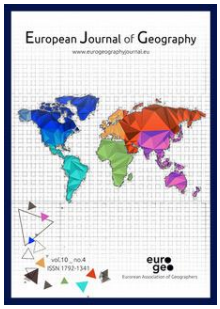

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Hidden aspects of pre-service geography teacher education in Slovenia—vision versus reality

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Abstract

Educators of future teachers are constantly faced with the changing demands of modern times in providing quality school education. The process of educating pre-service teachers involves many hidden aspects that even educators of pre-service teachers themselves are often unaware of, as they are subtly hidden behind likeable professional eloquence. For decades, the pre-service geography teacher education in Slovenia has been driven by the educators' profound belief in the significance of preparing students for their future professions, regardless of the, often hidden, obstacles that they have had to overcome. Through a qualitative pilot study among former students on the geography teacher education study programme in Slovenia, we aimed to identify strengths and weaknesses of the existing programme and suggest possible changes that could lead to its improvement.

The publication of the European Journal of Geography (EJG) is based on the European Association of Geographers' goal to make European Geography a worldwide reference and standard. Thus, the scope of the EJG is to publish original and innovative papers that will substantially improve, in a theoretical, conceptual or empirical way the quality of research, learning, teaching and applying geography, as well as in promoting the significance of geography as a discipline. Submissions are encouraged to have a European dimension. The European Journal of Geography is a peer-reviewed open access journal and is published quarterly.

1. INTRODUCTION

As teachers, future teacher educators, and (often) parents, we like to think of the past as a golden age, when the main task of a teacher was to convey the knowledge that students had to acquire before they could truly enter the adult world. According to Lidston (2006), in the early years of the 21st century, the question arose in developed countries as to whether there were enough teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of rapid social and economic change and an increasingly diverse population of students. The faster the world changes, the more we need to learn about survival strategies, and the more we learn, the greater the demand for change. In the past, teaching and learning were considered an exclusive domain of schools and universities (Dhimitri et al., 2018). Today, those who want to develop new forms of education to help young people learn and those who educate future teachers are confronted with young people who grew up in the "digital age", or citing Jukes and Dosaj (2003, cited in Lidstone, 2006), "digital immigrants" are confronted with "digital natives". Between Scylla of conservatism and Charybdis of innovation, Lidstone (2006) finds more sense in seeking the benefits of technological and social realities than looking to the past.

Nowadays, the science of teacher education aims to educate a "deep-thinking professional who is capable of meeting new challenges and successfully confronting the complexity and uncertainty of his or her profession, who is neither a sterile theorist nor a practitioner who believes that in the day-to-day management of problems theory is something useless" (Marentič Požarnik, 2006, p. 5). Due to the changes in society, teachers have to accept some new roles and change or abandon some old ones. The key lies in the willingness to change traditional roles and adapt them to new circumstances (e.g. mentoring role, organization of learning situations, more intensive involvement of students in the learning process, etc.). At the same time, teachers are faced with an increasing number of students with disabilities, which requires different forms of teaching and different forms of external assessment.

The process of educating pre-service teachers involves many hidden aspects that even educators of pre-service teachers themselves are often unaware of, as they are subtly hidden behind likeable professional eloquence. Political correctness, financial sustainability, satisfying the aspirations of individual sciences, the predominance of "important" over "less important, if not insignificant" sciences—all these factors are reflected in the proportion of the number of school hours for an individual subject in the school curricula, which further impacts on the interest in individual teacher education study programmes. To conclude, we should be aware of all this if we want to establish a comprehensive, high-quality and sustainable education system throughout the whole education vertical.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In Slovenia, the full implementation of the Bologna Process began in the academic year 2009/2010 with the first-year bachelor's students. It has brought about a number of changes in the education of future teachers, both of purely formal and substantive nature. The key step was the introduction of the Teaching Module (60 ECTS credit points) in all programmes of Slovenian universities that educate future teachers of primary and secondary school subjects. The Faculty of Arts of the University of

Ljubljana adopted the Teaching Module described below, which was then incorporated into the new Bologna programmes of individual pedagogical studies at the master's level. In Slovenia, students gain the majority of knowledge and competences in their chosen disciplines during their bachelor's studies. At the Faculty of Arts, they can decide between single-subject or combined (i.e. two-subject) studies, although all disciplines do not offer a teacher education programme at the master's level, or they (like geography, for example) offer just a combined teacher education study programme.

