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## PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE AS A MEANS OF FORMING A FUTURE TEACHER<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

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### Abstract

*The content of any educational process must be progressive and derive from the primary goal of forming, teaching, and educating the essential abilities, capacities, and skills for the future specialist, as well as the value system, guided not by the level and requirements of the educational sector but by the educational system. In other words, the student should be viewed from the development perspective.*

*Pedagogical practices have an irreplaceable role in turning the knowledge acquired in the pedagogical university into abilities and in acquiring important professional qualities for the teacher, bearing in mind that the pedagogical profile of the teacher is completed during the pedagogical practical work. Pedagogical practice is one of the most critical components of pedagogical education, which aims to form and develop future educators' general and professional competencies.*

*To understand the current issues of Pedagogical practice as an essential means of forming the professional abilities of the future teacher and aim to help improve that process in the context of university education, we conducted research. We explored the process of organizing Pedagogical practice, tested its effectiveness, and developed recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of pedagogical practice.*

**Keywords:** pedagogical practice, teacher training, professional competencies, educational development, future, educators, pedagogical education, professional abilities, school-university collaboration, teaching methodologies, competency-based education.

### INTRODUCTION

Modern higher education is given a vital and responsible role in society- properly carrying out future specialists' professional training. Implementing that complex function also implies the organization of effective and targeted practices during the education of future specialists. Therefore,

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the internships organized in higher educational institutions are best regulated by the regulations on the organization of professional internships approved by the scientific council of the university, where the types of professional internships, their goals, and the stages of implementation are indicated.

Today, the Organization of Professional Practice regulations at Armenian State Pedagogical University specify educational and methodological support for implementing Pedagogical practice. The requirements for the organization of Practice are characterized as tools that ensure the implementation of independent work of a student's educational research and practical nature (Sisyan, Babayan, & Aghuzumtsian, 2015). To our knowledge, only some studies have more comprehensively examined pedagogical practice.

Now, various theoretical and conceptual approaches discuss Pedagogical practice as an essential means of forming the professional abilities of the future teacher, whose methodological and organizational issues should be considered from the point of view of mutual connection and interaction between theory and practice in the educational process.

The development and formation of abilities are possible only if the content and methods of implementing the pedagogical practice are designed in the university, creating conditions for testing not only what was acquired at the university but also one's ideas. In the case of such a position, the work of the intern-student will be evaluated by the ability to cooperate with their students to leave a positive pedagogical impact on them (Gyulamiryan & Mikaelyan, 2018).

Practice can be considered a measure of the truthfulness of knowledge only because knowledge becomes a means of purposefully mastering the forces of nature only in training and activity. It should be noted that educational standards, educational programs, materials intended for students' independent and academic research activities, and information obtained from various information sources make up the educational-methodical complex of master's students' educational and cognitive activities and professional preparation (Hakobyan, 2013).

The pedagogical practice aims to expand the scope of future pedagogues' theoretical knowledge and deepen their knowledge of the theory and methodology of educational activity and their interconnection in practice. Its main aim is to involve students in the pedagogical process of educational institutions as future teachers and researchers (Master's pedagogical research practice: Subject description (2023–2024), 2024).

We especially wanted to emphasize that in the professional training process of the future

teacher, the need to create an effective environment for training and education during practice is emphasized (Elementary pedagogy and methodology subject descriptions of B.E.P. and M.E.P., 2022–2023).

The objective of our research was to study the current state of pedagogical practice as a means of forming future teachers and identify the peculiarities of the study and its organization in ASPU.

To achieve this goal, we set the following tasks:

- To study and analyze the current state of organization and implementation of pedagogical practice,
- To study and identify the obstacles and difficulties encountered during the organization and implementation of practice,
- As a result of research work, recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of pedagogical practice are developed.

We were also interested in the research participants' views on the effectiveness of pedagogical practice.

## METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

We thus examined a broad array of organization of Pedagogical practices; within the framework of the topic, the surveys have been carried out:

- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Primary Pedagogy and Methodology Faculty, in the 2nd year of the Master's degree,
- At school N 104 in Yerevan,
- At the ASPU(Khachatur Abovia Armenian State Pedagogical University).

To be involved in research works:

- Students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of Elementary Education and Methodology Faculty,
- School teachers and social educators,
- Lecturers and practice centre managers-coordinators are involved in the organization and conduct of practice.

During the research work, we used the following methods.

- study of documents / subject description of practice, folder, practice contract/,
- questionnaire among students and teachers,
- conversation with professors, the head of the internship department of ASPU, the

supervisors-coordinators of internships in the faculties,

- We used mathematical calculation methods to analyze the results of the research.

By studying the documents, we tried to determine how their final results were provided during pedagogical practice.

Through a questionnaire survey, we tried to find out the current state of organizing and conducting pedagogical practice, what difficulties students face during practice, and what suggestions they have regarding increasing the effectiveness of practice as a means of training future teachers.

Through the conversation, we tried to understand what principles are used to build the foundations of the practice and what difficulties or obstacles the practice organizers-coordinators faced during that time.

The novelty of our research is that, for the first time, we have analyzed and presented the current state of organization and conduct of pedagogical practice, analyzed and summarized the results of our research work, and, based on the results, made recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of pedagogical practice.

## RESULTS

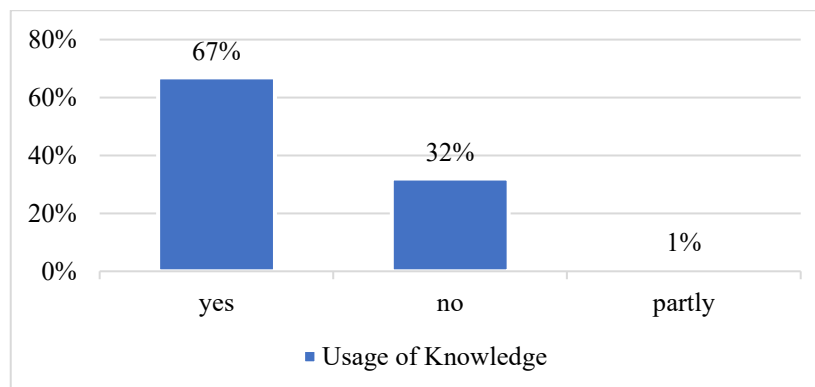
In the first stage of the conducted research work, we documented that the university has a practice file application procedure. The student completes the folder, recording his professional achievements and knowledge, analyses, self-evaluations, and evaluations. In addition to the mentioned documents, the students also have methodological instructions, guidelines, etc., related to their profession during the practice. However, we would like to point out that students need help to carry out self-analysis, which ends all practice rounds.

Therefore, in the first semester of the second year of the bachelor's degree, students should be taught the mechanism of self-analysis within the framework of any course because it allows them to know their person.

In the second stage, we conducted a questionnaire survey among pedagogues and students. Below, we present some of the study's results.

In response to the question, "Were the students able to apply their professional knowledge during the internship?" we recorded that 40 students (67%) consider the role of the internship effective because they were able to apply the theory in practice. The remaining 20 students (32%)

encountered difficulties, and 1% were partially able to apply their skills [see Diagram 1].



