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Mentoring v praxích budoucích učitelů angličtiny

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Poděkování

Ráda bych poděkovala svému vedoucímu PhDr. Tomáši Gráfovi, Ph.D. za jeho nesmírnou ochotu, podporu a cenné rady při psaní diplomové práce i během celého studia.

Velmi děkuji všem fakultním učitelům, kteří se zúčastnili výzkumu, za jejich čas, ochotu a upřímnost, se kterou zodpovídali mé zvědavé otázky. Bez nich by tato práce nemohla vzniknout.

Můj srdečný dík patří také mé rodině a příteli Dominikovi za to, že mi jsou (nejen během psaní diplomové práce) obrovskou oporou.

Klíčová slova:

Pedagogická praxe, fakultní učitelé, mentoring, kvalitativní výzkum, několikanásobná případová studie

Abstrakt

Pedagogické praxe jsou nedílnou součástí profesní přípravy učitelů a klíčovou roli v nich sehrávají cviční učitelé – mentoři. Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl zjistit jejich vnímání průběhu praxí, hodnocení vlastního stupně připravenosti a přístup k úkolům, které role cvičného učitele zahrnuje. Teoretická část zpracovává na základě sekundární literatury role mentora, typy mentoringu, konkrétní úlohy mentorů a v neposlední řadě i jejich motivaci. Dále pojednává o vybraných oblastech pedagogických praxí, konkrétně o zpětné vazbě a sebereflexi, násleších, připravenosti mentorů pro jejich roli a délce praxí. Empirická část práce představuje výsledky kvalitativního výzkumu, který má formu několikanásobné případové studie. Celkem bylo provedeno pět případových studií a data byla zpracována pomocí kódování. Hlavní výzkumná zjištění poukazují na vysokou motivaci a přátelský přístup mentorů ke studentům, ale také na to, že mentorům zcela chybí teoretická příprava pro jejich roli ve vzdělávání budoucích učitelů, což ovšem sami nevnímají jako nedostatek. Práce dále konfrontuje výzkumná zjištění s teoretickými koncepty prezentovanými v první části práce a popisuje jejich možné využití v dalším výzkumu i běžné školské praxi. Cílem této práce je zvýšit povědomí o situaci cvičných učitelů i o průběhu a kvalitě praxí jako takových.

Práce je zpracována v anglickém jazyce.

Keywords:

Teaching practicum, mentors, mentoring, qualitative research, multiple case study

Abstract

The teaching practicum is an integral part of teacher education and a key role is played by teacher trainers – mentors. The aim of this thesis is to determine their perception of the practicum, evaluation of their own degree of preparedness, and attitude to the tasks which the role of the mentor involves. The theoretical part describes the roles of the mentor, models of mentoring, concrete mentoring tasks, and also mentors' motivation as well as important skills. It further discusses selected issues in the EFL practicum, namely feedback and self-reflection, observations, preparedness of mentors, and the length of the practicum. The empirical part is comprised of the results of qualitative research in the form of a multiple case study. Five case studies have been carried out in total and data have been processed through the process of coding. The paper then goes on to analyse the findings with regard to the theoretical concepts discussed earlier in the study, and outlines potential research and pedagogical implications. The main findings of the study include mentors' high motivation for their roles and friendly attitude to teacher trainees, as well as their lack of specialised education for teacher trainee supervision and no perceived need for such training. Additionally, the study established mentors' evaluation of the current length of the practicum as insufficient. It is hoped that the present study should raise awareness of circumstances facing mentors as well as the process and quality of practicums as such.

The thesis is written in English.

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1. Introduction

The teaching practicum has a pivotal role in teacher education – it is an opportunity for students to use their knowledge of pedagogy and the subject itself, develop their teaching skills in a real-life environment, and to get a taste of what their future career might look like. The goal of language teacher education is for the students to master two sets of skills. Firstly, they should have adequate knowledge of theoretical concepts and issues connected to foreign language teaching, and general knowledge of other disciplines associated with teaching, such as psychology or sociology. Secondly, they need to acquire practical skills in teaching and classroom management. They must be able to successfully carry out customary teaching tasks, including presenting and explaining new subject matter, testing the students' knowledge and providing them with appropriate feedback, as well as maintaining discipline. While the theoretical part of education is spread over the whole university programme (also taught in great detail and examined thoroughly), the practical side of teacher training is provided by a much shorter period of instruction. The length of the practicum differs for each faculty; students of pedagogical faculties are usually required to undergo three semesters of practical training at a faculty school. Those who undergo the practicum as a part of the pedagogical minimum within the lifelong learning programme undergo a practicum which is only a few weeks long. While many students gain practical experience through extra-curricular activities, including the offering of private lessons or teaching in language schools, for many others the practicum is the sole hands-on teaching experience prior to graduation and becoming full-time teachers.

The quality of the practicum in Czech universities has long been the subject of debate. The existing body of research suggests that the organization of the practicum could benefit from a number of reforms (e.g. Mleziva 2015; Nováková 2016; Pospíšil 2017; Švec, Svojanovský, Pravdová 2016; Wernerová 2011). There are several issues common to students' evaluations of their experiences. Many students are unsatisfied with the length of the practicum, in some cases as short as two weeks and perceive that they are left inadequately prepared for the realities of a full-time teaching job. Other complaints are largely connected with the attitude of the mentor and their approach to instructing them. The practicum generally starts by the students merely observing, and while potentially very useful, many mentors do not complement their observations with supplemental activities such as focusing on specific aspects of teaching, or discussing and analysing the class with the student afterwards in greater detail. Similarly, after the students commence teaching independently, many remain

unsatisfied with the quantity and quality of support received. A commonality is the appreciation of more reflective discussions and further constructive feedback from their mentors.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on mentoring in teacher education (e.g. Field and Field 1994; Furlong and Maynard 1995; Raymond, Flack and Burrows 2016). Widely discussed are key issues in mentoring, outlining of theoretical framework, and the offering of practical advice in guiding students through the process – helping them to become independent practitioners. However, as research on the practicums in the Czech Republic suggests, the reality is often far removed from the theoretical concepts described in literature. In research on this topic (e.g. Pospíšil 2017), teacher trainees have clearly voiced their dissatisfaction. The aim of my research is to explore the mentors' point of view of the practicum. It seeks to explore how the mentors themselves view their role, and to what extent they feel prepared for it. Further it seeks to determine their attitudes to tasks which the mentor's role encompasses, such as providing observation opportunities to students in the classroom setting or the provision of constructive feedback. It is hoped that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the process of the practicum as well as teacher education in general.

This thesis consists of five chapters, with this introduction being the first. Chapter 2 describes the process of mentoring and seeks to describe the roles of the three involved parties: the teacher trainee, the faculty supervisor, and the mentor. Additionally, it will establish the terminology to be used throughout this work. Chapter 3 elaborates on the mentor's role, focusing namely on the different roles fulfilled, the theoretical models of mentoring, concrete tasks which mentors must perform, important skills, and the motivations of teachers in becoming mentors. Chapter 4 discusses selected issues in the EFL practicum connected to research questions and subsequent findings. Chapter 5 presents the research questions and methodology which was used in conducting the case study and research questions. Chapter 6 presents the multiple case study which has been realized in the form of semi-structured interviews with five mentors teaching at secondary schools in Prague. Chapter 7 discusses the findings and goes on to analyse the findings. Chapter 8 provides an overview of the theoretical framework and research findings, further discussing their significance to teacher education in the Czech Republic. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to raise awareness of the present state and quality of the EFL teaching practicum, particularly with regard to the mentors' circumstances, roles, and responsibilities therein.

2. The Teaching Practicum

This chapter discusses the three parties who are involved in the teaching practicum: the faculty supervisor, the teacher trainee, and the mentor. It describes their roles, tasks, and responsibilities. Additionally, it provides some information on teacher education beyond the practicum: on the education the teacher trainees receive in university as well as on the circumstances faced by novice teachers in the Czech school system.

2.1 The Faculty Supervisor

The faculty supervisor is a university teacher who is responsible for maintaining the quality of the practicum, setting its goals, and organizing the teaching practicum as a whole. They lead reflective seminars for the teacher trainees and oversee the communication between all parties taking part in the practicum (Spilková et al. 2015). They also assign specific tasks for the teacher trainees to encourage their professional development – this can include observations, active research, or keeping a reflective journal (Taušková 2014). Together with the mentor, the faculty supervisor should aim to provide support to the teacher trainee undergoing the practicum, encouraging their personal and professional development, and generally bridge the gap between theory and practice in their education (Spilková et al., 2015). The role of the faculty supervisor is crucial in maintaining good relationships between the faculty and faculty school. Additionally, they seek to establish a supportive and stimulating environment for both the teacher trainees and their mentors, promoting good communication and trust.

2.2 The Teacher Trainee

The teacher trainee is either a student of a faculty of education who specialises in one or two subjects, or a student (or graduate) whose major in university corresponds with one or more subjects taught at primary or secondary schools (and who is undergoing the pedagogical minimum within the lifelong learning programme at an accredited university). Several terms for those students exist in the relevant literature, e. g. student teacher, novice teacher, teacher trainee, mentee, teacher-learner, or pre-service teacher. There is no consensus regarding the term of choice and some terms can be rather ambiguous. Novice teachers, for example, may be perceived by some to be graduates in the first few years of their full-time jobs, while others

may use the term more loosely for anyone who is fairly new to teaching. Mentee is the obvious counterpart to the term mentor but is somewhat generalized and does not specify a connection to the teaching profession. Throughout this thesis, the term used to refer to the person undergoing the practicum is teacher trainee, while novice teacher is used to refer to a university graduate in their first few years of teaching.

The teaching practicum is designed as the first real teaching experience. Nevertheless, students do gain some practical experience during their studies prior to the practicum. This includes delivering presentations in front of their classmates, and especially delivering microteachings, in which a teacher trainee prepares and delivers a microteaching slot in front of their classmates who act as pupils with an observant course instructor. The slots are typically shorter than a real-life lesson, lasting around twenty or thirty minutes, followed by feedback from the course instructor and subsequent reflective discussion. Microteachings are essentially a “scaled-down version of the real world” (Seidman 1968). They are an extremely useful tool in teacher education – they allow the teacher trainees to gain their first practical experiences in a controlled environment among fellow students.

Even with their theoretical background and experience gained from microteachings (or even extracurricular activities, including tutoring/teaching company courses), trainees understandably express concerns regarding real-life school teaching prior to their practicum. According to Vašutová (2004), teacher trainees usually worry that the following things will happen:

- They will not manage to cover the planned subject matter during the 45-minute lesson;
- They will not know how to react in non-standard situations;
- They will not manage to evaluate the students’ performance objectively;
- Other teachers at the faculty school will not respect them;
- They will not be allowed to use their own ideas, innovations, or alternative methods of teaching;
- They will not gain the respect of the pupils;
- The pupils will not pay attention in class or misbehave;
- The pupils will not understand the subject matter taught by the teacher trainee, and will not learn anything during their classes;
- The pupils will ask questions the teacher trainee will be unable to answer.

Vašutová (2004) states that trainees usually do experience most of these issues, either during the course of their practicum or when they start their first teaching job. During the practicum, the teacher trainee is supported by the mentor who provides support, consults on relevant issues, and may intervene during lessons if difficulties arise. After trainees graduate and become novice teachers, they may also be supported by a more experienced teacher¹, although the type and form of guidance may differ for each school. Mentors generally help novice teachers in two areas: technical/administrative issues such as working with electronic systems or registers, and with the teaching itself. Support is usually in the form of consultations, observations, and subsequent discussions. The mentor should be a teacher who is experienced, responsible, competent, and supportive (Kopáčová 2019). The areas in which most novice teachers need help are:

- maintaining discipline in the classroom;
- keeping documentation, such as the class register etc.;
- evaluation of the students;
- working with special educational needs students;
- communication with the students' parents.

(MŠMT 2019)

The Czech Ministry of Education states that 80% of novice teachers are provided with a mentor who supports them in the beginning of their teaching career (MŠMT 2019). However, divergent findings from Hanušová et al. (2017) suggests that circumstances may be more complicated. In their research, novice teachers were asked to rate on a scale from one to six (*strongly agree to strongly disagree*) their extent of agreement with the following statement: “There is a functional system for mentoring novice teachers at our school”. The responses can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The extent of agreement with the following statement: “There is a functional system for mentoring novice teachers at our school”. (Hanušová et al. 2017)

Strongly agree	2	3	4	5	Strongly disagree
9.7%	16.8%	19.7%	13.9%	13.2%	17.9%

¹ The Czech term for a novice teacher's mentor is „uvádějící učitel“.

Only 26.5% novice teachers agree or strongly agree that there is a functional system of mentoring for novice teachers. In contrast, 31.1% disagree or strongly disagree.

Approximately one-third of novice teachers neither agree nor disagree.

Šimoník (2016) highlights the problems experienced by novice teachers as not only in lack of support from their respective schools, but also in shortcomings of university education, as well as intrinsic to individual novice teachers themselves. Some novice teachers failed to study adequately during university years, underprepared in terms of career planning, or remain undecided about seriously pursuing a career in teaching. It remains worth mentioning that novice teachers who have not had the support of a mentor during their first years of teaching are more than twice as likely to consider leaving the school/teaching profession than those with the requisite support (MŠMT 2019).

Clearly, mentors play an important role not only in the quality of future teachers' education, but also in the number of teachers the Czech school system will have at its disposal in the future. This fact proves to be even more important in light of one of the most pressing issues of the Czech school system: the aging of the pedagogical population. The Czech Republic is one of ten member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development whose number of teachers in higher secondary education over 50 years of age exceed 40% of available workforce (OECD 2013). There is a clear lack of young teachers in the Czech system; out of all graduates of pedagogical faculties, only 40% of them take up teaching jobs after their studies (Valachová 2017). After their first year of teaching, one third of novice teachers leave their jobs (Česká škola 2018). Even though the lack of support is not the main reason for the so-called drop-out of novice teachers, the main reasons being relatively low salaries and low prestige of the job (Hanušová and Píšová 2019), the research findings discussed above suggest that support in the form of mentoring by a more experienced colleague considerably influences the working experience and future careers of novice teachers in the Czech school system.

