THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AS A CHALLENGE FOR THE REALISATION OF INVESTIGATION IN UNDERGRADUATE PREPARATION FOR HELPING PROFESSIONS

A FORMAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL COMO UM DESAFIO PARA A REALIZAÇÃO DA INVESTIGAÇÃO NA PREPARAÇÃO PARA AS PROFISSÕES DE AJUDA*

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Abstract: This article aims to highlight the importance of correct procedures while completing professional training. These procedures can be pillars of research notes or sources for expertise accounts/articles. This paper stresses the importance of qualitative research methodology which is relevant for individual work as well as for interaction outside the major of the helping profession. The outcomes of qualitative research should be the gain of knowledge and new information, the realisation of qualitative research's importance, reflection on reading texts and on own development. Not only young researchers should have at the begging of a research a clear idea of what should be the investigated areas and what should their research look like. Therefore, undergraduate research is an important part of undergraduate preparation for helping professional jobs.

Keywords: Helping profession. Practice. Profession. Research. Student.

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo destacar a importância de procedimentos corretos ao completar o treinamento profissional. Estes procedimentos podem ser pilares de notas de pesquisa ou fontes para contas/artigos de especialização. Este artigo enfatiza a importância da metodologia de pesquisa qualitativa que é relevante para o trabalho individual, bem como para a interação fora da área principal da profissão de auxiliar. Os resultados da pesquisa qualitativa devem ser o ganho de conhecimento e novas informações, a realização da importância da pesquisa qualitativa, a reflexão sobre a leitura de textos e sobre o próprio desenvolvimento. Não apenas os jovens pesquisadores deveriam ter, ao iniciar uma pesquisa, uma ideia clara de quais deveriam ser as áreas investigadas e como deveria ser sua pesquisa. Portanto, a pesquisa de graduação é uma parte importante da preparação da graduação para ajudar em trabalhos profissionais.

Palavras-chave: Profissão de ajuda. Prática. Profissão. Pesquisa. Estudante.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The term helping profession refers to a group of professions that are based on the professionally qualified assistance of other people. Health, pedagogical, psychological, and therapeutic occupations as well as occupations focused on social or psychological assistance are usually categorised among them.

The helping profession represents a system that has on one side those who help – the nurse, teacher, social worker, or psychologist and on the other side those for whom the help is intended – the patient, pupil, client, or user (Géringová, 2011).

Vybíralová (2018) defines the helping professions as the general designation for professions concerned with helping others. The term includes the medical field, psychology, pedagogy, and social work. In addition to employees working in these fields, nurses, people working in social services, teachers, marriage and family counsellors, physiotherapists, etc. may be included among those active in the helping professions. Some activities performed by professionals are also done in certain instances by volunteers.

Assisting professions are much more of a service and a calling than a routine job. Therefore, it is very difficult to imagine this activity in the absence of an ethical context (Jankovský, 2003).

It is clear from the definition above that the term helping professions essentially entails doing a specific job that, in accordance with specifics, focuses on the assistance or support of a given target group of people regardless of age, gender or other defining characteristics of a person.

Kopřiva (2016) regards the helping professions as those primarily aiming to help people. He lists doctors, nurses, educators, social workers, carers, and psychologists as examples. At the same time, he contends that …unlike the other professions, the relationship between the helping professional and his/her client is key in the helping profession because the patient needs to trust the doctor and feel the concern of the nurse; the pupil wants to respect his/her teacher, and the client would like to have confidence in the social worker.

In nowadays' quickly changing society there arises a new research topic for which qualitative research is suitable due to its flexibility. We are convinced that qualitative research has its place in all pedagogical disciplines, mainly in special pedagogy (Daněk, 2021).

2.   THE RESEARCHER'S ETHIC

With regards to the focus of this research, it is important to focus on ethical aspects which should be a part of each research project. Ethics – ethical demand can be easily described as general demand on a human's behaviour to be in line with society's expectations such as values, norms, and morals.