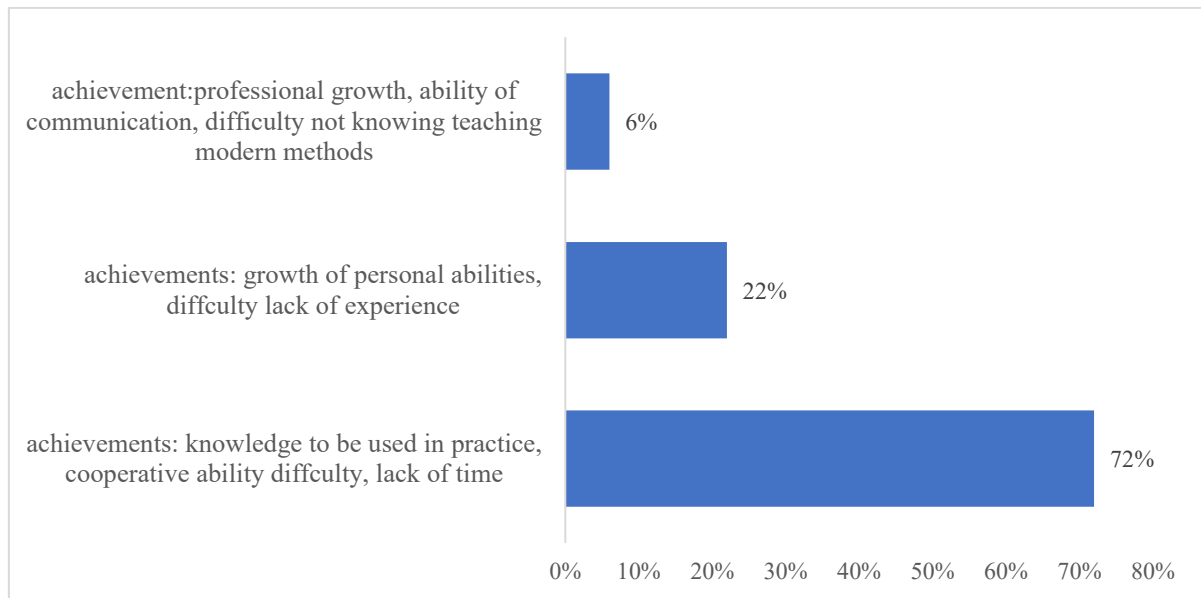
**Diagram 1. Could you use your professional knowledge during your practice?**

These data are encouraging because most students found applying what they learned in practice easy.

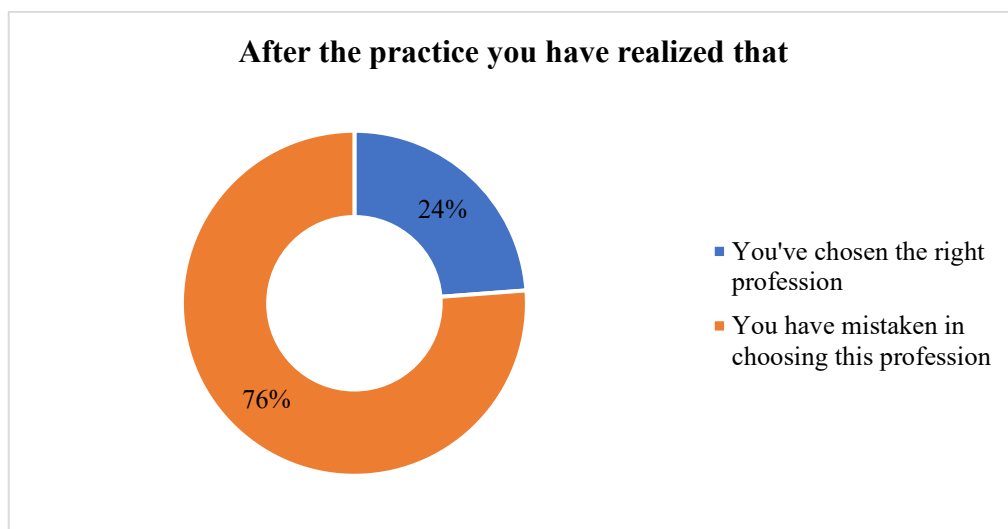
From the answers to the question *"What did you understand after the educational practice?"* It became clear that after the end of the practice, 60 (100%) students understood that the practice helped them confirm their choice of profession and realize that they had chosen their profession correctly. It is very welcome that all students are not disoriented after the internship but instead get more assertive in their chosen professional field.

