

The Training School Project as an Example of a Model for Training Current and Future Teachers in Poland

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Abstract

The idea of the Training School project has evolved and has been researched from the ministerial to the local level and is reflected in the functioning of the Polish education system. Teacher training (professionalisation) in the form of continuous learning and the constant search for the best ways to fulfil a professional role is the key to self-development and self-satisfaction for teachers, and the high level functioning of schools.

The school leader plays an important role in the process, as a goal setter, change leader and designer. The school leader's role is to start and constantly diagnose and work on the needs and consistency of action of the school society in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, local Education Department, local Board of Education, local businesses and associations. Of course universities play an important role in helping to set and achieve goals. The Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań (AMU), apart from educating teachers, also educates management staff: headteachers of schools and educational institutions in master's studies and postgraduate studies, and then supports them by organising training schools and regular meetings within the headteacher's academy. Besides, AMU offer individualised support if needed.

Key words: *Training School project | teacher training | practical learning | innovation*

Projekt šole za usposabljanje kot primer modela za usposabljanje (bodočih) učiteljev na Poljskem

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Povzetek

Zamisel o projektu šole za usposabljanje se je razvijala in je bila raziskana od ministrske do lokalne ravni ter se odraža v delovanju poljskega izobraževalnega sistema. Usposabljanje učiteljev (profesionalizacija) v obliki stalnega učenja in nenehnega iskanja najboljših načinov izpolnjevanja poklicne vloge je ključ do samorazvoja in zadovoljstva učiteljev ter do delovanja šol na visoki ravni.

Vodja šole v tem procesu igra pomembno vlogo, saj zastavlja cilje, vodi spremembe in jih oblikuje. Poleg tega v sodelovanju z ministrstvom za izobraževanje, lokalnim oddelkom za izobraževanje, lokalnim svetom za izobraževanje, lokalnimi podjetji in združenji spremlja potrebe šolske skupnosti ter uvaja ustrezne ukrepe, univerze pa pomagajo pri določanju in doseganju ciljev. Univerza Adama Mickiewicza v Poznanju poleg učiteljev izobražuje tudi vodstvene delavce: ravnatelje šol in izobraževalnih ustanov na magistrskem in podiplomskem študiju, nato pa jih podpira z organiziranjem šol za usposabljanje in rednih srečanj v okviru akademije za ravnatelje, po potrebi pa nudi tudi individualno podporo.

Ključne besede: projekt šol za usposabljanje | usposabljanje učiteljev | praktično učenje | inovacije

Training School concept outline

The guiding idea of the Training School, which is the basis for creating its model, is the continuous learning and constant improvement of teachers (professionalisation), which is key to the development of a school and its success. Due to the essence and the very concept of the model, which is a defined pattern of activities, it should be perceived simultaneously in a functional dimension. The functional approach to the Training School model indicates such features as: readability, usefulness, flexibility, adequacy and innovativeness of intervention in the practice of educating and improving teachers and students, aimed at increasing their quality and effectiveness. From the functional point of view, the model is a concept of systemic action, serving the purpose of achieving the assumed goals in terms of innovation and effectiveness by performing specific tasks with the use of resources that remain or will remain at the disposal of entities implementing the model (change). Therefore, the Training School model is based on a classic, hierarchical internal structure, in which operational goals are subordinated to strategic goals, which are elements or stages on the way to their achievement.

A Training School was defined as a school where future teachers will experience practical verification of the theory learned during their studies, and where already working teachers will improve their work skills. It is in such an institution that a student, under the guidance of a Training School teacher, will face educational practice in the areas of education and upbringing (Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T., 1991). In addition to the statutory duty to educate and raise children and young people using the most effective methods of work for the development of the student, a school that serves as a Training School co-organises practical preparation for the teaching profession. It is in this school that teachers are improved, and, through participatory observation, become acquainted with effective and innovative methods of didactic and educational work. Finally, new pedagogical directions and trends or methods of working with students can be tested at training schools.

