

The Role and Effectiveness of Pedagogical Practice in Developing the Professional Self-Development Competencies of Future Preschool Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role and effectiveness of pedagogical practice in developing the professional self-development competencies of future preschool teachers. In the context of the modernization of the education system and the increasing requirements for the quality of teacher education, particular importance is attached to preparing professionals who are capable of continuous professional growth, self-directed learning, and effective adaptation to changes in the educational environment. Pedagogical practice is an integral component of the professional training of future preschool teachers, as it enables the integration of theoretical knowledge with authentic teaching experience. It contributes to the development of professional thinking, communication skills, pedagogical reflection, responsibility, and independence. The article analyzes the pedagogical conditions that ensure the successful development of professional self-development competencies, including the use of innovative educational technologies, the organization of students' reflective activities, mentoring by experienced educators, and the systematic evaluation of practical training outcomes. Particular attention is paid to fostering future preschool teachers' ability to evaluate their own professional performance, set personal and professional development goals, and identify effective strategies for achieving them. The study emphasizes that pedagogical practice promotes the development of students' research, organizational, and creative abilities while enhancing their professional readiness to work in contemporary preschool educational institutions. It is concluded that well-organized and purposefully designed pedagogical practice is one of the most effective means of developing the professional self-development competencies of future preschool teachers. Furthermore, it significantly improves the quality of their professional preparation and positively influences the overall effectiveness of the educational process within the preschool education system.

Keywords: Pedagogical practice, future preschool teachers, professional self-development, professional competencies, preschool education, reflection, teacher education, pedagogical activity.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary stage of educational development is characterized by profound transformations aimed at improving the quality of teacher training and preparing pedagogical professionals who are capable of effectively performing their professional duties in the context of rapidly changing social and educational processes. Particular relevance is attached to the development of

professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers, as these competencies constitute an essential prerequisite for the successful implementation of educational programs in preschool educational organizations. A modern preschool teacher should possess not only strong professional knowledge and practical skills but also a high level of motivation for continuous professional improvement, the ability to engage in self-

education and reflection, creative thinking, and the capacity to introduce innovative pedagogical technologies.

Professional self-development is regarded as a continuous process of improving a teacher's professional and personal potential based on awareness of one's professional needs, analysis of one's performance, and a commitment to continuously enhancing professional competence. In the contemporary context of educational digitalization, the introduction of innovative teaching methods, and the revision of state educational standards, there is an increasing need to prepare preschool teachers who can rapidly adapt to new professional requirements. Therefore, the development of professional self-development competencies has become one of the key objectives of higher pedagogical education.

Teaching practice occupies a special place in the professional training of future preschool teachers. It represents a crucial stage in the development of professional competence, ensuring the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience. During teaching practice, students have the opportunity to apply their acquired knowledge in authentic educational settings, interact with preschool children, organize educational activities, analyze pedagogical situations, and make independent professional decisions. Practical activities contribute to the development of professional responsibility, pedagogical thinking, communicative culture, and the ability to critically reflect on one's own professional performance.

Research conducted by national and international scholars demonstrates that the effectiveness of future teachers' professional preparation is largely determined by the quality of teaching practice. It enables students to understand the specific nature of their future profession, identify their professional capabilities, recognize individual difficulties, and develop strategies for overcoming them. In addition, teaching practice contributes to the development of research, organizational, and communication competencies, which constitute important components of a teacher's professional self-development.

Contemporary approaches to organizing teaching practice involve the use of competency-based, learner-centered, and activity-based approaches. These approaches are aimed at actively engaging students in professional activities, developing independent decision-making skills,

pedagogical reflection, critical thinking, and the ability to engage in innovative professional practice. Mentoring also plays a significant role by enabling future preschool teachers to receive qualified methodological support from experienced educators and to analyze their own professional achievements.