*Referring to the achievements and difficulties of the students during the practice*, we found out that for the vast majority, 50 (71%), experienced in the professional field, the ability to apply the acquired knowledge in practice and cooperative abilities was considered an achievement. Among the difficulties, they mainly mentioned the lack of time. Six students (23%) thought changing personal qualities and individuality was an achievement. The lack of experience was cited as a difficulty, and for 2 (6%), it was an achievement of professional growth; mastering communication skills, not modern teaching methods, was complex.

The achievements prevail, and all the students emphasized the role of practice because it plays a decisive role in working around the difficulties that have arisen, correcting them, and "feeling" the profession in practice. However, it is necessary to pay attention to the problems that have arisen. It is overcoming difficulties. [see Diagram 2].



**Diagram 2. Mention the achievements and difficulties during the practice.**



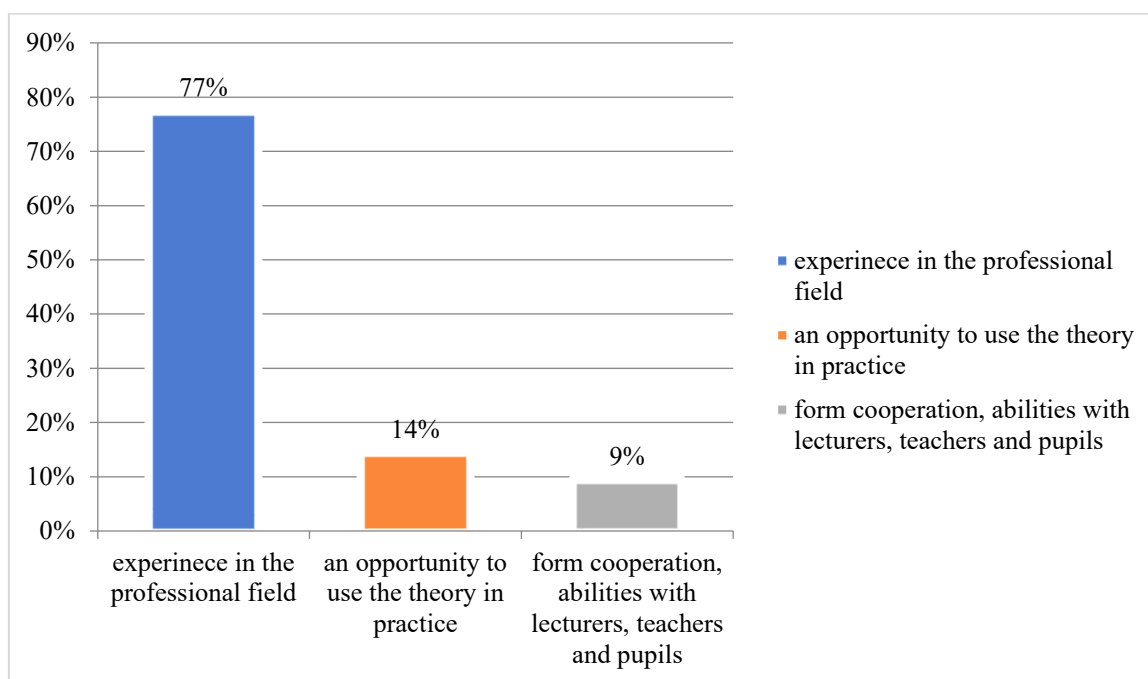
**Diagram 3. After the practice, you have realized that:**

Perhaps to the most critical question, that is, "Indicate your proposals and wishes regarding the ways to overcome the difficulties encountered during the practice and increase efficiency," 45 of the students (75%) suggested that it would be adequate to choose the right place and time for the practice, to clarify the practical lecturer, school-university cooperation, eight masters (13%), who did not have basic knowledge, offered to conduct the internship not at the university, but in schools, to have the opportunity to spend the last weeks of the organized and implemented two internships in

schools, 4 (7%) students offered is that it will be more effective to allocate more time for practice, to equip the student with professional and methodical knowledge, and 3 (5%) students confirm that any process is effective when the subjects demonstrate determination, will power, hard work, striving for self-improvement.