Thus, an extremely important role in it is played by the teacher - who should be open to taking on challenges, at the same time having well-established practices. The teacher is accompanied by the staff of institutions that support the work of the school, along with the expert representation of the staff of pedagogical universities. All activities are jointly planned, prepared and,

consequently, used in improving the competence of other teachers, employees of the improvement system and universities. For leading authorities and educational supervisors, these are centres for innovative activities that can be used in activities related to supporting the work of schools and in inspiring innovative activities to develop students' key competencies (Supporting the creation of a Training School. The Training School model, Centre for Education Development). As part of its activities, the Training School:

- uses a subjective model of building teacher-student-parent relations;
- is distinguished by the effective introduction of innovative activities aimed at developing students' key competencies necessary for the labour market;
- develops, disseminates and promotes examples of good practice in terms of educational, didactic and organisational solutions;
- implements various pedagogical concepts and theories, and conducts activities in the field of their practical application in direct work with students;
- cooperates with supporting institutions, i.e. psychological and pedagogical counselling centres (PPP), teacher training centres (PDN), pedagogical libraries (TAs), implementing the process of support - from diagnosis of needs to evaluation of effects - which serves the development of the school as a learning organisation;
- works in partnership with teacher training universities, carrying out joint activities to break down the theory-practice divide, professionally prepare students for the profession and continuously modernise the educational process and teachers' workbench, and implement the support system, new theories, trends and pedagogical directions;
- is supported and involved in the development of local education (Supporting the establishment of a Training School: The Training School model).

The Training School model can therefore play an extremely useful role in the improvement process and teacher education by promoting the best ways of constructing the learning environment. Its role, however, is not only limited to the best teaching and upbringing of students by reaching for optimal forms and methods but is expressed in active participation in the process of educating candidates for teachers and active teachers professionally. This aspect of its functioning is of exceptional value for optimising the teacher education system in Poland and for crystallising its professional identity.

Assumptions about the function of the Training School in the education system

The Training School, as part of the teacher training system, cooperates with pedagogical libraries, teacher training centres and psychological and pedagogical counselling centres in diagnosing strengths, planning activities, implementing planned activities, evaluating them and determining the next stages of school development. It also points out proven organisational, didactic and educational solutions. The Training School is also a place for the dissemination of innovative activities to support the development of students' key competencies, with particular emphasis on the teaching of foreign languages, mathematics, natural sciences, information and communication technology (ICT), sharing knowledge and skills, cooperating with other schools, and supporting institutions: psychological and pedagogical clinics, pedagogical libraries, teacher training institutions and universities. Importantly, the Training School is a place to promote headteachers and teachers (a form of promotion) who apply interesting didactic, organisational, educational solutions in the field of activities that support the development of key competencies of students, with particular emphasis on the teaching of foreign languages, mathematics, natural sciences and ICT. The Training School is a partner of the school superintendent as a pedagogical supervisory body, as well as the body that runs the school. It is also worth mentioning that the Training School is an institution implementing the local educational strategy, related to building the profile of a graduate with a high level of competence, effectively prepared to function in the local labour market, in cooperation with local government units (Bednar A.K., Cunningham D., Duffy T.M., Perry J.D., 1991).

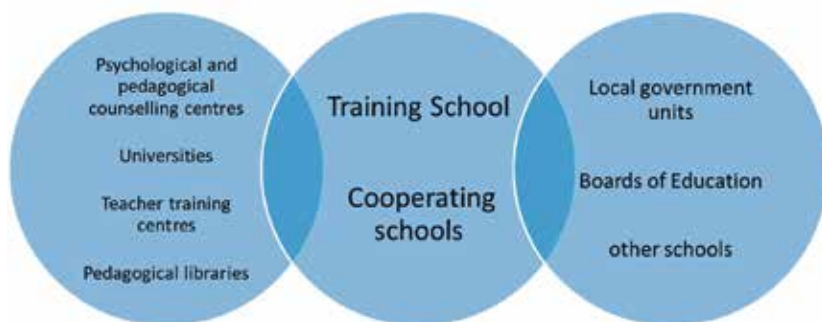


Figure 1.: Training School model by I. Cytlak.

The foundation of the Training School is “the joy of exploring and shaping one’s environment, openness to all that is new, and affirmation of life. There is space for authentic, personal, intellectual development. The process of acquiring knowledge is based on experience, one’s own experiences, interpretations and authentic interactions with others” (*Kompas budzącej się szkoły*).