Despite the considerable body of research devoted to teacher education, the development of professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers through teaching practice requires further scholarly investigation. Particular importance should be given to identifying the pedagogical conditions that ensure the effectiveness of students' practical training, as well as determining the factors that contribute to the development of sustainable motivation for continuous professional improvement [1–4].

The aim of the present study is to determine the role and effectiveness of teaching practice in developing professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers and to provide a scientific rationale for the pedagogical conditions that ensure the successful development of these competencies during the professional training of students in pedagogical programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers is one of the priority areas of contemporary pedagogical research. In both national and international scholarly literature, teaching practice is regarded as a key component of teacher education, ensuring the development of professional competence, pedagogical thinking, and readiness for continuous professional improvement.

A significant contribution to the study of teacher preparation was made by L. Darling-Hammond (2006), who demonstrated that high-quality teacher education is achieved through the integration of fundamental theoretical preparation and extended teaching practice. The author emphasizes that practice-oriented education contributes to the development of professional autonomy, the ability to make pedagogical decisions, and readiness for innovative professional activity.

The theoretical foundations of learning through practical experience are comprehensively presented in the work of D. A. Kolb (2015). According to the theory of experiential

learning, professional development occurs through a sequence of stages involving concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and the application of new knowledge. This model is one of the most widely used methodological foundations for organizing teaching practice in higher education.

A particularly important contribution to the study of professional self-development is provided by D. A. Schön's (1983) theory of reflective practice. The author considers pedagogical reflection to be an essential condition for professional growth. According to Schön, the ability to analyze one's professional activities, critically evaluate work outcomes, and improve professional actions is an important indicator of professional maturity. These principles are fully consistent with contemporary requirements for the preparation of future preschool teachers.

J. Hattie (2009) examined factors influencing the effectiveness of the educational process. The author demonstrated that the quality of teacher preparation is largely determined by the level of professional competence, the ability to engage in self-analysis, and commitment to continuous professional development. Particular attention is given to the role of feedback, pedagogical reflection, and practical experience in enhancing the professional skills of future specialists.

Issues related to the professional development of early childhood education teachers were examined in detail by Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, and Knoche (2009). The researchers emphasize that the professional development of preschool teachers should be continuous and include systematic teaching practice, methodological support, mentoring, and ongoing improvement of professional competencies. The authors stress that the effectiveness of the educational process is directly dependent on the quality of teacher preparation.

Contemporary studies on the professional preparation of preschool teachers continue to develop these theoretical ideas. For example, Ho, Tran, Nguyen, Phan, and Cao (2024) demonstrated that specially organized teaching practices substantially improve the professional competence of future preschool teachers and develop their self-learning skills, critical thinking, and professional reflection. The authors conclude that practical training is a determining factor in the formation of competitive and professionally prepared specialists.

The study by İvrendi, Kalburan, and Şimşek (2022) focuses on the professional development of early childhood education teachers through specially designed educational programs. The authors demonstrated that participation in practice-oriented programs contributes to the improvement of professional knowledge, communication skills, and the ability to effectively organize educational processes while taking into account children's individual characteristics.

Machynska, Derkach, and Pankevych (2020) presented contemporary forms and models of professional development for preschool teachers. The researchers consider teaching practice, mentoring, continuing professional development courses, and self-education as interconnected elements of a unified system of lifelong professional development. According to the authors, the comprehensive implementation of these forms ensures sustainable development of professional competencies.

The study by Chong (2020) focuses on the development of professional identity among early childhood education teachers. The author notes that successful professional socialization of students is largely determined by the quality of teaching practice, which enables future specialists to develop a stable professional identity, confidence in their own abilities, and readiness for independent pedagogical activity.

Shavega (2024), in turn, analyzes contemporary trends in the professional development of preschool teachers and emphasizes the need to introduce innovative approaches to the organization of teaching practice. The author notes that the combination of digital educational technologies, mentoring, reflective support, and practice-oriented learning significantly enhances the effectiveness of developing professional self-development competencies.

