ERIES Journal

THE ROLE OF THE VIDEO INTERACTION GUIDANCE IN THE ENRICHMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS' SOCIAL SKILLS

Eva Šírová, Kristýna Krejčová

Charles University in Prague
eva.sirova@ff.cuni.cz

Abstract

The school is a complicated social organism. The integration in it could be complicated for teacher novices, who have studied theoretically psychological and pedagogical aspects of learning, but have not many opportunities to develop their professional abilities in the real education.

The article deals with using of the video interaction guidance (VIG) in the education of the teachers to support their professional development – above all in the area of communication skills. The improvement of the communication significantly helps to create a positive, relaxed, but learning centred climate whereby increases the efficiency of the whole teaching process.

The investigation of using of the VIG in the preparation of student teachers is presented in the form of quantitative research and an illustrative case-study. Results of the research suggest that the positive video feedback provides a valuable opportunity for personal, professional and social development for both teachers and pupils across the range of contexts. The VIG improves the communication skills of student teachers, therefore enhances effective learning and teaching and minimises negative contact, e.g. misunderstanding, inattention or conflict. As a consequence, the using of the VIG had a positive impact on the self-esteem and mental hygiene of student teachers who have started fully enjoy the teaching, being energized by it.

Introduction

Communication skills of a student teacher

Communication skills constitute highly important part of profession skills of teachers, enabling them to attach positive relationships with students and to create pleasant and effective atmosphere in the teaching process (Gursimsek et al., 2008, cited in Saka and Surmeli, 2010). Many studies of Czech and foreign authors warn that above all student teachers have insufficiently developed their abilities to manage the class (Locke and Ciechalski, 1995, Šimoník, 1995). According to Tok (2010), communication and behavioural management skills belong to the most substantial problems of the beginning teachers.

Facing up to this situation, the preparation of student teachers should be concentrated on the development of social skills. The integration of these activities directly to the teaching practice could help them to bridge over the gap between the theory and the real classwork. Video interaction guidance (VIG) enables to realize that with considerable efficiency.

Video interaction guidance

The VIG was developed in the Netherlands (e.g. Jansen & Wels, 1995, 1998, in Häggman-Laitila et al., 2003) as a short-time intensive method helping to improve interactions between parents and children, practiced by the organization named SPIN (Stichting Promotie Intensieve Thuisbehandeling – Institution of Supporting of Intensive Home Approach) as an alternative to institutionalization of problem children. It was being expanded into many other areas of a social contact – the VIG is used in a very wide range of contexts (education, health service, social work, management etc.).

The VIG is currently practiced in many different countries, including the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States (Fukkink and Tavecchio, 2010).

The method of the VIG has been inspired by a wide range of theoretical sources from several disciplines – some of the most important are human ethology (Trevarthen – theory of intersubjectivity, reciprocity, protoconversation; Papouschek and Papouschek – intuitive parenting), psychology (Bowlby – attachment theory, Vygotsky – zone of the proximal development, Bandura – social learning theory), research of communication (Jacobson - rituals of the contact, Watzlavik – common theories of verbal and nonverbal communication, videofeedback et al.), pedagogy (Tausch and Tausch, Rogers – humanistic pedagogy, Gordon – parental ability et al.) (Beaufortová, 2002).

Through the video-records, the method focuses on increasing of the successful interactions, including verbal, nonverbal and paraverbal aspects of the communication. A unique feature of the VIG is that trainees watch themselves from a distance and have time for self-reflection, with the possibility to stop, review or to slow down the recording (Fukkink and Tavecchio, 2010).

The impact of the video-feedback on the development of the communication skills has been expressed elaborately in the theory of positive self-modelling by Dowrick and his colleagues (1999, cited in Bidlová, 2005). On the basis of many researches, the theory emphasizes that the positive self-review enables the increase of the adaptive behaviour that has been contaminated by unwanted elements of behaviour, facilitates the transfer of some environment-specific behaviour into another environment, reduces the anxiety etc. (Bidlová, 2005). According to this theory, the VIG trainer selects and labels successful elements of

interaction, intending to strengthen the communication skills of the client.

The records are analysed according to the Contact principles – categories of observable elements of behaviour that the VIG trainer and the client try to identify on the record (Biemans, 1990, in Beaufortová, 2002). The knowledge of these principles enables the client to increase his/her communication capability that means having more variants of communication. Wider communication repertoire then increases the probability of an effective communication in every situation (Šilhánová, 2008).

The VIG clients are taught these principles by video analysis under the guidance of the VIG trainer. The analysis takes place in supportive, productive climate. Clients are guided to identify successful communication principles and to think how to use these principles in other situations. This way of learning is demonstrably more efficient than to only point out and eliminate mistakes. "Based on the social learning theory of Bandura (1997), the VIG assumes that positive reinforcement of positive behaviour increases the self-efficacy of learners. "(Fukkink and Tavecchio, 2010, p. 2).