Ethical concerns are an important part of each research project. The researcher should follow their conscience and generally recognise ethical rules and norms. On the other hand, there are standards which define ethical rules applied in research. Thus, diverse ethical codex and ethical committees within universities are made. These committees keep eye on following the ethical rules. The ethical codex includes specific ethical rules for the specific research field. So, the research's ethical rules become the norm which should be followed by employees and workers in organisations. Not only with regards to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) but to The Charter of Fundamental Rights, and general regulations about the privacy of clients, pupils, and users of services as well. Every institution creates its intern methodologies to protect its clients' data. These documents are focused on problematic whether and when a student conducting professional training has access to these sensitive data. In practice, it is not often when a student wants to conduct research in direct contact with a child, a pupil, or a client.

The main aim of following ethical rules is to avoid possible conflict between individual research workers, between research workers and participants, and between the third part of the research as well. In the group of the third part, we can include founders or research managers. What is and is not ethical? According to Jeřábek (1992, p. 78), this question could be answered as follows:" To be moral means behave according to generally accepted customs. … moral responsibility is based on a combination of sensitivity, thoughtfulness, and healthy common sense. This moral responsibility could be divided as follows:

- responsibility to the person you are investigating.
- responsibility to science, profession.
- responsibility to the founders and submitter of research."

In research should be absolute respect for safety, integrity, anonymity, opinions, and privacy. Providing private data knowing that it will be publicised later could be for respondents' stressful occasions. It is not only about anonymity but about keeping privacy as well. The received resource about private information should be kept reliable if the provider does not wish to be contacted. If the respondents are easily identified, it is the researcher's responsibility to inform participants about the possible risks and impacts of publishing data and the outcomes of the research. Thus, the research cannot put a participant or their identity at risk.

According to Helsinki's declaration by the World Medical Association (WMA) (2013), research which includes interaction with human beings follows ethical rules which have similar moral values and research must be created around them. Specifically, it should reflect the needs of participants as well as the utility and justness of research.

It is usual before conducting research to gain verbal and written acknowledgement of participants. Often, it is informed consent which is related to the concrete research project, and it includes the name of the researcher, the institution from which the researcher is, name and aims of the research. Another important information in the consent should be data storage and its usage. The respondents should be aware of data usage and for what purpose their data are collected. Furthermore, what will the presentation of their life story look like specifically within case studies? The main effort is to keep total anonymity so respondents" identities cannot be recognized by someone else. The participants should be always able to choose whether they want to participate or not.

The ethical requirements demand maximal aspiration for trust. The respondents must know the purpose and aim of the research. Anonymity is important even though; in some research, the topic could be too specific that anonymity cannot be kept. From the researcher's point of view, this could be understood as interest in the topic, and in building trust between them and a participant.

"We must consider the power relationship in which some participants (pupils, clients etc.) could know or recognize the researcher. Therefore, it is crucial to secure that participants understand that their involvement in research will not provide them with any benefits or disadvantages. So, the researcher must think through how to inform participants about this. Thus, the participants know that their involvement or absence in research will not influence provided service." (Baum, Gojová, 2014, p. 125).

Every conducted research involves diverse risks for participants and researchers as well. The researcher must minimalize these risks and mind the protection of all participants. To ensure this a researcher should follow ethical codex and use common sense (Pavelková, 2012). All used materials for the analysis of questionnaires and interviews are stored in a safe place, and they cannot be accessed by unauthorized people.

3.   QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF RESEARCH

Based on the nature of the investigated topic we can choose between two research strategies which are qualitative, quantitative, or combination. Erikson (2008, p. 146) describes the differences between these strategies as: "in social science are used two significant methods' categories, namely quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research founds a little about a lot of stuff, whereas qualitative research founds a lot about a few things.". Akker van der (2006) describes the qualitative research method as a detailed understanding of a problem. In contrast, the quantitative research method offers a generalization of the researched problem. We decided to use a combination of both methods since we would like to gain not only numerical merit but detailed opinions of personal assistants as well.

"Quantitative and qualitative approaches originate from diverse epistemological assumptions. Often, they investigate different issues, use different analytical procedures, and provide different outcomes. Nevertheless, these outcomes are not better or worse, not even rivalling. For example, when using qualitative methodology and afterwards quantitative methodology can create a deeply analysed theory clarified on the wider sample. The methodology choice should be based on the research's aim and purpose: first, we have researched the issue and then we are looking for its solution." (Švaříček, Šeďová et al., 2007, p. 25).