The data allow us to conclude that internships for students will be considered more effective over an extended period in the case of close school-university cooperation, where students' personal and professional qualities are demonstrated, and in the case of masters who do not have primary education, to organize internships in schools.

From our surveys conducted among educators, we find out that according to 27 (77%) educators, practice gives the student the most crucial experience in the professional field; according to 5 (14%) educators, practice allows the student to apply theory in the practical field, 3 of the educators ( 9%) believe that during training, the student develops cooperative abilities and skills both with the teaching staff and with the students.

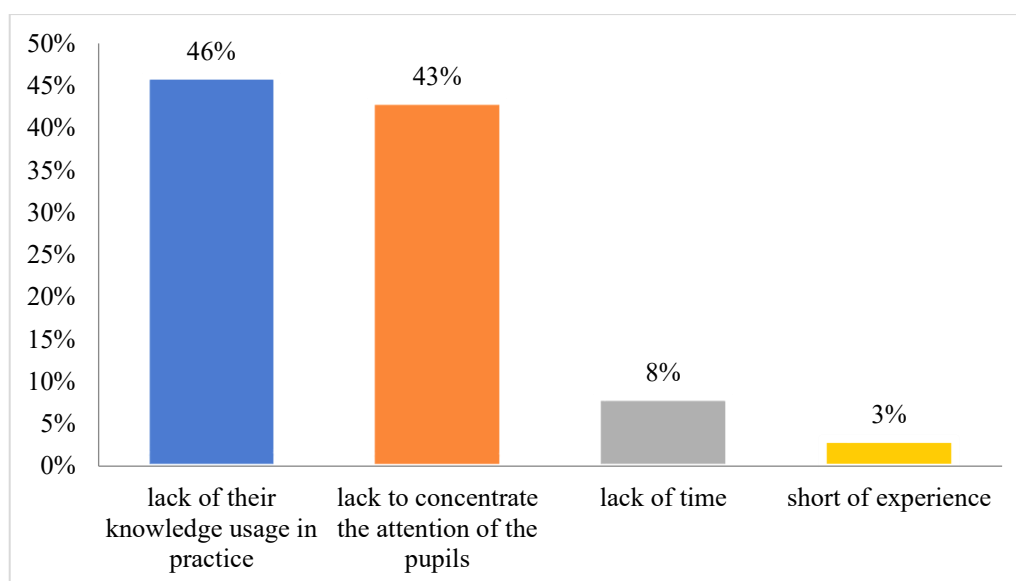


**Diagram 4. What gives practice to the student?**

Regarding the failure of students, 16 (46%) of the educators mentioned the insufficient knowledge of the students that they find it challenging to apply what they know in practice, 15 (43%) educators noted that the students find it challenging to focus the student's attention and

motivate them three educators (8 %) think that the little time allocated for practice is one of the reasons for their failure, one educator (3%) believes that the lack of experience of the students complicates the realization of the pedagogical team [see Diagram 5].

