

Factors that Influence the Learning of Students in their Practical Training: the Analysis of the Experience of Social Work Students

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Abstract

The goal of the article is to reveal the factors having influence on the learning of students in their practical training on the basis of the analysis of the experience of social work students. The qualitative research has been chosen. The data collection method is an unstructured written reflection. The research results have revealed the factors encouraging the learning of students in the practical training: these are a favourable reception of the student at the place of practical training, an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge and obtained skills in practice and gain specific practical knowledge; a created opportunity to act independently and express himself in practice; an opportunity to acquire experience while working with different client groups of social work; purposeful and meaningful tasks; cooperation with the practice supervisor and other specialists of the institutions; positive relationships with social work clients; the reflection on the practice; the activeness of the student himself. The factors having negative influence on the learning of students in the practical training are the negative attitude towards the student in the place of his practical training, the lack of feedback, an unprofessional attitude of employees and personal weaknesses of the student.

Keywords: social work studies; students; reflection; practical training; learning experience

1. Introduction

Social work studies at university are indistinguishable from students learning during the practical training in the organizations providing social services.

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During the practical training an attempt is made to nurture an active, seeking, reflecting and competent future professional. The learning experience of students in organizations is, in a great measure, determined by the development of the interaction between students, potential employers (administrators, social workers, student practical training leaders) and responsible lecturers of a higher education institution and cooperation ties when creating a favourable educational environment. The creation of educational environment oriented towards the learner during the practical training is actualized in the works of many scientists (Reidy, 2006; Allodi, 2010; Parker, 2010 et. al.). Educational environment is identified as a dynamic learning and self-learning space which is created and affected by the educator and determined by an educational goal (Lipinskienė, 2002). Educational environment is conditioned by an educational goal, learning abilities of learners, content, methods and tools, physical conditions of realization, the people that realize an educational goal and the culture of the institution.

Some scientists (Jucevičienė et al., 2010) single out psychological and study conditions for a favourable educational environment. Psychological conditions are the positiveness of climate, parity in the interaction between the lecturer and the student, the effectiveness of assessment and feedback, whereas study conditions are the transformation of learning goals into self-learning goals, the matching of (self-)learning goals and needs, and also the matching of tools, methods and self-learning goals and needs. Personal learning environment encompasses: a self-learning goal; place and space the volume and boundaries of which learners tend to realize as their personal environment; the actual information for the learner; communication tools and methods that are understandable and acceptable to him; other persons acting in the environment of learning (Jucevičienė, 2008). Potential learning environment consists of situations of human activity, human participation in the mutual activity with other persons during which the exchange of information occurs.

The organization in which students do practice is one of educational environments. The space from which the learning of students depends is purposefully created in the place of practical training learning by using human, informational and material resources. The process of student learning in the practical training occurs successfully in the organization which learning culture is supported: the openness to experience, flexibility, reflection on their own experience, an aspiration for perfection, the creation of new knowledge and dissemination (Kanišauskaitė, 2011).

In the place of practical training that is oriented towards the learning in the activity, research, the search of innovations the student is assessed as the potential development of the organization who is able to contribute to the growth and development of the organization through his knowledge and ideas and by the same token to expand needed competencies when implementing the tasks of student practical training.

Many influencing factors are encountered at the place of practical training: the environment of practice, the relationship with the practice supervisor and other employees of that institution, the characteristics of communication with clients, received and performed practice tasks – these aspects constitute the microclimate of the place of practical training and affect the content of professionalism. In this context a question of the research is raised: What factors that influence students' learning in the practical training are actualized by students?

The goal of the Research is to reveal the factors that influence students' learning in the practical training studies on the basis of the analysis of the experience of students.

2. Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology has been applied. The **method** of data collection is an unstructured written reflection. The reflections were written for two weeks after the students had returned from their practice. The students were reflecting in writing according to the presented open-ended questions: What did I experience when implementing practice goals: what had positive and negative influence on my learning during the practical training? What does the done practice mean to me personally? What did I learn about myself as a developing professional?

