

Interdisciplinary Project and Final Practicum: the points of view of students, cooperating teachers and teacher educators

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Practicum in Teacher Education

- ➡ Considered a “marginal component” of the overall teacher education project (Campos, 2001);
- ➡ Teaching Practice as a professionalizing component of teacher education (Formosinho, 2001);
- ➡ It is in “work contexts” that the essentials of professional apprenticeship are decided (Canário, 2001).

Project Aims

- To re-think the status of Teaching Practice in Teacher Education and to build knowledge about successful practicum experiences;
- To provide a real integration of this dimension in the training project:
- To develop partnerships with cooperating schools, making them an important part of the teacher education project;
- To re-think the roles of students, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and “methods” instructors.

PIMI (Interdisciplinary project seminar)

- A seminar that prepares and accompanies student-teachers in their final practicum;
- Mobilizes student-teachers, cooperating teachers, supervisors and specialists in methodologies to develop *project-work* with young children;
- Clear coordination of seminar by a trainer who is a “generalist specialist” responsible for integrated curriculum development;
- Cooperating-teachers are trained to do *project-work* activities and supervise their execution;

PIMI (Emerging Principles)

- ➡ It is in the final Teaching Practice that methodology trainers understand better the contents of their disciplines and their strategies within the disciplines that they are responsible for lecturing;
- ➡ PIMI works in the ZPD of student-teachers, cooperating-teachers and teacher-educators, thus contributing to their overall development;
- ➡ Cooperating teachers are real teacher-educators and therefore feel empowered;

PIMI (emerging principles, cont.)

- Trainee “in interaction” as the centre of his/her own transformative development process;
- Training as dynamics, participation; a spiral of complexity; an on-going questioning;
- *Transdisciplinarity* (Nicolescu): emergence of new knowledge which transcends the sum of the different disciplinary knowledges;
- An ethics of mutual responsibility that goes beyond rule-making and bureaucratic principles.

Narrative Evaluation (2nd year)

- Students-teachers; cooperating teachers and university methods instructors;
- Describe briefly *positive aspects* of our work in PIMI;
- Describe briefly *negative aspects* of our work in PIMI.

Student-Teachers (30% response)

Positive:

- 👉 learn how to do *project work* in a team;
- 👉 on-site support (strong emphasis)
- 👉 availability of instructors; providing resources;
- 👉 integration among instructors;
- 👉 different disciplines working together and convergence different knowledges;
- 👉 seminars: individual and collective support; opportunity to discuss projects;

Student-Teachers (30% response)

Negative:

- 👉 lack of consensus among instructors;
- 👉 lack of presence of cooperating teachers in seminars;
- 👉 too many students per instructor.

Cooperating teachers response (1,5%)

Positive:

- 👉 visit of instructors to classrooms;
- 👉 integration of methodologies through projects;
- 👉 individual support to students and resources provided.

Cooperating teachers response (15%)

Negative:

- ☞ lack of information;
- ☞ need for more articulation with in-site curriculum;
- ☞ need for more visits of instructors;
- ☞ more impact on in-service training;
- ☞ students stressed to using “all disciplines” in a project;
- ☞ devaluing “activity” - everything towards “project”.

Instructors Response (75%)

Positive:

- 👉 learning how to do “project work” and time to follow projects;
- 👉 “crossing knowledges”: interdisciplinarity;
- 👉 cooperation among instructors;
- 👉 knowledge of practicum sites and facing its heterogeneity;
- 👉 different perspectives according to different “disciplinary” sensibilities;

Instructors Response (75%)

Positive (cont.)

- 👉 individual support to students and providing resources;
- 👉 interaction among “generalists” and “specialists”;
- 👉 a learning opportunity: “helps to be closer to classrooms reality in order to better adjustment of our methods courses”.

Instructors Response (75%)

Negative:

- 👉 need clarification on how to do “project-work”- integration of “project-work” in general context of practicum;
- 👉 disciplinary fragmentation of our intervention;
- 👉 lack of articulation with “generalists” (university supervisors);lack of team work;
- 👉 better definition of roles and tasks;
- 👉 difficulty of students to define the support they need;

Instructors Response (75%)

Negative (cont.)

- 👉 lack of time (strong emphasis); more need for on-site observation;
- 👉 to invest on research component of our work;
- 👉 many differences among cooperating-teachers;
- 👉 more support to evaluation and students final report.

Emmerging “problems”

- ➡ Resistance of university supervisors;
- ➡ Disciplinary fragmentation;
- ➡ Indicators of evaluation;
- ➡ How to define “excellence” of a project.

Theoretical support

- ➡ Senge, 1990 - "learning organizations";
- ➡ Wesley & Buyse, 2001 - "communities of practice" ;
- ➡ Billett, 2002 - "workplace pedagogy"

Recommendations

- ➡ More in-depth study of what is “project work”:
 - theoretical sessions;
 - individual sessions;
- ➡ Insert this approach earlier:
 - in course-work;
 - in ways of working with students;
 - working directly in “methods courses” using project work
- ➡ More time allocated
- ➡ Find clear indicators of evaluation

Arendt, Hannah

- *What interests and stimulates me is the complexity of the situation: where are the key points of the problem? How to find practical ways, modest actions (...) but something that represents dinamism, change, life (...)*
- *What interests me are the new branches (bifurcações) and the apparently small decisions that allow us to follow, in each moment, one of the possible ways into which opens the branch.*