However, it is not only assumptions about school operation that become the basis for the establishment of the Training School. Other prerequisites are also necessary that both serve the development of the school itself and enable interaction with other entities that make up the Training School. We refer to these as strategies for organising and operating the Training School, and they include:

1. **Cooperation:** “Developing tolerance, social skills, democratic attitudes and creating numerous educational opportunities for students to learn through their own activity” (Filipiak, Szymczak, 2014); at **child level:** developing key competencies, group work, conversations; at **school level:** joint planning, sharing experiences.
2. **Empowerment:** “As a multidimensional category, subjectivity paves the way for the modern model of human adaptation in the world. The task of the school is to help the child in the formation of subjectivity, especially its two aspects: causality and self-esteem” (Kreatorzy świata, Szkoła Cogito, Poznań); at **child level:** forming self-awareness and self-confidence in students, creating conditions for the development of individual character traits, adapting tasks and activities to the needs, abilities and interests of students; at **school level:** preservation of its own identity, the goals and role of the institution, autonomy of decision-making, verification of decisions, planning of its development, and accepting responsibility for achieving goals.
3. **Creating a climate conducive to learning:** “Geoff Petty emphasises the importance of relationships and equal opportunities for all students. He talks about the need for all students to feel that they are accepted and valued, that the effort they put into learning is noticed, and that they are evaluated fairly” (Borek, Kowalczyk-Rumak, 2015); at **child level:** activities to create an atmosphere conducive to learning for both students and teachers. The role of relationships and equal opportunities for all students is important. All students need to feel that they are accepted and valued, that the effort they put into learning is noticed, and that they are evaluated fairly; at **school level:** mutual inspiration and design of activities, constant diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of the work in the Training School, and the promotion of its achievements.

4. **Innovative solutions:** “What is important is not only what we learn, but also how we learn...It is necessary to successively move away from the linear reproduction of the knowledge given, to stimulate students to be architects and co-creators of their own wisdom and competence” (Dylak, 2003).
5. **Use of modern technologies to support the learning process:** “Students at school should learn to use technology (not as a collection of tools), because it is a fundamental skill - the key to achieving success. In a difficult, changing, uncertain and complex world, human proven skills are no longer enough, so technology becomes an extension of our brains - it provides us with new and improved functions which we need; it is not an add-on to our mental activity, but is now part of it” (Prensky, 2010). Thus, one of the important elements of the Training School is to equip itself with new technologies, adapt technical facilities and train teachers in this area.
6. **Monitoring of activities and evaluation of work in the Training School:** Mizerek points out that conducting any type of evaluation requires adopting a research attitude, which in the case of self-evaluation means the teacher’s examination of his or her own practice, “it is the attitude of the teacher acting as a researcher of his or her own practice” (Mizerek, 2010). This implies the regular monitoring, diagnosis of school activities, self-evaluation of teachers, active participation of headteachers, teachers, cooperating schools and universities in the evaluation process.
7. **School leader:** a school is an organisation where both students and teachers should learn. However, in order for the learning process to take place, the conditions for it must be provided. The conditions are not only the building itself, classrooms and their equipment - they are also the climate (and therefore the relations between members of the school community) and the organisation of teachers and students’ learning. The school leader has a key role here - it is up to his leadership skills to ensure that the teachers work together as a team and learn from each other. Providing the right conditions also means building positive, beneficial relationships with the environment and parents, as well as the other factors mentioned in the requirements discussed above. Proper implementation of these requirements is a prerequisite for creating the right conditions for the teaching and learning process. The school leader’s job is to attract allies and experts and create networks to support the school’s efforts to improve student learning and the organisation as a whole (Borek., Kowalczyk-Rumak, 2015).

8. **Key competences:** key competences in lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the situation. They are essential for self-realisation and personal development, social integration, being an active citizen, and employment. Key competences can determine the scope of activities of Training Schools, so we can have Training Schools in the system that specialise in developing mathematical, linguistic or IT competences for example. However, it is important to remember that all key competences are interdependent, and in each case there is an emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision-making and constructive management of emotions.

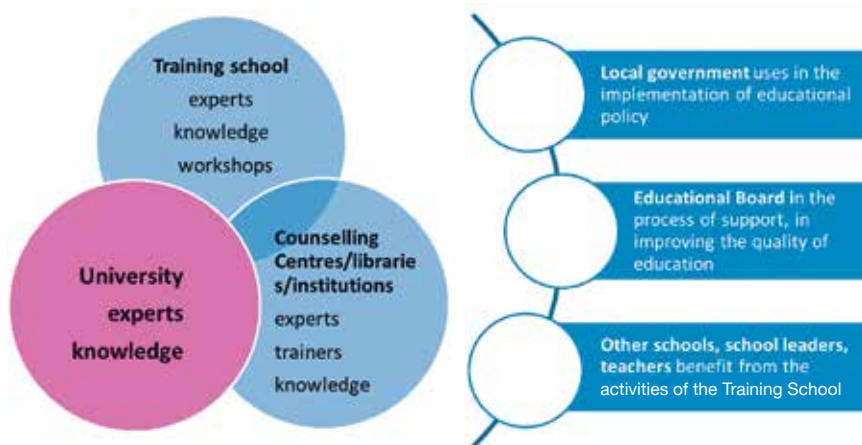


Figure 2.: Training School resources, I. Cytlak.