The analysis of the results has been performed by applying the method of content analysis: 1) the text was read and essential aspects were singled out that are reflected by phrases, sentences, words that are directly related to the researched phenomenon; the singling out of semantic elements in the read text; 3) the dividing up of semantic elements into categories and subcategories; 4) the integration of categories into the context of the analyzed context of the phenomenon and the description of the content (Žydžiūnaitė, 2005).

Research ethics. The research was conducted without infringing the rights of the research participants and by keeping the principles of research ethics: the research participants were acquainted with the goal of the research and the data collection method, all the participants agreed to participate in the research voluntarily, and their confidentiality had been guaranteed.

The scope of the research. 18 students of social work in their 3rd year of studies took part in the research. The research participants were chosen according to the following criteria: the full-time students of the first cycle of social work studies who have undergone not fewer than three practical trainings. The research was conducted in November 2013.

3. The analysis of research results

Having performed the analysis of the students reflections on their experience during the practical training, two qualitative categories came to light: *factors encouraging students' learning in the practical training; factors having negative influence on students' learning in the practical training.*

The category **"Factors encouraging students' learning in the practical training"** is concretized by the content of the singled out subcategories: the "introduction" of the student into the practical training; an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in practice; a created opportunity to act during the practical training independently, express himself; an opportunity to acquire experience while working with different client groups of social work; purposeful and meaningful tasks; the cooperation with the practical training leader, other specialists of the institution; positive relationships with social work clients; reflection on the practice; the activeness of the student, his/her personal characteristics (Table 1).

Table 1: Factors Encouraging the Learning of the Students during Their Practical Training

Subcategories	Examples of statements
The "introduction" of the student into the practical training	<p>"... already in the very beginning I received such a strong support which impelled me to action", "During the first meeting the employees welcomed me warmly and with joy, showed me to the ropes of the centre and the performed activities, told about their clients. Then we discussed the activities I can initiate, which ones I would like, which ones would be related to the tasks of my practical training and would be useful to the children and the institution. It allowed me to feel more confident and safer from the very beginning of the practical training", "As during all the practical trainings the first days were fretful, I was fearful due to the fact that I did not know with what people I would have to communicate, what challenges I would have to encounter during this practice. These doubts were soon dispelled. It was not difficult to get integrated into the organization, because from the very first days I was warmly welcomed. The specialists working there supported me, we discussed everything, I was given loads of useful advice. In the environment of the practical training I felt accepted, and that was a great incentive from the very first days of the practical training."</p>
An opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in practice	<p>"To learn some method of social work is much easier than to apply it in practice. The practical training is a good opportunity to apply theoretical things in real, practical situations and to develop", "I had read about it earlier only in the literature, whereas during the practical training I applied it in reality. You can check yourself as a professional in such a way, not only apply the knowledge you possess, but acquire new and specific knowledge based on your practice", "What I had known theoretically I experienced practically. It was more interesting than reading and thinking how everything works in reality", "My practical training was a good opportunity to try myself in the professional field, how I am able to apply the knowledge and professional skill I possess in practical situations. It is very valuable to me, a future social worker, but I have to admit that it was one of the most difficult trials at the same time".</p>
A created opportunity to act in the practical training independently, express himself	<p>"... I was given absolute freedom to express myself, offer my opinion, position and reveal my creativity, show what I can do best, what my strengths, therefore, I viewed at everything with a great deal of responsibility and put loads of effort into it".</p>
An opportunity to acquire experience	<p>"It is interesting and curious to try myself in a new area when working with another client group", "I have got to know yet another rather new direction in social work where I could try myself. Earlier I thought that I would not</p>

