

Improve the Quality of Practical Professional Activities at K12-schools of Pedagogical Teachers and Students Majoring in Primary Education in Professional Oriented Higher Education



Huong Le Thi Thu¹, Duong Lam Thuy², Ha Nguyen Thi Thu³, Vinh Nguyen Huy⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Thai Nguyen University of Education, Faculty of Primary Education, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: The article focuses on researching and affirming the role of practical professional activities of lecturers and students as an important content in the applied Professional Oriented Higher Education (POHE) at pedagogical universities. This activity creates opportunities for lecturers and students to connect the knowledge and skills taught and learned in university with the practice of primary school education, but also to develop a primary school teacher training curriculum. It also supports primary schools in developing professional capacity for teachers. This is further confirmed through the analysis of the time, duration, goals, content, evaluation method, and organizational form of professional practical activities between the University of Education, Thai Nguyen University (TNUE). From there, the article proposes a number of recommendations to improve the quality of practical and professional activities of lecturers and students majoring in Primary Education at pedagogical universities.

KEYWORDS- Professional practical activities, Primary Education, pedagogical lecturers, pedagogical students, POHE (Professional Oriented Higher Education)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the 4.0 revolution, higher education is increasingly recognized and affirmed its role and position in the overall development of the whole society and of each country. Universities not only produce scientists who conduct research and discover new knowledge but also create a highly qualified workforce [9].

In recent years, the role of pedagogical universities is to train the best quality teachers who can meet the needs of educational institutions immediately after graduation. To take on this role, pedagogical universities need to clearly define the development orientation of their higher education programs. The Vietnamese government's project on renovating higher education after 2006, as outlined in Resolution No. 14/2005/NQ-CP, specifies the need to classify universities in Vietnam into two groups: those with a research orientation and those with a career application orientation [1]. Specific objectives for the development of research-oriented and applied higher education programs. The most effective and appropriate training model for pedagogical schools is Professional Oriented Higher Education (POHE) (Professional Oriented Higher Education - POHE).

This orientation should be systematically expressed in the objectives, learning outcomes, programs, methods, organizational forms, and the assessment of learners' learning outcomes [8]. One of the important contents of the POHE-oriented teacher training program is the professional practical activities, and pedagogical internships of lecturers and students at K12 schools. This activity helps to connect the University (where primary teachers are trained) with primary schools (where primary teachers are recruited and used); helping the primary school teacher training curriculum to better meet the needs of employers and students to be "embedded" in the most practical learning environment. In addition, employers are also involved in contributing ideas and developing the primary teacher training curriculum of the pedagogical university.

The same as other countries, Vietnamese universities are increasingly emphasizing practical professional activities in teacher training programs. As professional practical activities evolve, they become more diverse and inclusive. This includes professional practical activities of lecturers and students, and pedagogical internships of students. However, the duration and timing of these activities in the training plan of the schools will vary somewhat. Therefore, our study aims to analyze the professional activities in primary education faculty of Thai Nguyen University of Education by both lecturers and students. Because of that, propose recommendations to enhance the efficiency of professional practical activities and primary teacher training programs in pedagogical schools. The research is focused on utilizing theoretical research methods. This involves reviewing documents related to the professional activities in K12 schools of lecturers and primary education university students. Additionally, information will be

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collected from research reports to synthesize, analyze, and generalize data on research issues relating to the bachelor's degree program in primary education at the University of Education - Thai Nguyen University. The main objective is to study the actual professional content of lecturers and students during the current period.

II. RESEARCH RESULTS

2.1. Professional Oriented Higher Education Program

Professional Oriented Higher Education was born and exists in parallel with research universities, with its mission and specific approaches. POHE is focused on providing professional-oriented higher education that serves domestic, regional, and international labor markets. [8]. To achieve this goal, POHE prioritizes practical experience in the teaching process, emphasizing its applicability in scientific research and increasing the number of professional internships, making it more practice-oriented than research-oriented. Training programs in pedagogical universities offer specialized knowledge and skills soon, with opportunities for internships and practice at K12 schools related to the major. POHE has a strong connection with the workforce and is reflected in pedagogical university activities. [9].

