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PREPARATION OF REFLECTIVE TEACHERS (ANALYSES OF THE FINAL REFLECTIVE AND SELF-REFLECTIVE TASKS WRITTEN BY STUDENTS OF TEACHING PROFESSION)

ABSTRACT. Tomková Anna, *Preparation of Reflective Teachers (Analyses of the Final Reflective and Self-Reflective Tasks Written by Students of Teaching Profession)* [Przygotowanie refleksyjnych nauczycieli (Analiza autorefleksji i refleksji końcowych pisanych przez studentów studiów nauczycielskich)]. *Studia Edukacyjne* nr 31, 2014, Poznań 2014, pp. 323-338. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2781-6. ISSN 1233-6688

This paper presents an analyses of the final reflective and self-reflective tasks written by students of the lower primary school teacher training. These tasks are included in the Final pedagogical portfolio, which students defend at the final state examination. Students use them to reflect on their work, to present themselves as new teachers, to reflect on their journey on becoming a teacher, describe important landmarks and results of their preparation, including their conception of teaching, and other goals related to their professional development. In the final part of the paper, we formulate recommendations for future development of pre-graduate preparation of future lower primary school teachers, including the suggestions regarding the format of the final state examination.

Key words: reflective approach towards teacher preparation, final state examination, pedagogical portfolio, reflection and self-reflection, landmarks in study, students' conception of teaching, goals of professional development

The paper aims to introduce current students of the lower primary school teacher training at the Faculty of Teaching, Charles University in Prague, and the results of their pre-graduate teacher preparation on the basis of the content analyses of the reflective tasks called *My professional development*. The second goal is to introduce quality of content and process of this kind of teacher preparation as seen from the students' point of view, and formulate recommendations for future development of pre-graduate preparation of

future lower primary school teachers, including the suggestions regarding the form of the final state examination.

Reflective approach towards teacher preparation

In recent years, many countries, including the Czech Republic, have been promoting the idea of quality teacher as a **reflective practitioner**. Teachers – reflective practitioners, are defined as professionals, who reflect on their profession, pupils, teaching process and themselves. They are able to justify their methods as well as analyse and solve complex situations in the class. They are able to respond to changes that can occur in the course of their career. Reflective practitioners also keep working on their professional development.

The idea of a quality teacher as a reflective practitioner leads to fundamental changes in teacher preparation. A **reflective approach towards teacher preparation** is being promoted. Reflective and self-reflective activities and tasks are integrated to study programmes with the goal to help students to look at their practice from hindsight and analyse them critically, to understand textbooks and teaching processes as well as themselves in the role of students and prospective teachers. As a result, competence for reflection is purposefully developed in prospective teachers.¹

The reflective approach towards teacher preparation anticipates that all students will work with reflection and self-reflection. We can, however, also anticipate that some students will resist reflective activities.² It's therefore necessary to establish the meaning and effects of the reflection together with students. Also, it's necessary to continue with researched based verifications of contributions as well as limits and risks related to reflective approach towards teacher preparation, concrete procedures, activities and tasks.

¹ D. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, London 1983; P. Perrenoud, *Développer la pratique réflexive dans le métier d'enseignants. Professionnalisation et raison pédagogique*, Paris 2001; V. Spilková et al., *Současné proměny vzdělávání učitelů*, Brno 2004; L. Paquay, C. Van Nieuwenhoven, P. Wouters (Eds), *L'évaluation, levier du développement Professionnel?* Bruxelles 2010; V. Spilková, A. Tomková et al., *Koalita učitele a profesní standard*, Praha 2010; F. Korthagen et al., *Jak propojit teorii s praxí: Didaktika realistického vzdělávání učitelů*, Brno 2011; M. Altet et al., *Former enseignants réflexifs*, Bruxelles 2013; A. Tomková, *Reflective approach towards professional teacher education – Inspiration, Experiences, Questions*, *Studia Edukacyjne*, 2013, 29, s. 327-340; C. Duykaerts (Ed.), *Analyse transversale. Évaluation du cursus Instituteur(-trice) primaire en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, AEQES, Bruxelles 2014, from: <http://www.aeqes.be/documents/20140626%20AT%20PRIMAIRE.pdf> [Retrieved: 16.7.2014] etc.

² M. Altet et al., *Former enseignants réflexifs*.