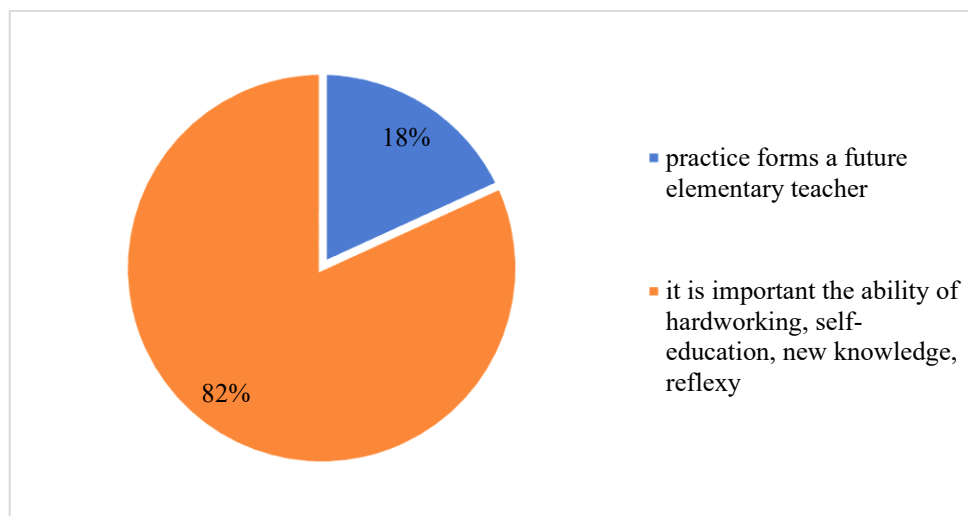
The obtained data can be concluded that, according to pedagogues, one of the main reasons for practitioners' failure is the difficulties of applying knowledge in practical activities and the lack of time, which prevents them from adapting to the children and the collective.



**Diagram 5. The main disadvantages of the practice area**

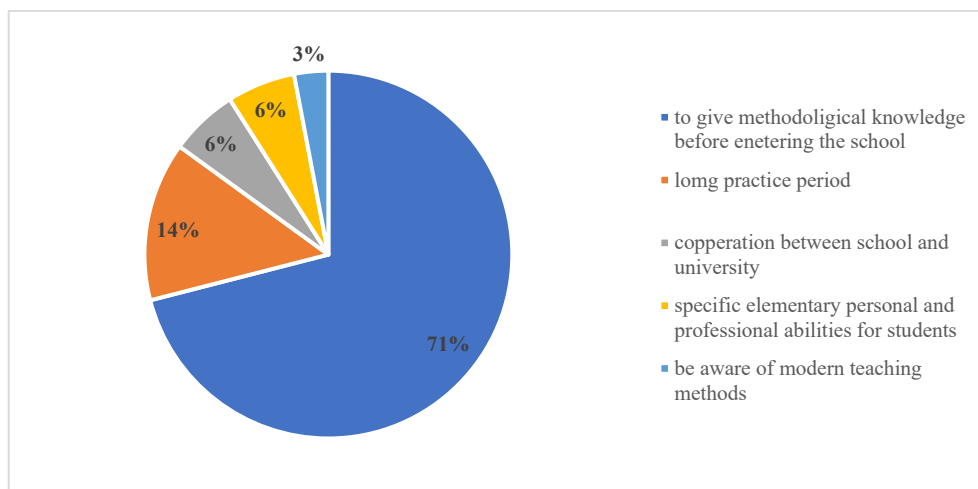
To the question of «**Whether the pedagogical practice is a means of forming a future teacher,**» 25 of the educators (71%) stated that it is in that process that the practitioners show themselves, value their chosen profession, and become its bearer. In the opinion of 10 educators (29%), practice has a crucial role in professional development. Still, it is valuable only with the motivated, hard work of the practitioner, the search for new knowledge in the professional field, self-education, and reflection. They emphasize that in that process, students strive to master the teaching methods, through which the conduct of classes will be more effective, and the knowledge will become more permanent [see Diagram 6].





**Diagram 6. Is practice a form of becoming a future elementary teacher?**

Thus, according to the answers given by the pedagogues, we can conclude that pedagogy is essential and valued only when the practitioner can present himself as a teacher with professional and personal defining qualities. To increase the effectiveness of Pedagogical practice, 25 educators (71%) suggested equipping students with methodological knowledge before entering school, and five educators (14%) proposed extending the time allotted for practice to make the interns understand what they are doing. Required to do two educators (6%) emphasized the close cooperation between universities and schools, and two educators (6%) believe that practice will be more effective if the practitioner is more purposeful, self-educated in his activities, and demonstrates personal and professional qualities specific to the teacher. According to one of the educators (3%), the effectiveness of the practice can be conditioned by the practitioner's mastery of modern teaching methods [see Diagram 7].



