detail. However, only older students who completed work placement could answer the topic of the placement. Furthermore, the sub-aims were set and under them the hypotheses set:

Sub-aim 1: To set motivation to study in general and to study these concrete fields.

According to the results, almost a half of students decided on university for study for the reason of higher qualification or for the reason of obtaining or broadening knowledge in a field. In further investigation of the motivation to study, we found specific expectable differences among age groups. The youngest students were more or less the only ones who were motivated to study to increase

financial evaluation, greater competitiveness on the labour market, or making new contacts in the field. In contrast, the old students had a more personal motivation. Two age groups that defy the average breakdown of motivation across all students are students in the age of 25–29 years and those older than 50 years. While in the 25–29 age group increasing qualifications is significantly predominant (65% of students) as the main motivation, among the oldest age group, it represents only 30% of them. In contrast, obtaining/broadening knowledge in the field among students in the 25–29 age group markedly falls behind the average for all age groups (only 22% of students in the 25–29 age group decided to study in order to obtain/broaden knowledge in field), whereas among older students it was 44% of them in the chosen sample of students.

Sub-aim 2: To survey what types of facilities the students select for their placement and what their motivation to select the given facility.

This sub-aim was already analysed in depth in the text above. For the placement, a great majority of students opted for facilities in education and institutions for children (89%) and 18% for social services, and given the low number of students in penitentiary pedagogy, the proportion of students with placement in such institutions was the lowest (6%). As already seen in Table 3 and Figure 4, the most decisive factor in choosing a placement location for 56% of students was the professional level of the facilities. And nearly 74% of working students did placement at the facility in which they work. So we can ask ourselves whether the motivation for choosing the facility is different for working and non-working students.

Sub-aim 3: To describe what are the positive benefits of the work placement from the students' perspective, what are the benefits of the placement for students, what new findings and experiences do they obtain in the placement.

Another sub-aim was to describe what are the positive benefits of work placement from the students' perspective. Students evaluated each criterion and assigned them a definite degree of importance. The students viewed the degree of obtained practical skills as the most important on average. Almost two thirds of students agreed on this factor being very important. 95% of students view work placement as important. 85% of students regard professional identity as important

or very important. And 76% of students agree with the work placement having significant influence on the creation of professional identity. We therefore pose the question whether the perception of professional identity differs by year that the students are in.

9. Conclusion

The development and nature of quality work placement is not only the work of the university but also each student, specifically from the perspective of representation of the given university when a student creates the first impression not only in itself but also in the university itself and may thus open or close the gates to undertaking further work placement. The ever-expanding portfolio of institutions with which they collaborate or participate in project activities, conferences, professional seminars generates awareness of the diversity of the profession, but also the interconnectedness and transfer of information that evaluates the student, the university and their expertise or performance.

The very model of professional experience is set by each university according to both internal guidelines and the relationship and perception of professional experience. Jan Amos Komenský University Prague s.r.o. went through a development in design and in looking at professional experience. This development is also expected in the future, as each specific event, not only on broad terms (e.g. the Covid-19 pandemic) but also in the individual initiative of stakeholders, brings opportunities for changes or improvements. The model of practice developed is therefore a living tool that should reflect the insights and needs of the actors involved – universities, students, professional practice institutions and experts not only from the field, but also from academic and HR backgrounds.

An interesting area is young adults who are looking for helping professions and need to help themselves. There is a need to lead the line of support in several directions. On the one hand, we need to intensively rehabilitate the original families, while building a quality aftercare network. In residential care facilities, it will be necessary to intensify the preparation of young adults for departure;

ideally, this preparation should begin on the day of their arrival. We see synergistic cooperation across disciplines, from social work to sociology to special education, as essential. The energy invested and the money spent will be returned to our society many times over. The young adults will have the opportunity to overcome difficult challenges tied to their past, both in their original families and in children's homes, and will have an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential. After all, equal opportunity is at the heart of the inclusion paradigm. We have a long and challenging process ahead of us. But it will undoubtedly be meaningful and the results will be undeniable. (Daněk, 2022)

Forging professional identity, or even seeking it, is certainly a long-term process that can have its beginnings in innocent children's games at playing teacher. Let us also throw off the sentiments of our parents, or rather grandparents, who have chosen their profession for their entire lives. Today's active teaching staff, however, need to be flexible and able to do everything necessary to succeed in a world of the profession that have their challenges and pitfalls and are very dynamic compared to history. We can talk about trends that may predetermine the selection of a teaching or special-needs pedagogical profession that has such a professional identity. In current foreign trends, the view of the educator prevails, as a unique personality based on the knowledge of their personal experiences and experiences of relationships with his surroundings and environment. At the same time, they are interested in how the current context of social, material and other conditions affects the process of professional development. In observing this interaction of the individuality of the educator and the context of specific current conditions, we come to the questions of finding one's own "essence", paths to self-understanding and self-fulfilment. Paths that form part of the profession and thus shape professional identity.

On the basis of the results, it can also be concluded that the teaching of students does not pay much attention to professional identity. Unfortunately, this attention is not always targeted and consciously directed in the context of professional identity, but rather the result of marginal information. Educators and students remain close to the educational context and have little concentration on the professional context of the profession.

The paper was also intended to draw attention to the fact that each profession should constantly evolve, making breakthroughs with new needs and insights. This also applies to the profession of special educators. Furthermore, new questions arise, and in the context of this contribution, they may focus on the reality of what it means to be a professional special educator; how to succeed in your profession; the importance of the nature of further development; the shaping of professional standards, etc.

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