while working with different client groups of social work	be able to work with persons having mental disorders, however, after this practical training my opinion has changed", "The thought about working with children was scaring me. I was thinking that I would not be able to work with children, I would not be able to handle them, that such a job was not for me. After the practical training in the child care institution I can say that my attitude has changed. I am very happy that I am lucky that I can work with children and even was employed at this institution".
Purposeful and meaningful tasks	"Loads of things depend on the practical training tasks. They were useful to me and the activity program prepared according to them was interesting both to me and the children. I put loads of effort into it and worked with great enthusiasm and fervour. Every time when I saw that the children like it I would start smiling, then it looked meaningful to me", "The greatest satisfaction and reward to me was that during the last meeting the children asked, "What? Is that all? Won't we meet again?". It was the proof that the activity was meaningful and interesting not only to me, but to the children as well".
Cooperation with the practice supervisor, other specialists of the institution	"It is important to start and maintain a close relationship with the practice supervisor: to discuss everyday activities, rejoice over successes and share doubts, receive a timely support and assistance when you need them most. When you feel the support of the professional you feel safer and you are not afraid to try", "The practice supervisor was extremely supportive towards me. We found a common language with her soon. She was not stingy with advice and shared a lot from her own experience. Other working specialists behaved pleasantly towards me as well, they would inquire me again and again how I was doing and whether I felt at ease. I felt confident due to the fact that the specialists working there cooperated with me and when there was a need they would help me and advise"
Positive relationships with social work clients	"I felt accepted in the children's group as though I already were a part of them. It was a great incentive to me", "The greatest success during the practical training is when you are recognized and you are accepted into their midst by the clients".
Reflection on the practical training	"My weak point is how to combine theoretical and practical knowledge. I know how it should be done, but it seems that you are not able to implement it practically. In such an instance I am in a great need of a professional's assistance. The discussion of everyday activity with my practice supervisor was very helpful in this case", "During the practical training I could think over better whether I had chosen an appropriate profession and understood that I had not made a mistake" , "...the reflections with the practice supervisor and reflection seminars at university broaden the vision of professional field a lot. It encourages to observe and get deeper into the situation and find a solution".
The activeness of a student, his personal characteristics	„Loads of things depend on yourself. I think that my most important strong point when doing the practical training is that I am communicative, I enter into contact easily, I am empathic and receptive to novelties", "I think that my personal characteristics, such as obstinacy, persistence and ability to look for solutions and ways out of problems, helped me. I never let my

	hands down and try to solve problems, because I am convinced that, if there is a problem, there is also a solution, you only need to desire to find it", "I think that a lot of things depend on a student himself – in what measure he will be active and motivated..."
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One of the factors encouraging students' learning during the practical training - *the "introduction" of a student into the practical training*. In the beginning of the practical training students feel unconfident, they do not know how they will succeed in implementing the practical training tasks, what kind of people they will have to deal with and what challenges they will encounter during their practical training. The first weeks of cooperation between the student and the organization in which he does his/her practical training are very important to the student, because the student, according to Eidukevičiūtė and Kiznytė (2009), experiences two parallel occurring processes: the formation of his professional identity and the adaptation in the organization.

Therefore, it is very important that from the very beginning of his first days of the practical training the student would feel that he/she is welcomed in the institution, that he/she would be received favourably and acquainted with the clients of the institution, their employees, performed activities, that the student would participate in the discussion of the activities that he/she will have to perform while implementing the goals and tasks of his/her practical training, that cooperation and effective feedback would dominate the relationship between the student and the practice supervisor and other employees. All of that determine psychological comfort, the greater concentration of the student and involvement into the learning process in the place of practical training. A properly designed learning environment can encourage a positive attitude of the learner towards his/her activity, stimulate his/her thinking, inventiveness and curiosity, build his/her self-esteem and self confidence and strengthen the learner's responsibility and positive attitude towards learning from the very beginning (Jucevičienė, 2001; Lipinskienė, 2011).

The data of the research reveal that the practical training is a very good *opportunity for students to develop through the application of theoretical knowledge and skills possessed in real practical situations*. The students admit that to combine theory with practice is *"one of the most difficult trials"* to them.