A student in a combined teacher education study programme must earn 60 ECTS credit points in the compulsory Teaching Module, that is 30 credits in each subject (e.g. geography and history). The Teaching Module consists of two parts: (1) Joint Part of the Teaching Module at the faculty level (Psychology for Teachers; General Didactics; Pedagogy—Theory of Education and Andragogy; Observational Practicum in Psychology, General Didactics, or Pedagogy; and a compulsory elective course in Humanities and Social Sciences, Slovene for Teachers, or Exploring the Learning Process) and (2) special sections planned by individual departments (two special didactics and two teaching practices within the framework of special didactics).

Each special didactics decides at its own discretion on the number of hours of classroom-based observations and classroom-based trainee evaluations. The student must complete a minimum of one week of observational practicum within the framework of the Joint Part of the Teaching Module (JPTM) and two weeks of teaching practice within individual special didactics (or four weeks in the case of a single-subject study programme).

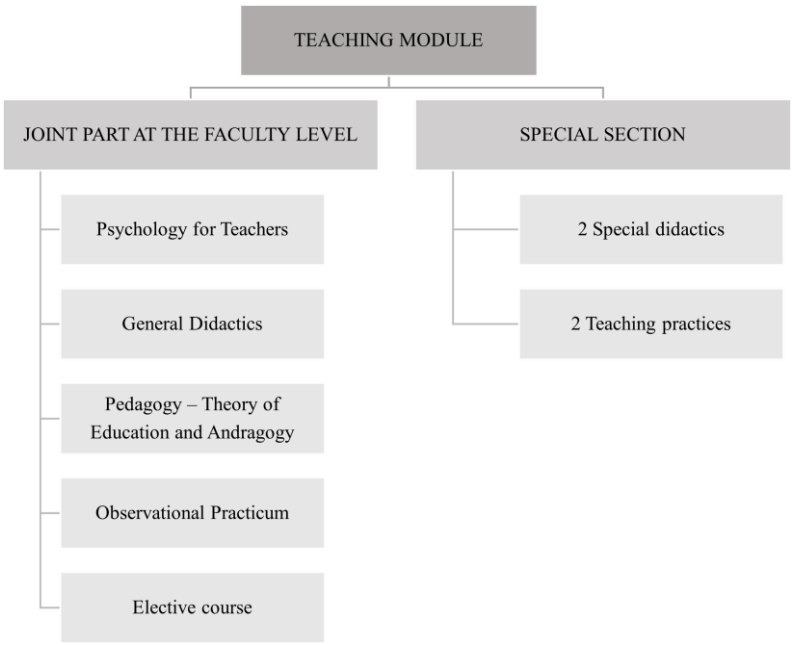

Figure 1. Teaching Module at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Study Programmes, 2020)

With the Bologna Process, teaching practice became (if it had not been already) a compulsory and integrative element, a link between the theoretical and practical part of the Teaching Module curricula. In this way, models of understanding events and responding to them are transformed into professional thinking, which determines

professional action. This process begins during the teaching practice and is expected to continue in the traineeship period. Although in Slovenia, teaching practice is not yet organized and carried out as desired by educators of future teachers.

When talking about the development of both the JPTM and individual special didactics in Slovenia, we have to mention two national projects, Partnership of Faculties and Schools I and II, which were carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport between 2004 and 2007. The professional public had expected a lot from these projects, but in the end received very little (Table 1). The aims, outcomes and their implementation are important for further development of pre-service teacher education in Slovenia, while bearing in mind that education of future teachers lies at the intersection of primary and secondary schools, and higher education.