2.3 The Mentor

There are several ways to address the person responsible for guiding the teacher trainee during the practicum, e.g. *supervisor*, *school advisor*, or *faculty teacher*. During the last few decades, the term which has become the most widely used in literature is *mentor* (Píšová 2001). The word itself originates in the name of a character in Homer's epic narrative, the

Odyssey. Mentor was an elderly man charged with the care and education of Telemachus, son of Odysseus (the King of Ithaca), during the Trojan War. The wise Mentor thus served as Telemachus', "teacher, role model, counsellor, facilitator, supportive protector and guide" (Gabel-Dunk and Craft, 2004). The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word mentor as "a person who acts as a guide and adviser to another person, especially one who is younger and less experienced" and "a person who offers support and guidance to another; an experienced and trusted counsellor or friend; a patron, a sponsor". This corresponds well with the reflective approach to teacher education² – the mentor is the teacher trainee's wise advisor who guides them on their journey towards professional growth. The term of choice in Czech is *fakultní učitel* or *cvičný učitel*, although *mentor* is also presently used, particularly among students and teachers of English (Píšová 2001). *Mentor* will also be used throughout this work to refer to the person responsible for educating the teacher trainee during the practicum. The discussion of the specific roles of the mentor, models of mentoring, and skills important for mentoring is the subject of the following chapters.

² The reflective approach and other theoretical models of mentoring are discussed in Chapter 3.2.

3. The Theory of Mentoring

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework for the role of the mentor in the teaching practicum. It describes their specific roles and tasks, discusses selected theoretical models of mentoring, and considers skills the mentors should have as well as their motivations for becoming a teacher educator.

3.1 The roles of the mentor

Mentoring an aspiring teacher is a complex and difficult task including various components and responsibilities. There are several roles mentors should be fulfilling; Malderez (2009) describes an ideal mentor as fulfilling the following five.

Firstly, mentors serve as *models* of a way of teaching. Trainee teachers closely observe the mentor's behaviour in the classroom and gradually incorporate features of their teaching style into their own performance. This is perhaps the most obvious and logical task one can expect of the trainee teacher. Conversely, this approach may not account for the development of the trainee teacher's autonomy and their own unique teaching style.

Secondly, mentors are *acculturators* who help the trainee teacher become familiar with and integrated into the specific context and community of the faculty school. B. Field describes the mentor's supervision in the sense of socialisation not only as helping with the teaching itself but also as “[welcoming] the students into the school, [making] sure they knew the ‘geography’ of the building, [introducing] them to the staff, [telling] them where to buy their lunch” (Field 1994).

Thirdly, mentors act as *supporters* of the trainee teacher. The teaching practicum can be extremely emotionally demanding, and in their transition from their theoretical studies to the practical application of their knowledge and skills, many trainee teachers find themselves dismayed by the day-to-day realities of teaching. This has been aptly described as a “reality shock” because of “the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life” (Farrell 2012). If the mentor finds the teacher trainee affected by this they step in and help the trainee teacher come to terms with the “harsh and rude” reality.

Another role of the mentor is *champion* or *sponsor* of the trainee teacher. It is the mentor's responsibility to do everything they can to ensure that the trainee teacher is accepted into the professional community and that they have optimal conditions for learning.

The last role which Malderez and Bodoczky describe is perhaps the most crucial one: an *educator*. The mentor scaffolds the processes of the trainee teacher for becoming or being a teacher, for teaching and for learning teaching.

3.2 Theoretical models of mentoring

This chapter presents three selected theoretical models of mentoring: the apprenticeship model, the competency-based model, and the reflective model. They differ substantially in their expectations of teacher trainees and their approach to their own education. The differences between the three models may be seen as representing the teacher trainee's journey towards autonomy and self-reliance, from the strictly hierarchical model perceiving the teacher trainee as an apprentice imitating their mentor (the apprenticeship model) to the model encouraging independence through self-reflection (the reflective model), with the competency-based model being somewhere in between.

3.2.1 Apprenticeship Model

The first model of mentoring is the most traditional one and builds on the way professional skills have been passed on for centuries: from master to apprentice. In the apprenticeship model of mentoring, the teacher trainee gets sent to a school and becomes an apprentice to an in-service teacher. The mentor is seen as an experienced craftsman who is an expert in their field: they serve as a role model and as the main source of information for the teacher trainee. Knowledge is not taught explicitly but rather “acquired as a result of observation, instruction and practice” (Klieger and Oster-Levinz 2015). It is associated with the criticism of university-based teacher education which is prominent in the writings of the Hillgate group. They suggest that working alongside an experienced teacher is all that teacher trainees need, and that apprenticeship is more important than instruction (Kerry and Mayes 2014). This model is also obviously hierarchic and may be seen as a parallel to the student-teacher relationship.

3.2.2 Competency-Based Model

According to the competency-based model of mentoring, teacher education is the achievement of a series of competencies which the teacher trainee acquires during their studies and practicum. This model represents the next step on the way to the trainee teacher's autonomy: instead of simply observing and copying the experienced teacher (mentor) they are expected to acquire a certain set of competencies by themselves. While there is certain variation in the interpretation of the model, there are at least two models of competence: performance and cognitive.

Performance Model

In this approach, competency is defined as performance, or, more specifically, “an ability to perform a task satisfactorily, the task being clearly defined as the criteria of success being set out alongside to this” (Furlong and Maynard 1995). In the teaching profession however, this ability is rather difficult to ascertain. In theory, competence includes the necessary knowledge and understanding required for performance in employment. However, being a teacher includes an infinite number of novel and complex situations. It is simply not possible to observe the teacher trainee in all situations they might encounter and therefore, the assessors must supplement their observations by other means, e.g. by a formal examination of their theoretical knowledge.

Since the model is strictly performance-based, it has been argued that candidates may not in fact need to undergo a particular study programme. It has been considered that the assessment of their competence may be based on a final state of demonstrated ability. A resultant programme may not be fixed in length, rather conclude as and when students meet requisite benchmarks. In response to that, critics of the performance model argue in favour of a difference between “habitual skills knowledge”, i.e. carrying out the necessary tasks of the teaching profession and “intelligent skills knowledge”, involving a more holistic view of the tasks at hand (Furlong and Maynard 1995). Another often repeated criticism is that the acquisition of the required competences may lead to certain professional stagnation. It should be emphasised that learning is a life-long process and the competency-based model should include a reflective element as well (Duschinska 2010).

Cognitive Model

The cognitive model forms an alternative to the traditional performance model. Instead of focusing on the “action” (performance) itself, it “places greater emphasis on the knowledge and understanding underpinning action: it is a cognitive rather than a performance model” (Furlong and Maynard 1995). The cognitive model emphasizes the importance of knowledge in two ways. Firstly, due to the method by which teachers process information from their environment (directly contingent on their knowledge), in order to prepare students for performance in the classroom, the study programme must provide them with the necessary theoretical education. Secondly, students need to develop critical thinking skills and an ability to judge, evaluate, and reflect their own performance. This includes not only thinking about what they have done but also requires consideration of their performance in context of theoretical knowledge. It follows that the series of competencies which the teacher trainee must acquire in the cognitive competence model includes both practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

3.2.3 Reflective Model

In the reflective model of mentoring, the goal of the teacher trainee is to be able to reflect on their own work in analytical terms. Teacher trainees should be able to apply their theoretical knowledge on matters at hand and formulate improvements independently. The mentor’s task is therefore not to tell the student explicitly what they should have done differently, but to provide them with appropriate feedback allowing for their own arrival at a beneficial conclusion.

The original model, while being popular, was criticized for being too abstract/vague and leaving little room for guided learning. In response to these criticisms, Korthagen (2002) proposes the realistic approach to teacher education, aiming to reduce the gap between theory and practice. The realistic approach is based on concrete real-life problems, building on teacher trainee-mentor interactions (and among teacher trainees themselves), thus integrating theory, practice, and allied disciplines (such as psychology and sociology). The core of his approach is the ALACT model which describes five phases of the alterations between actions and reflections:

1) *Action*

The first phase of the model is the teacher trainee's practical experience. The mentor's task is simply to be present, observe and not intervene unless the teacher trainee faces problems which they are not able to solve themselves.

2) *Looking back on the action*

After the teaching itself, the mentor directs the student to reflect on their performance. In order to promote concreteness and critical self-evaluation, Korthagen (2002) suggests that the mentor ask the teacher trainee the following questions:

- What is the context?
- What did you want?
- What did you do?
- What were you thinking?
- How did the students feel?
- How did you feel?
- What did the students want?
- What did the students do?
- What were the students thinking?

Teacher trainees may find it difficult to find answers to these questions, particularly those analysing student thoughts and feelings. It remains however that they are an excellent starting point for discussion of the teacher trainee's interaction with the students. Additionally, these questions offer an opportunity to consider in detail the influence of the teacher trainee's actions on the behaviour and feelings of their students, as well as on their own. The goal of the second phase is to identify aspects of the teaching process on which the teacher trainee needs to focus in the subsequent phases.

3) *Awareness of essential aspects*

After the reflection in phase 2, teacher trainees or their mentors may feel the need for some theoretical elements to be employed in their discussions. Korthagen (2001) distinguishes between *Theory* and *theory*. *Theory* with a capital T is formal academic knowledge which helps one understand a situation from a theoretical point of view. In contrast, *theory* is theoretical knowledge which is immediately relevant – it is linked to a specific context and adapted for the current needs of a teacher trainee. While knowledge of *Theory* can be useful in other contexts, *theory* is the better choice for the purposes of reflective analyses of classes: it

helps the teacher trainee apply their theoretical knowledge to their present situation. This methodology thus creates a valuable connection between theory and practice, enabling the planning of alternative methods of action.

4) Creating alternative methods of action

The ALACT model can be described as an inductive approach to teacher education. This method supports the teacher trainee's independent course of thinking and nurtures their ability to solve situations successfully on their own, thus preparing them for the time when they will no longer be able to rely on a mentor in their reflections. Perhaps the most important part of the reflective process is phase 4 after the teaching itself. In this phase, identifying problematic aspects and analysing them in theoretical terms, the teacher trainee considers different approaches to the issue at hand, devising alternative methods of action for the future.

5) Trial

Reflective learning is a cyclical process, and as all reflection is practical, the previous phases aim at one thing: another action and attempt at delivering a successful class. The goal of the ALACT model and the reflective approach in general is for the trainee to become an independent practitioner who can critically analyse their work, learn from their mistakes, and continue to develop both personally and professionally.

3.2.3.1 Methods of Reflection

As has been mentioned above, the mentor's task in the reflective model is not to provide the teacher trainee with explicit advice on their next course of action but rather to create a supportive and thought-provoking learning environment. Consequently, the trainee should be able to reflect on their work, arrive at beneficial conclusions, and create alternative methods of action independently. Evidently, the reflective approach requires a high degree of autonomy on the part of the trainee. Teacher trainees may be assigned several tasks further encouraging their independent reflections and professional development.

Journals

Keeping a teaching journal is one of the most common activities leading the teacher trainee to self-reflection. The teaching journal is a document in which the teacher trainee documents their lesson plans and subsequently, notes along with reflections of the same. It allows the writer to step back a moment from their work, obtain a new perspective and reflect on the

class with fresh eyes. Keeping a reflective journal can also be time-consuming and rather difficult; the teacher trainee should objectively describe every class, the context of the described event, the students, their behaviour, feelings, and emotions. It remains that journal writing is a useful exercise helping students to “express the encounters, experiences, perceptions and then the responses to these actions” (Afifa 2005). Farrell (2015) suggests a specific method of writing in a journal. Firstly, the teacher trainee describes a recent teaching experience and asks the following questions:

- What happened before this incident?
- What happened after it?
- Why was this incident important?
- What does this incident tell me about myself as a teacher?

After that, they write down the answers and continue to write about the topic every week for at least a month and try to look for emerging patterns.

According to Farrell (2015), the research shows that keeping a reflective journal may serve the following purposes:

- as a way of clarifying one’s own thinking;
- as a way of exploring one’s own beliefs and practices;
- as a way of becoming more aware of one’s teaching styles;
- as a way of monitoring one’s own practices;
- in order to provide positive feedback on one’s teaching, for example by writing about successful experiences;
- to vent one’s frustrations and set goals for remedying problems;
- to raise questions and issues for future consideration
- as a way of triggering insights about one’s self as a teacher and about one’s teaching;
- to provide a record of one’s teaching for others to read.

Observations

Observing a class is typically the first experience the teacher trainee gains. It allows them to gain experience by being present in a real-life class without the pressure to actively participate in it. Observation is the perfect opportunity to consider class events in analytical terms and reflect on the circumstances holistically. Dewey (1904) recognizes the benefits of observations for teacher trainees but maintains that when starting observations, teacher

trainees should focus on the interaction of the teacher and their pupils – “how mind answers to mind”. Observations should be first conducted from a psychological viewpoint. As the practicum progresses, the viewpoint should become more practical and the teacher trainee may move on to considering concrete teaching techniques and strategies during the observations.

Ben-Peretz and Rumney (1991) claim that the process of being present at a class and observing itself may not always lead to reflection on the part of the teacher trainee and subsequently to their professional development. They emphasise the importance of the teacher trainee observing with a specific issue in mind and a carefully planned, structured discussion with the mentor (or faculty supervisor) afterwards. A successful post-lesson conference promotes reflection and “sets the stage for better communication between the participants, and may lead to fulfilment of the expectations of student teachers for respect, appreciation, and readiness to listen to their views” (Ben-Peretz and Rumney 1991).

3.3 Mentoring Tasks

The mentor is the key person in the teacher trainee's practical education, intended to create a stimulating and supportive environment during the learning process. The concrete responsibilities are formally defined by a contract between the mentor and the faculty.

Mazáčová (2014: 12) summarizes the mentor's tasks and responsibilities as follows.