On the other hand, the practical training is a good opportunity *“not only to apply the knowledge and skills possessed, but to acquire new and specific knowledge based on their practice as well”*, the knowledge which is important to them as future social workers. Some scientists (Fisher, Somerton, 2000; Jarvis, Holford, Griffin, 2004; Dirgėlienė, 2008; Bubnys, 2011) point out that social work as a complex profession and professional intervention necessarily need the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge when creating knowledge that is relevant for new situations. Theoretical knowledge allows to see the possibilities of intervention and explain the existence of certain phenomena. On the other hand, theoretical knowledge is generalized, does not encompass sudden, nontypical individual situations which the social worker often encounters in his practice. Therefore, it is important for a future professional to acquire practical knowledge during the learning process, the knowledge that would be reflected upon, conceptualized and modified in case a sudden, nontypical client's situation arises (Eidukevičiūtė, 2009).

The research revealed that *a created opportunity to act in the practice independently, express himself* is a very important factor motivating them to implement the goals of the practical training, develop their professional skills. It is important to the students that both when planning and organizing their activity they would be able to express their attitude and need, that they would show what they are able to do best and reveal their creativity, strong professional and personal points. All of that motivate them to be active, inquisitive in the learning process. Modern learning paradigm oriented towards the student has to encourage the studying one to plan independently, organize and assess his/her learning. It is underlined that in the learning environment oriented towards the learner one of the ways to encourage student's learning is empowerment which is understood as the deepening confidence in himself/herself and knowledge allowing to change his/her professional actions – self-dependence and autonomy. In order that the student would be able to predict the possibilities of a particular activity and implement them independently, self-consciousness is needed and taking responsibility for the consequences of his/her actions at the same time (Grossman, 2007). Therefore, when creating learning environments that are oriented towards the learner, it is important to assess individual differences of learners: the competence possessed, attitude towards learning, learning needs and motivation, an individual learning style (Jucevičienė, Tautkevičienė, 2004).

The scientific research (Jaques, 2000; Teresevičienė, Gedvilienė, 2000; Barfield, 2003, Gupta, 2004 etc.) shows that educational innovations based on constructivist strategies of self-regulation and learning facilitate the process of the learners becoming independent, present an opportunity for learning reflection, develop transferable skills that are necessary in the modern labour world - problem solving, critical thinking, effective communication and cooperation, autonomous learning (according Burkšaitienė, 2006).

An opportunity to acquire experience while working with different client groups of social work has been identified by the research participants as an important motivational factor in their practical training. During practical training it is important for students to try themselves in yet other areas of social work when working with different client groups. On the one hand, practical training programs that are implemented in various institutions providing social services form the understanding of the student that professionalism in social work is attained through encounter with real clients and situations of practical activity. On the other hand, an opportunity to try oneself when working with different client groups of social work enables to form professional identity, to acquire specific practical knowledge (“... I was thinking that I would not be able to work with children, I would not be able to handle them, that such a job was not for me. After the practice in the child care institution I can say that my attitude has changed. I am very happy that I am lucky that I can work with children and even was employed at this institution”; “I have got to know yet another rather new direction in social work where I could try myself. Earlier I thought that I would not be able to work with persons having mental disorders, however, after this practice my opinion has changed”). According to B. Švedaitė (2007), higher education institutions provide future social work specialists with certain knowledge and baggage of experience, but real professionalism is born only when working practical work and constantly reflecting on it, meditating upon it and asking questions about it again and again.

The students pointed out that during their practical training *purposeful and meaningful tasks* motivate. Purposeful practical training tasks helped the students to prepare an activity program which was meaningful to the clients of the institution of practical training, and it, according to the students, was to them “the greatest satisfaction and reward”, conferred joy on them and provided them with incentive.