Table 1. Aims, results and the implementation of Partnership of Faculties and Schools I and II

Partnership of Faculties and Schools I		
Aims	**Outcomes**	**Implementation**
▪ Raise the quality and efficiency of the education of students/ future teachers ▪ Identify basic general and subject-specific competences of future teachers ▪ Establish a model of education that optimally encourages the development of these competences, combining practical knowledge and practical experience ▪ Improve the model for integrating reflected teaching practice into the study ▪ Establish a model of (collaborative) partnership between the faculty and schools in the planning, implementation and evaluation of student teaching practice ▪ Develop a model of continuous professional development of teacher mentors of students during teaching practice	▪ A set of professional competences ▪ Defined minimum standards for the practical education of future teachers ▪ Participating faculties interconnected with each other and with schools ▪ Appropriate position and status were given to the teacher mentors who participated in the process and are thus key carriers and partners, who assure the quality of future teachers.	▪ Professional competences and minimum standards were implemented into pre-service education of teachers. ▪ Some of the established connections between faculties, and between faculties and schools were preserved. ▪ Teacher mentors at schools have still not gained the proposed mentor status.
Partnership of Faculties and Schools II		
Aims	**Outcomes**	**Implementation**
▪ (Re)Evaluate the	▪ Several innovative	• Preparation and

organization of teaching practice, both in terms of finances and staffing (promotion) ▪ Introduce a student portfolio as a reference for graduates ▪ Introduce a one-week observational practicum followed by dispersed teaching practice ▪ Solve the problem of students' and teachers' individual workload ▪ Set norms for monitoring teaching practice	products ▪ A proposal for the acquisition of a title or license for teacher mentors at schools ▪ Recognizing the need to formalize the cooperation between the faculty, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, schools and other educational institutions, and to provide material conditions ▪ Recognizing the necessity for establishing a network of mentoring schools ▪ Awareness that work of teacher mentors should be properly rewarded	production of innovative products (e.g. an online classroom, a handbook on mentoring and professional growth of teachers, scientific monograph Theory and Practice in Teacher Education, Proceedings of the Systemic Solutions for the Participation of Teachers in the Education of Future Teachers)

Source: Resnik Planinc, 2019

University teachers of didactics of geography have been deeply involved in all the above-mentioned processes. The course was introduced as an independent course under the name of Teaching Methods of Geography at the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, 62 years ago. As a university course, it developed gradually; the content of the course was upgraded, the number of contact hours, hours of lectures, seminars and tutorials varied, as did the name of the course itself. In spite of occasional setbacks, we have witnessed, especially since the 1970s, gradual and ever-increasing interaction between didactics of geography and geographical science. With the Bologna reform, the didactics of geography succeeded in upgrading and expanding.

The new combined (two-subject) teacher education study programme (MA) in geography was launched in the academic year 2012/2013 (Resnik Planinc, 2019). Students attended *Didactics of Geography I* and a new course, *Organizing and Conducting Excursions and Fieldwork*. In the second year of the Bologna master's programme, students then attended *Didactics of Geography II* and a newly added course, *Teaching Practice*. All of the above refers to the field of specialized didactics, in this case the didactics of geography, but it should be noted that students from the first year of the second cycle have also always attended the JPTM as explained previously. Today, the relationship between general didactics and the didactics of geography is based on the fact that the didactics of geography uses general pedagogical and didactic principles, while the content, internal logic and special didactics approach, together with all the specifics, are derived from modern geographical science.

Minor changes within the geographical part of the entire Teaching Module have occurred over the years as a result of university teachers' and students' experience. Apart from the aforementioned courses, the master's Combined Geography Teacher Education Study Programme also includes the following courses: *Selected Geographic*

Contents for Geography Teachers and the remaining four of the six *regional geographies* (student already selected two at the bachelor's level).

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Although the department has been systematically collecting students' opinions about their satisfaction with the geography teacher education study programme, we considered it necessary to survey the views of former pre-service geography teacher education students about the programme in order to determine what we are doing well and where there is potential for further improvement. The study sought to find out their opinion about the pedagogical study.