Regarding the method of data collection, Hendl (2012, p.23) states that "… quantitative research uses random selection, experiments, and highly structured data collection through texts, questionnaires, or observation. The constructed concepts we investigate by using measurements, further, the collected data are analysed with statistical methods to explore, describe, and occasionally clarify the truthfulness of our assumptions about the relationship between variables. It is often linked with the hypothetical-deductive concept of science." On the other hand, methods of qualitative research according to

Hendl (2012) could be divided into groups as follows observation (complete participant, observer as participant, participants as observer, and complete observer), interview (structured interview, narrative interview, and group interview), and documents (public documents, private documents, and online discussion).

The research method we use should respect the following rules. It should relate to the researched issue and respect the mutual connection between method and scientific system. The research method must be objective. There should be the interception of variability and connection between the action and the base of the researched issue. Finally, rule is respect for equality of theoretical and empirical approaches – empirical findings are connected to the global systematic framework of primary science.

Qualitative research

The chosen research approaches of qualitative research

Doing professional training offers students not only space to find out and realise how to use theoretical knowledge and skills in practice, but it also provides a chance for their research. Gained knowledge can differ throughout levels of studies. In this sub-chapter, we will focus on a few chosen research approaches which are used in qualitative research and can enrich not only the professional training but specialist outcomes which students must present. The specialist outcomes can be a narrow focus in the dissertation's practical part which could originate from professional training.

Qualitative methodology is based on ontology, the subject of investigation, and research orientation. The subject of qualitative methodology is an investigation of people's everyday life in their natural habitat. The investigation of the social world from an everyday perspective methodologically assumes research from:

a)   acter's perspective,

b)   in their life context,

c)   in their language,

d)   in their non-structure interpretation.

(Petrusek, 1993)

Qualitative research is important because of its specifics which include:

-          uniqueness and unrepeatability (these phenomes can be understood differently in diverse qualities and levels).

- contextuality (there is a few rules or laws which will apply to the public).

- processes (the researched phenomenon occurred in a certain way, is developed and fadeout, and that happens in the process which is crucial to respect during research).

- dynamics (throughout research of dynamics are discovered diverse factors influencing the process and its quality).

- relf exivity (during qualitative research we directly work with the fact that a researcher is a direct or non-direct part of processes which they investigate, that means they somehow influence and are influenced by the processes).

(Milovský, 2006)

The most frequently used methods which are used during professional training can include: participating in observation, interviews, and case studies. With regards to the aim of collecting data, information, and subjects which could be involved in information sources we cannot forget about content document analysis.

Participating observation

Participating in observation is one of the primary observation options which are used in qualitative research. Švaříček and Šeďová (2010, p.143) define participating observation as "… long-term, systematic, and reflective observation of happening activities directly in investigating environment to discover and represent social life and process. … Participating observant has two main duties at the same time: first is to be a participant in interactions while they differ themselves by the proportion of interaction in activities (they more observe the activities than initiate them), firstly they are observer, thus they are a researcher who differs themselves from another participant through the aim. … The observer is participating at a certain level, but they hold themselves back when they ask questions that everyone in the researched group knows. They are friends, curious strangers, and unknown outsiders."

As stated above is clear that observation is understood as aimed and planned activity. This process allows participating observation to recognize as a research strategy and as systematic action which follows certain order also.

Hendl (2012) highlights four primary steps which should be applied in process of participating in observation. They are:

1.   Making contact – in the first step is important to create contact with the ground (i.e., school) and create "good contact" with participants of the observed situation (with teachers, pupils …). After integration into the environment, observation can happen. Hendl (2012) stresses the importance of key informant choice which is an important part of the whole research project.