Principles of using the VIG at school

The goal of the VIG at schools is to help the teachers to develop their communication and self-reflection skills. That would enable them to attach relationships with students successfully, to manage the class and the education efficiently and to support their self-confidence in the role of the teacher.

The basic premise of using the VIG at school is that pedagogical climate in the classroom is created by the teacher. He/she uses his/her communicational and organizational abilities to influence behaviour and performance of the students. Consequently, he/she is greatly responsible for the quality of the interactions in the classroom. If he/she helps the students to work without stress, in relaxed climate, if he/she tries to stimulate them and expresses pleasure from their successes, the teacher creates "learning-centred climate" (Bidlová, 2005).

The VIG at school uses the records of ordinary situations from the education to improve the communication through finding, enriching and strengthening the communication skills of the teacher. The possibility to see him/herself from the distance, to review or slow down the record and to analyse the behaviour of the teacher and the students under the guidance of the VIG trainer gives the teacher a new frame of view on the problem situations and on possible solutions.

With the help of the VIG trainer, the teacher is appealed to be as active as possible in identifying the elements which make these moments effective, reflecting on their impact on the students and considering how could he/she increase using of this elements of communication. Watching these successful moments, teacher gain confidence in his/her communication sources and in his/her ability to identify own strengths and areas for development (Forsyth, 2008).

The objective of this article is to characterise the role of the VIG in the education of the student teachers, using the quantitative research and a case–study approach.

Material and Methods

Method of the VIG

The VIG process involves the negotiating the goals of the work, resulting from actual needs of the teacher. Then the videotrainer is filming the teacher, short (approximately 10 minutes) records are being created at agreed times during the lesson. The

crucial parts of the record are being selected and analysed by the videotrainer (Forsyth, 2008). These parts are then being watched and discussed with the teacher with the intention of revealing and strengthening of his/her own communication sources, which seems to be more efficient than to point out and eliminate mistakes (Häggman-Laitila et al., 2003). This part of the VIG process leads into specification of partial goals for the next work of the teacher. This is supported by the next VIG intervention.

VIG implementation into undergraduate study of teaching – quantitative research

The pilot evaluation has been designed and organized by the first author of this article (the second one was a member of the realization team). The study focused on the possibility of the VIG implementation into undergraduate study of Teaching Psychology at secondary schools and colleges. 133 students of Teaching Psychology (103 females, 30 males) practising at 30 secondary schools and at 12 colleges of 10 regions of the Czech Republic for at least 3 months. The data were collected from October 2003 till June 2009.

The study had two crucial aims: the VIG implementation and evaluation. Three VIG trainers aimed at supporting and helping to develop the social skills of the students of Teaching Psychology by using the VIG during the role playing (microteaching) and students' practices at real schools. Initially, short segments of microteaching (10 minutes) were recording by the VIG trainer and then analysed and discussed with the trainer and other present students of Teaching Psychology. Consecutively, the students were being recorded three times during their practices at real schools. All the recordings were followed by individual analysing and discussing the material with the VIG trainer. At the end of the discussion, the students set the partial goals for their professional growth (by the first and second recordings, these goals became objects of the next VIG intervention).

The evaluation focused on measuring changes in the social skills of the student teachers over the VIG intervention period by video analysis. The data presented in this paper were gathered from the written notes of the VIG trainers and from the analysis of the written reflections of the student teachers.

The next form of evaluation of the recorded materials, which has still not been finished, is the structured observation with the help of the program V. I. P., designed for the analysis of the videorecords. Three educated observers analyse the records according to the designed categorisation system: analysis of the used teaching methods (lecturing, exercising, discussion, groupwork, using of psychological tests, games, roleplaying, brainstorming, presenting of some related video or a book), analysis of the emotional state of the teacher (calm, sad, concentrated, bored etc.), analysis of the attention (the teacher focused on some student, group of students, blackboard; students focused on the teacher, their notes, each other etc.).

Case-study

One of the participants of the research was selected to demonstrate the impact of the VIG on the student teachers in more detail. The student was a 23 year woman who had been already working as a teacher of social sciences at a grammar school.

Despite of her advanced teaching skills she faced up to the insufficient attention of students, who were allowed to use notebooks during lessons (an important part of the school orientation). She needed to find out some efficient ways how to activate the students more.

The VIG was used during the lessons of the general psychology in the class of approximately 15 students (15 and 16 year old). The approximately 10 minutes long records were created at agreed times and then analysed in compliance with the VIG approach by the second author of this article.