**Diagram 7. What ways can you suggest to improve the practice?**

The survey results prove that the effectiveness of practice will increase both in the case of motivated work of the university-school-practitioner and the conscious self-education of the practitioner, his goal-oriented work.

Then, through a conversation, we tried to find out from the head of the internship centre what principles the bases for conducting internships are chosen, how they decide which faculty should go to which school, and whether the peculiarities of faculties and specialities are considered. It became clear from the conversation that the university chooses based on the best schools with a supportive teaching staff and a cooperative environment. We also found out that the university welcomes masters who do not have a primary education to conduct internships in schools based on the relevant application of the dean, which, for example, did not happen in our version.

During the conversation, we also clarified that the practice centre works closely with schools; by providing feedback, emerging problems are highlighted, and ways of solving them are developed.

## DISCUSSION

The research proved that pedagogical practice allows students to apply theoretical knowledge and form competitive teachers with professional competencies, practical abilities, and 21st-century skills by the requirements of the time. It is a unique focal point of the intersection of interests of study organizers, future graduates, and employers, and it is one of the best opportunities for evaluating the effectiveness of one's activity and self-evaluation.

The problems of pedagogical practice are the provision of conditions for the formation and development of professional competencies of future pedagogic students, the skills of organizing educational activities conducted with students, and the personal style of professional activity, formulation of the professional development and improvement. Since 2010, research practice seminars have been organized at the university to summarize master's practices (Map of Practice Institutions, 2024).

Systemic changes are being carried out at ASPU, particularly in terms of continuous practice; as a result of conducting a sound personnel policy, the school creates an opportunity to select personnel for itself, and on the contrary, the university expects to choose its personnel from the school, allocate suitable places for applicants using its propaganda machine, presenting itself with its educational system (Practice, 2024). Although the pedagogical practice is not considered a total academic activity, it nevertheless integrates components of teaching and practical training of students. Pedagogical practice is an essential means of forming the professional competence of the future teacher, whose methodological and organizational issues should be considered from the point of view of mutual connection and interaction between theory and practice in the educational process.. That is why a "competent approach to professional education implies assimilation of educational information, meaning, and application in life situations" (Gevorgyan et al., 2012).

For several years now, serious steps have been taken at ASPU toward increasing the effectiveness of pedagogical practice and changing its components and content, contributing to the formation of appropriate student competencies. According to several specialists, training a competent specialist in primary education is possible if the student spends one day a week at school during the entire semester. Today, with this ideology, the pedagogical practice of the second and third years of the University is called continuous and organized according to that principle (Topuzyan et al., 2017). During the pedagogical practice in the master's degree (the field of our research), the student discusses the peculiarities of the pedagogical process in the educational institution /school and university/, analyzes various pedagogical situations, collaborates with friends and senior colleagues, and offers solutions. The intern reports any issue to the professional community and organizes a professional discussion. During practice, in the professional preparation of the future teacher, it is necessary to create an effective learning and education environment (Master's pedagogical research practice: Subject description (2023–2024), 2024).

The fact that pedagogical practice is a continuous process is essential. It is meant to motivate

the student to engage in educational activities to create conditions for mastering the necessary knowledge, skills, and values that will be needed throughout life (Harutyunyan & Torgomyan, 2017).

It should be noted that, according to S. V. Levina, the practice includes diagnosing various problems that have appeared in the educational process, searching for information and consultations necessary for solving problems, and providing practical support to the teacher in solving the problem (Levina, 2001).