Reflective tasks in the preparation of lower primary school teachers. In the Czech Republic, the preparation of lower primary school teachers has the format of a five-year university training. Study programmes are offered in a full time as well as combined form, and they show a notable effort to connect theory and practice in a meaningful way.

Study programmes for future lower primary school teachers offered by the Faculty of Teaching, Charles University in Prague, include a systematically organized set of teaching practice held between the 1st and 5th grade. A system of mentor support for students, who are doing teaching practice is developed in close cooperation with faculty teachers. Students can attend courses aimed at reflection of teaching practice and development of their professional identity. A system of reflective and self-reflective task is thoughtfully planned. Their goal is to help students to become teachers, understand pupils, teaching methods, complex situations, as well as themselves in these situations and themselves in the role of a teacher.

In the course of their study, students work on three basic reflective tasks. In the 1st year, they write a student essay *I as a future teacher*, in the 2nd year, the essay is called *I'm becoming a teacher* and in the 5th year, they conclude by the essay *I as a beginner teacher*. These essays aim to make students reflect on themselves as future teachers, specifically on their motivation for the teaching profession, their experience gained in the course of the study at the Faculty of Teaching, as well as on their own strengths and personal challenges. Other than that, students also reflect on how the Faculty of Teaching fulfilled their expectations. These reoccurring reflections are connected with teaching practice and reflect gradual development of their professional competencies. Other reflective activities and tasks are added to these three basic reflective tasks in the course of the study. Other forms of reflection are introduced, spoken as well as written. The written form of reflection and self-reflection is justified by the fact that it makes students to use accurate language to express meaning and enables them to come back to what they have previously written.

Final reflective tasks in the context of state final examinations. In the Czech Republic, the students of the Faculty of Teaching conclude their training by the state examination. Integration of the competence to reflection and self-reflection together with reflective and self-reflective activities in the study programme for future teachers also influences the form of the final examination and certification of graduates. The Faculty of Teaching, Charles University, develops a new form of the state examination of lower primary school students, which corresponds with the promoted reflective and per-

sonalised approach towards teacher preparation.³ Students take the final examinations from Pedagogy, Math with didactics, Czech language and Literature with didactics and from the selected specialised subjects (foreign language, Music, Art, Physical or Drama education). Students chose from two versions of the Pedagogy final state examination. The first version means that students draw two thematic areas. One thematic area is prepared by a student and has a form of a discussion carried out on the basis of the professional publications he/she has read. The student also presents a file that contains documents from the teaching practice. The second option is the defence of the **Final pedagogical portfolio** (*Final pedagogical portfolio* 2014):

The Final pedagogical portfolio presented at the final state examination from Pedagogy is an organised and reflected collection of selected assignments and other materials, which students collected in the course of their study at the Faculty of Teaching, and which document their professional development as well as achieved quality of professional competencies they reached at the end of their lower primary school teacher training.

Goals and functions of the Final pedagogical portfolio:

The Final pedagogical portfolio aims to organise, reflect and present gained professional experience, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values related to the preparation for teaching profession and start of a teaching career.

The Final pedagogical portfolio gives students means to present and defend their conception of teaching on the basis of theoretical knowledge and in a broader context. Students show their ability to systematically reflect on their pedagogical activities, including the reflection of their future professional development (ability to set their own goals – what I need to improve, what I need to learn).

A quality Final pedagogical portfolio serves as a tool to integrate different parts of study content, especially the theoretical and practical part with pedagogical/psychological and subject didactic preparation. It enables not only qualitative, formative and individualized external assessment of students, but it also serves as a precious self-evaluation tool.

The examination committee uses the portfolio to discuss and evaluate development and outcomes of the specific study achievements of students. On the bases of the portfolio, the examiner suggests exam questions (Final state examination 2014).

The Final pedagogical portfolio is used to evaluate students at the end of their pre-graduate teacher training. It reinforces students' self-evaluation,

³ A. Tomková, *Portfolio v pregraduální přípravě učitelů primární školy*, [In:] *Současné proměny vzdělávání učitelů*, Eds V. Spilková et al., Brno 2004, s. 180-190.

enables them to present the results of their preparation, and gives them opportunity to document and present the progress achieved. It builds on continuity of pre-graduate preparation and professional development of the beginning teacher.⁴

Apart from the selected and organised materials, the Final pedagogical portfolio has to also include a **reflective part of the portfolio**. Students are obliged to write the final reflective task called *My professional development*, which is defined as a “written comprehensive essay about the milestones of student’s professional development. The essay also includes a definition of the student’s conception of teaching as well as goals and plans for future professional development” (Final pedagogical portfolio 2014). In this task, students reflect on their professional development and synthesise existing results of their teacher preparation. Specification of the function and content of the *My professional development* reflective task creates a fixed part of the Final pedagogical portfolio. Also other materials included in the Final pedagogical portfolio should include reflective parts.

