

# Bridging the Gap between Teachers' Initial Education and Induction: Case Study of Serbia

## Student Teachers' practical studies

EU context: variety of models, but in many countries up to 30 ECTS, conducted in model and practice schools, by cooperating teachers, through a variety of modalities

Western Balkans context: STs' practical studies a missing link, high priority to establish

Serbian context: 1-4 yrs focus on TED and CPD system, new ITE policy with modest requirement of 30ng ECTS, emerging implementation



## Synopsis of the story

- 1. Case study of trying to help to overcome one gap in the ITE system in Serbia: the practical studies of student teachers
- 2. A pragmatic, non-ambitious needs assessment study was conducted
- 3. The study discovered much more than expected
- 4. Trying to overcome the one gap proved impossible without overcoming many more

## Conclusions

- ✓ Emerging institutional implementation of the new teacher development policy
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## Whom did we examine?

- The study was performed in October-November 2013
- 65 different departments in five state universities in Serbia were contacted in order to gather data on student teachers' practical studies; 44 departments (68%) responded to our query

Questionnaire (contextual information in respect to practical studies, number of university staff and teacher mentors involved, amount of practical studies, curricula, challenges...)

## 1. Organization of practical studies or "System without a system"

- Variability of systems
- number of school and teacher mentors involved (e.g. several up to more than 20)
  - practical studies as a separate course or part of an university course
  - amount of time students actually spend in schools varies (e.g. 8-30)
  - no unified way organizing practical studies between and within UNIFACULTY/DEPARTMENT

Tünde Kovács Cerović  
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**A pragmatic, non-ambitious needs assessment study was conducted**



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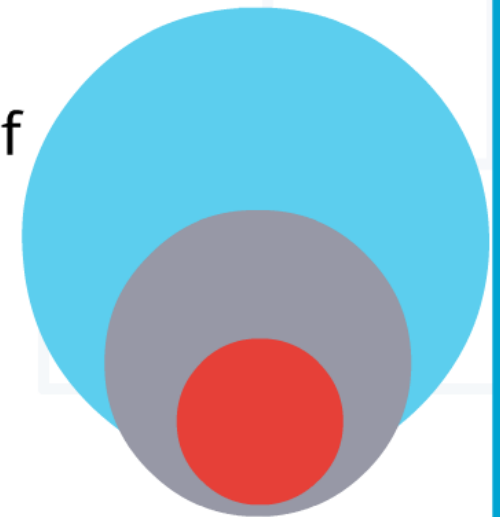
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## **„Razvionica“ project**

Strengthening the “knowledge triangle” and improve the effectiveness of the education system.

- pilot a National Curriculum Framework in 10% of schools
- enable 13 thousand teachers to acquire transversal competences
- establish sustainable relationships between research, policy and practice
- establish a new system of practice schools for student teachers' practical studies, and train 2000 STs
- 41 schools, distributed across the country, at all University levels
- spread around 1200 teacher mentors, from these schools and many other schools to take up the mentoring role

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- establish a new system of practice schools for student teachers' practical studies, and hence assist ITE
  - 41 schools distributed across the country, at all University centres
  - prepare around 1500 teacher mentors from these schools and from other schools to take up the mentoring role

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### *Some system level information*

- In Serbia student teachers' practical studies take place at bachelor level (66%), master's level or both bachelor and master level
- Future class teachers spend more time in practical studies (200 vs. 70)
- Mostly practical studies are being graded only by the teacher(s) from the university (60%)
- In most cases 1 teaching assistant and 1 coordinator are involved in the practical studies
- On average 12 hours staff time per week is spent in activities related to practical studies (average 168 hours per year)
- Good university teacher:student ratio (around 1:25)
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## 2. Curricula of the practical studies knowledge acquisition or competence building?

students are to acquire knowledge on practical issues related to working at school, and apply their acquired knowledge analysis of the curricula using specific keywords

**„The traditional approach“** - acquiring knowledge, teaching units, teacher plans and programmers, teacher, didactic, methodics, education process

**„Current trends in teacher education“** - competencies, reflexive practitioner, self-evaluation, critical thinking, self-regulation, extracurricular activities, complexity of the teacher profession, professional identity, action research, cooperative learning, standards, up-to-date teaching methods

### *3. knowledge needed to perform the lesson or to support education of students*

- number of hours (lessons) observed during practical studies
- number of lessons held by the student
- activities related to lesson preparation and teaching materials necessary for the execution of the lesson