Thus, the research devoted to pedagogical education proves that the practice is an open, developing process with excellent educational opportunities. The effectiveness of that process depends on the nature of the interaction between the teacher and the students. Academic and cognitive goals can be fulfilled during the teacher-student relationship if the practice process is built on person-centred and systemic approaches. The formation of the teacher's characteristics depends on this interaction: pedagogical culture, the need for self-improvement, self-realization, cognitive and creative activity, and the ability to conduct a dialogue. At that time, the student can perform the lessons (or any part of them) at the school/university to discuss and evaluate the lessons conducted by his colleagues. At the same time, he carries out research within the framework of the master's thesis, performs analysis, and compiles a practice folder. (Map of practice institutions, 2024).

However, ASPU does not stop at these achievements and continues to work on ensuring the content and quality of Pedagogical practices with new opportunities to make them more interactive and accessible (Practice 2024, 2024).

It should be noted that research related to pedagogical practice in the Armenian State Pedagogical University has yet to be done; this is the first attempt to consider this issue at the empirical level. However, after each practice cycle (both undergraduate and master's), discussions are held to identify achievements, observed obstacles, and difficulties. The problems that need improvement are analyzed.

Our research data prove that the forge of training future educators should evaluate the raised issues and pay attention to the gaps because the quality of the professional practice determines the teacher's professional formation, growth, and success in all professional activities.

It was also noted that the practice centre staff must be present at the preliminary and final conferences and make observations. However, there are still things to be done and difficulties. For example, 14-15 groups of different specialities do internships in the same school/not in the same

period. 57, 104, 125, 135/, sometimes there are no free classes for specialists/psychologists, pedagogues / to conduct discussions with interns and, in general, to work. These are problems that still need to be solved.

From these discussions, we concluded that the university considers any observations of student practitioners and suggestions for overcoming difficulties, provides feedback, and is open to any cooperation that will be in students' interests to increase the efficiency of organizing and conducting internships.

Thus, the results of our research work allow us to draw the following conclusions:

- The research made it possible to substantiate that the tasks assigned to the pedagogical practice are implemented in practice. In particular, during the training, students discuss and evaluate the pedagogical process and various pedagogical situations.
- They can conduct classes at school, cooperating with friends and senior colleagues. They choose and apply research methods and analyze the results. As a result of their own professional experience, they identify and analytically present professional problems.
- At the end of the internship, the students fully understand the peculiarities of organizing the pedagogical process in elementary school.
- Emphasizing the role of pedagogical practice in shaping the professional abilities of the future teacher, it is necessary to improve it, particularly by ensuring its continuity. It is impossible to imagine the formation of the teacher's professional abilities without pedagogical practice.
- Unfortunately, the survey results showed that in the initial stage of organizing the internship, a preliminary assessment of the needs related to the organization of the internship was not performed, the needs of future teachers were not identified, and individual plans were not developed based on them.
- In the attached schools, there were still some shortcomings in the motivated work of mentors with practitioners; the students could not smoothly integrate into the school community and overcome the problems and difficulties that arose more quickly. Must be created a professional team in schools that will support and guide practitioners to carry out their professional activities effectively,
- There is also work to be done regarding the right choice of practice bases. First, it is necessary to consider the characteristics and requirements of a specific faculty and profession.

Taking into account the results of the analysis of the research work carried out by us, we **developed recommendations** for increasing the effectiveness of pedagogical practice:

- To organize courses in separate groups or additionally/even online/for masters who do not have an undergraduate pedagogic education: pedagogy, pedagogical communication, and methods, to fill the gap in pedagogical knowledge, to conduct additional seminars on modern pedagogical issues.
- Students find it difficult, or at all, to carry out self-analysis, which ends all rounds of practice. Therefore, we suggest teaching students the mechanism of self-analysis in the first semester of the second year of the bachelor's degree, within the framework of any course, because it allows you to know your person.
- In the master's educational program, add applied subjects that the future teacher must teach; among the subjects, add subjects that have become mandatory in the 21st century regarding digitization, media education.
- To reduce the employment of Methodist pedagogues so that they can devote more attention and time to interns.
- Ensure constant feedback with schools because today's practitioner is tomorrow's teacher.

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