As a result, the POHE training program combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience, emphasizing both specialized professional skills and soft skills development for students. The teaching methodology prioritizes interaction and collaboration, which is crucial for a successful learning experience. The POHE teaching method emphasizes interaction and collaboration, emphasizes teamwork, and individual activities, including large assignments or projects; so students have the opportunity to learn, and develop confidence and a sense of responsibility. [2]. When participating in Professional practical activities, pedagogical schools assign students to groups of 5 to 15. For pedagogical practice activities, students will be divided into groups of 10-30 students per group. In general schools, students are typically divided into smaller groups of 2-3 students per class and guided by their teacher. This allows students to cooperate and support each other in completing tasks throughout the semester or internship with the best possible quality. In the POHE training program, research activities are carried out on POHE, focusing on issues of application, technology transfer, and career development. The research questions students develop are closely tied to professional practice, as assignments often aim to solve problems in this field. For the professional practice and pedagogical practice activities of students of pedagogical schools, in addition to observing, visiting classes, and participating in and organizing teaching and educational activities in primary schools, students also have to make 01 final report. Participating in practical activities allows lecturers to study, identify research problems, and implement scientific and technology transfer.

The assessment of students' performance during POHE training aligns with program objectives. Not only theoretical knowledge is evaluated in the usual way, but also the internship and practice in school are assessed. Formative assessment for university students in primary school includes practical activities, internships, and exercises. This means that students' learning outcomes aren't solely based on their test scores but also on their practical internship experiences. As part of the assessment, students can suggest improvements to the quality of the educational activities they observe. Therefore, the POHE undergraduate training program is demonstrating its excellence in current social practices expected of employees. Nowadays, people in society tend to focus less on the value of degrees and more on the practicality, occupational skills, workability, and adaptability of an individual within a specific social environment. This shows a significant change from the past when people placed more importance on academic knowledge and training qualifications.

2.2. Practical and professional activities of lecturers and students majoring in primary education at the University of Education - Thai Nguyen University

2.2.1. Practical and professional activities of lecturers

a) Goals

Starting from the 2014-2015 academic year, the University of Education - Thai Nguyen University has included scientific research activities for lecturers who practice professional activities in 12 schools in their plan [5]. The purpose of this activity for pedagogical lecturers majoring in primary education is to:

- Improving the capacity of lecturers, especially lecturers specializing in theory and teaching methods;
- Supporting university lecturers and primary school teachers in continuous professional development to meet the requirements of teacher training renovation and the requirements of general education renovation;
- Create a connection, sharing, cooperation, and learning environment among university lecturers and primary teachers for continuous career development, meeting the requirements of general education innovation.
- Strengthen the practical experience of primary education for lecturers, thereby constantly improving the quality of teacher training, linking theoretical teaching with educational practice, and meeting the requirements of renovating the general/preschool education program.
- Improve the capacity of educational science research for university lecturers, form a team of experts knowledgeable about primary education, and actively participate in the training of key teachers at primary schools.

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b) *Practical and professional activities of pedagogical lecturers*

Faculty of Primary Education lecturers must follow these guidelines during professional practical activities:

- Visiting, attending, and studying the teaching and learning activities at primary school.
- Teaching at least 01 period (or organizing at least 01 educational activity) at the school, of which 01 period (or at least 01 educational activity) is recorded.

- Collect feedback from alumni and education managers on the primary teacher training program of the Faculty.

- Implement activities at the request of the University and Faculty depending on the time of going to the school (if any)

In addition, lecturers will select at least 01 of the following contents to implement:

- Researching the practice of primary education, detecting problems arising from professional practice, thereby proposing at least 01 direction of educational scientific research (providing a list of programs, scientific research topics at all levels, graduation thesis topics, master's thesis topics, doctoral thesis topics...).

- Proposing knowledge modules related to theory and practice and content of professional practice activities for students in the syllabus assigned to teach in the primary teacher training curriculum

- Develop a detailed outline for a teacher (or manager) training subject based on the needs of the affiliate facility.