2.   Observation – at the begging we try to gain as many diverse situations observed as possible. Therefore, we begin with a detailed description of the observation – we create a portrait of the observed group, society or individual who is describing situations which happened during our observation. The result is a narrative note about observation. The observed subject is at the start controlling their behaviour but later they stop realising the observer's presence. Subsequently, the researcher starts to orient in situations, and they can recognize what is and is less important. During participating observation, the researcher focuses on answering these questions: Who we are observing? What is happening (i.e.: what behaviour is repeating in the group, how people are reacting to each other, what is the content of their discussion)? What is the context of a group like? when and how often does the group meet? How does the group work as a whole and what is their position towards other groups or institutions? Why is the group behaving in a certain way and what do they think about it?

3.   Data recording – even though, the observations in unstructured it is recommended to use some system during the observation that will help the research to collect information meaningly and completely. The record from observation should be completed directly. The usually shorter version is recorded using diverse abbreviations, and symbols …. A certain structure should be used so the research can add something later. This record is called rain notes. It is a short description of what an observer saw, felt, and heard and how they reflected on it. Švaříček and Šeďová (2010) add that is important to be precise but avoid trivial information.

4.   Conclusion of observation – after collecting important information the moment of goodbyes comes. It is recognized as natural that the goodbye feels

normal and natural without missing any participant. The possibility to say in touch and work together on other research projects is right concerning individuals, groups, and institutions.

The process itself is an additional method to other methods of data collection which helps the researcher to complete their picture of the research environment, for example, the atmosphere in the group, about equipment and material available in the room where the observation takes place.

Interview

Throughout the interview, we aim to find out opinions, thoughts, postures, knowledge, and experiences with the researched topic. According to Papřoková (2012), an interview should be understood as a provoked conversation between a researcher and a participant with h purpose to gain crucial information to understand the participant's view on the researched area.

What is the difference between a dialogue and an interview? As Pelikán (2007) states some authors see dialogue as unstructured conversation whereas an interview is prepared structured procedure with prepared questions based on what a researcher longs to find out. For us, diversification is not too important and thus we agree with the statement above, and we consider both terms dialogue and an interview as equal.

"Interview is a method of data collection about pedagogical reality which is based on immediate verbal communication between a researcher and a respondent. Sometimes a similar meaning is used wider Czech term "rozhovor" (dialogue = rozhovor). However, as not every dialogue is not an interview the term *rozhovor* is more accurate. English term interview has two parts when *inter* means in Czech *between* and *view* means in Czech opinion." (Chráska, 2007, p. 182).

Throughout an interview, we collect needed information as well as notice the nonverbal communication of a participant about the researcher's preparation and professionality. Therefore, the interview could be considered one of the more advanced methods of data collection.

"A research interview is a framework of verbal communication between a researcher and a respondent. During this process, a researcher is gaining thru questions related to the information to researched area or subject. The interview is a technique in

social research in which unnatural contact between a researcher and a participant or focus group. They get together as strangers who make contact initiated by one side (a researcher). The other side (participant agrees and respects the researcher's will. Therefore, the researcher must provide anonymity, should not judge, and use the shared information in research only." (Buam, Gojová, 2014, p. 91).

- The demand and beauty of this method should be considered during the process which is influenced by several factors such as the subject of research and relations o both sides to it.

- the interview's scenario such as the lead of the interview, its content, and its purpose.

- the environment – whether the environment is known for one side (especially the interviewee) i.e., working place, home environment, or neutral which should support the trust between interviewer and interviewee.

- mutual interaction between interviewer and interviewee, their communication and motivation.

(Surynek, 2001)

In crucial types of in-depth interviews, we include semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews known as narrative interviews. Semi-structured interview originates in prepared questions and topics and their usage is characteristic and grounded in theories and case studies. The unstructured or narrative interview can be based on one prepared question and the researcher can ask based on provided answers. For the semi-structured and unstructured interviews used in the biographic design, there are other interview types which differ based on their realization and focus. For example, an interview in action research, evaluation, and creative interview.

Based on the number of respondents we categorize the interview as well. For example, individual interviews, group interviews, and focus groups.