We wanted to provide answers to the following research questions:

Q1: Why do young people decide to study to be teachers and why do they choose geography?

Q2: What expectations of former geography teacher education students were/were not satisfied during their studies?

Q3: Did their study properly prepare them for the work of a teacher?

Q4: What would former geography teacher education students preserve in the concept and implementation of the JPTM and what changes would they suggest?

Q5: What would former geography teacher education students preserve in the concept and implementation of the geographical part of the Teaching Module and what changes would they suggest?

Q6: What do former geography teacher education students consider an "ideal" geography teacher?

Our primary approach to the research topic centred on descriptive methods with the analysis of written documented sources. The data collection for the study was based on a qualitative empirical pedagogical research design, which best allowed for an exploration of what Mason (2002, p. 1) calls "the texture and weave of everyday life … the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants". The basic research instrument we used was a written semi-structured interview, which combines predefined questions, like those used in structured interviews, with the open-ended exploration of an unstructured interview (Wilson, 2014). The general goal of the semi-structured interview is to gather systematic information about a set of central topics, while also allowing some exploration when new issues or topics emerge (Wilson, 2014). They enabled us to gather more focused and in-depth explanations of the research topic. Former geography teacher education students were in the interviews presented with questions on the research topic, allowing them the opportunity to provide their personal opinions as a narrative, and as such they were not limited in the scope of their responses. "Narrative inquiry and reflection allow teachers to develop new meanings and interpretations, to organise their personal knowledge of teaching and learning, and thus alter their teaching practices, and personal and professional development" (Konečnik Kotnik & Javornik Krečič, 2011, p. 10). Kohont et al. (2005) found that when it comes to determining job competences, interviews can be a very appropriate method for obtaining data. A feature of in-depth interviews, such as those carried out by Legard et al. (2003), is their potential for being generative because they encourage the articulation of independent responses, which reflect the knowledge and understanding

of the interviewee. In this case, an in-depth qualitative questionnaire was considered as the most appropriate data collection method (Groenewald, 2003).

It is important to note that our qualitative pedagogical research is not intended to reveal representative situations within the studied topic; we rather sought to examine whether participants conform to the key assumptions, irrespective of their gender, work experience, and where they teach (primary or secondary school). This approach was based on our specific selection of former geography teacher education students according to the extent of their cooperation during their studies.

The data were analysed in descriptive terms and presented as generalised descriptions with selected individual responses as examples. According to Groenewald (2003), studies influenced by phenomenology should aim to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself or himself (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, cit. in Groenewald, 2003, p. 18). In this tradition, we have used exact quotations from the participants, although the choice of quotations and the analytic framework remains ours. When presenting the results, we did not use any names in order to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees; we therefore stated only their gender and age.

4. RESULTS

As already mentioned, the Bologna Process began to be fully implemented in Slovenia in the academic year 2009/2010 with the first-year bachelor's students, which means that the first generation of combined geography teacher education students at the Department of Geography enrolled in the master's programme in the academic year 2012/2013.

Table 2. The number of combined geography teacher education students per academic years

Academic year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Number of first-year students	**6**	**19**	**14**	**19**	**9**	**10**	**9**	**10**

In March and April 2020, twenty selected former geography teacher education students were asked in writing to participate in our qualitative research. The criteria for the selection of participants were based on: different length of time elapsed since the last year of their studies/graduation (and consequently the extent of experience), equal gender representation, and their previous documented pedagogical activity/engagement during their studies. We received responses from seventeen former geography teacher education students, six females and eleven males. Eleven participants had a master's degree in geography education, three participants were going to gain it within the next two months, while three participants were still in the process of writing their master's thesis. Based on the written interviews, their age ranged from 25 to 29 years (the average age was 27.06). They came from six (out of twelve) Slovenian statistical regions. Fifteen were employed, while two were unemployed. Among the employed ones, thirteen worked in four different Slovenian statistical regions, one worked in Italy and one in Austria. Seven participants (three women and four men) were employed in primary schools teaching geography (5) in

combination with history (3), Slovene language (1), German language (1), or working as pedagogical staff (2), whereas four participants (one woman and three men) were employed in secondary schools teaching geography (2) in combination with Spanish language (1), sociology (1), Slovene language (1), and English language (1). Four participants (one woman and three men) were not employed in schools.