Results

VIG implementation into undergraduate study of teaching – quantitative research

Figure 1 shows the teaching methods that student teachers used during their microteaching and practice. They started used more student-centred and activating methods after the VIG intervention such as exercising, discussions, group work, the form of lecturing was changed also (the questioning increased). Few students also administer the psychological tests, play role with students, used a brainstorming, play a video or read a book.

All presented data were gathered from notes of the videotrainers and from self-reflections of the student teachers. Percentages represent the part of the students who used a teaching method during their microteaching and practices.
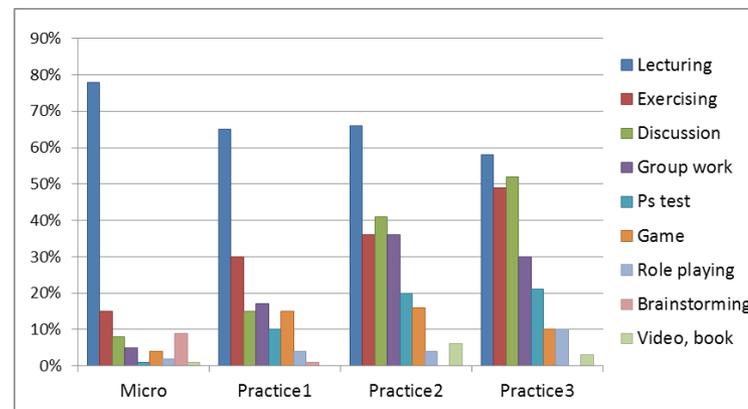

Fig. 1: Teaching methods

Figure 2 shows changes in social skills of the student teachers during their teaching practice. There are remarkable changes after first and second VIG feedback.

The decrease in activating and discussing between microteaching and the first practice might have been caused by the fact that the student teachers were less familiar with the students in the real classes than with their colleagues. After two feedbacks more students used stronger and clearer signals, they were more readable for students, their non verbal and verbal attuning improved also. They reduced guiding and corrections.
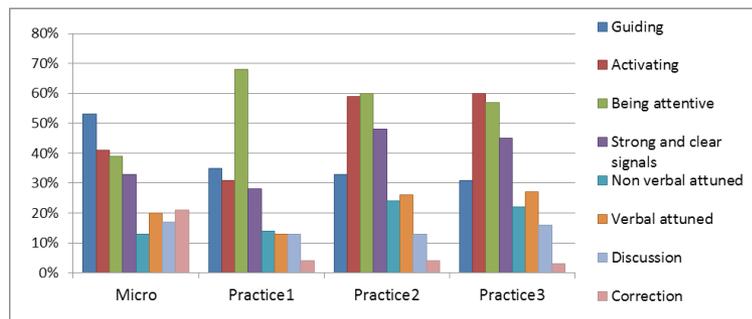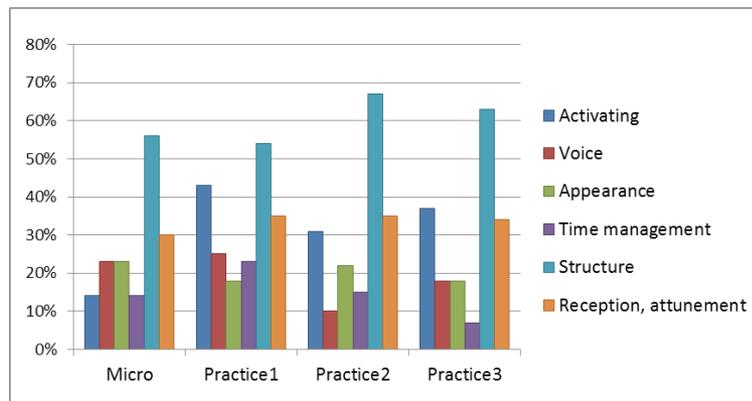
Fig. 2: Social skills

Fig. 3: Working goals of students

Figure 3 shows changes in working goals that student teachers set during the VIG intervention. The goal "to activate students more" remarkably raised after first real experience of teaching in a big class of students as well as the aim to be better attuned,

to make better structure of the lecture and to have a better time-plan of activities. Many of them worked on their voice (modulation, intonation, articulation, loudness, fluency etc.) and on their appearance (dress, face expression, movement, gestures etc.).

Case-study

During the first recording, the teacher seemed to be free-hearted and tolerant, well-prepared, trying to involve all the students into the education. She tried to activate the students to infer examples, connections etc., but the notebooks created a barrier of the eye-contact and of the interactions generally.

In the following discussion, we were talking about the communication sources and strengths of the teacher. We were observing the connection between the eye-contact with the teacher and the activity of the students. A possibility to limit using of the notebooks was discussed, but the teacher would like to attract attention and activate students without limiting them. The partial goals till the next intervention were: more equable eye-contact with all students, direct activations.