In the course of working on the Final pedagogical portfolio and *My professional development* reflective task, students are expected to utilise all existing experience. This includes the experience they gained while producing the working version of their portfolio and worked with them during their study, as well as experience they gained when writing student essays, and reflective or self-reflective tasks. Process of transformation of the working version of portfolio in the final pedagogical portfolio is dealt with in the compulsory optional subject *Portfolio in education*.

Content analyses of the final reflective tasks *My professional development*

The process of introduction of the reflective approach to preparation of lower primary school teachers is supplemented by the research verification of its efficiency. A complex study was published introducing the reflective and personalised approach to the preparation of future lower primary school teachers at the Faculty of Teaching, Charles University.⁵ Other publications include many research reports informing about the longitudinal action research. Also analysed was a content of reflective tasks written by the 1st grade students and included in *I as a future teacher*. This research was

⁴ See the portfolios assessment categories: K. Smith, H. Tillema, *Portfolios for professional development: A research journey*, New York 2006.

⁵ V. Spilková et al., *Současné proměny vzdělávání učitelů*, Brno 2004.

searching answers to questions: What can we learn about students, their emotional attitudes towards the teaching profession, how they perceive the demands of this profession and evaluate how demanding this profession is. Also, what can we learn about students' motivation for the profession and their determination to start their teaching career.⁶

Goals of the content analyses. In the course of the content analyses of *My professional development* reflective tasks, our main focus is to search and interpret significant topics and questions unravelled by these reflective tasks. The content analyses of the reflective tasks presented in *My professional development* aims to identify valuable information about students and the results of their pre-graduate teaching preparation, including their competence for reflection and self-reflection. It also enables us to gain a comprehensive insight of the contemporary beginning teacher – a graduate of the Teacher Training for Primary Schools. The second goal is to gather important information regarding the quality of content and process of teacher preparation from the students' point of view, and formulate recommendations for future development of pre-graduate preparation of future teachers, including the conception of state final examinations.

The analyses of *My professional development* reflective tasks will be included in the intended analyses of entire Final pedagogical portfolios, which are reviewed in the context of changes that affect the conception of pre-graduate teaching preparation and final state examinations.

Characteristic of the research sample. The analysed *My professional development* reflective tasks, included in the Final professional portfolio, were written between 2001 and 2014. In a year, about ten students from eighty select to defend the Final pedagogical portfolio as a part of their Final state examination. Since 2008, the number has been on a slight rise due to an increasing offer of supportive activities and courses offered in the course of study, which enable students to practice and develop the necessary competences. Altogether 76 Final pedagogical portfolios were defended by 2014, and 10 portfolios weren't accepted. Reflective tasks in *My professional development* were written mainly by the full-time students (62 full-time students – 22 students of the combined type of study), women (74 women – 1 man), mainly with specialisation on English language and Drama education, occasionally also with specialisation in Music, Art, Physical education and

⁶ A. Tomková, M. Chvál, H. Hejlová, *Pedagogický a výzkumný rozměr studentských esejů v přípravě studentů učitelství pro primární školu*, *Pedagogika*, 2010, LX, 3-4, s. 314-328.

French language. Occasionally, we can also find students, who studied Teacher Training for Primary Schools simultaneously with Special Pedagogy, amongst those who choose the defence of the Final pedagogical portfolio.

Results of content analyses. We will use the assignment of the *My professional development* reflective task as a basic tool to organise analysed sub-topics.

Landmarks in professional preparation of prospective teachers. Students analyse the most significant landmarks of their teaching preparation in *My professional development* reflective tasks. Some students want to show the broadest possible range of all things that influenced them and name majority of teaching practice sessions and courses they attended. In such cases, it is more difficult to establish their personality on the basis of *My professional development* reflective tasks. Most students identify three to five landmarks in *My professional development* reflective tasks, and they reflect on them in a greater detail. Students tend to include more what inspired them towards the end of their study as this is something they have fresh memory of. Also they can understand and integrate their previous knowledge and experience better at this stage. Students chose mainly more complex subjects (such as Drama education), but also individual and unique experience (such as the course of Orff's musical instruments).