Forms and methods of work of the Training School

Networking and self-learning involves an inter-school team of teachers or headteachers working together on a selected issue. The purpose of the functioning of the network is to jointly solve problems, share ideas, insights and proposals - both through an on-line platform treated as a forum for the exchange of experiences, as well as face-to-face meetings. Members of the network benefit from their own experience but can also draw on the help of external experts. They work under the guidance of the coordinator of the cooperation and self-study network (Filipiak, Szymczak, 2014). Examples of methods and forms used: open classes for teachers led by a teacher at the training school, workshops for teachers, peer observation, action learning

or team coaching in practice, open space, or the open space method, supervision, forum for the exchange of experiences and good practices, team development of solutions, organisation of open lessons.

Individual teacher support opportunities offered by Training School teachers are very important. A proven form of support is individual consultations, where a teacher has the opportunity to share his or her problem and receive advice from an experienced practitioner. Long-term support is much more valuable, such as coaching, tutoring or mentoring. A Training School teacher can be a mentor for students just taking their first steps in school, but also for other teachers (not just beginners). Even those who have already gained a fair amount of knowledge still need support in developing their competencies, realising their potential and determining directions for further development. An interesting form of work could be to solve case studies together with students on any school problem situation.

The perspective of preparation for the teaching profession as an extremely important element of cooperation between schools and teacher training universities. The main goal is to bring academia closer to the school; surrounding gifted students and teachers who implement pedagogical innovations or original curricula with support and care.

The following methods and forms can be introduced within the framework of cooperation between Training Schools and Universities: problem lectures for teachers of the Training School, conferences with the participation of academic teachers, teachers from the Training School and cooperating schools, employees of supporting institutions, students of teaching specialisation, study visits of academic teachers and students of teaching specialisation to supporting institutions, e.g. pedagogical library, teacher training institutions, educational projects for gifted students of teaching specialisation (e.g., members of learning circles, members of study circles), educational projects for particularly gifted students from practical schools, patronage/academic classes, conducted by academics and students of teaching specialisation, experimental research projects with the participation of academics and teachers from Training Schools, courses for teachers of Training Schools, e.g. in the field of tutoring, coaching, formative assessment, creation of educational e-tools, creative thinking, interpersonal communication, motivating students to learn, seminars conducted by an academic teacher with the participation of a teacher from the Training School (Grzymkowska, 2012).

Cooperation of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan with a Training School

In the Faculty of Educational Studies at AMU, as part of the master's degree and Postgraduate Programs, we offer studies in Educational Management. This study programme is dedicated to graduates wishing to take up future work as managers in education, but also in other public institutions. The programme confers qualifications to work as a school leader. Very importantly, after graduation, we provide our graduates with expert support (supervision). In addition, for those interested, as part of the studies we offer a programme of managerial internships in different types of schools and educational institutions.

The study program includes, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- Education financing
- Professional development of the headteacher and teachers
- Marketing of educational services
- Methodology of building educational strategies
- Educational and administrative law
- Pedagogical supervision
- Educational policy of local governments
- Work planning in an educational institution
- Quality management of an educational institution
- Organisational structure of educational institutions
- Conflict management in educational institutions
- Management of educational institutions - good practices
- Leadership and human resource management in education
- Psychology in the management of educational institutions.

As part of the specialisation of Educational Management, students participate in the following projects conducted by the Department of Educational Policy and Civic Education at UAM: Wągrowiec Training School, supporting staff of local government units in education management, PUK PUK programme in the field of promotion of equal educational opportunities, Mental Health Prevention Program for children and adolescents in educa-

tional institutions (international project in cooperation with Prof. Louise Hayes, Australia), School Leaders Academy AMU.

The following are the tasks for students of Educational Management (under supervision of the school leader, school teachers, academic tutor): diagnosis and evaluation of teaching and support process, dossier preparation, participation in discussions with parents and students about their difficulties and proposing ways to solve the problems, preparation and delivery of lessons under the supervision of the school leader / teachers, familiarisation with the school's documentation, cooperation in school activities with the local government, assistance in conducting and analysing scientific research, assistance in the organisation of scientific conferences, participation in support networks and training for teachers.

