

MODEL OF SUPERVISED TEACHING PRACTICE FOR THE TRAINING OF REFLEXIVES PRESCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRIMARY TEACHERS

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Abstract

This paper presents the new model of supervised teaching practice planned for students attending the Master in Pre-School and Primary School Education, at a time when we are witnessing a new reorganization of Study Plans as regards professional Master's degrees, compliant with Decree-Law N.º 79/2014 of 14 May.

The new model is the result of constant research justified by numerous studies in teacher education ensuring the importance of supervised curricular traineeship and highlighting it as an extremely important stage in the training of students, prospective educators/teachers, still more by the weight assigned to this training component concerning ECTS credits. There is further emphasis on the importance of the supervision and guidance actions, that have a key role in the Practicum, as moment of teaching-learning, research and orientation, and which simultaneously constitute essential moments of reflection, the currently most widely used concept when addressing new trends in teacher training.

The purposes, objectives and principles underlying the methodological options are properly presented, as well as the organization and management of the entire process of Supervised Teaching Practice, including the importance of choosing Education Centres with best practices and the specification of functions of the different educational actors involved in the process.

Keywords: *Supervised Teaching Practice, Practicum, Teacher Training, Theory-Practice, Reflection.*

Introduction

*No one is so old that cannot learn,
Nor so young that cannot teach."*

Unknown Author

Research on teacher training, as mentioned by Grossman & McDonald (2008), is still a relatively new field, although its fundamentals largely coincide with the research on teaching itself.

The conclusions of the Council of the European Union of 15 November 2007 pointed out that teacher education shall be considered as a "transversal objective" and that every EU country must put it into practice, but taking into account its specificities.

In Portugal, a first implementation of the European Agreements was performed, mainly regarding the curriculum, teaching and student work. However, compliant with Decree-Law No. 79/2014 of 14 May, we are witnessing a new reorganisation of Study Plans as regards professional Master's degrees, designed to endow students pedagogically and didactically, and which led to the need of creating a new Model of Educational Practices.

The Educational Practices, immersed in a Supervised Teaching Practice, are thus presented as one of the most important training components of the educators and teachers' training process. In this sense, we present a curriculum design of the *Practicum*, accomplished in the Supervised Teaching Practice of the Master in Pre-School and Primary School Education of the Teacher Training Model of the Higher School of Education of Fafe, based on the study plan and the guidelines emanating from the current legislation.

Thus, we present in a first analysis, the *Practicum* in the curriculum structure, followed by the aims and objectives that guide the methodological options, as well as the framework in terms of organisation and management of the Supervised Teaching Practice process, which ensures coordination and execution and, to conclude, the training content to develop during the *Practicum*.

The *practicum* in the curriculum structure

Following the opening remarks, the importance of the process of Supervised Teaching Practice is understood, as it is a means through which students, prospective educators/teachers, act as agents of change, recognise themselves, renew themselves and extend (individually or collectively) their commitment to teaching, acquire and develop critically the skills/professional practices which are essential for an effective reflection in each stage of their professional life. In terms of curriculum structure, the *Practicum* is part of the 2nd year of the course since in the 1st year occur all other training components perceived as important in the basic sustaining of the construction of

professionalism, through which it is intended that the graduate acquires the basic knowledge to be able to teach properly, relying on principles such as reflectivity, theorising analysis of practices, collaborative work and action research.

Thus, the *Practicum*, accomplished in the Supervised Teaching Practice, presents itself in the new Curriculum of the Master in Pre-School and Primary School Education, in the 2nd year of the course – in the 1st semester as *Practicum* in Early Childhood Education, subdivided in moments of childcare practice and practice in Pre-School Education; in the 2nd semester as *Practicum* in Primary School Education. We understand that it is ensured thereby that the student acquires a sequenced specialisation of academic nature resorting to research and innovation, as well as the further enhancement of professional skills.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the Masters in Initial Training of Educators and Primary School Teachers is to train educators/teachers professionally qualified to respond to different demands and requirements with which today's and tomorrow's school is confronted, in its idea of School-Community, considering the school as an open system, which results from dissolution of boundaries between school and the surrounding community (Branco, 2007).