To better understand, the interview's importance is crucial to familiarise me with general rules which correspondent with information about interview phases:

- to provide details preparation and training for the interview,

- the researcher aims to define the whole interview process,

- in interview is important to provide conditions in which a respondent can express themselves in their words and terms,

- to create trust environment full of interest and an accommodating atmosphere, we are respectful of the gender, age, and cultural differences of the participant,

- to realise that during the interview the questions are not the same as the research questions,

- to formulate questions clearly and in a way that a respondent can understand,

- to ask one question at a time,

- to support questions with sub-questions,

- to inform the participant about what information we want to, why they are important, and in what stage the interview is,

- to listen carefully and to answer properly so the participant knows we care,

- to provide enough time for the interviewee to answer,

- to keep a neutral attitude towards shared data, to not judge the participant,

- to be aware of participants' emotions and the interview's influence on them,

- to consider participant's time availability,

- to be reflective, and self-critical, and to monitor myself,

- after the interview to complete and check notes, their quality and complexity.

(Hendl, 2012)

An interview is often recorded via audio record – dictaphone, mobile phone, video … and always with the respondent's consent with regards to GDPR with written consent. Afterwards, the transcript and analysis of the interview follow. The main disadvantage of recording is that both sides can be nervous. The interviewee can be more dramatic because they can think that their answers should be as much interesting as possible. In contrast, the interviewer can become more exact which in the end making more damage than profits.

As the most crucial mistakes during an interview, we consider mistakes situational, sociological, and psychological. The situational mistakes are the wrong choice of place,

time, or situation for an interview. The sociological mistakes are connected to the researcher i.e., their appearance, behaviour, attitude, gender etc. The psychological mistakes originate from the interviewer's underestimating of the respondent, or the interviewer has own assumptions about a respondent (which can be on non-reflected stereotypes), which could not correlate with reality. The stereotypes about respondents can be based on visual traits consequently they can be based on the participant's social status, or it can be based on society's assumption about the social group from which the respondent is (Baum, Gojová, 2014).

Case study

During the case study, we aim to capture in detail the story of a case (individual, specific group, an institution etc.). Therefore, we work through specific and individual aspects which must be grounded in universal and detailed research. "Analysis of a case allows during research to observe, to describe and to explain researched case in their complexity and due to it, the research can provide more exact and in-depth findings. Throughout the findings, we can better understand the relationships and their connections" (Miovský, 2006, p. 94).

The purpose of a case study is to understand an individual and their closer and wider environment. Primary, we focus on family, community, or culture. In the aspect of a concrete case study, we focus on life stories, social interaction, family relationships, the role of an individual, and important life moments not only the positive ones. During a case study, the individual subject is observed in their natural surroundings. The aim is to collect detailed interpretations, descriptions, and explanations from participants of the researched phenomenon. Thus, a case study is a unique method of research as it is focused on one entity which could be a person, a group, an organisation, an occasion, an event, or a situation.

The case study can have diverse aims such as descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory aims. So, it works with a wide range of data in different contexts of life. The research questions in a case study can be formulated as How? Why? The case study can be used in various situations when the borders between researched event and its context are not clear (Žiaková, Čáp, and Gurková, 2019).

The case study focuses on individual cases rather than on the population. The positive a side of case study is that a researcher can investigate an individual casa e for long

period without expensive costs. Case studies are used at the beginning of research when is crucial to investigate diverse ideas, test and prepare for wider research. This method is popular not only in social work, pedagogy, and sociology, but in anthropology, psychology, political science, clinical science, and public relation as well.

Hendl (2012) categorizes case studies into diverse groups:

- Personal case study – this is detailed research of an aspect within one person. It is focused on past, context factors, and attitudes which forego researched phenomenon. It investigates possible causes, determinants, factors, experiences, and processes related to the researched event.

- Community's study (part of sociographic) – a group or more communities are investigated at a specific place. The characteristics of a community's life are described, analysed, and compared.

- Study of social groups – it focuses on small directly communicating groups (i.e., families) and large diffused groups (i.e., co-workers' groups). It describes and analyses their relationships and activities in a group.

- Study of organizations and institutions – investigates companies, schools, and other organizations, implementation of programs and interventions, organizational culture, processes of change and adaptation. It seeks behaviour patterns, to implement a specific type of leadership, evaluation, and adaptation.