In addition to the above professional practical activities, lecturers teaching courses on teaching methods also spend at least 1 day going to primary school, accompany students during their professional field trips at primary schools to check students' professional practical activities, observe 01 lessons of teachers in primary schools and participate in lesson analysis with students after class. Teachers can use these observations to evaluate students' professional practice results through better professional practice reports.[4][5].

2.2.2. *Practical and professional activities of students*

a) *Goals*

- Increase practical and practical learning hours for relevant modules in the primary teacher training program of the University of Education.

- Creating opportunities for students to experience the reality of primary education by observing teachers, classrooms, and primary students in action.

- Create conditions for students to communicate with teachers and students, apply the knowledge of the subject to the reality of primary education, study the psychological characteristics of students, learn from the experience of primary school teachers, practice handling pedagogical situations; understand the functions and tasks of primary school teachers to form professional skills, attitudes and the love of the job.

- Create conditions for students to observe, record, and synthesize information about teaching and educational activities in primary schools, and practice necessary pedagogical skills. From there, they learn the contents of the teaching work and the class head of the teacher in primary school.

- Help students well prepare knowledge and skills for pedagogical internships in the third and fourth academic years.

b) *Duration*

There are 03 periods of assignments, practice, or discussion equivalent in each credit to one actual session (called the actual period) for university students to go to primary school and participate in professional practical activities. [4].

c) *Time*

In the school year's training plan, one week is dedicated to allowing students to participate in practical activities related to their chosen subject at a primary school.

d) *Contents*

The professional practical activities content of each subject can vary depending on their characteristics:

- (1) Understanding the general education environment (facilities of schools and classrooms; regional characteristics; teaching staff; the number of students; quality of students,...).

- (2) Learn the activities of specialized groups; contents, programs, general textbooks, and lesson plans of the school for each subject.

- (3) Learn about classroom management, teamwork, student achievements, and academic support. Guide primary students in both classroom and home study.

- (4) Utilize knowledge of psychology, education, and subject-specific teaching methods in the context of general and early childhood education.

- (5) Designing and analyzing survey forms and data; interviewing teachers and students.

- (6) Observe activities of primary teachers and students in lessons, and learn teaching plans and activities of primary teachers and students; record minutes of observation; participate in professional group activities; analyze lessons after class.

- (7) Learn the methods of testing and evaluating students' learning results; set up test questions and assessment records for primary school students.

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(8) Attend classroom activities chaired by the homeroom teacher; Attend Team and Children's Star activities.

(9) Participate in the design and organization of after-school educational activities for primary school students, and participate in other movement activities of professional practice establishments.

(10) In addition to the above contents, lecturers teaching the course may assign other specific tasks to students depending on the specific subject.[3][6].

e)Assessment

The course lecturer is the one who evaluates the results of this activity based on the student's report after the end of the professional practical session. [3][6].

2.2.3. Pedagogical Internship Activities

3.2.3.1. Pedagogical Internship Activities 1

a) Goal

- Understand the reality of education, and contact with students and teachers of internships, thereby forming professional feelings, and promoting the process of self-training according to the requirements of the profession;

- Establishing skills in classroom management in primary schools;

- Be able to explain the contents of the professional work of the primary school teacher;

- Initially have an understanding of teaching methods and how to organize an hour of learning at primary schools. [3][6].

b) Duration

Having a volume equivalent to 02 credits, conducted in 03 weeks at a pedagogical internship establishment, applicable to the accumulation of credits equivalent to the third academic year and having accumulated the previous course or the prerequisite course in the training program[6].

c) Time

Pedagogical Internship 1 is conducted by students in the first semester of the third academic year according to the general training plan of the school.

d)Contents

**** Educational internship***

- Learn the content, curriculum, teaching plan, teaching work of teachers and subject groups in high schools at pedagogical practice establishments.

- Learn the types of records and documents related to the classroom: how to evaluate and rank primary students and professional guidance documents of primary education management levels;

- Each group of professional internship participants observe 06 lessons of teachers of pedagogical practice establishments (different subjects); practice recording minutes of attendance; practice commenting and drawing experience from teaching hours.