We sorted the opinions of the interviewed former geography teacher education students into designated thematic areas, in which we, alongside the generalised description of the most common responses, highlighted individual concrete answers as illustrations of established generalisations. Together with the generalised descriptions, we also provided their frequency in parentheses.

4.1 Decision to enrol in the teacher education programme

The participants' decision for pedagogical study was based on their desire to become a teacher (11); four chose it because it was the only option to study two desired subjects, three participants wanted to work with children, and one pointed out a greater possibility of employment.

Examples of participants' responses
I have always liked the profession of a teacher. I love being among people and working with them. The profession of a teacher seems to me like a mission because I know that I can contribute something positive to the whole society and to future generations. The profession is dynamic and you are never bored. I think it is hard to get tired of this profession. (M, 28)
I wanted to continue my master's studies in both disciplines, history and geography. The desire to pursue a profession in education was not decisive. (M, 25)
I wished to work with children (also children with special needs) for many years because of my social sense and the opportunity for personal growth through pedagogical work. (F, 29)
I decided for the combined teacher education study programme because it was the only way to continue studying geography and history together. At that point, I had no idea what I was going to do, but during my studies, I realized that I had made the right decision because I was starting to see myself as a teacher and I thought that the work would make me happy. (M, 26)

4. 2 Reasons for studying geography

Seven interviewees stated that the decision to study geography was due to the fact that geography is a dynamic, versatile, topical, and life-oriented science, whereas four participants stressed that geography provides insight into our world that helps us understand both nature and society. Four participants were attracted to its breadth and four to its interpretation of the world. Two participants mentioned inspiring primary and secondary school teachers, and one mentioned the possibility of employment in tourism and a good combination with an already selected other subject.

Examples of participants' responses
Geography is extremely interesting and dynamic; it allows the use of various methods and forms, and above all, it is closely connected with everyday life, the environment, and society. (F, 26)
I decided to study geography because of its versatility and close connection with everyday life. All current natural and social processes in the world can be defined geographically. It also offers a wide range of topics that can be debated with students. (M, 26)
My high school geography teacher played a very important role in my decision to study geography. She was able to make the teaching of geography extremely interesting, either by using various methods and forms that we did not use in other subjects or by discussing topical issues in the world and by encouraging critical thinking. (F, 28)
When I enrolled at the university, I chose geography as another subject, mainly because of broader education and easier employment opportunities after graduation. Geography also seemed quite compatible with the study of history. (M, 25)
Spanish was my first choice in the two-subject study. I chose to study geography because of potential opportunity to work in tourism. (M, 29)

4. 3 Fulfilment of students' expectations of their study programme

The majority of the participants stated that the study programme fulfilled their expectations. They pointed out the acquisition of competences that enable successful work in school; acquisition, upgrading and deepening of knowledge, both professional and pedagogical; the possibility of international exchanges and fulfilment of their expectations about field exercises and professional excursions at home and abroad. Their expectations that the study would be interesting and well organized were confirmed.

The interviewees did not point out any completely unfulfilled expectations, although quite a few described them as partially fulfilled. The following stood out: insufficient teaching practice; unresolved professional dilemmas; insufficient field work; insufficient access to the courses from the single-subject study programme, insufficient emphasis on the interconnectedness of different contents; an insufficient number of professional excursions to other continents; lack of interdisciplinarity; and sometimes outdated, boring, static delivery of some content.

