

How do pre-service teachers see their education in times of distance learning? – A qualitative study of university students during COVID-19

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In March 2020 all lectures and seminars had to be transferred from mere face-to-face teaching to distance learning due to COVID-19 regulations in Austria. Lecturers and students of the university college of teacher education Vienna/Krems (KPH) had to accommodate to the situation literally from one minute to the other. The situation of distance learning continued in winter semester 2020.

At three points of time (spring and fall 2020, January 2021) 35 students of KPH Vienna/Krems (studying for bachelor and master degree) were interviewed to find out how they experienced this rapid change from face-to-face learning to e-learning courses and how they see their gain in knowledge in theory and practice. Using a semi-structured interview guide the students were asked via an online conferencing tool about their experiences. The research question “How does distance learning change the subjective understand of students regarding their teacher education?” will be answered by asking them questions like:

- How did you experience tasks given in the two semesters?
- How was practical work with pupils carried out? In how far do you think that has influenced your future work as a teacher?
- Which challenges did or do you face?
- What do you miss most when studying in distance learning?
- How did you experience the winter term 2020 regarding your gain of knowledge?

Results so far show that some students profit from working on their own when it comes to theoretical knowledge. The biggest problems are seen in practical subjects (for example practice with pupils). The results can provide insight what to be aware of when providing online courses at university in order to make sure that the quality of their education is still high.

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