The most significant landmarks. The Teacher Training for Primary Schools at the Faculty of Teaching, Charles University, supports the development of professional competences of its students. An important role belongs to professional knowledge. Which influences do students see as the most influential in their teaching preparation?

As the most significant landmarks students describe mainly **distinct innovations in pedagogy and didactics** as well as clearly defined inspirations, such as Drama education specialisation, innovative programme Step by Step⁷ or the innovative programme Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking.⁸ These innovations represent specific examples of constructivist approach to education. They show students how to encourage cognitive, emotional and social development of students. Students are introduced to these innovations in an active way, when they can experience them first hand. This develops their reflective skills, they learn how to understand these in-

⁷ V. Krejčová, J. Kargerová, *Vzdělávací program Začít spolu – metodický průvodce pro 1.stupeň ZŠ*, Praha 2003.

⁸ A. Tomková, *Program Čtením a psaním ke kritickému myšlení v primární škole*, Praha 2007.

novations, use them and defend them. Such inspirations represent for students a link between theory and practice. Often, students encounter them for the first time, and they are therefore identified as a novelty: *“The biggest discovery for me was the Drama education. Even though I knew some parts of it, I couldn’t imagine I would be able to plan a meaningful lesson that would be utterly build on Drama education, or that I would be able to prepare a whole project. The fact that I decided to specialise on Drama education was a big challenge for me, I battled with myself, because I’m not an extrovert type. I knew it wouldn’t go as smoothly as I would wish. Today, I’m glad that I won that battle. If I had given up, I would have deprived of this great experience not only myself but also my future students.”*

Full-time students emphasise the meaning of **teaching practice**, especially of continuous teaching practice, which gives them a complex insight in teaching profession and enables longer teaching experience. Other significant experiences named in *My professional development* reflective tasks are represented by additional teaching practices, such as the practice period in special needs or Drama education classes. Students also describe practice sessions during their study visit as an important experience. Some students name specific moments of their teaching practice, such as those that had a positive impact on their motivation for the teaching profession.

For many years, our students have been significantly influenced by the new concept of **Math methodology** developed by the team of experts from the department of Math and Math methodology at the Faculty of Teaching, Charles University.⁹ Also this constructivist concept of Math instruction is, for the majority of students, new and is different from their own school experience. Less inspired are students by Czech language and methodology subjects. Especially the students of combined study name subject methodology courses as the most significant landmarks, because they give them specific inspirations for effective teaching of specific subjects and specific subject matter.

Only occasionally, students name the **subjects of broader university foundation**. These are perceived as theoretical subjects and are usually emphasised by students, who express desire for self-improvement of a broader scope than is preparation for their profession, and who value opportunities for reflection. Similar effects are with international **study visits**.

Reflective tasks in *My professional development* also bring descriptions of specific activities in various subjects. Because of the topic of our paper, we

⁹ M. Hejný, F. Kuřina, *Dítě, škola a matematika. Konstruktivistické přístupy k vyučování*, Praha 2001.

want to emphasise that students included their experience with **writing reflections in Math subjects**. Students also mention that **studying specific specialised publications** significantly influenced their professional knowledge, attitudes and the way they think about the teaching profession. In *My professional development* reflective tasks students also describe significant impact of **working on their dissertation**, which gives them an opportunity to gain a deep insight of topics or questions that interest them.

Students also deem important their encounters with faculty or university teachers, who became their role models. Meeting with personalities during their studies and professional life is considered an important motivational stimulus. Students attending combined study programme mention the **significance of their student group**, where students help each other and exchange interesting professional experience. An interesting moment was the long-term **cooperation** described by several full-time female students, which started by cooperation during their study days and lead to team teaching.

Other Influence. Students find important moments of their study **across fields and subjects**, across educational and psychology subjects and subject methodologies, across theory and practice, across study activities and other influence gained outside the faculty. Students of the combined study programme count amongst the significant experience gained **outside the faculty** the attendance of further professional trainings with innovative and specific, often very practical, topics. Full-time students gain important experience outside the faculty in the course of their teaching practice, which they find and attend in addition to the compulsory teaching practice organised by the Faculty of Teaching (students take on part-time teaching jobs, they teach in after-school clubs, basic school of arts, lead after-school activities, do after-school tutoring). Personal and professional life of students is significantly influenced by their active involvement in religious and leisure organisations.

