



The impact of the pandemic situation in preparing student teachers professionally: perceptions of students and their mentors during student teaching practice

Nita Bakija-Haraçija, *Faculty of Education, University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Kosovo*

ABSTRACT

The sudden global pandemic period modified and transformed teaching and learning patterns in higher education. Challenges were seen also in the process of student teaching practice as a crucial component for preparing new teachers. Even though the attendance of student teachers in the school-based class was shorter, they tried to comprehend the elementary parts of the teaching profession. The aim of the study was to reveal student teachers' perception of how they see mentor teachers' willingness to provide their experience in order to prepare them professionally and to what extent student teaching practice helped student teachers on their professional development during the pandemic period. The data were collected through a survey with $n=160$ student teachers from bachelor and master study programs, who were part of the school-based classes in primary schools during the pandemic period. To measure the correlation between mentor teachers' willingness and readiness to cooperate and their level of pressure to collaborate during the pandemic period in order to share their experience with student teachers in their school-based class, a Chi-Square Test and Pearson Correlation were used. Also, a semi-structured interview was realized with a group of primary teachers ($n=10$) who were assigned as mentors, in order to comprehend their perception about how student teachers can be prepared for the student teaching practice and did the pandemic period impact in developing them professionally. The findings show that although mentor teachers willing to collaborate responsibly and efficiently, student teachers found it impossible to improve their professional necessity for self-development due to the short teaching schedule. The research will contribute to the literature by raising the awareness about the impact of the pandemic period as a serious impediment to student teachers in accomplishing the requirements to become teachers.

Keywords: pandemic period, student teaching practice, students' professional preparation