The mentor's tasks and responsibilities to teacher trainees:

- creating a positive learning environment during their time at the faculty school;
- actively cooperating with, consulting, and supporting them;
- providing them with information about the school curriculum, in particular the relevant curriculum for the subject(s) studied, and the timeframe of their teaching plans;
- letting them observe in classes taught by the mentor, in addition to other teachers of the same subject at the faculty school;
- consulting on the teacher trainee's preparations of their own classes, including the selection of the materials which are to be used;
- being present at all classes taught by them;
- evaluating performance on a regular basis and providing them with constructive

feedback;

- keeping documentation of the practicum;
- creating a final evaluation of their performance during the teaching practicum.

Mentors' influence on their trainees is dual: not only do they facilitate the development of teaching skills, but they also play a crucial role in teacher trainees' socialization process in a given school and provide them with emotional and psychological support (Liu 2014). Rajuan et al. (2007) present three main areas in which mentors educate their trainees: practical, technical, and personal.

The practical area describes the “artistry” and teaching techniques of the mentor. It perceives them as an experienced craftsman (this view is often associated with the apprenticeship model of mentoring). The concrete knowledge and skills which the mentor aims to transfer to the teacher trainee may include the ability to make their lessons engaging and to motivate students, as well as maintenance of discipline and the ability to deal with problematic students. Provision of feedback on the teacher trainee's performance falls within this category as well.

The technical area refers to the particular knowledge and behavioural skills required for the job of the mentor. The technical orientation is often linked to competency-based approaches and the behaviourist model of teaching and learning. Content areas such as time management, lesson planning, and giving instructions are considered within the technical area.

The personal area is perceived as crucial for teacher trainees' development of professional teaching identities and confidence. Mentors' comprehension of the circumstances facing trainee teachers is crucial. Moreover, mentors should help trainee teachers in their transition from students to teachers. Research suggests that above all, teacher trainees expect their mentors “to remember that they were once a student” and “to be human” (Rajuan et al. 2007). For the sake of the development of a professional relationship beneficial for both parties, it is imperative that the mentor should be equipped with certain skills and competences. These are discussed in the following chapter.

3.4 Important Skills for Mentoring

Regardless of mentors' particular teaching styles, all need to possess certain skills in order to ensure successful personal relationships with teacher trainees and their subsequent professional development. Mentoring is a complex task and the required skills are numerous.

Yuan and Hu (2018) suggest that what makes a mentor truly effective is rather a “combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, and personal dispositions”. They argue that mentors need to be equipped with skills of three kinds. Firstly, they must possess comprehensive *subject content knowledge*, that is, in this case, knowledge of the English language and the English literature and culture, since teachers who are enthusiastic as well as deeply knowledgeable about their subjects naturally motivate their students to a greater extent. Secondly, mentors should possess rich *pedagogical content knowledge*, i.e. the know-how of teaching itself. Mentors ought to be experienced practitioners with good knowledge of teaching techniques. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, mentors should have a solid grasp of *pedagogical knowledge about how to teach teachers*. Furthermore, Yuan and Hu (2018) emphasise the importance of mentors’ familiarity with curricula and policies in their respective schools and with the educational system in general.

Field and Field (1994: 56-57) summarize the specific skills and abilities mentors ought to possess as follows. “A supervising teacher should be able to:

- be articulate about teaching practices;
- analyse what is happening in a lesson;
- tread the line between diplomacy and truth;
- empower student-teachers;
- model good practice;
- recognise signs of stress;
- recognise what is not remediable;
- be a good listener.”

These findings suggest that a certain level of emotional intelligence is as indispensable for a mentor as adequate knowledge of their subject and pedagogy.

3.5 Motivation for Mentoring

Motivation of mentors for their jobs may be one of the most important factors contributing to the overall success of the teaching practicum. It shapes mentors’ approach to instruction and ultimately determines the degree of effort they are willing to make. Field and Field (1994) maintain that motives of mentors for teacher trainee supervision are highly diverse, ranging from pragmatic reasons such as “[I do it] for the money”, “it looks good on the c.v.”, and “it’s

an ego trip” to truly selfless ones such as “to help the university”, “to contribute to a student’s development”, and “to promote teaching as a profession”. Furthermore, some mentors choose to take on teacher trainees out of a sense of professional duty, wishing to improve the quality of future teachers and the school system in general. Additionally, the choice to undertake the role of the mentor requires teachers to have healthy self-confidence. If they do, their faith in their abilities may motivate them to pass on experience and model good teaching for teacher trainees. Another frequent motive of mentors’ is the provision of help and support for teacher trainees they themselves did not receive in their early days of teaching, and creation of conditions and learning environment which they perceive they would have then appreciated.

A crucial factor determining mentors’ motivation is also whether they volunteered for the job or whether it was assigned to them by the school management. A recent study on the factors influencing the quality of teaching practicums conducted by Nováková (2016) reported that the majority (ca. 60%) of the interviewed mentors were assigned the job by their headmasters, ca. 20% offered to take it voluntarily, and ca. 20% accepted it under different conditions, most notably after being asked to do so by their former students.

Be that as it may, most mentors perceive their roles as rewarding and recognise the benefits following their work with teacher trainees since it provides a unique opportunity for their personal and professional development. In a recent study on mentors’ and teacher trainees’ views on the teaching practicum conducted by Loucká (2018), mentors were asked to express the extent of their agreement with the following statement: “I use the ideas and inspiration which the students come up with in my lessons later, too.” The results may be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The extent of agreement with the following statements: “I use the ideas and inspiration which the students come up with in my lessons later, too.” (Loucká 2018).

“Yes”	“Mostly yes”	“Mostly no”	“No”	“I do not know”
20.80%	60.40%	4.20%	2.10%	12.50%

The results prove the beneficial effect of mentoring and its function as a source of inspiration for the vast majority of mentors. More than eighty percent of mentors agreed or mostly agreed that they used the ideas of their students (teacher trainees) in their lesson later while only about six percent did not agree or mostly did not agree. About twelve percent of them were not sure about the impact their teacher trainees’ ideas have on them and selected the option “I do not know”.

An important benefit reported by mentors is the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on their own work with fresh eyes (e.g. Loucká 2018, Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka 2011, Duschinská 2010). Following the instruction of teacher trainees on various classroom techniques, mentors are forced to re-evaluate their methods and aim to perform as well as possible in order to model good teaching. Moreover, a beneficial consequence is mentors' adoption of new teaching ideas and approaches they witness while observing teacher trainees. This allows experienced in-service teachers to keep in touch with current methodology and views as taught by universities (Field and Field 1994).

Additionally, mentoring may function as a means of socialization. Becoming a teacher educator may serve to increase teachers' sense of inclusion (or reduce their feelings of isolation). It may invoke a sense of belonging to both the school and the community in general (Raymond et al. 2016).

4. Issues in the EFL practicum

This chapter aims to provide an overview of issues which appear most frequently in studies on the EFL teaching practicum. Widely discussed are feedback provided by mentors and the role of reflection in it, observations, preparedness of mentors, and the length of the practicum. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

4.1 Feedback and self-reflection

The most common complaint in teacher trainees' evaluations of their practicums is unequivocally the lack of feedback provided by their mentors. A recent study on teacher trainees' views of the practicum conducted by Pospíšil (2017) reported that all six teacher trainees interviewed as part of the study received only very little feedback, if any, and consequently assessed the amount of feedback received as inadequate. Other studies conducted on this topic in the context of the Czech educational system generally support this claim. In a study conducted by Řihánková (2014), the interviewed trainee teachers maintained that the feedback provided to them was insufficient, claiming it was either positive or neutral, or completely absent from the practicum, thus not beneficial to their professional development. The respondents emphasised the importance of adequate feedback and their consequent disappointment with the lack thereof. It remains worth mentioning that the respondents regarded lack of feedback as a potential reason for discouragement from the teaching profession as such. Other studies reporting lack of feedback as a recurrent issue in teacher trainees' evaluations of their practicums include e.g. Taušková (2014) and Duschinská (2010). The aforementioned studies also report lack of reflection in the post-class analyses, with feedback (when given at all) not invoking independent self-evaluation and self-reflection on the part of the teacher trainees, but being rather directive.

4.2 Observations

Observations in teaching practicums are discussed from a theoretical point of view in Chapter 3.2.3.1. The most emphasised aspect of observations is observing with a specific issue in mind and a subsequent carefully planned, structured discussion with the mentor (or faculty supervisor). These tools promote reflection on the part of the teacher trainee and their

subsequent professional development. In Pospíšil's (2017) study, half of the interviewed trainee teachers explicitly expressed their discontent with the way observations were conducted during their practicums. Most stated they had not received any information about the aims of observations, or instructions on the particular foci of observations. Additionally, they maintained they would have appreciated more guidance from their mentors during this phase of the practicum. Moreover, the number of lessons observed was surprisingly low: two trainee teachers reported having merely observed four lessons before they commenced teaching classes themselves. Another commonality to teacher trainees' experiences with observations is the reluctance of other teachers at the faculty school to let teacher trainees observe their lessons, the reason being the fear they would be (negatively) judged by them. Furthermore, some teachers who consented to having teacher trainees observe their classes reportedly seemed to seek approval of their performance afterwards (ibid.).

4.3 Preparedness of Mentors

There is an emerging body of literature in the Czech context highlighting the importance of adequate preparation of mentors for their roles and current insufficiency thereof (e.g. Čapek 2002, Duschinská 2010, Havel 2002, Píšová 2001). Elaborate suggestions of possible models of mentors' training have been made and presented in literature. Píšová (2001) summarizes her arguments in the following way:

- Guidance by mentors is necessary for successful teaching practicums;
- Mentoring is a specific expertise requiring special preparation (training);
- No teacher should mentor a teacher trainee without having undergone the aforementioned training;
- The mentor is an equal partner of university teachers, their roles and tasks are complementary, albeit different.

For the aforementioned reasons, the following policies should be implemented (ibid.):

- training of mentors should be implemented in a systematic way;
- a standard of mentor training should be implemented, as well as tools for evaluating mentors' progress and certificates for trained mentors;
- the specific qualification should be recognised within the career structure of the teaching profession;

– the aforementioned tools should improve mentors' status and prestige, allowing for a favourable treatment in terms of pay.

It remains that these policies are yet to be implemented.

Additionally, research findings report mentors' lack of awareness of the complexity of mentoring and their respective deficits in this area, notwithstanding the fact that the job in question is one for which they do not possess any formal qualifications (Duschinská 2010). A study on this topic conducted by Duschinská (2010) confirmed mentors' tendency to base their attitudes towards mentoring on their intuition rather than analytical skills or formal knowledge of matters at hand. A typical attribute is their reliance on their common sense and life experience, or confrontation of issues at hand with their own experience in their early years of teaching. Duschinská (2010) maintains that this issue may be perceived as a serious shortcoming of the Czech educational system and proceeds to emphasise on these grounds the disputability of asking mentors about their educational needs and perceived shortcomings.

4.4 Length of the practicum

Another commonality to teacher trainees' evaluations of their practicums is the insufficient length thereof. Many recognise the abyss between theory and practice and acknowledge the importance of the teaching practicum in helping their transitions from students of pedagogy to independent practitioners. Correspondingly, teaching practicums serve as a way of reducing the "reality shock" associated with the early years of teaching. While the length of their practicums proves to be an important factor for teacher trainees, it is perhaps the only factor mentors have no means of influencing. Still, mentors as a crucial party in the process of the practicum should offer their perspective on the issue, especially since potential changes would affect them as well.

5. Methodology

Research on teacher trainees' perceptions of teaching practicums and on teaching practicums in general reports insufficiency of the amount of guidance provided by mentors, one of the possible reasons being inadequate preparation of mentors for their roles. The aim of the empirical part of this work is the determination of mentors' perceptions of the teaching practicum, most notably their perceptions of their roles in the process of teacher education, their evaluations of their own degrees of preparedness, and attitudes to the tasks associated with the role of the mentor. This chapter provides information on the methodology used in conducting this study, presents research questions, and discusses the multiple case study as the selected research method.

5.1 Research questions

Five research questions have been formulated for this study.

Research questions:

- 1: What was/is mentors' motivation for their jobs? Do they perceive any benefits of mentoring for their personal or professional development?
- 2: How do mentors perceive their roles in the teacher education process?
- 3: How do mentors evaluate their own degrees of preparedness for their roles? Have they been prepared or trained in any particular way?
- 4: How do mentors describe the process of mentoring and how do the processes differ in each case?
- 5: How do mentors evaluate the current length of the teaching practicum?

5.2 Research method

After a thorough review of literature and research studies, the multiple case study emerged as the most suitable approach. Literature consulted on the topic of conducting qualitative research and multiple case studies includes Gillham (2013), Starman (2013), Šed'ová and Švaříček (2013), and Yin (2018).

A case study is “a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis; i.e., the characterization of the case and the events“ (Mesec 1998; as cited in Starman 2013) and falls into the category of qualitative research, although it may contain some quantitative features as well (Starman 2013). Qualitative methods of research are “essentially descriptive and inferential in character” (Gillham 2000: 9); typical features are reliance on unstructured data and non-numerical forms of data analysis, as opposed to quantitative methods which are based on gathering and analysing quantifiable data. There are several disadvantages of qualitative research as opposed to quantitative methods. Firstly, it only involves small samples which may not be representative of the broader population. Secondly, it can be seen as not objective. Thirdly, the interpretation of the results may be affected by the researchers' own experience or opinions and thus be seen as biased (Hammarberg et al. 2016). That being said, qualitative research can provide a uniquely extensive and “in-depth” description of social phenomena, most often from the standpoints of the participants (Yin 2018:33), and raise awareness of related issues. Moreover, Yin (ibid.) adds that the more our research questions “seek to explain some contemporary circumstance (e.g., “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works), the more that case study research will be relevant”. A case-study approach was therefore adopted in the present study to allow a deeper insight into the complexities of the teaching practicum, since it mainly focuses on such “how” and “why” questions. In order to examine various views held by mentors, a multiple case study was employed and five case studies have been carried out in total.

