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Preventing reality shock in future pre-school and primary school teachers

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Abstract

Reality shock in pre-school and primary school teachers is a significant factor affecting beginning of careers of novice teachers. The purpose of the project of Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic called 'Preventing reality shock in future preschool and primary school teaches at the beginning of their career' is to prepare students of pre-school and primary teacher education for the beginning of their teaching career and thus prevent reality shock once they become service teachers. One of the focuses of studies presented in the project covers topics related to health problems of children teachers will possibly have to cope with in their classes. The aim is to provide teacher education students with information, which can help them in their teaching practice. Setting relationship between health issues and education is important, as it raises awareness of possible impacts certain health conditions of children may have on their education. We want to focus on the problem from the perspective of teacher training.

Keywords: Reality shock, preschool teacher education students, primary teacher education students, health conditions.

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1. Introduction

Reality shock in pre-school and primary school teachers is a significant factor affecting beginning of careers of novice teachers. As we are aware of the necessity to prepare students for their teaching practice, in July 2017, Tomas Bata University in Zlin started to realize the project of Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic called 'Preventing reality shock in future pre-school and primary school teachers at the beginning of their professional career.' The project has eight phases and will end in June 2020. The objective is to improve quality of university educational preparation at the Faculty of Humanities of Tomas Bata University and prepare future teachers for an adaptation phase in nursery or primary schools to prevent reality shock and possible decision to work in a different profession. The project also wants to prepare intervention programs for mentors, that is, faculty teachers. The idea is to support interconnection between theory and practice in educational institutions.

Reality shock occurs in somatic, emotional and cognitive sphere. In the somatic sphere, it is manifested by a physical collapse (headache, fatigue), in the emotional sphere (stress) by losing interest in teaching profession and in the cognitive sphere by not understanding today's problems.

Due to ongoing changes in the educational system in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to continue with reflective strategies and cooperation with teachers, particularly in nursery and primary schools. The most significant problems are

- (1) unpreparedness for didactic work with children over 2 years of age,
- (2) unpreparedness for didactic work with children over 5 years of age (related to the compulsory school attendance for this age category),
- (3) insufficient theoretical knowledge for work with students in the process of professional practice,
- (4) lack of quality literature focused on didactic, educational and also on paediatric preparation of students and
- (5) lack of intervention strategies for work with parents of children from nursery and primary schools.

The aims of this intervention project reflect the problems mentioned above and can be categorized according to areas of focus. These areas are (1) pre-school teacher training—children under 3 years of age, (2) pre-school teacher training—work with children over 5 years of age and (3) teacher training concept.

The objective of the project is to prepare a concept and methodical materials for students of pre-school and primary school education. Besides didactic support the materials will provide also paediatric support. As our aim is also to encourage positive constructs of inclusive education in students, the publications cover the topic of children with various chronic diseases and physical disabilities in the educational process. *

1.1. Pre-school teacher training—children under 3 years of age

In the Czech Republic, there is an increasing tendency to integrate children from 2 years of age into pre-school education. Since there are differences in pre-school education of children under 3 years of age and over 3 years of age, the goal of the Czech Ministry of Education Youth and Sport is to provide support for teachers of these children. This initiative presents partial differences in education of these children in comparison with children from 3 to 6 and provides nursery schools with information how

* KM-KC-2-05-20170628141502 - MŠMT. Retrieved from www.msmt.cz/file/42839_1_1/

to proceed and what measures are to be taken in order to set optimal conditions for children from 2 to 3 years of age. *

The aim of this module of the project focused on work with children under 3 years of age is to prepare educational concept and study materials for future pre-school teachers working with children under 3 years of age. Another aim of this module is to prepare professional publications providing methodical help for future teachers.