- Design at least 01 lesson plan (encourage students to register and implement an hour of teaching at high school) [3][6].

**** Professional internship***

- Apply the knowledge of psychology and education in practice.

- Learn the organizational structure, contents of work and the actual situation of the school and the locality through listening to reports of pedagogical internships and the actual operation of the school. Attend classroom activities chaired by the homeroom teacher, Team and Star Children activities and extracurricular activities led by the teacher. Directly participate as the homeroom teacher in a class of students; develop a homeroom work plan for the whole period and each week, monitor the ethical, learning, health and activities of the class, record comments and organize lessons learned. Participate in guiding homeroom activities, Team activities, Children's Star activities, organizing educational activities: labor, arts, sports, play, sightseeing, camping and other activities according to the characteristics of primary school. [6].

e) Assessment

The results of Pedagogical Internship 1 of students are evaluated and graded by instructors in primary schools. The score for Pedagogical Internship 1 includes the total score of both the professional internship and educational internship and is calculated with a weight of 0.3 for professional internship and 0.7 for educational internship

3.2.3.2. Pedagogical Internship Activities 2

a) Goal

- Developing skills in class management, education, improving morale and professional ethics;

- Have basic skills in preparing lessons, going to class; organizing lectures; evaluating the learning results of primary school students;

- Be able to carry out activities to lecture in class and do class work independently [3][6].

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b) Duration : Pedagogical Internship 2 has a volume equivalent to 03 credits, conducted in 07 weeks at a pedagogical internship establishment; applied to students who have accumulated the number of credits equivalent to the level of the fourth year of the previous module or prerequisite module and the module of Pedagogical Internship 1 in the training program [3][6].

c) Time

Pedagogical Internship 2 is conducted by students in the second semester of the fourth academic year according to the general training plan of the school.

d) Contents

*** Educational internship**

- Learn the activities of the professional departments, functions, and tasks of primary teachers, classroom materials, records, transcripts of primary students, and professional guidance documents of management levels, by the characteristics of primary schools;

- Plan classroom homeroom work for the whole period and each week, monitor and learn the learning situation, health, and ethics of the whole class, individual students, as well as other class activities during the internship, record, comment, and evaluate.

- organization homeroom activities in class, participate in Team and Children's activities. Organize educational activities: labor, play, arts, fitness, sports, camping, celebrating traditional holidays, and other activities [3][6].

*** Professional internship**

- Make a teaching plan for the whole period and each week.

- Attend 02 teaching sessions led by a good teacher or teacher, with learning experience.

- Design at least 07 lesson plans; prepare teaching aids; submit lesson plans to professional instructors for approval at least 03 days before class.

- Practice all the lesson plans designed (attended by a group of pedagogical interns and instructors). After each hour of practice, there are lessons learned to complete the lecture.

- Lesson plans will be evaluated by instructors based on the training major. After teaching, there are lessons learned, evaluations, and scoring. Each lesson plan only scores 01 good teaching period.

- Students are not allowed to teach class for more than 03 periods for 01 lesson plan; do not go to class to teach contents not included in the teaching internship plan. [3][6].

e) Assessment

The results of the pedagogical internship 2 of students are evaluated and graded by the teacher guiding the educational internship (scoring the educational internship) and the teacher guiding the professional internship (scoring the teaching periods according to each lesson plan). The professional internship score is the average score of the teaching periods according to each lesson plan [3][6]. The final score for Pedagogical Internship 2 is determined by adding the scores of two components: Educational Internship and Professional Internship. The weightage of these components in the final score calculation is as follows:

- Educational Internship score is weighted at 0.3.

- Professional Internship score is weighted at 0.7

2.3. The role of professional practical activities and pedagogical internships in application-oriented teacher training programs

According to Grossman et al. (2009), in various professional education programs, occupational activities are taught. The authors argue that students should be prepared to meet the requirements of employers in both knowledge and skills. While practice-based exercises and activities conducted at the university, such as simulations or role-playing, play an important role, they cannot replace the need for students to be involved in a real practice environment with actual students. The authors conclude that such experiences are meaningful and necessary for the student's professional development. [10] [11].