The interviewees are non-native English teachers and mentors with Czech as their L1, with the exception of one mentor who is a native speaker of German, teaches German as a second language, and has a German educational background. This mentor has been included in the study in order to provide a different view of the practicum and allow for a comparison of the ways practicums are carried out in the Czech Republic and Germany. No additional requirements for the selection of interviewees (such as the degree of their experience) were established in order to provide a diverse representation of mentors. Three mentors have got more than thirty years of experience and have mentored more than ten teacher trainees. Two

mentors are novice teachers with less than five years of experience and have only mentored one and two teacher trainees respectively. Out of the five mentors interviewed for the study, four of them were female and one of them was male. All mentors currently teach at secondary schools in Prague. The mentors' names in the study have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

Prior to the interviews, the participants received an explanation of the research and the way the interviews would be carried out, and consented to the interviews being recorded. Because the time period devoted to interviews coincided with the state of emergency and the subsequent closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted online via Skype. The interviews were semi-structured: a predetermined set of questions and possible prompts was used in each interview and followed by unplanned additional questions. The interviews were then transcribed using the recordings and analysed through the process of coding.

According to Gibbs (2018: 54), coding is a way of "indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it". A code in qualitative research is usually a word or a short phrase expressing the most important or summative feature of a portion of language based (or visual) data. During the coding process, codes are assigned to portions of transcribed data and divided into more general categories. Šed'ová and Švaříček (2013) describe the process of analysis in qualitative research as follows:

- 1) Classification of data – coding and categorizing;
- 2) Formulation of statements;
- 3) Interpretation of statements;
- 4) Comparison of statements;
- 5) Theoretical generalisation.

In general, coding facilitates deep, comprehensive and thorough insights into the analysed data and allows reliable conclusions to be made. Moreover, it can be seen as a way of systemizing qualitative research and thus making it more transparent and objective.

5.3 Interview questions

The interviews conducted within this study followed the subsequent structure.

1.A.What was your motivation to take on the role of a mentor?

B. Did you volunteer for it or was it assigned to you?

2. How do you perceive or understand the role of a mentor?

Prompts: description of the job of a mentor, ultimate aim of mentoring trainee teachers, skills or qualities of mentors

3. How would you describe your attitude to the teacher trainees? How would you describe your mutual (professional) relationship?

4. How do you perceive your degree of preparedness for the role of a mentor?

Prompts: any preparation from the school management, courses on mentoring, source of information about what the job entails; adequacy of preparation

5. Please describe the process of the regular teaching practicum from start to finish.

Prompts: observations, preparations for lessons, discussions and feedback

6. Do you assign the teacher trainee a particular task when they observe your lessons or do you simply let them observe?

7. Before the teacher trainee teaches a class independently, on what areas do you give them instructions/advice?

Prompts: instructions on subject matter to cover, providing literature/textbooks/any other materials to the trainee, advice on how to deal with discipline issues/particular students etc.

7. How do you provide feedback to the teacher trainee?

Prompts: focus of the feedback sessions, time spent discussing lessons

6. Do you try to get the teacher trainee to reflect on their teaching independently, or do you tell the teacher trainee directly what they should be doing differently?

7. Do you see any benefits of mentoring trainee teachers for your own personal or professional development?

6. Case studies

This chapter contains five case studies of mentors from Prague secondary schools. Each case study summarizes one mentor's perception of and approach to the teaching practicum and their role in it. As has been mentioned, mentors' names have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

6.1 Mentor A: Alena

Alena is highly experienced as a teacher as well as a mentor. After her initial experience as a teacher at a primary school, she taught at various secondary schools, having taught for 33 years in total. She first took on the role of the mentor approximately 15 years ago and has usually worked with one teacher trainee every year since then. In most cases, she is asked by the school management if she would like to mentor a trainee teacher that year. Alena's keen interest in working with aspiring teachers and motivation for the role of the mentor was apparent throughout the whole interview. She finds the work very interesting and said she enjoyed passing on her knowledge and experience, both positive and negative, increasingly more with age. She describes the work as “inspiring” and “refreshing”.

„Myslím si, že kantořina právě dává tu možnost, že člověk nestárne na duši.“³

In her view, the realities of the teaching job are often vastly different from the expectations students of pedagogy tend to have, and she realizes the importance of having the support of a mentor. Alena mentioned that both her parents were teachers and they often discussed teaching at home. Moreover, she got her first teaching position at the school where her mother was working, and she emphasised the benefits of the support and advice her mother had provided her with in her early years of teaching.

Alena mostly described the role of the mentor as a “guide” and “consultant”. She emphasised that she did not think her job was to tell the teacher trainee they had to do things a certain way. Instead, she stated she discussed with the teacher trainee what they were doing, which techniques were proving effective, and in what areas they could improve their performance. Alena highlighted the importance of communication and trying to see the teacher trainee's perspective. She stated that she always tried to make the teacher trainee feel

³ „I think that teaching helps you stay young at heart.“

welcome and let them know she was there to help them. Discussion was very important in Alena's view and she preferred giving suggestions and recommendations to direct instructions. Teacher trainees should mainly learn lesson planning, time management and dealing with discipline issues, according to Alena. She mentioned that teacher trainees should teach both “good” and problematic classes during their practicums in order to gain valuable experience. Furthermore, mentors should introduce teacher trainees to all aspects of the teaching profession.

“Tak myslím si, že je to učitel v takové roli, která se snaží být hlavně nápomocná, měl by být průvodcem a měl by tomu studentovi vysvětlit všechny náležitosti, které se toho vyučujícího procesu týkají. Není to jenom to učení samotné, ale všechno ostatní, co k tomu patří. Co vlastně škola jako taková přináší. A kromě toho, že je [studenty] naučí anglicky, tak musí být i určitým psychologem a trochu kamarádem a trochu vůdcem, aby ty děti prostě ty děti dokázal tím procesem provést pokud možno úspěšně.”⁴

As for skills and competencies, mentors should be patient, friendly, and empathetic; they should understand teacher trainees and their needs. Moreover, Alena thought that mentors should be able to accept feedback from teacher trainees, for example after the teacher trainee had observed the mentor's lessons. Alena also mentioned she aimed to create “open space” for teacher trainees as they needed to gain practical experience, and that she saw making mistakes as an integral part of the learning process.

In terms of her own degree of preparedness for the role of the mentor, Alena had no doubts she was fully prepared for it, the reason being her rich experience.

“Já jsem určitě připravená, protože jsem tam dlouho.”⁵

Alena stated that the faculty served as a source of information about the specifics of the job. She had been sent a document with instructions which she follows. Interestingly, Alena took part in *Klinický rok*, a project organised by University of Pardubice between the years 2001 and 2010. She mentored a teacher trainee over the period of a whole school year, and she stated that the teacher trainee partly taught lessons independently and partly assisted her with

⁴ “I think that the mentor's role is to be helpful, they should be the teacher trainee's guide and explain everything that is connected with the teaching process. It is not just *teaching*, there are numerous other responsibilities. They should explain what being a teacher is like. Besides teaching (their students) English, a teacher also needs to be a bit of a psychologist and a friend and a leader so they can guide their students through the process successfully.”

⁵ „I am definitely ready because I have been there for a long time.”

her work. During the school year, Alena took part in seminars for mentors organised by the university. However, she stated they were not being educated or trained at the seminars but rather they simply discussed their experiences with the process. Overall, Alena evaluated the project positively.

As for the teaching practicum itself, Alena is usually approached by teacher trainees themselves and she accepts one of them on the “first come, first served” basis each year. The practicum starts by the teacher trainee observing her lessons and Alena mentioned that she aimed to plan diverse lessons at this phase in order to model various teaching styles and methods. Alena does not give instructions or assign any particular tasks to the teacher trainee for the observations, the reason for that is that they are usually assigned some tasks by the faculty. After observations, the teacher trainee prepares their first lesson and starts teaching. In advance of each lesson, Alena reads the teacher trainee's lesson plan and discusses potential issues, such as time management, various types of activities, blackboard work etc., and/or gives some final instructions and recommendations. In terms of instructing the teacher trainee on subject matter to cover in their lessons, Alena saw the textbook as a sufficient source of information.

“No většinou ty učebnice jsou koncipované tak, že je to tam zpracované. A když mají teacher's book, tak k tomu není co říct.”⁶

Alena also mentioned that she tried to provide mental support as well as teacher trainees tended to be nervous before the first lesson.

Feedback sessions take place after each lesson and there is a final session at the end of the whole practicum. Alena was not able to say how much time exactly the feedback sessions usually took but mentioned they tended to get shorter as the practicum progressed, as the teacher trainee gained more experience as well as self-confidence. At the beginning of each feedback session, Alena asks the teacher trainee about their view of the lesson and whether they are satisfied with their performance. That serves as a starting point for a subsequent discussion in which Alena provides the teacher trainee with recommendations and useful tips.

As for the length of the practicum, Alena saw it as insufficient and thought it should be considerably longer, especially for those students of pedagogical faculties who undergo the teaching practicum in two subjects. The number of observations (two in each class the teacher trainee is to teach) is adequate but the number of lessons the teacher trainee teaches ought to

⁶ „The coursebooks usually cover the subject matter. And if they [teacher trainees] have the teacher's book, there is nothing left to say about it.”

be higher. Alena also mentioned that the teacher trainee should be able to spend more time at the faculty school as they were often busy with their studies, jobs, or other responsibilities. On the other hand, Alena did not see the insufficient length of the practicum as a crucial problem since teacher trainees inevitably gain experience once they graduate and enter the profession as full-time teachers.

6.2 Mentor B: Barbora

Similarly to Alena, Barbora has got plenty of experience with both teaching and mentoring. She has taught for thirty-five years and started mentoring aspiring teachers relatively early in her career, about four years after entering the profession. To this day, she has mentored about twenty teacher trainees. Barbora mentioned that she had worked with children since she had been in secondary school so teaching or mentoring of any kind felt natural to her. She enjoys passing on her experience and values the opportunity to discuss various issues related to the teaching job. She values the benefits of mentoring for her own professional development greatly; she described the job as “refreshing” and appreciated encountering younger colleagues’ perspective, energy, and enthusiasm. She also mentioned that working with the teacher trainees gave her inspiration for her work or compelled her to re-evaluate some of her views.

„Třeba i při nějakých věcech, na které dojde, o kterých si povídáme, tak mně zas dojde „aha, tohle bych třeba já sama mohla dělat jinak“ nebo možná, že tenhle nápad je lepší než něco jinýho, ta praxe je fakt přínosem i pro mě. Určitě.“⁷

Before she started mentoring, Barbora had not taken an active interest in the mentoring job and had not volunteered for it; she was later recommended for the job by a more experienced colleague. However, she stated she had known right away she would enjoy the job. Nowadays she is usually contacted by the pedagogical faculty at the beginning of each school year and makes arrangements regarding mentoring with the faculty. She is also sometimes contacted by students of the philosophical faculty directly.

For Barbora, arranging for the teacher trainee to experience the real-life classroom environment and day-to-day aspects of the job is a crucial aspect of the mentor’s overall

⁷ „When talking about certain aspects of teaching, I might think „Perhaps I could do this in a different way.“ or that a certain idea is better than another... Mentoring is really beneficial for me as well. Definitely.“

responsibility. Teacher trainees need to encounter methodological issues, problems occurring in the classroom, or various ways a language skill can be taught or presented, which facilitates the usage of theoretical knowledge in practice. Barbora also emphasised the role of reflective feedback. She stated that it should make students realise whether or not their approach proved effective during the lesson, what the advantages or disadvantages of a particular approach are etc. In terms of important skills or qualities mentors ought to have, the first thing that Barbora mentioned was that they should be good teachers. Furthermore, they should be patient, friendly, and ready for a challenge. Being open-minded was also important for Barbora. She observed that while some teacher trainees are “born teachers” and manage to deliver great lessons from the very beginning, some of them were anxious, inexperienced, or not planning on pursuing a teaching career at all. However, that often changed during the course of the practicum, and teacher trainees may significantly improve their skills. For this reason, Barbora emphasised the importance of giving everyone a chance even if they are not doing great at the beginning. She tries to approach teacher trainees in a friendly manner and sees their mutual relationship as a partnership, although she is of course more experienced than the teacher trainee. She mentioned that she felt they were in the same positions (the positions of teachers at the same school).

When asked about her perceived degree of preparedness, Barbora answered that she felt good about herself in the role of the mentor. She knew some training for mentors was being designed at the Faculty of Arts but did not feel as though she was missing anything of the sort. The instructions for mentors provided by the pedagogical faculty were a sufficient source of information about her role and responsibilities.

“Já si myslím, že obecně se v té roli cítím dobře. Samozřejmě jsme nikdy neměli nějaký, já nevím, sezení, kurz nebo něco podobného, i když vím, že teď něco podobného na filozofické fakultě připravují. Ale musím říct, že jsem nějak neměla pocit, že bych jako postrádala něco takového.”⁸

The process of the practicum, as Barbora described it, is standard. She is contacted either by the faculty or by teacher trainees themselves, then she meets with them before the practicum begins to go over the paperwork, she tells them basic information about her classes regarding their levels or textbooks they are using, and she and the teacher trainee agree on an

⁸ „I think I generally feel good about myself in the role of the mentor. Of course, we have never had some kind of training or anything like that, although I know something of that sort is being prepared at the Faculty of Arts. But I must say I never felt like I was missing out on something of the sort.“

approximate timetable. The practicum starts by the teacher trainee observing (usually two lessons in each group which they are going to teach). She does not assign particular tasks for the observations carried out by teacher trainees but sometimes she points out problematic or otherwise distinctive students. She observed that there was not enough time for teacher trainees to fulfill particular tasks during the observations since they only observed one or two lessons.