1.2. Pre-school teacher training—work with children over 5 years of age

Since the beginning of the school year 2017 (01/09/2017), the last year of pre-school education is compulsory. This means that the number of children over 5 years of age attending pre-school education has risen. This project module is focused on work with children over 5 years of age. The aim is preparation of educational concept for future pre-school teachers working with children over 5 years of age and preparation of study materials for education of future teachers (i.e. students) who will work with children over 5 years of age. †

1.3. Teacher training concept

In the framework of teacher training concept, the project aims to realize methodical publications for didactic support for future teachers and to support active exchange of professional experts in selected international platform. The objective is to prepare educational faculty concept for (1) faculty/trainee pre-school teachers and (2) faculty/trainee primary school teachers.

The publications include also transdisciplinary topics such as impacts of health conditions of children on their education.

2. Paediatric Preparation of Students in Teacher Training

The studies presenting research realized within the project focus on impacts of diseases and disabilities on education of children in nursery and primary school. The authors covered topics of children with physical disability in nursery schools in the Zlin region (Pacholik, 2017) and children with epilepsy (Snopek, 2017), children with cystic fibrosis (Filova et al., 2017) and children with celiac disease (Pliskova, 2017) in primary schools. All the papers are at the moment in the publication process therefore we cannot include detailed information in the references.

The conclusions of the researches share the view that health conditions affect children in the educational process. The studies stress the significance of teachers' awareness of the diseases and disabilities, which may help the children overcome challenges of their health problem, cope with school duties and also experience positive relationships with their classmates. Since teachers' attitude and knowledge are crucial, the studies advocate inclusion of topics related to health conditions in studies of future teachers. Learning about chronic diseases and disabilities may help teachers prepare for educating children with special educational needs. Our project also helps to support student's positive constructs of inclusive education.

Inclusive education in the Czech Republic is a process supporting fair educational chances for children with physical, psychological, mental or social conditions.

* Podrobný informační materiál ke vzdělávání dětí od 2 do 3 let v mateřské škole. (2017, January). Retrieved from <http://www.msmt.cz/file/39798/>

† Informace o povinném předškolním vzdělávání – školy. (2017, March). Retrieved from <http://www.msmt.cz/file/40133/>

Inclusion of children with special educational needs into common school has provoked ambiguous reactions both from the public and experts, and there are many problems to be solved yet. One of the problems is preparedness of schools, particularly of teachers and teaching assistants.

Proper training is indisputably essential in the preparation process. Firstly, in-service teachers need support and help in order to be able to cope with different situations they may encounter in a heterogeneous class. They can cooperate with teaching assistants, who should obtain a thorough and appropriate training.

As for future teachers, one of the solutions is to incorporate inclusive education into teacher training programmes. It already forms part of basic educational frameworks at some faculties of education. The main idea is to prepare students to accept the fact they will work with children of different capabilities and from different sociocultural environments.

Proper education and training of teachers and teaching assistants is a crucial measure and will enable schools to provide education for children with special educational needs. There are strong chances that the achievement will convince the opponents that inclusion education can be efficient and beneficial for all parties involved.

3. Phases of the Project

The first three phases of the project will be realized in 2017

In 2018, the fourth and fifth phase will be realized. The sixth and the seventh phase will be realized in 2019, and finally, the eight phase will be realized in 2020.*

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we presented the project of Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic 'Preventing reality shock in future pre-school and primary school teachers at the beginning of their professional career.' The project is being realized at the Faculty of Humanities of Tomas Bata University in Zlin.

The project reflects efforts for innovation in the educational system of the Czech Republic and the purpose is to prepare students of pre-school and primary school teacher education for the beginning of their teaching career and thus prevent reality shock once they become service teachers. The project also focuses on support for mentors, that is, faculty teachers.

Individual aims cover pre-school teacher training focused on children under 3 years of age, pre-school teacher training focused work with children over 5 years of age and finally teacher training concept focused on faculty/trainee pre-school teachers and faculty/pre-school primary school teachers. Individual aims of teacher training concept are methodical publications for didactic support and active exchange of professional experts in selected international platform. Besides providing a didactic support, materials focus also on paediatric topics because raising teacher training student's awareness of chronic diseases and disabilities is also an objective of the project.

* KM-KC-2-05-20170628141502 - MŠMT. Retrieved from www.msmt.cz/file/42839_1_1/

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