Examples of participants' responses
I chose a two-subject study programme. At the beginning, it was very difficult, as it was necessary to coordinate the programmes of two departments. There were a lot of compulsory lectures, seminars and tutorials in geography—a workload I had to get used to. I gained a wide range of geographical knowledge, many courses were very interesting, the lectures were interesting and well delivered. (F, 26)
Above all, I got this broader view of the world and developed cause-and-effect thinking. Constantly reacting actively to constantly changing events. And a willingness to react and adapt to it. And this concept of thinking, I guess, was implanted in our brains in every course. As far as general geography is concerned, it seems to me that my

expectations regarding my studies were met. (F, 29)
The expectation that university teachers at the Department of Geography would bring to the forefront the understanding, knowledge and interdisciplinary connection of the contents, as would be expected for the study of geography, was not realized. There was a contradictory, static, outdated and poor presentation of some geographical contents with an emphasis on bare factual knowledge. What are the reasons for this? Maybe the university teachers who find scientific geographical content more important than their pedagogical input, or my personal resistance to factual knowledge and learning by heart. (F, 28)
I wanted more involvement in the schoolwork and direct transfer of knowledge to pupils and students. Testing teaching methods with fellow students is of course interesting, but often unrealistic. I also expected more contact with teachers. Round tables on various topics with students, teachers, and professors, where students could get in touch with the experience of pedagogical staff from primary and secondary schools, would be welcome. (M, 29)

4.4 Level of qualification for teaching profession

All participants are of the opinion that the study adequately prepared them for the work of a teacher. Their grades ranged from fairly appropriate (3), appropriate (13) to very appropriate (1). As very positive they pointed out students' active role in education process (7), classroom-based observation in primary and secondary schools (3), teaching practice, organisation and conducting of excursion and field work (8), detailed preparation for the lesson (9), acquisition of various knowledge and skills (3), expertise in geographical knowledge (2). They mentioned too much theory and too little practice, especially in the courses from the JPTM (2), they missed several topics in the field of education (4) and school legislation (2), lectures delivered by experienced teachers (2), work with programmes Lo.Polis and eAssistant used for organizing work in schools (2), and work with children with special needs (3).

Examples of participants' responses
The study prepared me properly for the job of a teacher. When I started teaching during the additional academic year, I had no problems with the content that needed to be covered. Most of my headaches were caused by the dynamics with problematic students and the policies of the schools where I worked. Maybe I was not prepared enough for this kind of work, namely dealing with problematic students and parents and various aspects of school management. (M, 29)
All study content corresponded to the work of a teacher, but we did not get enough practical experience, and above all, there was a lack of topics regarding school laws, with which we would better prepare ourselves for this job. The state teacher certification examination requires extensive knowledge of the laws and rights of children, which we did not discuss clearly enough during our studies. For example, there was no work with eAssistant, which would make the first employment in a school much easier. (M, 26)
The concept was very well prepared. I would maintain the scope and structure of teaching practice and the organization of excursions and motivational weekend, increase the number of school lessons carried out by students, but change (i.e. shorten)

the teaching preparation and adjust certain contents within the JPTM. (M, 27)
I think that the study properly prepared me for the job of a teacher. The contents of geographical courses were well chosen, but of course, it depends on each student how in-depth the content is learned. I myself often did not take it very seriously, so any lack in this area is more the result of my work (or lack thereof) than the curricula. (M, 25)

4.5 Opinion and suggestions considering the Joint Part of the Teaching Module

Regarding the JPTM, the participants would keep: seminar assignments (1), tutorials in Psychology for Teachers (2), tutorials in General Didactics (2), General Didactics (4), Andragogy (4), Pedagogy (1) and Psychology for Teachers (5), elective courses of the JPTM (1), tutorials in all courses of the JPTM (2), observational practicum (5), all basic courses of the JPTM (1) and the elective course Slovene for Teachers (2).