**The focus is on teaching the subject!**

| 5. Who does what?  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| The role of the teacher mentors  |                     |
| Lesson observations/observation  | (M=26.16, SD=9.84)  |
| Individual preparation of the students   | (M=16.56, SD=10.54) |
| Lesson observations of other students  | (M=13.74, SD=10.41) |
| Working with the teacher from the university in planning and preparing lessons | (M=13.26, SD=6.24)  |
| Analysis of observed lessons with a teacher from the university                | (M=9.42, SD=11.68)  |
| Working with the teacher mentor in planning and preparing lessons              | (M=8.80, SD=9.67)   |
| Analysis of observed lessons with teacher mentor                               | (M=6.70, SD=12)     |
| Group students' preparation  | (M=5.11, SD=11.33)  |
| Teaching under supervision   | (M=4.94, SD=5.06)   |
| Analysis of performed lessons with teacher mentor                              | (M=4.34, SD=4.87)   |
| Analysis of performed lessons with teacher mentor                              | (M=2.57, SD=3.12)   |

## 4. Who gets to do what? The role of the teacher mentors



### Faculty staff

- coordinating and implementing
- mentoring the students
- informing (directing?) teacher mentors on practical issues
- teach at the faculty

### School staff

- provide placement possibility
- average teacher mentors supervise 12 students

*no periodic meeting, conferences, discussion between faculty and school staff exists*



## ***5. Who does what?***

### ***The role of the teacher mentors***

Lesson observations/hospitation (M=26.19; SD=50.44)

Individual preparation of the students (M=16.66; SD=18.54)

Lesson observations of other students (M=13.74; SD=19.41)

Working with the teacher from the university in planning and preparing lessons (M=10.06; SD=14.74)

Analysis of observed lessons with a teacher from the university (M=9.42; SD=11.68)

Working with the teacher mentor in planning and preparing lessons (M=6.80; SD=9.47)

Analysis of observed lessons with teacher mentor (M=6.75; SD=12)



Group students' preparation (M=5.11; SD=11.33)

Teaching under supervision (M=4.94; SD=5.58)

Analysis of performed lessons with faculty teacher (M=4.34; SD=4.87)

Analysis of performed lessons with teacher mentor (M=2.57; SD=3.12)

## 6. What is being graded? The role of teacher mentors

| activities   | % PSP   |
|--|---|
| The analysis of performed lessons with a teacher from the faculty  | 80%    |
| Individual preparation of students (including time and products in the form of written preparation, etc.). | 80%   |
| Lesson "defense"   | 74%   |
| Teaching under the supervision   | 72%   |
| Working with teachers from faculty in planning and preparation of lessons                                  | 70%   |
| Report of mentor teachers on professional practice the students has realized                               | 63%   |
| Working with mentor teachers in planning and preparation of lessons  | 53%  |
| Portfolio  | 52%   |
| Oral exam  | 46%   |



## *Perceived benefits of practical studies*

- „students' actual chance to **see and feel** what teaching really is“
- chance for the students to become **more confident** in own abilities of running a lesson and to get to know the programme
- students become **more knowledgeable** of classroom management

## *And the problems perceived*

- available **number** of schools and staff working with the students is too small
- practical studies are **too short**
- **no substantial cooperation** between the faculties and the schools
- **very little professional development** for both schools' and university staff

# Conclusions

- ✓ **Emerging institutional implementation** of the new teacher development policy
  - **Diversity** from 0 to excellent, room for development, good practice models also exist
  - **Typical weak points:**
    - Selection of schools and mentors is a bottleneck
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**How did the project embrace these findings?**

- Strengthen mentors' competencies in and outside of practice schools
- Overcoming the disciplinary fragmentation
  - Subject didactics professors of different subjects working together to develop the curriculum for in-service training of mentors
  - Subject didactics professors and school psychologists pedagogically working together for developing learning
  - Subject didactics professors and school psychologists pedagogically working together to plan to implement the training
  - Training reports and practice case studies and IT's use, classroom management, classroom observation and pedagogical practice feedback and formative assessment, cooperation with parents, lesson planning for diversity of students etc.

= co-construction of an integrated and interdisciplinary profession?

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Overcoming the disciplinary fragmentation


- Subject didactics professors of different subjects working together to develop the curriculum for a short training of mentors
- Subject didactics professors and school psychologists/pedagogues working together to develop the training
- Subject didactics professors and school psychologists/pedagogues working together in pairs to implement the training
- Training program encompassing areas missing in ITE (e.g. classroom management, classroom observation methodology, providing feedback and formative assessment, cooperation with parents, lesson planning for diversity of students etc.)

**= co-construction of an integrated and interdisciplinary profession?**



- Overcoming isolation of practice schools: preventing the transfer of ITE fragmentation to practice schools**
  - Mentors from all schools cooperating with the same university/faculty together
  - Training organized in alternation of groups by school and by subject
- Overcoming the disconnect between teaching and research**
  - Action research module integrated into the training – conduct a small AR by mentors
  - AR module delivered by researcher and subject didactics professor in pairs
- Overcoming the gap between national policy and institutional policy and**





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## Overcoming the gap between national policy and institutional policy and practice

- Providing a long overdue support for implementing the national policy (min 6 ECTS for practical studies)
- Several sub-legal acts still to be developed



# *Is this the end of the story ?*



Will this collaborative approach unleash creativity and innovation or strengthen territorial positioning?