Some scientists (Ramsden, 2000; Jovaiša, 2003 et.al.) point out a task has to be purposeful, understandable and motivating to perform it, guaranteeing success of its performance. If the meaning of a task is not understandable, an activity decreases or even stops, because motivation ceases and positive relationship with it. From an educational point of view an activity will be meaningful for the student when he/she is able to reveal his/her abilities, realize other possibilities, satisfy his/her needs, when he/she while performing it acquires useful professional experience. In order to achieve optimal learning conditions during practical training, it is important that the tasks performed by the student would support the formation of the identity of the social worker.

Cooperation with the practice supervisor and other specialists of the institution are linked by the research participants to a motivating and supporting factor of their learning during the practical training. The students pointed out that *"it is important to start and maintain a close relationship with the practice supervisor: to discuss everyday activities, rejoice over their successes and share their doubts, receive a timely support and assistance when you need them most"*. A professional's escorting provides them with the sense of safety; they get involved into their activities bolder and are not afraid to experiment. Informal communication of the practice supervisor and other specialists with the student is a necessary condition to maintain the learning.

The students reflections raise *positive relationships with social work clients* as an important factor motivating their activity in the institution of practical training and the guarantee of success during the practical training. Good relationships of the clients with the students build the senses of safety and necessity, i. e. strengthen their personal recognition (*"I felt accepted in the children's group as though I already were a part of them. It was a great incentive to me"*). Positive mutual connection between clients and students helps students to know clients and their needs better and organize their activity more successfully (*"Their openness and trust in me helped me to know them better and foresee activities taking into consideration their needs"*). When the student interacts with his clients during his practical training, changes manifest themselves in his personality, especially in the formation of his professional identity.

The reflection on the practical training is relevant for the students as assistance to them to analyze, assess the content and the experience of his practical training, reduce tension and maintain inner motivation in learning.

The students note that it is difficult for them to see the relationship between theory and practice, in such a case the assistance of the professional is needed when discussing and showing those relationships: *"...this is what you learned, and here, in this place, is what you have done - exactly that"*. It should be also noted that the students, especially in the beginning of their practical training, while transiting into the role of acting social worker experiences the feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and incompetence. In addition, while performing during his practical training the student raises dilemmatic questions: is the activity he is performing useful? Is he performing the activity well? and the like. The assistance of reflection helps the student to get oriented in his professional activity when assessing the tension arising between personal and professional identity stipulated by scientific knowledge and professional reality (Boud, Keogh, Walker, 2005; Dirgėlienė, Kiaunytė, 2005, Bubnys, Žydzūnaitė, 2010). Zorga (2002) notices that reflection helps to integrate theoretical knowledge and practical experience, find solutions to problems which the student encounters during his practical training, helps to effectively cope with stress and enable to form professional identity as well.

The students maintain that reflections with the practice supervisor and reflection seminars during practical training at university *"broaden the vision of professional field a lot"*. According to Jensen (2010), while acting and solving problems in a certain professional area the person narrows the area of complex questions, therefore, some aspects remain not taken into consideration. The reflection gives space which helps look at the question from a variety of perspectives and complexly.

The students have noted in their reflections that the practical process of learning depends in a great measure on *the activeness of the student himself, his personal characteristics*, desire to develop in order to become a professional social worker. The students maintained that their learning during their practical training is supported by such personal characteristics as self confidence, communicability, empathy, receptivity to novelties, determination and aspiration to solve arising problems *"without letting hands down"*. On the other hand, practical training participants would not have to wait for incentives from those who are around (employees of the organization, their practical training leader or even a client) as a sole drive to act. According to Eidukevičiūtė and Kiznytė (2009), the student also creates learning conditions that would satisfy his motivation and inquisitiveness.

In order to create an optimal learning environment and stipulating a faster student's adaptation in the organization, both sides would have to share the initiation of active and conscious role. When coming to his practical training the student would have to think over his expectations towards process of the practical training consciously and foresee how he would be able to be useful to the particular organization. The organization receiving the student for his practical training should foresee possible activities assisting him to implement his practical training tasks and introduce him to the organization's culture.