On the other hand, they would reduce the share of theory in the JPTM courses (4), at least a part of the theory they would replace with practical work (3), some would keep Andragogy (4), while others do not find it useful (3). They would change the structure/content of tutorials in General Didactics (1), unify the number of hours of the JPTM courses (1), introduce a more active role of students in observational practicum (1), change the schedule of the JPTM courses (1), include experienced teachers (1). They mentioned overlapping and repeating of the contents of individual JPTM courses. One would change the curricula of almost all courses of the JPTM, one interviewee would exclude observational practicum from the JPTM, and one would abolish Psychology for Teachers and Pedagogy together with all their tutorials and seminars.

Examples of participants' responses
Observational practicum seemed very sensible and useful to me, as I was able to observe teachers of different subjects and transfer some ideas to my subject. The more teachers you see, the more ideas, creativity and different forms you get to know. That seems very valuable to me. (F, 26)
In General Didactics, I would keep the content of lectures but change the concept of tutorials; I would put more emphasis on the development of the criteria for assessing knowledge, on learning about different taxonomies of knowledge and on practical work with ICT. In Psychology for Teachers and Pedagogy, I would place less emphasis on theory and much more on applicability: how to establish good relationships with students, how to identify learning difficulties, how to properly treat people with special needs and how to adapt materials and lessons (I know I mention them a lot, but in each class that I teach I have at least three or four such pupils/students.), how to recognize the distress of students, how to deal with such students, how to solve educational problems at school, etc. (F, 28)
The JPTM itself seemed to me largely a waste of time. I did not get much from it and after talking to my colleagues, both in geography and history, I saw that they came to similar conclusions. The knowledge for the future profession was largely received in special didactics; the general module was a kind of an "obstacle" that required a lot of "nonsense", but brought little benefit. I am not saying that it should be abolished, only that it should be present to a lesser extent, with the emphasis on the work that would

truly benefit future teachers. (M, 26)
In general, I would redesign most of the JPTM courses, as the contents of individual courses overlapped and repeated—this was even more noticeable in the second year. (F,28)
It would also be necessary for the providers of the JPTM courses to be more adapted to special didactics, as certain contents are duplicated. (M, 29)

4.6 Opinion and suggestions considering geographical part of the Teaching Module

The interviewees were unanimous in their answers to the question of what they would preserve and what they would change in the concept and implementation of the geographical part of the Teaching Module. All of them would definitely keep teaching practice, classroom-based observations, excursions and fieldwork. The majority would keep the existing courses and their content design, workshops and practical work, micro-lessons, classroom-based trainee evaluation, guest lectures by experienced teachers, and visits to various educational institutions (the National Examination Centre, the National Education Institute, the School Museum, the House of Experiments, etc.).

The participants would prefer to have even more practical work (workshops, classroom-based observations, and classroom-based trainee evaluations), more contents from special didactics research, and more instruction in legal protection of teachers. They would expand the content on: pedagogical documentation and tasks of the class teacher, testing and assessing knowledge, the use of ICT in teaching and distance learning, working with students with special needs, and educational approaches. They would appreciate more involvement of experienced teachers. Three participants also mentioned excessive teachers' lesson plans, and one participant mentioned an overly extensive programme.

Examples of participants' responses
I would keep the current courses and the number of hours devoted to lectures, seminars and tutorials, classroom-based observations and teaching practice, as well as the classroom-based trainee evaluation. I would maintain connections with other institutions and organizations and attend various events (e.g. Association of Geography Teachers of Slovenia camps, workshops at the National Examination Centre). I would also keep the fieldwork for high school students and all the topics we covered. Many times, I check the notes, either when I am writing a paper or when I am preparing materials and lesson plans. For ideas, I also go back to the products we created together. (M, 29)
I would keep the theoretical preparation for lessons, tutorials and all the practical tasks. (M, 26)
I liked the fact that all students of the Teaching Module had to attend all regional geographical courses because in this way we gained broad knowledge. (F, 28)
In the didactics of geography and teaching practice, I would keep everything. All the acquired knowledge is extremely useful (classroom-based observations, micro-lessons, conceptual networking, well-designed tutorials, etc.) (F, 26)
I would absolutely keep the preparation of fieldwork and the process of conducting an