Thus, an analysis of contemporary scholarly literature demonstrates that most researchers regard teaching practice as a primary mechanism for developing the professional competence of future preschool teachers. At the same time, a comparative analysis of published studies indicates that the comprehensive development of professional self-development competencies among students enrolled in pedagogical programs during teaching practice requires further scholarly investigation. This highlights the relevance of the present study, which focuses on determining the role and effectiveness of teaching practice in developing professional self-development

competencies among future preschool teachers within the context of contemporary higher pedagogical education.

METHODS

The methodological framework of the present study was based on competency-based, learner-centered, systemic, and activity-based approaches, which made it possible to examine comprehensively the process of developing professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers through teaching practice. The application of these approaches enabled the researchers to analyze the relationship between the organization of teaching practice and the development of professional qualities required for successful pedagogical activity in contemporary preschool educational organizations.

The study was comprehensive in nature and combined theoretical and empirical research methods. At the first stage, national and international scholarly literature was analyzed with regard to teacher preparation, the development of professional competencies, the organization of teaching practice, and the formation of the capacity for professional self-development. In addition, regulatory and legal documents governing the activities of higher pedagogical educational institutions and the professional preparation of early childhood education specialists were examined. The results made it possible to identify the principal criteria for assessing the professional self-development competencies of future preschool teachers.

The empirical component of the study employed pedagogical observation, questionnaires, interviews, analysis of students' reflective journals, expert assessment, and comparative analysis of teaching-practice outcomes. Pedagogical observation was conducted during students' teaching practice in preschool educational organizations and focused on identifying the level of development of professional competencies, as well as the characteristics of students' interaction with children, teaching staff, and parents [5].

The questionnaire was used to determine students' levels of

professional motivation, their attitudes toward teaching practice, readiness for professional self-development, ability to self-assess their own activities, and desire for further professional improvement. Interviews were conducted with teaching-practice supervisors and experienced preschool teachers, who assessed the students' level of professional readiness and identified the most significant factors contributing to the successful development of professional self-development competencies.

Particular attention was devoted to the analysis of reflective journals in which students recorded the results of their own pedagogical activities, professional difficulties they encountered, strategies used to overcome these difficulties, and prospects for further professional development. This approach made it possible to identify the dynamics of reflective competence development and determine the influence of teaching practice on the development of future preschool teachers' professional self-awareness.

The collected data were processed using qualitative and quantitative analysis, comparative analysis, systematization, generalization, and interpretation. The indicators were compared according to the main components of professional self-development competencies: motivational, cognitive, practice-oriented activity, communicative, and reflective components. The comprehensive application of these methods ensured the objectivity of the study and made it possible to obtain scientifically grounded results.

The research methodology was based on the principles of scientific objectivity, systematicity, comprehensiveness, and practical orientation. This made it possible to comprehensively evaluate the role of teaching practice in developing professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers, identify pedagogical conditions for improving the effectiveness of students' practical training, and formulate scientifically grounded recommendations for improving the educational process in higher pedagogical institutions [6, 7].

Levels of development of professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers before and after teaching practice (%)

Table 1.

Competency Components	Before Teaching Practice	After Teaching Practice	Change (%)
Motivational competence	68	89	+21
Cognitive competence	71	90	+19
Practice-oriented activity competence	64	88	+24
Communicative competence	73	92	+19
Reflective competence	61	86	+25
Mean value	67.4	89.0	+21.6

The data presented in Table 1 demonstrate the positive influence of teaching practice on the development of professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers. A comparative analysis of the results obtained before and after teaching practice indicates a consistent positive trend across all components of professional competence.

The most substantial change was observed in reflective competence, which increased from 61% to 86%, corresponding to a 25% increase. This finding indicates that practical activity contributes to students' ability to objectively evaluate their professional performance, identify emerging difficulties, analyze the causes of these difficulties, and determine ways to further improve their professional practice. The development of reflective skills is one of the key factors in the professional self-development of a modern preschool teacher.