Some students go back to past experiences when establishing landmark inspirations of their teaching preparation. They find them in their **families, encounters with their former teachers** (in positive as well as negative sense). They describe this influence mainly in connection with their professional motivation. These can be signals indicating that students will teach in a way they used to learn and they used to be taught as pupils, and that these memories still outweigh influence of new experience gained in the course of their teaching preparation.

Especially the students attending the combined study programme value the new experience they gained in **the role of a student**: „*In the student role, I came to gain deeper understanding of how important the personality of a teacher is,*

what pupils experience during lessons, how they can feel hopeless when they don't understand something and can't ask, how important is to give students options to discuss with their classmates to organise and clarify their thoughts. I also realised how they can be scared of written tests even if they didn't underestimate preparation, how fast attention diminishes if the teacher just gives whole-class presentations and pupils are in the role of a passive recipient... These and other experience started having direct influence on my teaching."

Students write mainly about **positive influences** and landmarks in their professional preparation. This is understandable considering the reflective tasks are prepared for the purpose of examinations.

Students' conception of teaching. *My professional development* reflective tasks should also contain characteristics of students' current conception of teaching. Obviously that students teach in the same way as they describe would have to be proven by searching for proof in other parts of the portfolio or in students' teaching practice.

According to Spilková¹⁰, the **expected conception of teaching in the Primary school** involves treating children as personalities, partner approach to children, respecting that children are entitled to individual development, applying the principle of individualisation in education, as well as creating positive social, emotional and working classroom climate, which enables pupils to engage in communicative activities. From the perspective of learning process, emphasis is on constructivist methods, active and cooperative learning and respecting individual learning styles of younger school age children. Also emphasis is placed on the transformation of evaluation to the formative evaluation form, being open to the outside world and partner communication with parents.

In descriptions of their conception of teaching, students show relationships between basic categories that have impact on the form and quality of teacher's work with pupils. These categories include mainly: child (who for) – content (what) – processes (how) – teacher (who) and his professional philosophy (why).

In *My professional development* reflective tasks, students express their professional **self-perspective**, their personal professional credo, philosophy, beliefs, ideals, goals and principles. Their own professional self-evaluation helps them to gain deeper understanding of the nature of their students' conception of teaching.¹¹ It is valued when students deal with the question

¹⁰ V. Spilková et al., *Současné proměny vzdělávání učitelů*, s. 109-113.

¹¹ B. Pravdová, *Já jako učitelka: profesní sebepojetí studentky učitelství v posledním ročníku pedagogické přípravy*, Pedagogická orientace, 2013, 23/2, s. 174-194.

“why”, which reflects their value system and their professional philosophy: *“I want to be a teacher, who is able to communicate with pupils, parents and his colleagues. I want to be a teacher, who can give advice, who can admit he was mistaken, and who can accept advice. I want to be a teacher, who believes in himself, who can make fair assessment, who respects rules and is consistent. I want to be a teacher, who is respected and respects others. I want to be a teacher, who can design a lesson, in which students will work in pairs, groups as well as individually, they won’t be bored, they will be actively engaged in meaningful work, and they will be motivated by me as well as by each other.” ... “I want to be a person, who seeks truth, who does neither stick nostalgically to the ways he was brought up with, nor want to be a rebel and only look for controversial ideas. I want to critically search for an optimal approach.”*