„Vzhledem k tomu, že oni mají jednu dvě [hodiny], tak není moc prostoru, ale spíš když tam je něco specifického, ať už to týká výuky speciálně nebo té třídy, té skupiny (...), tak něco takového tak si můžeme říct, že na tohle třeba ať si všímá něčeho konkrétního, ale řekla bych, že při těch násleších na to vlastně není moc prostoru, no.“⁹

After the initial observations, Barbora provides the teacher trainee with information on subject matter to cover during lessons and appropriate materials before the teacher trainee starts teaching. When describing what sort of instructions she gives, Barbora talked about tips on working with the textbook and the choice of activities for the lesson. She mentioned she usually gave very general advice and only elaborated if the teacher trainee required it. The amount of her input depends on the particular teacher trainee's experience; some of them are able to prepare their lessons independently early on in the practicum. In addition to that, after the teacher trainee has gained more confidence, she gives them more freedom in designing the lesson plans and rather discusses the plan with them post-lesson.

Barbora stated that she usually had the post-lesson analysis right after the lesson although that was not always possible since the teacher trainee may teach two or three lessons in a row. In that case, they had the discussion at the end of the work day or she gave them feedback quickly between the lessons. After the last lesson of the day, the post-lesson analysis takes place and usually lasts for fifteen to forty-five minutes. Barbora begins by asking the teacher trainee about their perspective on the lesson and its high and low points. After that, they discuss alternative approaches and advantages or disadvantages of individual activities. She mentioned that her feedback usually emerged naturally from the exchange of opinions but teacher trainees were mostly able to reflect on their performances quite well. At the end of the practicum, she provides the teacher trainee with summative feedback and provides a written

⁹ „Considering that they have one or two [observations], there is not enough time. Only when there is something specific regarding the individual groups or teaching in general, I might tell them to observe something in particular, but I would say there is not enough time for that during observations.“

evaluation for the faculty.

Barbora saw the length of the practicum as insufficient but stated that she could not imagine having the teacher trainee there for a longer period of time as it was demanding for her to reconcile the needs of the teacher trainee with those of her students. She revealed that her more advanced classes did not use textbooks anymore and instead she based their lessons on the topics for the Maturita exam. During the practicum, however, she expects teacher trainees to use the textbook in their lessons, so she has to incorporate it into the class lessons before the practicum itself, as it would be too demanding for the student not to base their lessons on the textbook.

„V těch vyšších ročnících tak člověk nejede s knížkou, děláme věci, děláme témata, kdy už je fakt obtížný pro toho studenta vlastně se zapojit, a vlastně vždycky, když ten student tam přichází, tak já už předem se snažím nějak nacpat to, že vlastně budu moct dělat minimálně základ nějaký s tou knihou.“¹⁰

Barbora stated that the two weeks of the practicum were the bare minimum but from her perspective as the mentor, a longer practicum would be problematic and unwelcome.

6.3 Mentor C: Cyril

Cyril became a mentor relatively early in his career, as he has only been working as a full-time teacher for four years and has already mentored two teacher trainees. Before graduating from university, however, he gained experience teaching for various language schools. Cyril mentioned that he still remembered his own practicum and regarded the teaching practicum as the only opportunity to gain insight into the realities of teaching in a secondary school, and wanted to give others the same opportunity he had received. He perceived the kinds of teaching that took place in language schools (mainly individual lessons delivered to adult students) and in secondary schools as entirely different.

„Tohle je asi jediný způsob, jak ten student si může vlastně jako představit, o čem to učení vlastně je.“¹¹

¹⁰ „We do not use coursebooks in the higher classes, we go through (Maturita) topics, and it is difficult for the teacher trainee to take part in that. Before the teaching practicum starts, I have to introduce the coursebook into the course again so the teacher trainee can use it.“

¹¹ „This is the only way the teacher trainee can see what teaching is actually all about.“

He was contacted by the faculties in both cases and he mentored one teacher trainee from the Pedagogical Faculty and one from the Faculty of Arts.

Cyril reported that he had no source of information about the details of the mentoring job, such as his responsibilities or the aims of the practicum. He knew the process from his own practicum and also had his own perception of what was required of him.

„No to je vlastně celkem těžký, protože vám to jakoby nikdo neřekne. (smích) Nevím, jestli někde to je nějakým způsobem definovaný, žádný takový dokument se ke mně nikdy nedostal.“¹²

Nevertheless, he described the main responsibility of the mentor as creating opportunities for the teacher trainee to experience the everyday realities of the job, whether it meant teaching or other responsibilities such as lesson planning or paperwork. The mentor should allow the teacher trainee to get a sense of what their future job could look like. An ideal mentor should be helpful, kind, objective, and communicative, and they should essentially have the qualities of a good teacher. However, Cyril remarked that it may be hard to make use of these good qualities when the mentor was busy with their work and ought to attend to the teacher trainee at the same time.

„Někdy když (...) je [člověk] třeba pod tlakem, že je jakoby v trochu stresující situaci, tak třeba někdy úplně zapomene na tu svoji roli (...), protože prostě ten stres kolem a ten tlak jako to úplně neumožní, no, takže je to vlastně hlavně o tom, aby ten fakultní učitel si nezapomínal na to, že vlastně se musí chovat určitým způsobem, protože tam vlastně není sám, ale má tam někoho vedle sebe.“¹³

Cyril talked openly about the negative influence of the stress and pressure which he sometimes experienced in his role as the mentor on his attitude to the teacher trainee, and even admitted occasionally raising his voice or reacting in an unpleasant manner when he perceived some of the teacher trainee's questions as unnecessary.

„Jak tam člověk třeba měsíc v kuse někoho má, pořád se musí o někoho starat, tak je to náročné i na psychiku toho fakultního učitele si myslím. Takže se potom může dostat

¹² „That is actually difficult to say since no one ever tells you that. (laughter) I do not know if that is defined anywhere, I have never got hold of such document.“

¹³ „Sometimes when you are under pressure, in a stressful situation, you forget about your role (...), because the stress and pressure of the job does not make it possible, so the mentor should remember they need to behave in a certain way because they are not alone, there is another person present there.“

do situací, kdy třeba řekne něco, čeho potom lituje, protože to prostě jako v té chvíli se nedokáže ovládat.”¹⁴

Cyril also emphasised the role that mutual sympathy of the mentor and the teacher trainee played in the practicum and said that it was easier to lapse into unpleasant behaviour if the mentor did not naturally get on well with the teacher trainee. Still, Cyril described mentoring as a “wonderful experience” but remained that it was not always one hundred percent positive.

At the beginning of the practicum, the teacher trainee observes lessons taught by Cyril, observes his teaching style, makes notes, and discusses the lesson with him afterwards. Before they start teaching independently, Cyril gives them instruction on subject matter to cover and appropriate activities. He stated that he usually took a look at the teacher trainee’s lesson plans right before the lessons and approved them, as they were mostly satisfactory. Cyril also mentioned that scheduling post-lesson discussions sometimes proved difficult; he stated that the teacher trainee he mentored had sometimes left after her lesson because she needed to attend her lectures at university, so they had had the post-lesson discussion as late as two days later. He stated that he usually spent fifteen to twenty minutes discussing the lesson with the teacher trainee, although occasionally he only sent them his feedback via e-mail because they were both too busy. Cyril also said that he began the discussions by asking the teacher trainee about their perception of the lesson and whether they would do anything differently in hindsight, and then continued with his own comments and advice. Throughout the interview, Cyril described honesty and open communication as very important, and remarked that he did not try to appear as a “perfect teacher” but rather admit that some areas of teaching were difficult for him as well and it was okay to make mistakes.

When asked about his perceived degree of preparedness, Cyril admitted it may seem he was not qualified or competent enough to mentor aspiring teachers as he was currently in his fourth year of teaching full-time. On the other hand, he saw it as a potential advantage as he still remembered his own practicum vividly and could use his own experience to his advantage. Moreover, Cyril stated that he did not think more experience was necessarily needed as anyone who had spent a month or two at the school had more experience than the teacher trainee and could therefore offer advice.

¹⁴ „When they have the teacher trainee there for a whole month and they have to take care of them all the time, it can be stressful for the mentor. As a result, they might say something they regret later but they simply can’t control themselves in the moment.“

„Já si upřímně myslím, že připravený je každý, kdo v té škole strávil, já nevím, měsíc, dva, protože i ten člověk, který tam byl měsíc, tak je o hodně víc připraven než ten, co tam nebyl vůbec. Tak já myslím, že každý kdo nějakou dobu strávil ve škole, s tím má prostě k tomu co říct.“¹⁵

Despite admitting that mentoring can sometimes be demanding for the mentor, Cyril criticised the current length of the practicum and described it as “ridiculous”. He mentioned a friend of his who studied teaching in Scotland where students spent a whole year of their studies at the faculty school, which he saw as “absolutely amazing”. He also pointed out that it was nearly impossible for teacher trainees to be diligent in preparations for both the practicum and regular university lectures at the same time. A solution for that would require a fundamental change in the university curricula.

„Těch osmnáct hodin, které požaduje Filozofická fakulta, tak to mi připadá opravdu směšné. (...) Na druhou stranu, vzhledem k tomu, že tady je ta praxe jako taková věc, která se dělá během toho, že ten student chodí i na přednášky a na semináře, tak to asi jinak ani nejde, no. Já si upřímně myslím, že by to mělo trvat aspoň dva měsíce a během těch dvou měsíců by ten student neměl mít povinnost chodit na semináře a na přednášky, protože když se má připravovat svědomitě na tu praxi, tak podle mě není možné, aby se zároveň připravoval svědomitě na semináře a na přednášky, takže to je spíš takový systémový problém, který by asi požadoval nějaké úplné překopání těch programů učitelství.“¹⁶

In addition to that, Cyril would also welcome better communication between the mentor and the faculty about the process of the practicum and the teacher trainee’s performance. The first teacher trainee Cyril mentored was from Slovakia, attended Charles University through the Erasmus programme and was allowed to do the teaching practicum in Prague, and Cyril had to fill out various detailed evaluation forms about the teacher trainee’s progress which he

¹⁵ „Honestly, I think that anyone who has spent a month or two (at the school) is ready. If they have been there for a month, they are already more experienced than someone who has not been there at all. So I think that anyone who has spent any time at all at a school has something to say about it.“

¹⁶ „I think that those eighteen hours (which are required by the Faculty of Arts) are ridiculous. (...) On the other hand, when teacher trainees have to attend lectures and seminars during their practicums, there is probably no other way. I honestly think that practicums should be at least two months long and teacher trainees should not have to attend lectures and seminars during that time, because if they are to prepare diligently for their teaching practicums, it is impossible for them to prepare diligently for their lectures and seminars at the same time. So the problem is in the system, and a solution would require a fundamental change in the university curricula.“

considered useful. He suggested that a similar form of feedback required from mentors could prove useful for both the faculty supervisor and the teacher trainee.

6.4 Mentor D: Dominika

Unlike other mentors included in this thesis, Dominika is a native speaker of German, she completed her university studies in Germany, and now teaches German as a second language at a private secondary school in Prague. She has been teaching for thirty years and has mentored approximately ten to fifteen teacher trainees. She is usually contacted by the pedagogical faculties in Ústí nad Labem or Prague and she has also mentored teacher trainees from Germany. In the interview, Dominika also provided an explanation of the German model of teacher training.

In Germany, teacher training is divided into two parts. In the first part, students undergo regular university education including a teaching practicum which is three to six months long. After graduation, they teach at a faculty school for two years under the supervision of a trained mentor. Only after this stage do students take their final exams (which include evaluations of their demonstrations of their practical skills) and become fully qualified teachers. Teachers need to undergo specialised additional training in order to become mentors. The German system of both teacher and mentor training is entirely different from the Czech model.

Dominika's personal motivation for the role of the mentor is twofold. Firstly, she believes her school has a lot to offer, as the quality of teaching is high, they incorporate cooperative teaching and place emphasis on teaching critical thinking to their students, and thus the school can offer a unique perspective of the school system to teacher trainees. Moreover, she acknowledges the importance of thorough training for aspiring teachers, as she said that letting a beginning teacher teach when they have no idea what to expect was "a horrible thing". Secondly, Dominika said that mentoring a teacher trainee meant looking at her own teaching from a different perspective, re-evaluating her habits and stereotypes, and thus was beneficial to her as well.

Dominika described her role of the mentor as "coaching" the teacher trainee rather than "teaching" them in the traditional sense, and she repeatedly emphasised the role of the teacher trainee's self-reflection. She mentioned that she regularly observed other teachers' lessons at the school, as she was the supervisor, and she sometimes recorded the lessons on a camcorder.

Afterwards, she and the other teacher watched the recording and discussed the lesson. Dominika reported that teachers were generally able to analyse their lessons themselves without any prompts.

In Dominika's view, mentors should not only have mastered the teaching of their subject, but they should also be empathetic and skilled in interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and active listening. They should have a basic knowledge of psychology and certain leadership skills used in the spirit of partnership and cooperation. Of course, mentors also cooperate with the faculty and Dominika mentioned she thought there should be closer cooperation and better communication between mentors and faculties. Overall, the goal of the teaching practicum is for the teacher trainee to gain experience under the supervision of an experienced mentor and allow for their easier transition into the profession.

Dominika stated that she had not undergone any formal training for the role of the mentor as such. However, she took a course in psychology and underwent many courses on communication or conflict resolution as well as peer review training. Dominika also shared that she supervised other teachers at her school and regularly observed their lessons and provided them with feedback, therefore she had plenty of experience with this type of work. Overall, she evaluated her degree of preparedness for the role of the mentor as "quite good" but added that further education was always important.