A considerable increase was also observed in practice-oriented activity competence, which rose by 24%, from 64% to 88%. These results confirm that teaching practice provides an effective means of consolidating theoretical knowledge through its application in authentic preschool educational settings. During practical activities, students gain experience in organizing educational processes, interacting with children, solving pedagogical problems, and applying contemporary educational technologies.

Motivational competence increased by 21%, indicating strengthened professional orientation, a more sustained interest in pedagogical activity, and a stronger commitment

to continuous professional improvement. Teaching practice contributes to students' awareness of the social significance of the preschool teaching profession and strengthens their internal motivation for professional growth.

Cognitive competence increased by 19%, while communicative competence also increased by 19%. These findings confirm that participation in educational activities contributes to expanding students' professional knowledge, improving pedagogical communication, and developing their ability to interact effectively with children, teaching staff, and parents.

The mean level of professional self-development competencies increased from 67.4% to 89.0%, representing an overall increase of 21.6%. These findings indicate the high effectiveness of teaching practice as an essential component of future preschool teachers' professional preparation. Practical activity ensures the integration of theoretical preparation with professional experience, contributes to the development of key professional competencies, and creates favorable conditions for continuous professional self-development among future early childhood education specialists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study demonstrate that teaching practice is one of the most effective components of professional preparation for future preschool teachers and has a direct influence on the development of professional self-

development competencies. The analysis of the obtained data showed that practical activity contributes not only to the consolidation of theoretical knowledge but also to the development of sustainable professional motivation, pedagogical thinking, communicative culture, research abilities, and pedagogical reflection. In the contemporary context of preschool education reform, these qualities are regarded as essential components of a preschool teacher's professional competence.

A comparative analysis of the results obtained before and after teaching practice demonstrated positive dynamics across all investigated indicators. The most substantial changes were recorded in reflective and practice-oriented activity competencies. This can be explained by the fact that, during direct interaction with children, students encounter diverse pedagogical situations that require independent decision-making, analysis of their own actions, and the selection of the most effective methods for organizing educational activities.

Practical activity contributes to the development of professional responsibility, confidence in one's own abilities, and the capacity to objectively evaluate the results of one's professional work.

The results also confirm that teaching practice significantly increases the level of professional motivation among future preschool teachers. During their practice, students have the opportunity to recognize the social significance of their chosen profession, identify their professional interests, and develop a commitment to further professional growth. Direct interaction with children, mentor teachers, and parents strengthens students' positive attitudes toward their future professional activities and develops an internal need for continuous self-education [8].

The development of students' communicative competence is of particular importance. During teaching practice, future preschool teachers gain experience in effective interaction with all participants in the educational process. They improve their pedagogical communication skills, learn to establish trusting relationships with preschool children, interact constructively with colleagues, and cooperate pedagogically with children's families. The development of these competencies contributes to the successful professional adaptation of young specialists after graduation.

The study also revealed a positive influence of teaching

practice on the development of research competence among future preschool teachers. Through observing children's educational activities, analyzing pedagogical situations, and evaluating the effectiveness of applied teaching methods, students acquire skills in pedagogical analysis, interpretation of results, and development of recommendations for improving the educational process. This contributes to the development of analytical thinking and readiness to employ scientifically grounded approaches to solving professional problems.

An important result of the study was the identification of pedagogical conditions that ensure the high effectiveness of teaching practice. These include systematic methodological support for students, mentoring by experienced preschool teachers, the application of contemporary educational technologies, regular pedagogical reflection, the use of individualized educational pathways, and the creation of a favorable professional environment that promotes students' creative activity. The comprehensive implementation of these conditions ensures the sustainable development of professional self-development competencies [9].

The obtained results are consistent with the conclusions of national and international researchers who regard teaching practice as a central element of future teachers' professional preparation. According to contemporary pedagogical approaches, effective teaching practice should focus not only on developing professional knowledge and practical skills but also on developing the capacity for independent learning, critical thinking, pedagogical reflection, and innovative professional activity. Mentoring support, continuous feedback, and students' active involvement in solving professional problems substantially improve the quality of future specialists' professional preparation.