Students’ conceptions of teaching are strongly characterised by focus on a child, questions related to a child and formative issues: *“My goal is to educate, to be a role-model and facilitate information with this aim in mind. My role-model is a class teacher, who worked with me during my teaching practice. She didn’t hesitate not to include something in her Czech language lesson to gain more time for solving a problem. The goal is not to be preparing children all the time for something, but to live it.”* Often, students use the terms **integration/inclusion** and mention **individualisation of instruction** as an important principle. In characteristics of their students’ teaching conception they strongly focus on active teaching methods, especially on **constructivist methods** and other specific **experiential learning methods**, mainly the methods of personal and social development and drama education: *“Constructivism is a huge topic. It gets reflected in all subjects, and for me it became a way I want children to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes in school.”* In some My professional development reflective tasks, the characteristic of students’ conception of teaching resembles puzzle assembly by naming individual discoveries (such as *“When I quieten, my pupils quieten as well.”* *“The most important role in pupils’ motivation to learn is played by an enthusiastic teacher.”*) and individual competencies (such as *“My strength is in being able to communicate with pupils and colleagues.”*). Only some students show clear reflection on basic fundamental connections e.g. between goals, content, teaching methods and evaluation. In recent years, **standards for teachers’ work** (student teacher) help students to describe and form their complex conception of teaching. Among other things, they contain criterions and quality indicators for expected professional activities and competencies (*Competent Teacher of the 21st Century: ISSA’s 2001 definition of quality pedagogy*¹², *Set of professional qualities of a stu-*

¹² A. Tomková et al., *Rámeček profesních kvalit učitele. Hodnotící a sebehodnotící arch*, Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, from: <http://www.nuv.cz/file/54/> Praha 2012.

dent during teaching practice 2014). Analytical types of teachers standards can, however, direct attention from the basic question "why". Therefore, well appreciated are original keys that can help us unlock the nature of students' conception of teaching as well as the meaning of chapters included in the Final pedagogical portfolio. Here is an example of a students' conception of teaching, which in points captures the relationship between all categories, including sometimes sidelined category of educational content: *"Child. What do I know about it? Relaxed environment, which makes a child feel well, relationship to nature and environment, development of critical thinking, art education, curriculum integration, historical context awareness."*

For the purpose of *My professional development* reflective tasks, many students use essays they wrote in the course of their study. That makes them to compare, become aware and present **development of their conception of teaching**, opinions and convictions. *My professional development* reflective tasks show that students' conceptions of teaching have different development. Some students confirm the priorities they have already described, some change them, get new inspirations, or they come back to their original ideas after a certain phase: *"I wouldn't change anything in my first essay. The underlying idea that remains constant over the three years of my study is the idea of inclusion/integration." "... "I'm getting a clearer idea of what I want to teach my future pupils. I can now defend my opinion better. I'll need that mainly for the purpose of communicating with parents of pupils." "... "In the course of my study, I have changed my opinion: from enthusiasm for innovations I'm coming back to traditional teaching methods, from unlimited respect to needs and interests of children I'm returning to demanding certain rules and order..."*

Goals and plans of further professional development. The last item that has to be included in *My professional development* reflective tasks involves establishing goals and plans for the further professional development of the student - future teacher. It's appreciated when the goals are clearly described, are achievable and contain a plan that indicates how they will be achieved. Analyses of reflective tasks included in *My professional development* indicates noticeable differences in quantity and quality in achievements related to this part of the task. Differences are also apparent between students of the full-time and combined study programme. It is not surprising that independent and strong-willed students pay attention to their further professional development. Full-time students further phrase their goals in a form of visions: *"I want to learn how to manage educational side of instruction, my goal is a successful pupil, my goal is to contribute to change."* Just some of them are more specific in being aware of the steps that are ahead of them

once they start teaching: "...Another examination is ahead and this time it will be much more difficult. I will become a classroom teacher in the third grade. It sounds wonderful. On the other hand, I expect lots of work. Beginnings are the most difficult and also the most important part. I won't forget classroom rules as they are the key to any further success. Following my experience of working in an after-school club, I know I am not afraid of problems with discipline. I should be careful not to neglect anything, I shouldn't forget that I'm starting teaching in a new class, they don't know me and my rules. We have to make them together again. I also want to introduce morning circles. But, shall we really meet every day or just on Monday? I have to think it through well. I want a pleasant ambience in my class, where children cooperate and I can get support from their parents..." We can see that full-time students repeatedly state they want to develop in the field of school evaluation and effective cooperation with parents, in spite of the fact that the student programme offers a rising number of activities and courses that cover these topics. Full-time students are often worried whether they will be able effectively manage teaching organisation and relationships between pupils in the class. They envisage to concentrate on these goals in their teaching practice: "...I realised that I don't have as many problems with innovative thoughts and targeted ideas as I have with sticking to set order, completing unfinished projects or finishing evaluation of individual tasks. I expect to develop these skills further after I start teaching in my own class..." Undoubtedly, it is also on educators of the future teachers to deal with this issue. They surely want to seem graduate teachers as confident and independent as possible when starting their job.