As R. Michalak (Michalak, 2022) notes, since growing up to be a teacher requires practical learning of the profession, properly prepared practical training is an integral and very important part of the teacher education system. The concept of educating future teachers involves organising a permanent dialogue between trainees and other participants in the process of professional education (teachers, lecturers, methodologists, parents of students, school pedagogue etc.). In terms of educating future teachers, student participation in all project activities of the Training School should be as dynamic and active as possible. Both students and their supervisors should to

Table 1.: Michalak R., The Training School as a Community of Mutual Learning Between Teachers and Students. A Research Perspective, Prima Educatione, 2021. Points range: high: 14–32, medium: 33–51, low: 52–70.

Detailed variables	Points
Organisation of workshops	26
Organisation of demonstration lessons	24
Improvement of personal competence in the field of organisation of the educational process	18
The content of workshops and demonstration lessons	22
Competences of teachers conducting classes	24
Quality of the materials obtained	14
Meeting personal expectations	30
Increase in understanding of the content of academic education	38
Increase in self-awareness of the resources necessary to fulfill the role of a professional teacher	32
Increased motivation to improve teaching competences	22
Total	250

a greater extent be creators and not just recipients of the offerings provided in the Training School model (Michalak, 2022).

In view of the fact that in the Training School model, the participation of universities in both the training of students and the improvement of headteachers and practicing teachers should be strengthened; and the fact that the model itself needs to be more popularised among those academics who are involved in the professionalisation of teachers at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; the School Leader Academy initiative was created. University staff are more intensively involved in creating and conducting various forms of training and preparing methodological materials. In practice, this involves the creation of an integral model of cooperation between institutions with responsibility and potential for teacher education. Our aim is to develop, prepare and conduct of a series of meetings (lectures, trainings, workshops, conferences) in the field of leadership, theory and practice of modern management, educational law, pedagogical supervision procedures, interpersonal communication, information technology and support in crisis management. The tutors engaged are education practitioners, university lecturers, directors of schools and educational institutions, employees of the Department of Education, the Board of Education, and psychotherapists. The institutions cooperating with the project are: the Faculty of Educational Studies of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the Board of Education in Poznań, the Department of Education of the City of Poznań, local governments, partner schools and institutions/educational institutions, Poznań Science and Technology Park of the UAM Foundation, the Chamber of Committed Business. The Program Objectives are strengthening the competencies of education managers, supporting headteachers in crisis management, professionalisation of the management staff in the field of knowledge of the theory and practice of educational law, strengthening the competence of managers in the use of modern information technology, development of managerial proficiency in interpersonal communication, strengthening the leadership competence of headteachers, support for graduates of the second degree (Master's) and postgraduate studies of Educational Management in the new role of headteacher – leader.

Implications for schools, headteachers and teachers

The strategic goal of the Training School model is to optimise the system of student education and teacher training by developing and promoting innovative and effective activities, solutions, strategies for constructing a rich and diverse educational environment and development based on a culture of mutual learning. Creating a mutual learning community of students, students and teachers with diverse competences and experiences is the greatest asset of the Training School model and determines its identity and innovation. In the Training School model, the role of the school leader should be emphasised and described in terms of multifaceted leadership. The role of the school leader is expressed above all, in the skilful management of the community learning processes involved in the implementation of the model. The model of a learning organisation imposes a lot of tasks and responsibilities on the school leader. In its creation key components should be noticed, such as:

- a common and coherent vision that sets the organisation's strategic goals and ways achieving them, as well as noticing positive changes;
- a stimulating structure that facilitates mutual, interactive learning of partners and those involved;
- supportive culture motivating people to modify reality in context, diagnose possibilities and needs, question obvious truths and principles, and plan innovative, individualised change procedures;
- a management team which shares powers, which is expressed in delegation of powers to make decisions and building trust in shared effort, leads to better quality and upward development;
- motivated staff that strive for continuous development and self-improvement;
- inciting, facilitating learning through the encouragement and motivation for continuous learning, enriching personal competences (Michalak, 2022).

The above-mentioned components determine the scope and content of the tasks to be performed by the leader of an organisation among mutual learning entities. Modern management of a learning organisation in a culture of reciprocity requires team problem solving through negotiation and focus

on its conditions. Identification is extremely important in determining and reasoning for its successful solution. These problems should be relevant and concern the functioning of a given community. A school team can be treated as: a learning organism with a life of its own, where there is room for collective analysis of experiences and to learn from them. So it's about an organisation in which the learner creates a natural environment in which everyone undertakes teamwork effort to enrich and improve their professional competences, according to individual needs and possibilities. In a learning organisation there is a place for everyone and the opportunity to invest in oneself and one's own development.