It should also be noted that the study identified certain difficulties encountered by students during teaching practice. The most common difficulties include insufficient confidence in their professional abilities, challenges in independently organizing educational activities, limited practical experience in interacting with children of different age groups, and an insufficient level of proficiency in contemporary digital educational technologies. However, most of these difficulties can be substantially reduced through qualified pedagogical support and systematic reflective work.

Thus, the results of the study convincingly demonstrate that teaching practice is an important factor in the development of professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers. It ensures the effective integration of theoretical preparation with practical activity, contributes to the formation of professional autonomy, develops research and communicative competencies, enhances pedagogical

reflection, and strengthens professional motivation.

Therefore, improving the content, organizational forms, and methodological support of teaching practice represents an important direction for enhancing the quality of future preschool teachers' professional preparation and ensuring their successful professional activity in contemporary preschool educational organizations [10].

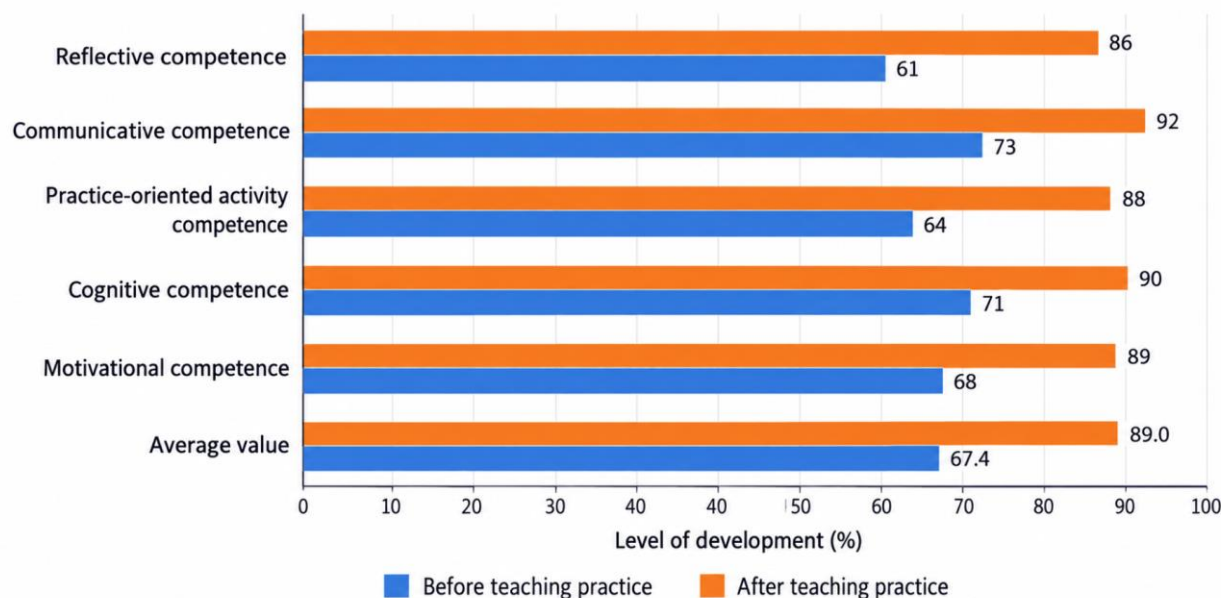


Figure 1. Comparative analysis of the development indicators of professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers before and after teaching practice

The data presented in Figure 1 clearly demonstrate a positive trend in the development of professional self-development competencies among future preschool teachers following their participation in teaching practice. The comparative analysis of the indicators shows that teaching practice has a comprehensive impact on the formation of professionally significant qualities among students and contributes to an increase in their level of professional readiness for future pedagogical activities.