The diversified role of School demands to the educator/teacher the capacity to promote developmentally appropriate educational practices, considering cognitive, social and cultural diversity of children.

The condition of the school as an educational community also requires that the educator/teacher develops research and reflection skills, on teaching, learning and child development, mobilising that scientific knowledge for the conceptualisation of projects of action, research and scientific and pedagogical innovation in their teaching area.

In summary, the profile of the educator/teacher of basic education has to meet the competencies foreseen in Decree-Law No. 240/2001 of 30 August – general competency profiles for teaching – and Decree-Law No. 241/2001 of 30 August – specific professional performance profile of the Primary School teacher and specific professional performance profile of the early childhood educator.

With this conception of school and educator/teacher in mind, the training during the *Practicum* considers as priority objectives:

- To acquire a comprehensive and critical understanding of the educational School-Community, seeking to create alternatives for change.
- To acquire concepts, techniques and processes appropriate to the demands of teaching in the curriculum areas of Pre-School and Primary School Education.

- To develop the skills foreseen in the curriculum of primary school education, in the context of an inclusive school, mobilising and integrating scientific knowledge of the areas that underlie it and the skills required to promote students' learning.

- To improve attitudes and skills of interpersonal relationship with the children/students and the different educational actors, based on the principles of professional ethics.

- To assume a pedagogical relationship of quality, expressed in criteria of scientific and methodological accuracy in the different areas.

- To progressively acquire the security and domain in performing the different tasks which the educator/teacher faces as a professional.

These objectives are operationalised through experiments and significant activities, which allow the students of the *Practicum* to:

- Develop joint projects between Pre-School and Primary School, as well as continuity projects with the succeeding levels of education.

- Promote learning of curricular nature, integrating the areas of Pre-school and Primary School Education through inter- and transdisciplinary practices, leading to the development of socially relevant skills.

- Develop skills foreseen in the curriculum guidelines for Pre-School, through planning, organisation and evaluation of the educational environment.

- Develop skills foreseen in the Primary School curriculum, through planning, organisation and evaluation of the educational environment.

- Reflect on their practices in order to assess their own professional performance.

- Investigate and reflect with the aim of building interdisciplinary projects of pedagogical intervention, mobilising the relevant knowledge for an informed, competent and innovative action.

- Use research strategies which allow preparing intervention projects to solve problems and change the practices and contexts.

- Critically evaluate the different educational contexts in which they play their professional roles.

Organisation and management of the supervised teaching practice process

The **structure** of organisation and management of the Supervised Teaching Practice process comprises: i) an education centre, which is the cooperating school where students perform the *Practicum*; ii) a training pair, who are students under the guidance of the same cooperating teacher. Where applicable: and iii) a training group, which is the group of students accompanied by the same supervisor.

The **participants** in the Supervised Teaching Practice process are: i) the Coordinator of Supervised Teaching Practice, which inherently is the

Course Coordinator; ii) the Supervisor, who is the professor of the higher education institution responsible for monitoring the *Practicum*; iii) the Cooperating Teacher, who is the educator or Primary school teacher of the education centre who guides the training of students in the *Practicum*; iv) the Student, future educator/teacher, who is doing *Practicum*; v) the Commission of Supervised Teaching Practice, which is the group formed by the Coordinator and Supervisors, that define and coordinate the training project of the students in Supervised Teaching Practice. Whenever required, the Cooperating Teachers and/or students may participate.

Once defined the participants, it is worth highlighting their **roles**:

The Coordinator has the following functions: i) to chair the Commission of Supervised Teaching Practice; ii) to coordinate the design, development and evaluation of Supervised Teaching Practice in its administrative, pedagogical and scientific aspects; iii) to implement the training program for Supervisors and Cooperating Teachers; and iv) to select juries for public defence of the Final Reports of Supervised Teaching Practice.

The Internship Commission has the following functions: i) to design the curricular project for the training; ii) to monitor and evaluate the development of the project; iii) to formulate the modalities and criteria for assessment of students; and iv) to approve the assessment of students.