In the reflections of the students the factors that have a negative effect on their learning during the practical training were revealed - *a negative attitude towards the student, the lack of feedback, the unprofessional attitude of the employees and personal weaknesses the student* (Table 2).

Table 2: The Factors that Have a Negative Effect on Students' Learning during the Practical Training

Subcategories	Examples of statements
A negative attitude towards the student	"I felt bad, because other employees were hostile towards me and did not want to communicate. I sometimes got the impression as though they felt I was their rival. Having witnessing my good relationship with the children, the director would not even talk to me. Maybe that was due to fear that "I might steal" somebody's employment. I do not know what made them behave like that, however, when it comes to me, I did all I could that our communication would be positive and not conflict-prone. Certainly, it is harder to meet your expectations in such environment."
The lack of feedback from the practice supervisor	"Due to the fact that the practice supervisor could not give me a lot of attention because of time shortage, the preparation of my program was entrusted to me and I led the lessons myself. The communication was shallow and fortuitous. I really missed discussions, wanted to have a professional's advice, receive support and remarks. It was especially difficult in the beginning of the practical training, I felt tension and uncertainty".
The unprofessional attitude of the employees	"...the attitude of the employees of the institution itself is influenced by firmly established stereotypes and indifference. That stifled my enthusiasm very much, because I had thought that it was a great injustice toward the disabled", "...I would react towards the incompetent specialists who cooperated with the society in a sensitive way. Such sensitivity sometimes hindered to hold on to the program of the practical training and one time my motivation to complete the practical training decreased", "It is not good when you have to observe an improper attitude of the employees towards their work. I cannot tell why it is so, I can only guess. Maybe the employees lack motivation, maybe they lack competence to work such kind of work, maybe they are not satisfied with their salary, and maybe the attitude of the employees themselves towards such activity is negative, maybe it is a "burnout" syndrome that occurs when doing social work..."
Personal weaknesses	"I felt very sheepish when I had to lead lessons myself when a social worker was not around. I lack self confidence and that is not a minor obstacle to me", "My activeness is blocked by the lack of confidence in my own strength. It seemed to me that I had too little experience and would not be able to do a lot of things properly", "I was afraid to make a mistake, to do something wrongly", "My weak side is excessive emotionality: I would bring all the problems of my clients home and think about it without ceasing", "It is difficult for me to make rational decisions and control myself in stressful situations".

Negative experiences of students relationships with their practice supervisors and other specialists of the institution are linked to the lack of cooperation. According to the students, they feel bad when the employees are not favourably disposed towards them and do not want to communicate. It is *"harder to meet my own expectations"* for the student in such a place. During his practical training the student tries to make contact with the employees of the organization, therefore, it is important that not only his presence in the institution would be recognized, but he would be received as a colleague. When there is a mutual partner relationship the student does not experience tension, does not feel being depreciated, has the courage to experiment and enrich his experience. One of the first objectives to organize the practical training in the institution is to create partner relationships with the student. The student's relationships with his practice supervisor, other employees of the institution and clients are very important factors influencing the creation of a favourable atmosphere for the activity in the place where practical training is performed.

On the other hand, in the process of the practical training future social work professionals nurture their ability to recognize the roles of the social worker during an intervention and while working as a team with other professionals (Večkienė, Eidukevičiūtė, 2009). Cooperation improves mutual relationships, creates the atmosphere of trust and support and increases learning motivation. The scientists (Allodi, 2010; Eidukevičiūtė, 2009 et.al.) point out that in many cases the success of the implementation of the practical training of the student and further cooperation depend on the dominating attitude in the organization towards the student and his activity. If an organization is guided by an attitude that the student does not possess proper experience and is able to do only elementary practical work (which the workers often are not able to do due to their lack of time), successful implementation of the practical training is hardly probable. If an organization is guided by an attitude that the student is competent and able to participate in the activity of the organization effectively, that he is the one who can be entrusted with the tasks of corresponding responsibility, the process of the practical training is usually successful.