- Investigation of events, roles, and relationships – these studies are focused on specific events. They involve analysis of interactions between members of a group, conflicts, and stereotypes.

Gurková (2019) clearly states what should project involving case study include:

1. Definition of a case, determination of research aims and questions, which are related to the case and on which research will focus during the investigation. The first stage is to reason for the choice of case study method – to explain why this method is the best for this specific research.

2. To determine the researched issue, for example, clients' experience with usage of a given type of social service.

3. The choice of researched subjects – in case studies is often chosen intentional and unlike choice.

4. To prepare the ethical side of research – informative consents, conservation of anonymity etc.

5. The choice of concrete methods/techniques in the case study are used:

 i. official by publicly accessible documents, unpublic archived documents.

 ii. interview with participants (with individuals, family, a group, head of an institution, people cooperating with the researched institution),

 iii. observation of the given situation, notes making.

 iv. provided observation.

6. Data recording collected by presented methods or techniques.

7. The choice of data analysis, criteria for presentation of findings, and recommendation for practice.

Without differences in what type and form of case study you decide are crucial to first identify the aims, goals, and approach which you will use for creating methodologically reliable research.

Content document analysis (desk-based research)

The documents and other types of media can be an interesting resource for qualitative research as well. They can be the primary resource, or they can support conducted observation. In general, as the documents, we consider data which were created in past by someone else than a researcher and for another purpose than they are used in your research. There are recognized personal documents, official documents, archive documents, mass media outcomes, virtual data, and subject data (Hendl, 2012).

The desk-based research is effective and systematic text collection. The texts are created by organizations or people, so it is possible to describe and explain the social event. Examples of documents which could be used in desk-based research are internal records about a person or situation, notes from meetings, emails, annual reports, webpages, articles, notices about principles and photography. Some of the documents are limited and their use during research requires significant will and allowance.

Into advantages of desk-based research, we can include time comparisons about the social events, and the amount of data which could be created by professionals.

However, some disadvantages are presented as well. The biggest one is the accessibility of some documents which could be lost or inaccessible, and even authors of current or previous data are not the representative proportion of the population and their answers can be subjective (Papřoková, 2012).

4. CONCLUSION

Mainly in helping professions is important the connection of research and the question "to what level are objects of helping professions investigated". On the other side, the support of subjects to become active researchers who are conducting their research from another point of view is not often in empirical sociological research. The helping professions need a specific approach and methods of empirical sociological research while the construction of research questions is led by requirements dictated by the community function of helping professions. From research should people always benefit? What serves a person, serves society, their integrational function and preserves their structure.

With regards to state above is important to highlight the essence of the historical aspect as described by Klugerová and Víšek (2022) who write about special pedagogy-historical realization ... Let us keep in mind that the indicated and addressed the issue, i.e., care – support – practice and theory (special education as a scientific field) may seem somewhat vague from a practical point of view. It must be emphasised that the issue of special care (which should have a system and goals) is quite naturally – historically – related to the question of a comprehensive understanding of normalcy in society, which was, is and will be derived from the socio-ethical breadth of the learning process and the logically entailed care in a particular society and time, i.e., a historical time.

Inclusive education of pupils with specific educational needs is high current topic - our society is very diverse and after years of segregation and ignoring minority groups, it is trying to offer equal opportunities to all individuals, both in terms of education and also professional and social application. However, this brings significant to the educational system a task that not only the Czech education system, but the entire society has to deal with. Opening mainstream schools to all pupils with diverse specific educational needs entails certain obstacles, but at the same time challenges and enrichment of all participants in the educational process, it also contributes to combating boredom and stereotypes in the school environment. There are a number of things that had to change and still have to

change in the school system - the composition of pupils in the main classes is changing educational stream, on which we must reflect not only in terms of setting environment, conditions for education, aids, evaluation, financing, etc. However, a change in attitudes and approaches from both sides is fundamental and necessary teachers and school management, as well as parents and society as a whole.

Inclusive directions are therefore not only in special pedagogy, but also in social work, a direct source of inspiration for research or investigation not only of the students of these fields, but also of experts as such.

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