The Supervisor has the following functions: i) to participate in the design of the curricular project for the training; ii) to be responsible for the implementation of the curricular project in his/her training group; iii) to monitor the *Practicum* process in his/her training group (needs assessment, guidance of the Final Report of Supervised Teaching Practice, support of planning, observation of activities, analysis and feedback of student performance, mediation of personal and professional development, formative and continuous assessment); iv) to mediate between the Education Centre and the Higher Education Institution; v) to participate in mentoring students of his/her Training Group; vi) to promote a climate of communication and collaboration among members of his/her training group; and vii) to propose to the Internship Commission the final grade of the Student, taking into account his/her own and the Cooperating Teacher's assessment, and the grade awarded in the public defence of the Final Report of Supervised Teaching Practice.

The Cooperating Teacher has the following functions: i) to assist the Supervisor in the implementation of the training project in the class in which he/she is the titleholder; ii) to monitor the process of training of Student(s) who develop the *Practicum* in his/her classroom; iii) to help to integrate Student(s) in the school; iv) to diagnose the needs of Student(s); v) to prepare, with the Student(s), the activities plan (with the support of Supervisor); vi) to observe Student(s) in several educational performances in

school; vii) to give continuous feedback to Student(s); viii) to perform formative and continuous assessment of Student(s); ix) to participate in meetings of the Internship Commission whenever appropriate; x) to participate in trainings organised by the higher education institution; xi) to maintain a close relationship with the Supervisor, to inform him/her periodically about the progress of the process and formative assessment of Student(s).

The student performing the Supervised Teaching Practice has the following functions: i) to develop, with the Cooperating Teacher, the plan of activities, structuring it according to the Educational Project of the School, the activity plans and the expectations of the school community; ii) to teach, in a qualified manner, in a system of co-responsibility with the Cooperating Teacher; iii) to attend classes of the Cooperating Teacher and, if applicable, of the training pair; iv) to participate, with support from the Cooperating Teacher, in performing the activities of curricular and organisational development which are provided by the School; v) to take part in the planned educational activities, in the scope of the School and the school/community interaction; vi) to engage in sessions of scientific and educational nature, carried out in the Education Centre or Higher Education Institution; vii) to actively establish relationships with all members of the school community, helping to improve the educational function of the school; viii) to foster the Education Centre, becoming involved in projects of educational renewal and innovation; and ix) to prepare all documentation inherent to the *Practicum* process and respective Final Report of Supervised Teaching Practice.

Training contents to develop during the *practicum*

Giving special emphasis to issues related to personal and professional development of the Student in the scope of Supervised Teaching Practice, the training shall focus on different activities and meaningful training experiences, taking into account the contextual differences.

Supervised Teaching Practice in Early Childhood Education: i) participant observation (of the context/group); ii) co-participation in activities of the group and the institution; iii) planning/implementation of activities; iv) design of evaluation documents; v) seminars for: survey of training needs experienced by Students during their teacher performance; performance profile of the early childhood educator; develop skills that enable the design, development and integration of the curriculum (lesson plans that meet the Curricular Goals); reflections on the educator as a reflective professional through the logbook/weekly reflections; approach to the assessment of children's development: development evaluation grids; approaches to teacher-researcher: action research and case study; and vi) analysis of transversal aspects and general guidelines: information/guidelines on the framework of Supervised Teaching Practice (regulation), guidance and monitoring in the

preparation of the documents: the *Practicum* and children assessment portfolio and final report.

Supervised Teaching Practice in Primary School Education: i) participant observation (of context/class); ii) co-participation in classroom activities and Education Centre dynamics; iii) planning and implementation; iv) design of evaluation documents; v) seminars for: survey of training needs experienced by Students during their teacher performance; performance profile of the Primary School teacher; analysis and reflection on the teaching-learning process: knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of students; approach to observation methodology in educational situations, planning and evaluation of the teaching-learning process; reflections on the teacher as reflective professional: the reflective diaries; approach to research methodologies: action research and case study; and vi) analysis of transversal aspects and general guidelines: information/guidelines on the framework of the Supervised Teaching Practice (regulation), guidance and monitoring in the preparation of the documents: characterization of context, planning, reflections and final report.

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