The negative assessment of the learning during the practical training expressed by the students is linked to *the lack of feedback*. According to the students, it is important to them to discuss their activities with the practice supervisor, to ask the advice of him, receive remarks and support. Due to the lack of feedback the student feels tension and uncertainty.

Having encountered negligence, poverty and complicated experience of the people, the student of social work often experiences stress and other strong emotions which he/she is not able to easily cope with on his/her own. It could be helped by the cooperation with experienced specialists, his/her practice supervisor in order to eliminate emotional tension, assess the situations and his/hers possibilities realistically and increase self confidence. Feedback is very important to maintain the interaction that is favourable to learning. Feedback positively strengthens practical skills that are needed for the success of education (Sadauskas, 2013).

The students motivation to be interested in their professional activity is decreased by an open depreciation of social work by social workers themselves and improper behaviour of the employees with their clients (the depreciation of the possibilities and abilities of the client, putting labels on their clients and disrespectful talking about their clients). The premises of his practical training is the place for the student to learn professional behaviour, therefore, it is very important for them to see positive examples of the social worker and his professional attitude.

The students emphasized their *personal weaknesses* in their reflections, especially the lack of self confidence and excessive emotionality, inability to manage their stress. The lack of self confidence would occur due the meagre practical experience and the lack of skills of the students (especially communication, the organization of the activity, problems solving and conflicts management). The students maintained that during their practical training they experienced difficulties due to their excessive emotionality and the lack of emotional resilience (*"My weak side is excessive emotionality: I would bring all the problems of my clients home and think about it without ceasing", "I am too sensitive, I absorb the problems of others to carry them for a long time"...*). It goes without saying that social work requires high emotional intelligence and emotional resilience especially due to the fact that emotions experienced while communicating with the clients affect the relationships with them in one way or another and change the attitude and approach towards them. On the other hand, it also shows the need for supervision. Supervision helps the student overcome difficult professional situations, examine problematic cases, think over his experience, his professional role, look at his work critically, know himself better, receive feedback, facilitate psychological load, inquire into his professional activity, develop his own professional skills, especially that of diagnosing, problems solving, communicational etc.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of written reflections allowed to learn the experiences of the students during their practical training better, highlight positive and negative factors that can have influence on the students during their practical training and affect the efficacy of their practical training.

The research results highlighted the factors that support students' which are linked to the favourable attitude of the organization towards the student, his activity from the very first days of the student's "introduction" into his practical training; the opportunity for the student to apply theoretical knowledge and the skills possessed in real practical situations and acquire new specific knowledge from his own practice; the created opportunity to act during his practical training independently and express himself/herself; the opportunity to acquire experience while working with different client groups of social work; purposeful and meaningful tasks enabling the students to acquire valuable practical experience, develop professional competencies; the cooperation and parity in the relationship with the practice supervisor, other specialists of the institution; positive relationships the clients of social work; the reflection on the practical training; student's activeness, desire to develop in order to become a professional social worker.

The research also revealed the factors having negative influence on the students' learning during their practical training. The process of the practical training will not be effective, if an organization is guided by an attitude that the student is incompetent, unable to participate in the activity of the organization effectively and that he/she cannot be entrusted with responsible tasks. The negative assessment of the learning during the practical training is linked to the lack of feedback. Due to the lack of feedback the student feels tension and uncertainty. The students' motivation to be interested in their professional activity is decreased by the unprofessional attitude of the social workers: the depreciation of social work and improper behaviour towards their clients.

The research highlights the substantiation of the practical training by supervision when preparing social workers at university. The students that encountered difficulties, doubts, the complexity of professional situation or ignorance during their practical training of social work should have a possibility to discuss and analyze based on the stages of their activity: the presentation of the situation and the discussion of its complexity, the raising of problematic questions, the search for changes, the emancipation of thoughts and generalization and experimentation during the practical training.

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