„Vždycky je něco co doplnit. Já myslím, taky není od věci některé kurzy absolvovat znovu a znovu, samozřejmě v té spirálové oblasti, aby se to prohlubovalo a roširovalo, refresh je vždycky dobrý.“¹⁷

Before she starts a practicum with a teacher trainee, she has a conversation with them about their expectations and responsibilities and they discuss the practicum in greater detail. Afterwards, the teacher trainee observes several classes taught by several teachers at the school. Dominika stated that they aimed for the teacher trainee to have the opportunity to observe various teaching styles and discuss the classes afterwards with the respective teachers. As for observing with or without a specific issue in mind, both options are possible in Dominika's view. Dominika mentioned she had undergone peer review training and cooperated with teachers from other schools, and therefore had various forms and tools for observations at her disposal. She made a clear distinction between focused and impressionistic

¹⁷ „There is always something more to learn. I also think it is useful to take some courses over and over again, in the spiral approach of course, in order to deepen and expand your knowledge, refreshing your knowledge is always good.”

observations, claiming that the teacher trainee's experience plays a role. A less experienced teacher trainee is usually tasked with focusing on a specific aspect of the lesson, such as time management, classroom management, or classroom language. After they find their feet, they can focus on the lesson as a whole, which Dominika sees as more difficult.

After observations, the teacher trainee is told what they ought to cover during their lessons and they get instructions on both subject matter and methodology. The teacher trainee prepares the lesson on their own and she discusses the plan of the lesson with them, paying attention to details such as why they chose certain activities or what the overall aim of the lesson is. If she as the mentor perceives some areas as potentially problematic, she tries to get the teacher trainee to think of a different approach, or alternatively advises them on the particular issue herself. Again, the teacher trainee's previous experience is important. Dominika mentioned she had to provide some teacher trainees with more guidance in order for them to plan lessons with good communication and student interaction, while some who were more experienced needed less help.

„Měla jsem studenty, které jsem musela velmi úzce vést k tomu, aby opustili doplňování do mezer a řízenou formu frontální výuky a potom jsem zadávala konkrétní požadavky, aby určité kroky vynechali a místo toho zkusili aplikovat něco jiného. Jsou studenti, kteří vlastně mají větší zkušenosti, a těm tím pádem nechám úplný volno v té fázi přípravy a potom jenom (provedeme) reflexi toho plánu předtím, než půjde učit.“¹⁸

After the lesson, Dominika begins the post-lesson discussion by asking the teacher trainee to reflect on their performance. If the self-reflection is not sufficient, she asks reflective questions in order to shed some light on the issue.

„Nejdřív sebereflexe a potom, pokud ta sebereflexe není dostačující, vést vhodnými otázkami toho kolegu, pokud něco nevidí, nebo nechce vidět.“¹⁹

Dominika dedicates a lot of time to post-lesson analyses and discussions, usually one to two hours for each lesson.

¹⁸ „I have had to make some students abandon „filling the gaps“ and teacher-controlled frontal instruction and required that they leave some activities out and try using something else instead. I give more freedom in this aspect to more experienced students and then we just reflect together on the lesson plan before the lesson.”

¹⁹ „Self-reflection first, and if self-reflection is not enough, if the colleague does not see or does not want to see something, I ask reflective questions in order to shed some light on the issue.”

„No tak když to děláme dopodrobna, tak ty dvě hodiny to jsou. V ideálním případě. (...) Vždycky tomu vymezuju hodinu na rozbor té hodiny.“²⁰

Moreover, she asks the teacher trainee beforehand if they would like her to focus on a specific aspect of their teaching and discuss it in greater detail afterwards.

The length of the practicum, in Dominika's view, is insufficient. She observed that teachers ought to be equipped not only with the knowledge of their subject as such but they should also have experience with areas such as school administration or communication with the students' parents, which they cannot gain if they are only present at the school for a period of three weeks.

„Je to strašný. (smích) Jakože strašně krátký, takhle. (...) Když se připravuje i na roli toho třídního učitele, kde jsou úplně jiné kompetence, tak 18 hodin během 3 týdnů je naprostá katastrofa.“²¹

Another problem is that some teacher trainees do not devote enough time to their practicums because of other responsibilities they may have. Dominika mentioned that when teacher trainees came from Germany to undergo their teaching practicums at Dominika's school, they spent three months or more with the practicum as their sole focus, and the difference was significant.

„(O)ni jsou od rána do odpoledne s námi ve sborovně, i o přestávkách, a vidí tím pádem i takovýty problémy normálního provozu a ne jenom „odučím, rozbor, jdu někam jinám, spěchám zpátky na fakultu, spěchám zpátky do práce atd.“²²

Dominika suggested a period of three months as a sufficient length of the teaching practicum. She observed that during that time teacher trainees would have the opportunity to experience everyday events as well as staff meetings and parent-teacher conferences. In addition to that, they should have enough time to focus on their practicums.

²⁰ „It does take two hours if we do it in detail. That is ideal. (...) I always devote an hour to the discussion.”

²¹ „It is terrible. (laughter) Terribly short, I mean. (...) And if they are to prepare for the role of the form teacher which requires different competencies, 18 hours in 3 weeks is a catastrophe.”

²² „They are with us in the staff room every day, from morning till afternoon, during the breaks as well, so they can see everyday troubles, too, they are not like “I teach the lesson, discuss it, I go somewhere else, I rush to the university, I rush to work etc.”

6.5 Mentor E: Eliška

Eliška is the least experienced mentor included in this study with only four years of teaching experience and having mentored one teacher trainee. Eliška studied English and American Studies at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University and underwent basic pedagogical training within the lifelong learning programme at the Pedagogical Faculty after graduation. It is worth mentioning that Eliška has never undergone a teaching practicum herself since the pedagogical programme at the Pedagogical Faculty only included observations. During her studies, she gave private individual lessons and occasionally taught a few classes as a substitute teacher at the school where her mother taught. After graduation, she taught at a primary school for two years and then transferred to a secondary school where she has worked for two years so far. Her first experience with mentoring took place only two months prior to giving the interview for this study and she mentored a teacher trainee she had known beforehand from her previous cooperation with the faculty.

Eliška admitted that having met the teacher trainee beforehand increased her motivation for the role of the mentor because she knew the teacher trainee to be diligent and competent as well as communicative. She was also looking forward to having the opportunity to observe her students with another teacher and seeing how they would respond to a different teaching style as this is not normally possible to do at her school. Moreover, Eliška said she was lucky the teacher trainee did very well during the practicum, and she saw great progress which was motivating for her as well. Eliška also emphasised how beneficial the experience was for her own development. Mentoring a less experienced teacher led her to re-consider methods and techniques she uses in her classes and realizing she has experience and knowledge she can pass on helped her with her self-confidence. Eliška admitted having experienced the imposter syndrome and said that stepping out of her comfort zone by teaching someone and having them observe her own lessons helped her immensely. Moreover, it motivated her to further improve her skills.

„Tak mně to v tomhle hrozně pomohlo. Že mám pocit, že jsem si uvědomila, že některý věci dělám správně a některý zase ne, ale o to víc se v nich můžu pak zlepšit.“²³

Eliška stated that the most important task of the mentor was to show the teacher trainee what real-life teaching looked like, especially practical aspects of teaching “the university cannot

²³ „It has helped me tremendously in this aspect. I feel like I realised that I do some things well and others not so well, but at least there is room for improvement.”

prepare (teacher trainees) for”, such as time spent on lesson planning, reacting to non-standard situations in the classroom, or having a lesson go badly. Eliška thought a mentor should be “open” and unafraid of feedback, in addition to being a good teacher. They should also be able to admit that they occasionally experience problems as well and discuss problematic areas with the teacher trainee rather than tell them a “perfect” solution.

„Měl by to být člověk, který... jak bych to řekla... dokáže taky přiznat, že některý věci jsou těžký, nebýt tak jako říct „já to dělám takhle a takhle to je vždycky správně“, ale třeba „s touhle situací já si taky nevím rady, pojďme si sednout a přemýšlet nad tím, jaký by mohly být možný řešení“.“²⁴

All in all, Eliška emphasised the importance of dialogue and an equal relationship between the mentor and the teacher trainee.

Eliška admitted being nervous before the start of the practicum as she realized her relative inexperience. However, she gained more confidence during the course of the practicum and eventually felt like she had something to offer, especially after she saw she was able to provide the teacher trainee with useful and helpful advice. Moreover, Eliška mentioned that she felt she could empathize with the teacher trainee more easily, being a novice teacher herself, and advise her on issues such as asserting authority as a young teacher. As for getting information about her role and responsibilities, Eliška admitted that she had not received any guidance on what was expected of her and as a result did not feel quite prepared.

„Že by mi někdo řekl, co to obnáší, to ne, takže jsem se cítila trošičku nepřipravená. (...) Jako věděla jsem, že budou náslechy a potom bude výuka v hodinách, že bude nějaká zpětná vazba, ale co se týče těch věcí kolem, to jsem nevěděla nic.“²⁵

Eliška also regretted missing out on her own teaching practice as she recognised its importance. Her early years of teaching were difficult, and she did not receive any formal help. She also stated it would be useful if there was a well-worked out system of support of more experienced colleagues for novice teachers.

²⁴ „It should be a person who... How should I put this... A person who can admit some things are difficult, they should not just say “I do it this way and this is the only correct way” but rather “I am not sure how to handle this either, let us sit down and consider possible solutions.”

²⁵ „No one had told me what it entailed, no, so I felt a bit unprepared. (...) I mean I knew there would be observations and then they would give lessons on their own, there would be some kind of feedback, but I knew nothing about the other things.”

„A přitom je to tak strašně užitečná věc. Já bych hrozně ocenila, kdybych mohla tohleto (pedagogickou praxi) zažít. (...) Myslím si, že tohle je strašně užitečný a že by bylo hrozně fajn, kdyby byl víc propojený ten systém tý podpory třeba od zkušených kolegů a tak.“²⁶

At the beginning of the practicum, Eliška chose three classes for the teacher trainee to teach and aimed to choose diverse ones, regarding age group or their characters. During observations, the teacher trainee observed their behaviour and started to learn their names. Eliška mentioned that the teacher trainee had been trained in observations and brought her own materials (worksheets to fill out) so she did not need to give her special instructions for observations beforehand; they only discussed the lessons afterwards and Eliška asked her about her opinions on various aspects of the lesson. Before the teacher trainee started teaching, Eliška had given her instructions on subject matter to cover and had pointed out possibly problematic areas. During the post-lesson discussions, Eliška stated that she usually asked the teacher trainee to reflect on her lessons and she was able to analyse them quite well. In addition, Eliška asked questions such as what did not go well in the lesson, what could she have done differently etc.

What Eliška saw as problematic was the structure of the practicum, as the practicum was three weeks long and the teacher trainee was only supposed to teach three to four lessons a week. As a result, the teacher trainee and she took turns teaching the selected groups.

„Studentka učí třeba dvě hodiny, já jednu, pak ona jednu, tak se to tak střídá... Myslím si, že by bylo lepší, že by to bylo souvislý bez přestávky. (...) Ale to nejde udělat, protože by se to muselo nacpat do dvou týdnů, ale málokdo má dva týdny volno, aby se mohl přizpůsobit tomu rozvrhu.“²⁷

What Eliška saw as problematic was the schedule of teaching three to four classes a week for three weeks in total rather than the length of the practicum as a whole. However, she admitted being influenced by her own experience; during her pedagogical training, she only attended fourteen hours of observations and had no direct teaching practice, so she considered eighteen hours of direct teaching great in comparison.

²⁶ „And it is, in fact, so important. I would have appreciated it so much if I had the opportunity to experience this. (...) I think it is incredibly useful and it would be great if there was a better system of support from more experienced colleagues.”

²⁷ „The teacher trainee teaches two lessons, I teach one, then she teaches one, we take turns like this. I think it would be better if it were continuous, uninterrupted. (...) But that is impossible because you would have to do it in two weeks, but most people can't spend two weeks solely on their practicums.”

„My jsme teda měli v rámci pedagogické praxe praxe čtrnáct hodin náslechu a to bylo celý. (...) Takže když potom vidím 18 hodin učení, tak mi to přijde úplně skvělý.“²⁸

Eliška also criticised the system of pedagogical training within the lifelong programme and described it as greatly insufficient.

„Se mnou třeba studovali lidi, co v životě neučili, co studovali něco úplně jiného a pak si udělali jazykové kurz a šli potom dělat tohle [pedagogické minimum]. (...) Tohle je úplně šílený, doufám, že to změní. (...) Jediný požadavek, co se týče angličtiny, je, že má člověk magisterský titul z čehokoli, k tomu certifikát C1 a vlastně si zaplatí ten kurz, co má rok a půl, a je to teda těch čtrnáct hodin náslechu, který mi přišly vtipný z hlediska toho, že učím třeba 20 hodin týdně, ale... Normálně Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy a tohleto prostě existuje a je to akreditovaný a je to šílený.“²⁹

At the end of the interview, Eliška mentioned she felt disappointed by the encounter with the faculty supervisor. The faculty supervisor arrived right before the lesson, left shortly after it, and only discussed the lesson with the teacher trainee, not with Eliška. Eliška was looking forward to discussing the teacher trainee's performance and was planning on praising her for her progress. She admitted feeling slightly undermined as a result and said she would appreciate better communication between the faculty and herself as the mentor. Moreover, she saw the incident as a wasted opportunity for useful discussion between the three parties.

„Já bych tu studentku i pochválila, řekla, v čem mi udělala radost, nějaký pokroky, protože na ni koukám tři tejdny, že jo. (...) To pro mě bylo velký zklamání a přišlo mi, že nedošlo k propojení té části té školy a té praxe, té fakultní školy. Protože prostě se tam ztratil potenciálně užitečný bod diskuze. Přišla jsem si, že mě to trošičku shazuje v tom smyslu, že já myslím, že u nich ta diskuze proběhla, ale mě k ní jako nikdo nepřizval.“³⁰

²⁸ „We had fourteen hours of observations as teaching practice and that was it. (...) So when I see 18 hours of teaching, it seems great to me.“

²⁹ „Some of my classmates were people who had studied something completely different, underwent a language course and then started this [teacher training]. The only requirements, when it comes to English, are an MA in any subject and a C1 certificate, and they pay for this course which takes a year and a half and includes fourteen hours of observations, which seemed ridiculous to me considering that I teach about twenty hours a week, but... I mean, this is the Charles University's Pedagogical Faculty, this is happening there, it is accredited, and it is insane.“

³⁰ „I would have praised the student, pointed out her accomplishments and progress because I had watched her there for three weeks, you know. (...) That was really disappointing for me and I thought that the teaching practicum was not connected with the university. A potentially useful point of discussion was lost. I felt slightly undermined in the sense that I think they had the discussion, but I was not invited.“

In conclusion of this statement, Eliška said that she would insist on taking part in the discussion if she was lucky enough to have the opportunity to mentor a teacher trainee again.