On the next video, the teacher tried to activate the students more directly, even in the connection with the notebooks ("try to find this out" etc.), but she was working hard herself, not giving enough space to reactions of students. She had succeeded in activation of students by the concrete examples.

In the discussion, the teacher was astonished that she had given so small space for students' reactions. We were talking about different forms of teaching (if it is more efficient to lecture without a participation of students or to activate them and guide them through the education). We were discussing the possibility to limit using of notebooks occasionally, the teacher

considered trying it, because she realized that she needed more of the eye-contact with students to attract their attention.

In the last recording, there was a huge change in the organization. The teacher and the students were sitting in a circle together, the teacher succeeded in activation of the students more times. The students were paying more attention to the teacher and to themselves as well.

The teacher was very absorbed by the changes that increased the students' activity and the efficiency of the education. She was pleasured that she had managed to attract the attention and realized how the changes reached thanks the VIG helped her to feel more comfortable with the education.

Discussion

The results of quantitative research indicate the potential of the VIG method as an efficient tool for the enrichment of future teachers' social skills. We realize that we affected only a small part of the complex relations between teacher and students. We did not monitor all the variables that enter into their interaction, but we chose those that may be crucial for the education of student teachers and can be monitored through the VIG method as well.

In the process of analysis and interpretation of the data few problems arose (mainly caused by the nature of field research design). Above all, only the short segments of every lesson had been recorded and then were analysed. These segments had been chosen mostly according to the needs or working goals of the student teachers so they sometimes do not fully represent their teaching style. Using of certain teaching methods could have been affected by influences such as the topic of the lesson or by the condition of the student teacher (e.g. nervous or

uncertain teachers used to hide themselves behind the lecturing that seems them much safer then discussion, which is probably the reason for the decrease in activating between microteaching and the first practice in Fig. 2).

As we can see in the case study and partially in Fig. 3, the VIG influenced not only their communication skills but also their way of thinking about the education (e.g. if it is more important and efficient to transmit the information or to activate the students to think about the topic, to infer connections and conclusions etc.). We agree with Forsyth (2008), who suggests that the VIG is able to cause changes in the student teachers understanding and practice. One of interesting conclusions of her study, which was not examined in our research, is the fact that the student teachers after the VIG were able to generalise their skills to another context. This conclusion confirms the efficiency of the VIG method for the teachers.

Despite the research mentioned above provides enriching information for student teachers, it will be very helpful to support it by the findings from structured observation processed by the program V. I. P. This investigation is going to bring precious data from the microanalysis of attention, emotions and other important aspect of communication.

Conclusion

According to the described research, the VIG provides an important tool to analyse and develop effective teacher-students interactions and to prepare and positively motivate student teachers for their future profession. There is a substantial positive impact of the VIG on the self-reflection processes of the students. The method helps to reduce insecurity and nervousness of the student teachers in their practice as well.

The student teachers rated very high the possibility to see themselves on the records and analysed them together with positive and supporting VIG trainers and other students. They found helpful to see the records of other students as well.

In summation, the VIG has a positive effect on teacher-students' communication and perception: the student teachers used activating techniques more frequently, became more attentive, receptive and attuned to the initiatives of students. As a consequence, students were more involved into the education.

Acknowledgements

References

Bidlová, E. (2005) Sociální dovednosti učitele a možnosti jejich rozvíjení [dissertation] Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, Charles University in Prague

Beaufortová, K. (2002) Videotrénink interakcí (základy metody a její využití), [online] Prague: SPIN ČR. Available: http://intranet.spinlink.eu/files#2294 [3 Mar 2011].

Forsyth, P. (2008) The development of student teachers' interaction skills: is it time to re-think?, [online] Faculty of Education and Social work, University of Dundee. Available: http://intranet.spinlink.eu/files%232294#2902 [5 Mar 2011].

Fukkink, R., Tavecchio, L. (2010) 'Effect of Video Interaction Guidance on early childhood teachers', Teaching and Teacher Education, vol. 26, no. 8, pp. 1652-1659

Häggman-Laitila, A., Pietilä, A. M., Friis, L., Vehviläinen-Julkunen, K. (2003) 'Video home training as a method of supporting family life control', Journal of Clinical Nursing, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 93-106.

Locke, D.C., Ciechalski, J.C. (1995) Psychological Techniques for Teachers, Washington, DC: Accelerated Development, 362 p.

Saka, M., Surmeli, H. (2010) 'Examination of relationship between preservice science teachers' sense of efficacy and communication skills', Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 4722-4727.

Tok, S. (2010) 'The problems of teacher candidate's about teaching skills during teaching practice', Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 4142-4146.

Šimoník, O. (1995) Začínající učitel. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 94 p.

Šilhánová, K. (2008) Manuál pro VTI ve škole [online] Available: http://intranet.spinlink.eu/files#2302 [20 Sept 2011].