- Who's song is this?



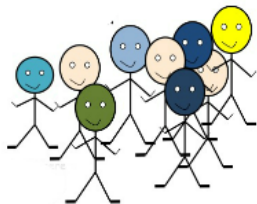
Can fragmentation be overcome without creating new cleavages?

- Between those who are in and who are out?
- Those who support and those who are against?



A large scale development is still ahead beyond the project:

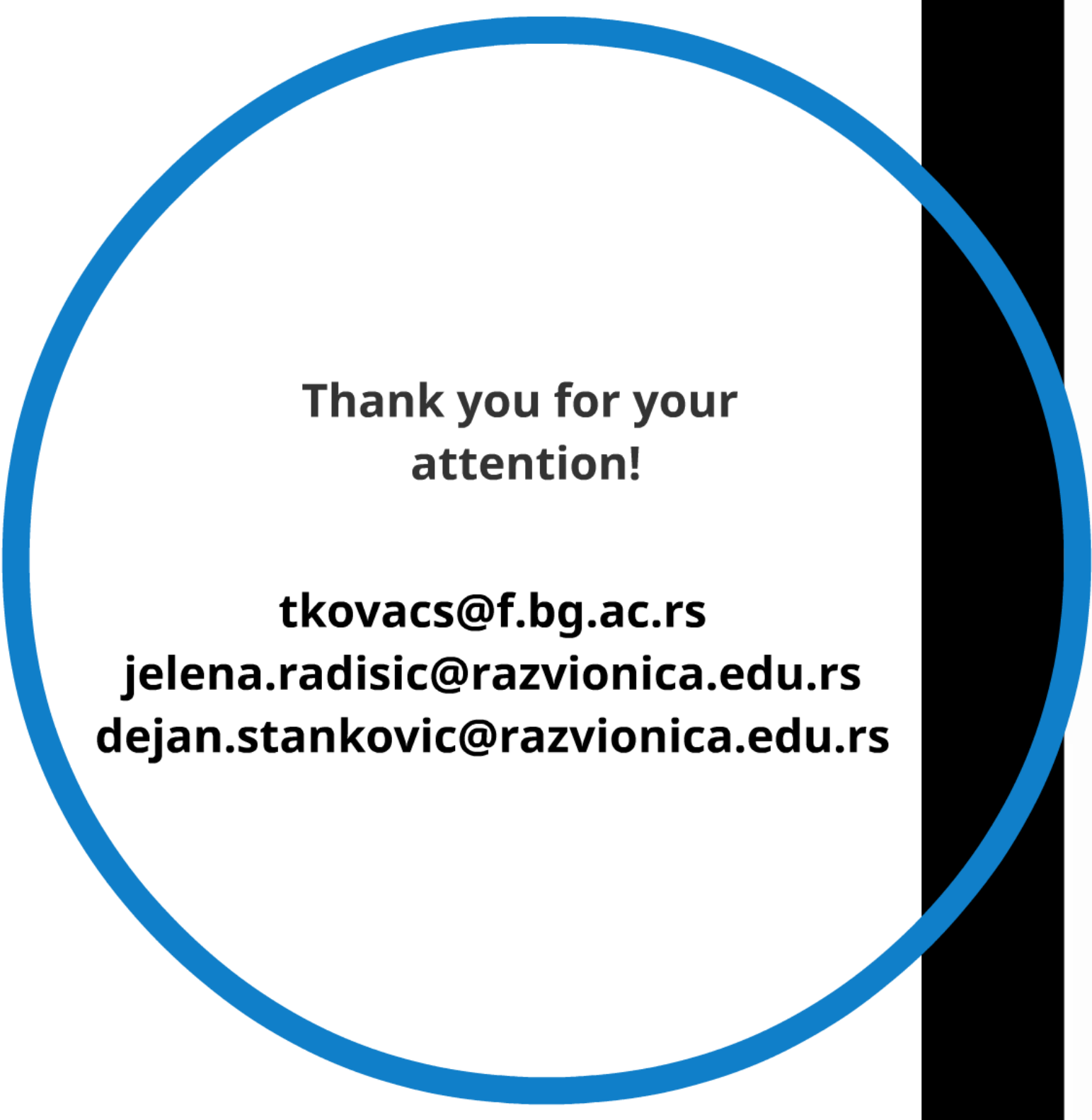
- Accreditation of mentors, accreditation of practice schools
- Scaling up and structuring the practice schools network
- ITE programs for mentors
- QA of the emerging system



**Let us not forget about the children!**

Thank you for your attention!

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