7. Discussion of findings

The interviews with mentors explored various aspects of the mentoring process and shed light on issues in the teaching practicum from the points of view of mentors. It is nevertheless important to keep in mind that the views presented in this study are subjective perspectives of individual mentors and thus must not be seen as representing views held by all mentors in general. Still, some views were shared by all or most mentors in this study which suggests that they might potentially be common to many more. The subsequent chapter discusses the findings made in the case studies in regard to the research questions presented in Chapter 5.1.

1: What was/is mentors' motivation for their jobs? Do they perceive any benefits of mentoring for their personal or professional development?

A commonality to all interviewees was their strong motivation for the job of the mentor and their acknowledgment of subsequent benefits for their own development. Most commonly mentioned sources of motivation were mentors' desire to pass on their knowledge and experience as well as having an opportunity to discuss various aspects of the teaching job with an aspiring colleague. Most respondents stated without any prompts that mentoring teacher trainees led them to re-evaluate their own deep-rooted behaviours and classroom techniques, inspired them to try new activities in their lessons, and they often described the mentoring experience as "refreshing" and "inspiring". Some of them also appreciated the opportunity to observe their students in a different setting and seeing how they responded to a different teaching style. Seeing their teacher trainees' progress was also highly motivating for mentors. All mentors were aware of the importance of the teaching practicum in the process of teacher education. A frequent observation among the respondents was that the theoretical training provided by universities could not prepare teacher trainees for the realities of the teaching job and the teaching practicum was consequently their only chance at gaining practical experience and a realistic perspective on the profession as such. As for important skills or qualities, respondents often stated that mentors should be patient, friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable, as well as good teachers themselves.

These findings seem to be in accordance with the most frequent motives of mentors for trainee supervision described in literature and discussed in Chapter 3.5, although no pragmatic reasons such as "[I do it] for the money" appeared in the present study. All mentors gave selfless reasons for their willingness to supervise teacher trainees, such as wanting to

contribute to a student's development or appreciating the opportunity to reflect on their own work. The results of a study conducted by Loucká (2018) show that most mentors draw inspiration from teacher trainee supervision, and the findings made in the present study also confirm this, as all mentors explicitly described the process of mentoring as inspiring. In addition to that, Chapter 3.4 presents three kinds of skills mentors ought to be equipped with: subject content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge about how to teach teachers. While all interviewees in the present study recognised the importance of having adequate knowledge of the English language and the particularities of teaching, such as classroom management or lesson planning, the necessity for specialised pedagogical knowledge for teacher trainee supervision was never mentioned. It should be pointed out, however, that spontaneous answers to unexpected questions during interviews cannot be expected to cover theoretical concepts as thoroughly and in such great detail as literature on the topic does. It remains that mentors reported not having undergone any specialised training for the role of the mentor, and their statements clearly indicated their reliance on their intuition or their own experience rather than formal pedagogical knowledge or analytical skills. This issue is further addressed below in the discussion of Research question 3.

2: How do mentors perceive their roles in the teacher education process?

Mentors' views regarding their roles in the practicum were also remarkably similar. They mostly saw the mentor's role as a guide, a consultant, a coach, or a helpful, more experienced colleague. They placed emphasis on discussion as well as self-reflection and mostly provided advice and recommendations rather than direct instructions. A crucial task in mentors' views was allowing the teacher trainee to experience the everyday realities of the job, learn to use their theoretical knowledge in a practical manner, and gain valuable experience under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

In terms of the theoretical roles of the mentor described in Chapter 3.1, it can be said that mentors' perspectives of their roles mostly corresponded with the roles of *supporters* and *educators*. Interestingly, no respondent described their role as "model" for the teacher trainee and some even explicitly stated that they did not try to provide "guaranteed" or "perfect" solutions to problems to the teacher trainee since there were usually various possible ways of addressing the issue at hand. Moreover, the two novice teachers/mentors also mentioned they had pointed out to their mentees that some areas of teaching were problematic for them as well. This implies that mentors do not necessarily expect the teacher trainee to emulate their

particular teaching styles but rather discuss various teaching methods or techniques with them and allow them to develop their own. The same principle could be applied to the theoretical models of mentoring described in Chapter 3.2. Mentors' attitude to their mentees could be interpreted as representing the Competency-based model, in that they expect the teacher trainee to acquire various skills, and mostly the Reflective model, as all mentors emphasised the role of post-lesson reflective discussions and teacher trainees' self-reflection, rather than the Apprenticeship model.

3: How do mentors evaluate their own degrees of preparedness for their roles? Have they been prepared or trained in any particular way?

The perceived degree of preparedness understandably differed for more and less experienced mentors. The two novice teachers/mentors had a similar view on their respective competencies: on the one hand, they acknowledged their relative inexperience, but on the whole felt sufficiently competent and commented that they had been able to provide their mentees with helpful advice. The three more experienced mentors all felt adequately prepared for the role. As for the source of information about the particularities of the job, two mentors reported they had received no information on their specific responsibilities or the overall aim of the practicum, and had to rely on their own experience or notions of the practicum; one of them admitted she had felt unprepared in this aspect as a result. One mentor mainly drew from her experience supervising her colleagues in a manner similar to mentoring. Two remaining mentors considered the forms provided by the faculties a sufficient source of information. In terms of preparation or training for the role of the mentor in particular, no respondent received any. One mentor underwent training in peer review and drew on her experience as a senior teacher (which included observations and giving feedback to other teachers), and another took part in a project including reflective discussions for mentors. Opinions on the need for specialised training for mentors differed greatly. Firstly, one mentor considered self-development through specialised training and courses very important. Secondly, another stated she felt good about her capability and never felt the need for any training of this kind. Thirdly, another considered her rich experience in teaching a sufficient qualification for mentoring. Lastly, another declared that anyone who had taught for a month or two was qualified enough to mentor teacher trainees since they did have more experience than them. This suggests that mentors' views on the necessity of specialised training are highly diverse and potential changes in the system in this regard would consequently receive mixed

reactions.

The preparedness of mentors in the Czech educational system was discussed from a theoretical point of view in Chapter 4.3. It presented the reasons for the necessity of specialised training as well as policies which could be implemented in order to ensure sufficient preparation of mentors. Chapter 4.3 also cited a study conducted by Duschinská (2010) which reported mentors' general lack of awareness of the complexity of mentoring, their tendency to base their attitudes towards mentoring on their intuition, and reliance on their common sense and life experience rather than analytical skills or formal knowledge. For these reasons, Duschinská (*ibid.*) highlighted the disputability of asking mentors about their perceived skills or knowledge, or their educational needs. Findings made in this thesis support these claims to a great extent, as most respondents had received no training for the role of the mentor and did not consider such training necessary. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that it was Mentor D (the mentor with a German educational background) who underwent courses in areas such as peer review, communication, or conflict resolution, and also considered self-development through specialised training and courses very important. This implies a potential link between having undergone specialised training and consequently perceiving such training as important or necessary. In contrast to that, the four Czech mentors included in the present study had received no specialised training and, although they expressed interest in the courses being prepared at the Faculty of Arts, did not consider their not having undergone any training a competency deficiency. These findings support Duschinská's (*ibid.*) claim concerning the disputability of asking mentors about their perceived skills and educational needs. Additionally, Chapter 4.3 also cited Pířová's (2001) claims that mentoring is a specific expertise requiring special preparation (training), and no teacher should mentor a teacher trainee without having undergone the aforementioned training. On the grounds of their statements, it is evident that Czech mentors do not share these views. This prompts the question whether the implementation of mandatory training for mentors would lead to their perceiving such training as important/necessary, or whether it would be considered needless and even potentially discourage some teachers from pursuing the role of the mentor. Further research regarding the link between mentors' educational needs and their views thereof would be necessary to make any final conclusions regarding this matter.

4: How do mentors describe the process of mentoring and how do the processes differ in each case?

The general process of the teaching practicum as described by mentors was standard in all cases: after the initial formalities, teacher trainees observed the lessons delivered by their mentors or possibly by other teachers at the school. After that, they received some instructions on delivering their own lessons and started teaching. Following their lessons, they attended post-lesson discussions with their mentors and received feedback on their performance. However, the more detailed accounts of the practicum showed significant variation. The first such area is the assignment of specific areas to analyse during observations, or the lack thereof. Only one mentor in this study stated she did so. She made a clear distinction between focused and impressionistic/general observations, and opted for focused with less experienced teacher trainees, and for impressionistic/general with more experienced ones. Another mentor stated that her teacher trainee (the only one so far) had been trained in observations and therefore, she did not need to assign any tasks to her. The remaining three mentors did not assign any tasks to their mentees either. One of them explained that teacher trainees had usually been assigned some tasks by their faculties, but she did not commonly ask to see the papers afterwards and did not consider it important. The remaining two mentors reported that there was not enough time for that during the practicum and/or they were too busy.

Chapter 4.2 discussed the importance of observing with a specific issue in mind and a subsequent carefully planned, structured discussion with the mentor (or faculty supervisor). Pospíšil's (2017) study reported dissatisfaction on the part of teacher trainees regarding the way observations were conducted during their practicums, especially the lack of instructions on the aims of observations and subsequent discussions. Correspondingly, most mentors interviewed in the present study stated they did not explain the aims of the observations to their mentees and did not assign any particular tasks for the lessons. This implies that mentors may be unaware of both the potential beneficial effect of such techniques and their mentees' dissatisfaction with the lack thereof.

Another area of interest was the providence of instructions before the teacher trainees' lessons. Similarly to the assignment of observations tasks, some mentors' approach to this matter is more in-depth than others'. All provide teacher trainees with instructions on subject matter to cover, the choice of materials, and practical areas such as time management or maintaining discipline. After these assignments, however, not all mentors review the lesson plan the teacher trainee has devised. Those who do may offer further guidance based on the

teacher trainee's plan as a result.

Feedback and the procedure of its provision was similar in all mentors' descriptions of their post-lesson analyses. All highlighted reflection as a crucial tool in their mentees' training and began their discussions with self-reflections of the teacher trainee. Importance was placed on the discussion of various teaching methods or possible solutions of problems experienced by the teacher trainee and the consideration of both high and low points of each lesson. The lengths of such discussions, however, varied considerably. The reported durations ranged from one to two hours per lesson to only a few minutes' time or occasionally providing the feedback to the teacher trainee in the form of an e-mail.

These findings are in direct contradiction to the views of teacher trainees which were discussed in Chapter 4.1. Research done by Pospíšil (2017), Řihánková (2014), and Taušková (2014) reported that teacher trainees interviewed in the studies had received very little feedback, if any, and evaluated it as inadequate. Lack of self-reflection on the part of teacher trainees was also reported, with most feedback being rather directive. Moreover, teacher trainees also regarded lack of feedback as a potential reason for discouragement from the teaching profession as such. In contrast to that, mentors included in this study described their post-lesson discussions as highly reflective and placed emphasis on the self-reflection of the teacher trainee and subsequent discussion. This discrepancy highlights one of the limitations of this study, that is only researching mentors' points of view. In order to analyse the matter of feedback (or potential insufficiency/lack thereof) thoroughly, both parties (the mentor and the teacher trainee) would need to share their perspectives on the amount and quality of feedback and self-reflection in their teaching practicums for an objective conclusion to be made.

5: How do mentors evaluate the current length of the teaching practicum?

Mentors' views on the current length of the practicum which is, on average, three weeks long, were similar. Only one mentor did not perceive the length of the practicum as problematic and limited her criticism to the structure of the practicum (teaching merely three to four hours weekly for three weeks). It should be noted, however, that the mentor stated that she had arrived at her view by comparing the three-week-practicum with her own training which involved *zero* hours of direct teaching. The four remaining mentors were unanimous in their evaluation of the length of the practicum as insufficient. Two of them considered the length inadequate but did not perceive the issue as crucial. The other two went as far as to

describe it as “completely ridiculous” and “catastrophic” and suggested a period of two to three months as satisfactory. Besides the notion that the current practicum is insufficient in duration and should be extended, two other important factors emerged in this study. Firstly, it has been observed by three mentors that the quality of the practicum is negatively influenced by teacher trainees’ lack of time and energy owing to their other responsibilities, be it university- or work-related. Those mentors suggested that teacher trainees should not have to attend regular classes if they are to prepare diligently for their ongoing practicums. Secondly, two mentors admitted their difficulties with mentoring. What is more, one of them conveyed that the toll the mentoring takes on her was so heavy that she would not welcome longer practicums. Her complaint regarded the reconciliation of the teacher trainee’s needs with those of her students. The other mentor revealed that the close cooperation with the teacher trainee(s) was irritating at times and caused him to occasionally lose his temper. In addition to everything else, one mentor remarked that while some mentors devote a lot of time and effort to their job, some fail to educate their mentees entirely, on account of their busyness or other factors. It should therefore be said that the teaching practicum must be considered in terms of both quality and quantity.

The importance of a sufficient length of the teaching practicum and its potential to reduce “reality shock” was discussed in Chapter 4.4. The above-mentioned findings show that mentors realise the importance of the teaching practicum and consider the current length thereof insufficient. These findings show that longer practicums would, in general, be welcomed by both teacher trainees and mentors.