Students of combined study programme set more specific goals that are built on the needs of pupils they already teach. At the moment just some of them are proving that they are well informed about issues, and reflect on ways how to reach their goal: "In my future professional development, I want to focus on manipulation with the interactive board and its utilisation for the lower primary school. Information society lays on teachers and pupils many demands that regard working with modern technologies, and technologies also bring many options to enhance educational process. For example interactive instruction is built on multimedia utilisation – sound, video, flash animations, objects handling and other digital tools. Therefore it gives students an option to experience things, which makes them to understand and remember content better. When working on tasks, students can work in teams, exchange their ideas and opinions, understand global connections across subjects. Interactive boards can provide students with immediate feedback, so that they become aware of their mistakes immediately and can evaluate their work. I believe that if I manage to learn how to manipulate the interactive board, use

its different functions and support portals for interactive teaching with verified digital lesson plans, I'll not only liven my teaching up, but also make it more effective and enhance its quality."

Conclusions

This paper highlights a report about **students**, who concluded their pre-graduate preparation by writing *My professional development* reflective task. It shows how future teachers think, reflect, write, what journey they have been through, what influences them most in their teaching preparation, what is their concept of teaching and what other professional goals and tasks lie ahead of them. These students try to understand themselves as future teachers. In accordance with the concept of a quality primary school teacher, these students take into consideration children and their needs. They are notably influenced by innovations, mainly constructivist methods of teaching, which develop the cognitive, emotional and social side of children. Students create their concept of teaching with a critical mind, even though in some cases they don't show apparent awareness of contexts, integration of individual inspirations, deliberate development of professional philosophy, and effort to seek the answer to "why" questions. By choosing to defend the Final pedagogical portfolio at the state examination, students usually show their commitment to reflection and self-reflection, which they deem important activities and qualities in a teacher student. However, the analysed *My professional development* reflective tasks show differences in students' ability to reflect well on their readiness to start their teaching career at the end of their study.

The paper also brings information about the developed **reflective concept of pre-graduate preparation** of lower primary school teachers at the Faculty of Teaching, Charles University in Prague. Some content and instructional strategies are notably appreciated by students and therefore stand out from the widely designed Teacher Training for Primary Schools programme. Students themselves are not able to integrate these inspirations sufficiently. Therefore it's important to purposefully integrate opportunities to reflect and integrate new knowledge and experience. Students need to have an ample amount of opportunities to develop their competencies for reflection and self-reflection. Demands on students' competencies are further increased by the written form of reflective tasks.¹³

¹³ L. Paquay, C. Van Nieuwenhoven, P. Wouters (Eds), *L'évaluation, levier du développement Professionnel?* Bruxelles 2010, s. 201.

Regarding the **final state examinations**, they should be in tune with the concept of teacher preparation. In case of the emphasised reflective and personalised concept of teacher preparation, this means to give students an option to introduce themselves as future students and prove their presented qualities in the course of the final examinations, namely the final examination from Pedagogy. It also means that quality of students' competence for reflection and self-reflection should also be evaluated. *Also, final state examinations should be understood in the continuity of further professional development of teachers.*

My professional development reflective tasks included in Final pedagogical portfolios fulfil the function of a **complex reflective and self-reflective task**. Students use them to reflect and introduce themselves as beginning teachers, to introduce their concepts of teaching, reflect, identify the most important landmarks of their preparation, look ahead to clarify goals and plans of their future professional development. The analysed reflective tasks in *My professional development* have the potential to become a starting point for verification of Pedagogy and Psychology professional knowledge.

Some students see as problematic that *My professional development* reflective tasks are intended not only for them but also for examiners. This may result in a conflict between the two functions of *My professional development* reflective tasks, the developmental and evaluation function. According to further research studies, combination of these two functions doesn't need to cause problem if students observe sufficient distance.¹⁴ On the contrary: Teachers and quality of their study can benefit by the final examination being purposefully supplemented by the reflective aspect.

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¹⁴ Ibidem, s. 200; M.L. Lopez, C. Van Nieuwenhoven, *Co-élaboration d'un dispositif d'évaluation entre formateurs: quelles relations de régulation au sein de la communauté de pratique?* [In:] *Évaluation en tension entre la régulation des apprentissages et le pilotage des systèmes*, Eds M.L. Lopez, M. Crahay, Bruxelles 2010.

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