A very important condition for effective teacher learning is the opportunity for experience reinforcement and support, mainly from the school leader and representative institutions involved in the process of implementing the Training School model. Their role results from the specificity of a given institution and the essence of tasks defined in the model. However, it is extremely important to provide teachers with multi-faceted support, both psychological and material. Teacher psychological support is particularly invaluable. It allows them to build a sense of agency and competence, mainly through obtaining systematic and current feedback. This creates opportunities to discover their strengths, strengthening their faith in the resources at hand, and at the same time inspiring them to improve. What's more, it allows them to identify needs and not fully perfected areas of their functioning and obtaining adequate support from professionals. This support should also be of a procedural nature, well-thought-out, holistic and interactive, based on task engagement and personal to each party. At the same time, it should motivate the setting and achievement of substantive and targeted goals in the short and long term, at the same time providing help and encouragement to put effort in and not give up despite difficulties experienced over time. Below is a prediction of problems and challenges that may stand in the way of development yet are crucial for building a sense of agency and psychological safety. Cooperation of all entities understood as involved in the implementation of the Training School model, based on mutual support, transforms a closed, hermetic and isolated culture into an open and networked culture, in which each element has an autotelic value (Michalak, 2021).

A learning organisation with a life of its own, where there is space for collective analysis of experiences, can learn from them. So it's about an organisation in which the learner creates a natural environment in which every-

one undertakes a teamwork effort to enrich and improve their professional competences, according to individual needs and possibilities. In a learning organisation there is a place for everyone and the opportunity to invest in oneself and one's own development. In the Training School model, it is worth placing much emphasis on improvement of educational competences. This aspect of the school's work requires a great deal of support, but also a different approach – focused on the individual student and the conditions of his development, without losing sight of the team - especially in the present era of extremely complex and unpredictable changes. This reality creates many problems and difficult situations, which students experience in everyday life and which they often feel they can't handle.

In some cases, teachers do not cope well enough with educational work both with a group and with an individual student. Sometimes they can't provide students with adequate and useful support and material help. Also, the sphere of cooperation with parents, which is an integral element of educational work, should gain a more important place in the concept of the model. Professionalisation of teachers must therefore cover all spheres of their functioning, so that, as a result, they feel aware and competent in reflective practices that are able to manage not only the process of educating students, but also their holistic development.

Moreover, in the Training School model, the participation of both universities and schools should be strengthened in the education of students and in the training of practising teachers. The model itself requires greater popularisation among those academics who deal with the professionalisation of teachers. The participation of students in all project activities should be more dynamic and active. Both students and academic teachers to a greater extent should be the creators, and not only the recipients of the offerings provided for in the Training School model. Academic teachers could become more involved in creating and running various forms of training and preparation of methodological materials. In practice this would consist of creating an integral model of cooperation between the responsible institutions, and has potential for teacher education (Michalak, 2022).

Since growing up to be a teacher requires hands-on learning about the profession, thus appropriately prepared practical education constitutes an integral and very important element of the teacher education system. The concept of the training of future teachers is about organising a permanent dialogue between trainees with other participants in the vocational education process (teachers, lecturers, methodologists, parents of students, school

pedagogue etc.). This dialogue is aimed at diagnosing the degree of development of their teaching competences, as well as the multidimensionality of school life, which becomes a source of reconstruction of their knowledge and skills. The dialogue should take place in different ways and situations of practice, both at school with the student's tutor, and with lecturers from the university and other trainees. Learning by doing and the theory integrated with it allows for the disclosure and active redefinition of the personal knowledge and resulting attitudes and skills, and it also creates a context to present the student with various formal theories.

Conclusion

A model for educating candidates as teachers requires, apart from academic education, their active participation and learning in practice (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, Perry 1991). The Training School becomes a space for gaining new and authentic experiences and for confronting academic theoretical knowledge, personal ideas, experiences, and resources. In addition, it creates various opportunities for the construction of the image of the educational reality, the role of the teacher and the student.

Through the peer-learning strategy, they explore, experience, search, discover, verify, negotiate, and, thus, have many opportunities to reconstruct their philosophy of education. Both teaching candidates, and in-service teachers who practise education based on intuition, common theories and passive copying of someone else's solutions, have the chance to become reflective, autonomous, self-aware participants in the education process, making paradigmatic choices and focusing on continuous improvement.

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