The most pronounced increase was observed in reflective competence, the level of which increased from 61% to 86%. The results confirm that students' participation in the real educational process contributes to the development of self-analysis skills, objective evaluation of their own professional activities, identification of existing difficulties, and the search for effective ways to overcome them. The development of reflective competence is an important condition for the continuous professional self-

development of modern preschool teachers.

A significant improvement was also observed in practice-oriented activity competence, which increased from 64% to 88%. This indicates the high effectiveness of teaching practice as a means of developing professional skills and abilities. During practical activities, students gain experience in organizing the educational process, applying contemporary pedagogical technologies, interacting with preschool children, and solving real professional problems.

The level of motivational competence increased from 68% to 89%, indicating a stronger professional orientation among future preschool teachers, the development of a sustained interest in pedagogical activity, and a commitment to continuous professional improvement. Practical activity contributes to students' awareness of the social significance of the preschool teaching profession and promotes the development of intrinsic motivation for lifelong learning.

Positive dynamics were also observed in cognitive and communicative competencies, whose indicators increased from 71% to 90% and from 73% to 92%, respectively. These results confirm that teaching practice contributes not only to the expansion of students' professional knowledge but also to the improvement of their communicative culture and the development of effective interaction skills with children, colleagues, and parents of preschool children.

Particular attention should be paid to the change in the average indicator of competency development, which increased from 67.4% to 89.0%. The overall increase amounted to 21.6 percentage points, demonstrating the high effectiveness of teaching practice as an essential component of the professional preparation of future preschool teachers.

Thus, the results presented in Figure 1 confirm that teaching practice is a significant factor in the development of professional self-development competencies. It ensures the integration of theoretical preparation with practical experience, promotes professional autonomy, pedagogical reflection, communication skills, and sustained motivation for continuous professional improvement. The findings provide a basis for further improving the content and organization of teaching practice as an effective means of enhancing the quality of preparation of future early childhood education specialists.

CONCLUSION

The study established that teaching practice is one of the most significant components of the professional preparation of future preschool teachers and has a substantial influence on the development of their professional self-development competencies. The findings confirm that the effective organization of teaching practice ensures the successful integration of students' theoretical preparation with their practical professional activities and contributes to the development of professional autonomy, responsibility, pedagogical thinking, and readiness for continuous professional improvement.

The analysis of the research results revealed a consistent positive trend in the development of motivational, cognitive, practice-oriented activity, communicative, and reflective competencies following teaching practice. The most substantial changes were observed in reflective and practice-oriented activity competencies, demonstrating the effectiveness of practical training in developing students'

capacity for self-analysis, objective evaluation of their own professional activities, and pedagogically grounded decision-making. At the same time, the study established that practical activity contributes to increased professional motivation, the development of research abilities, and the formation of a sustained need for continuous self-education.

The study confirmed that the effectiveness of teaching practice is determined not only by the duration of practical training but also by the quality of its organizational and methodological support. The use of contemporary educational technologies, individualized student support, mentoring systems, reflective activities, innovative teaching methods, and regular expert evaluation of future preschool teachers' professional achievements plays a significant role. The comprehensive implementation of these pedagogical conditions creates a favorable educational environment for the development of professional self-development competencies.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying the findings to improve educational programs in higher pedagogical institutions, develop models for organizing teaching practice, and formulate methodological recommendations for developing the professional competencies of future preschool teachers. The proposed approaches can be used by university instructors, teaching-practice supervisors, and specialists in preschool educational organizations when designing systems for the professional preparation of teaching personnel.

Thus, teaching practice should be regarded as a strategic resource for developing competitive, competent, and adaptable professionals who are capable of effective professional activity and continuous self-development in the context of modernization of the preschool education system. Further research should focus on developing innovative models of teaching practice based on digital educational technologies, mentoring practices, and individualized professional development trajectories. Such approaches may contribute to improving the quality of future preschool teachers' preparation in accordance with contemporary international educational standards.

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