Kennedy et al. (2015, p. 2) stated that universities should not only be a place where students can put their acquired knowledge into practice. Instead, they should be provided with a working environment that offers practical experiences. This will help them develop their abilities, rehearse how to handle different situations, and be flexible in all circumstances. [12].

Professional practice and pedagogical internships are crucial components of teacher training programs in Australia. The Educational Research Council of Australia recognizes its importance in preparing high-quality teachers. Furthermore, there is an international trend to provide students with opportunities for career experience in various locations. This trend is being implemented earlier and earlier in the training plan for pedagogical students [7].

The Faculty of Primary Education at Thai Nguyen University has implemented practical activities for students since their first year of study, which continues throughout their training process. Pedagogical internship opportunities are also expanding and becoming more diverse. Alongside the public primary schools in Thai Nguyen city and province, students of the Primary Education Department can also gain experience in private schools such as the Vinschool system in Hanoi, Iris Primary School in Thai Nguyen, and Stephen Hawking Uong Bi Primary School in Quang Ninh. After graduation, students are better equipped to adapt to diverse educational environments due to the rich and varied experiences they gain.

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2.4. Several recommendations for application in Vietnam

Based on some analysis of professional practical activities and pedagogical internships of lecturers and students, we come to the following recommendations to improve the quality of the Primary Teacher Training Program to meet the 2018 General Education Program:

- Sending lecturers and students to primary schools to visit classes, attend classes, professional activities, study lessons, and observe sample lectures, and considered one of the mandatory tasks for lecturers, especially lecturers in Methodology subjects.

- It is important to work together with primary schools and teachers to carry out scientific research projects for students and teachers. The findings of the research should be shared with primary schools through professional activities or seminars to exchange experiences between the two schools.

- Regularly gather feedback from primary schools on the students of the Faculty. This feedback should focus on the professional capacity of the students to discuss issues. It will help to supplement and adjust the training content of each specific subject in the training program.

- Experienced instructors in teaching and classroom management should be invited to participate in evaluating pedagogical competitions, designing instructional aids, and developing educational activities organized by the Faculty. The products of these contests also need to be shared and disseminated to primary schools.

It is suggested to invite experienced teachers in primary schools to participate in teaching subject teaching methods. They should at least participate in sample teaching of some lessons and then assist the regular lecturers in analyzing and exchanging feedback on the teaching activities that have taken place. This will help compare the practical teaching experience with the theoretical knowledge and teaching methods that the students have been equipped with.

- The Faculty of Primary Education needs to send lecturers and students to primary schools to participate in organizing movement activities, experiential activities, etc. At the end of each activity, students must report the results obtained from those activities.

- The Faculty of Primary Education offers support to primary schools in teacher development, including updating teaching theory, sharing learning experiences, etc. Content may be requested by primary schools.

It is important to ensure that students at university receive proper training from their first year so that they can learn about primary school activities and become familiar with the general education environment. They should be acquainted with professional activities, classroom homeroom, semi-boarding, and how to organize after-school activities for primary students; ect. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to establish collaboration and partnership with primary schools to develop a practical educational model for general schools. This model will provide ample opportunities for students to learn through practice, training, and skill development, thus enhancing their professional capabilities.

III. CONCLUSIONS

It is essential to ensure that pedagogical students acquire the necessary professional competencies during their training at the university level, to be adaptable and develop professionally after graduation. Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop training models that align with the implementation capacity of applied occupations in the field of education at the university level. This requires specific solutions and directions to address this urgent requirement. The University of Education is not only equipped with the necessary knowledge but also interested in the formation and training of professional capacity for students in the direction of better meeting the needs of employers. In order to improve the quality of vocational training for primary education students, it is crucial to establish closer cooperation and linkages with primary schools. This will ensure that students receive not only pedagogical training but also professional training within primary schools. Moreover, instructors should also participate in practical activities at primary schools to gain a foundation for developing subject programs in a practical and applied manner. This approach will be an effective way for teachers to engage in local educational community-building activities.

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