8. Conclusion

The teaching practicum is an incredibly rich and complex research topic involving various factors such as university curriculums, teacher trainees' previous experience, and the human factor embodied by the three key parties: the teacher trainee, the mentor, and the faculty supervisor. This thesis set out to examine the role of the mentor in the process of the teaching practicum and determine mentors' perception of the practicum, evaluation of their own degree of preparedness, and attitude to the tasks which the role of the mentor involves. The theoretical part first discussed the roles of the three parties involved in the practicum, specified their roles, tasks, and responsibilities, and defined terminology used throughout this work. It proceeded to consider the role of the mentor in greater detail, outlining the various roles of the mentor as well as theoretical models of mentoring. Selected theoretical models of mentoring included the apprenticeship, competency-based, and reflective models. Methods of reflection such as journals and observations were presented. The theoretical part also defined the particular responsibilities of mentors to teacher trainees and discussed additional factors such as important skills or motivation for mentoring. Lastly, the theoretical part considered specific aspects of the practicum such as feedback and self-reflection, observations, preparedness of mentors, and the length of the practicum in greater detail, providing an in-depth foundation for the subsequent discussion of research findings.

The empirical part included a methodology section which provided information on the process of obtainment and analysis of data. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five mentors teaching at secondary schools in Prague. All mentors were non-native teachers of English with Czech as their L1 with the exception of one who was a teacher and native speaker of German with a German educational background. The information gained in the interviews was presented in the form of a multiple case study. A total of five case studies were included. The findings were then discussed and analysed with particular regard to research questions. The main findings may be summarised as follows.

- 1) Mentors are all highly motivated as well as aware of the helpfulness of mentoring in terms of their own professional development, and perceive the experience as mutually beneficial.
- 2) Mentors see their roles as guides or consultants rather than teachers in the traditional sense. They perceive their and their mentees' relationships as partnerships

as opposed to hierarchical student-teacher relationships. Mentors place emphasis on prolific discussion, self-reflection, and mutual exchange of opinions.

3) Mentors perceive their degree of preparedness for their roles as adequate, relying in their assessments on their experience in teaching, their having undergone relevant training and having supervised other teachers, or general perceived capabilities. The perspectives on the necessity of specialised training for the role of the mentor were varied.

4) Mentors' accounts of the process of the teaching practicum mainly differed in their attitudes to areas such as the assignment of specific tasks for observations conducted by the teacher trainee, the providence of instructions before the teacher trainee's lessons, and the duration and depth of post-lesson analyses.

5) On the whole, mentors evaluate the current length of the teaching practicum as insufficient. A period of two to three months instead of three weeks was suggested.

6) Based on the explicit statement of one mentor and the overall motivation and willingness to discuss various aspects of teaching of all interviewed mentors, a final discussion among the teacher trainee, the mentor, and the faculty supervisor, is a potentially helpful tool in the overall effectivity of the teaching practicum and as such can be expected to be welcomed by mentors.

The limitations of this research were determined by at least two factors. Firstly, the qualitative research design did not allow for a larger number of mentors to be interviewed, and the extent of this thesis furthermore limited the amount of data which could be processed. As a result, the views presented in this study represent the perspectives of no more than five mentors and it is certain that the obtainment of results from a higher number of respondents would deliver more extensive as well as more accurate results. Secondly, the conclusions arrived at through interviews with mentors regarding their views must be inevitably subjective in nature and they cannot be regarded as universal to all mentors. That being said, this study provided insight into the complexities of the role of the mentor and presented various perspectives and beliefs of mentors. It is hoped that this thesis may raise awareness of circumstances facing mentors as well as the process and quality of the teaching practicum as such. As has been mentioned, the teaching practicum is a rich and complex research topic and possible suggestions for further research are numerous. By way of illustration, the limitations of the presented study – especially regarding its subjective nature and a low number of

respondents – could be addressed by designing quantitative research aimed at verification of the presented results. Moreover, since the teaching practicum includes three parties, a more thorough research could analyse teaching practicums from the points of view of all of them, perhaps interviewing mentors along with their mentees and faculty supervisors. This might be particularly useful with issues on which the views of teacher trainees and mentors differ, such as feedback and self-reflection, as it could analyse whether the same type of feedback which teacher trainees evaluate as inadequate is generally perceived as sufficient by mentors. This type of research could potentially provide deeper insight into the practicum and the intricate interpersonal relationship within.

The teaching practicum is a key component of teacher education and directly affects teacher trainees' outlook on their perspective careers as well as their later performances as teachers. It is my belief that more systematic and elaborate design of the teaching practicum allowing for longer and more thorough training could facilitate positive changes in the circumstances facing both teacher trainees and novice teachers, as well as the Czech educational system in general.

Resumé (česky)

Tématem této diplomové práce jsou pedagogické praxe budoucích učitelů anglického jazyka a zejména role fakultních učitelů, která je pro hladký průběh a kvalitu praxe klíčová. První, teoretická část práce, v první řadě vymezuje role tří stran, které do procesu pedagogické praxe vstupují, definuje jejich povinnosti a určuje terminologii, která je používána ve zbytku práce: budoucí učitelé jsou „teacher trainees“, vyučující na fakultě „faculty supervisors“, fakultní (cviční) učitelé jsou nazýváni mentory. Mentoři mají být svým svěřencům vzorem, měli by jim pomoci zorientovat se v novém prostředí i kolektivu, poskytovat jim podporu a potřebné informace a v neposlední řadě je jejich úkolem budoucí učitele vzdělávat ve svém oboru. Práce popisuje tři vybrané teoretické modely mentoringu. Učňovský model je založen na vztahu mistr-učeň a úkolem studenta je se nápodobou zkušeného „mistra“, tedy fakultního učitele, naučit jeho řemeslu. Kompetenční model nahlíží na vzdělávání učitelů jako na sérii kompetencí, které musí studenti pod dohledem mentorů získat. Reflektivní model vzdělávání učitelů si žádá, aby byli studenti schopni sebereflexe, úkolem mentora je poskytnout takovou zpětnou vazbu, díky které bude student schopný samostatných závěrů. Sebereflexi mohou napomoci nástroje, jako vedení si deníku z praxe nebo náslechy a následné rozborů pozorovaných hodin s fakultním učitelem. Fakultní učitelé musí se studenty během celé praxe aktivně spolupracovat, poskytovat jim potřebné materiály pro výuku, umožnit jim provádět náslechy ve svých hodinách, konzultovat se studenty jejich přípravy na hodiny, podávat zpětnou vazbu a na závěr praxi celkově zhodnotit. Mentoři by měli mít znalosti trojího druhu: daného předmětu, pedagogiky obecně a také znalost procesu vzdělávání budoucích učitelů. Důležitým faktorem v kvalitě pedagogických praxí je i motivace mentorů. Výzkumy ukazují, že pro většinu fakultních učitelů je mentoring studentů učitelství inspirací pro jejich vlastní výuku a že vnímají mentoring jako oboustranně přínosný.

Výzkumné práce podobného zaměření ukazují, že studenti obecně hodnotí zpětnou vazbu, které se jim během praxe dostalo, jako nedostatečnou. Zpětná vazba je v mnoha případech velmi krátká, povrchní, nebo dokonce zcela chybí. (Sebe)reflexe je podle výzkumů zastoupena v diskusích mentorů a studentů jen velmi málo. Dalším nedostatkem praxí je nízký počet náslechů a především následných rozborů s příslušným vyučujícím nebo fakultním učitelem. Studenti někdy pozorují jen několik málo hodin, než začnou učit samostatně. Vyjadřují také nespokojenost s tím, že nedostávali pokyny, na co se během hodiny konkrétně zaměřit, ani žádné informace o účelu náslechů jako takových. Výzkum také ukazuje, že v českém školství chybí jakákoli příprava pro roli fakultních učitelů, mentoři

vycházejí při vedení studentů na praxi pouze z vlastních zkušeností a přistupují k jejich vzdělávání spíše intuitivně až „kutilsky“. Důležitým poznatkem je to, že sami mentoři nevnímají, že by měli v tomto ohledu nedostatky, a cítí se pro svou práci dostatečně připraveni a kvalifikováni. Posledním zkoumaným bodem je délka praxe (orientačně tři týdny), kterou studenti hodnotí jako naprosto nedostatečnou.

Cílem empirické části práce bylo zjistit, jak praxe vnímají samotní mentoři, jak hodnotí svůj stupeň připravenosti pro roli fakultního učitele a jak přistupují k úkolům, které role fakultního učitele zahrnuje. Výzkumné otázky byly formulovány následovně:

- 1) Jakou mají fakultní učitelé motivaci pro roli mentora? Vnímají přínos i pro svůj osobní či profesní rozvoj?
- 2) Jak fakultní učitelé vnímají svou roli ve vzdělávání budoucích učitelů?
- 3) Jak fakultní učitelé hodnotí svůj stupeň připravenosti pro roli mentora? Prošli nějakou formální přípravou?
- 4) Jak fakultní učitelé popisují průběh praxe a jak se praxe u jednotlivých fakultních učitelů liší?
- 5) Jak fakultní učitelé hodnotí současnou délku praxí?

Výzkum byl zaměřen kvalitativně a byl proveden v podobě několikanásobné případové studie. Celkem bylo provedeno pět případových studií. Data byla získána polostrukturovanými rozhovory (interviews) s fakultními učiteli ze středních škol v Praze. Čtyři mentoři pochází z Čech a učí angličtinu; pro srovnání byla do studie zahrnuta i fakultní učitelka z Německa, která nyní vyučuje na pražské střední škole němčinu jako cizí jazyk. Ve studii byly zahrnuty čtyři fakultní učitelky a jeden fakultní učitel. Tři fakultní učitelky mají více než třicetiletou učitelskou praxi a vedly na praxi více než deset studentů. Zbývající dva mentoři jsou sami začínající učitelé, kteří učí teprve čtvrtým rokem, a vedli na praxi jednoho až dva studenty. Mezi nejdůležitější poznatky vyplývající z případových studií lze zařadit následující zjištění.

Všichni mentoři zahrnutí v této studii pocítují pro roli fakultního učitele silnou motivaci. V rozhovorech často zmiňovali, že si přejí předávat své znalosti a zkušenosti dál a že s budoucími kolegy rádi diskutují o všem, co učitelská profese zahrnuje. Vedení studentů na praxi popisovali jako „inspirující“ a „osvěžující“. Mentoři také vyjádřili názor, že fakulta nedokáže studenty připravit na reálnou situaci ve školství, a pedagogická praxe je tak pro

studenty jediná možnost, jak si učení vyzkoušet a získat představu o tom, jak vypadá učitelství v praxi.

Fakultní učitelé vnímali svou roli především jako roli průvodce, konzultanta, kouče, nebo vstřícného zkušenějšího kolegy. Kladli velký důraz na sebereflexi studentů, zpětnou vazbu jim poskytovali spíše ve formě rad nebo doporučení. Mentori v rozhovorech nezmiňovali, že by se snažili být pro studenty vzorem, spíše se snažili jim poskytnout podporu v jejich vlastním rozvoji. Přístup fakultních učitelů se dá vnímat jako kompetenční nebo reflektivní model mentoringu. Přístup žádného z mentorů nevykazoval znaky učňovského modelu.

Jedno z nejvýznamnějších zjištění práce se týkalo toho, jak fakultní učitelé hodnotí svůj stupeň připravenosti a zda prošli školením či jinou formální přípravou pro vedení studentů na praxi. Žádný z českých fakultních učitelů neměl pro roli mentora formální vzdělání. Někteří zmínili, že vědí, že se na Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy v současné době podobné školení chystá, a projevíli o něj zájem. Pro roli fakultního učitele si připadali připravení dostatečně a nepocíťovali, že by jim podobné vzdělání chybělo. Při vedení studentů na praxi čerpali především z vlastních zkušeností a znalostí. Německá fakultní učitelka také neměla formální vzdělání pro roli fakultního učitele, prošla ovšem kurzy „peer review“, komunikace či řešení konfliktů, a čerpala také ze svých zkušeností s „mentoringem“ svých kolegů, kdy pozorovala jejich odučené hodiny a poté je s nimi rozebírala a hodnotila. Svůj stupeň připravenosti hodnotila jako „docela dobrý“, ale zmínila, že je vždy co doplnit a že je proto užitečné absolvovat další a další kurzy. Nabízí se tedy otázka, zda je možné nalézt souvislost mezi tím, že čeští fakultní učitelé nemají žádnou formální přípravou pro svou roli, a tím, že nevnímají, že by takové vzdělání bylo potřebné.

Výzkum také ukázal, že fakultní učitelé většinou nedávají studentům na praxi bližší pokyny týkající se náslechnů. V rozhovorech často zmiňovali, že náslechnů není moc a na konkrétní úkoly během nich není během praxí čas a prostor. Dále se fakultní učitelé vyjadřovali k tomu, jak dávají studentům zpětnou vazbu. Všichni považovali zpětnou vazbu za velmi důležitý nástroj při vedení studenta na praxi a kladli důraz zejména na sebereflexi studenta a podnětnou diskusi. Čas, který fakultní učitelé zpětné vazbě a diskusi věnují, se výrazně lišil – od jedné až dvou hodin rozboru za každou odučenou vyučovací hodinu až po několik minut nebo ve výjimečných případech pouze prostřednictvím e-mailu.

Důležitým výzkumným zjištěním je také to, že téměř všichni mentori považují současnou délku praxe za nedostatečnou. Jedinou výjimkou byla začínající fakultní učitelka, která sama pedagogickou praxi neabsolvovala, protože v rámci pedagogického minima na Pedagogické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy se zúčastnila pouze čtrnácti hodin náslechnů, a v porovnání s tím se

jí osmnáct hodin přímé pedagogické praxe zdálo dobré. Ostatní fakulní učitelé ale délku praxe kritizovali a dokonce ji označovali za „katastrofální“ a „směšnou“. Z toho vyplývá, že delší pedagogickou praxi by potenciálně uvítali nejen studenti, ale i fakulní učitelé. V závěru práce shrnuje výzkumná zjištění a nejdůležitější poznatky a uvádí náměty pro další výzkum.

Tato práce přinesla poznatky o tom, jak pedagogické praxe vnímají fakulní učitelé, jak k vedení studentů přistupují a jak hodnotí svůj stupeň připravenosti pro roli mentora. Cílem této práce bylo i přispět k diskusi o možných změnách ve vzdělávání budoucích učitelů a zvýšit povědomí o situaci fakulních učitelů i o průběhu a kvalitě praxí jako takových.

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