excursion. This was one of the highlights in the didactics of geography. Because it is really about the specifics of the work. (F, 29)
Given that the JPTM does not talk about legal protection of teachers, I would add some content that would help a young teacher deal with difficult parents, blackmailing, lawyers, etc. I would also add more information (which should belong to the JPTM) about pedagogical documentation, how to enter lessons, grading, school documentation and the tasks of the class teacher. (M, 29)
In special didactics, I would perhaps devote more time to assessing and testing of knowledge, formative monitoring, authentic tasks and work with pupils/students with special needs. Or some tutorials where you would discuss preparing assignments for a geographic competition. (F, 28)
It would be sensible to invite two or three parents of children with special needs and some teachers after the students have become acquainted with the characteristics of these children. This could lead to an extremely useful conversation, from which students could learn a great deal. (M, 29)
Based on the experience I have gained at work, I now think that I should have become more familiar with the ICT tools during my studies. There are more and more new possibilities to support the learning process. And geography is also such a science where many things (e.g. fjord formation, volcanism, earthquakes …) can be presented in various attractive and interactive ways. (F, 29)

4.7 "Ideal" geography teacher

In the descriptions of an "ideal" teacher, the participants were quite in accord: knowledgeable; resourceful; professional; didactically and pedagogically qualified; one who updates teaching content; who encourages cause-and-effect, critical and problem thinking; who constantly upgrades his or her knowledge; who is open, honest and does not discriminate between students; who has mastered non-verbal communication; who knows how to establish a genuine relationship with a child and build trust; who is inspiring; who knows how to motivate; and who has a sense of humour.

Examples of participants' responses
An ideal geography teacher keeps track of events, is up to date, can present topics in an understandable and interesting way, provides possibilities for discussion, draws on his or her own knowledge, is reciprocal, recognizes the right to one's opinion and justification, does not rest on the existing lesson plans and materials, broadens the horizons of learners, encourages the multidisciplinarity of the subject and the integration of the contents with other subjects, is knowledgeable, curious, always available to students and without prejudice. (F, 28)
To summarize, an ideal teacher must be enthusiastic about the subject he or she teaches, have the right attitude towards students, be honest but strict, use various teaching methods and forms, be a very good motivator, and above all, he or she must be someone whom students can trust and come to when they need something. (F, 28)
There is no ideal teacher, but I can mention a few qualities. The teacher must be positive, eloquent, broad-minded, curious about new knowledge and professional

development, encouraging, innovative, he or she must attract students' attention and have authority, be fair in assessment, well-organized and practically oriented whenever possible. (F, 26)
An ideal teacher should try to understand students and improve his or her work through everyday analysis. He or she should avoid causing stress to students, try to perform a kind of "educational show" in class, be lifelike, interactive, and up to date. (M, 26)

5. DISCUSSION

In retrospect, it seems that change has been the only constant in education in Slovenia. However, this does not imply that every change is desirable. As Huber wrote, "We need to agree with the direction the change takes, more, we need to be active and be the actors of the change we would like to see" (Huber, 2011, p. 137). According to the research findings, the qualifications the participants acquired during the pre-service teacher education programme are still not sufficient despite all the modifications and reforms we have witnessed. In spite of their youth, the participants are well aware that the role of a teacher is very demanding, and that teachers cannot be educated once and for all during the few years of pre-service teacher education programme. They are aware that "every teacher needs to have the transversal knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable him or her to become a 'facilitator' or a 'guide' who can steer the learning process of his or her students" (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 7).

Comparing the research results with the previous collection of students' opinions on the geography teacher education programme (Resnik Planinc, 2019), we might conclude that after all these years, despite the complexity and changes in the highly demanding programme, former students still emphasize the importance of classroom-based observation, classroom-based trainee evaluation and teaching practice. Almost without exception, the participants, the same as their predecessors, claimed that there should be more days of teaching practice. (Interestingly, all students were of such opinion, both before and after the Bologna reform.) For them, the contact with real situations and the transfer of theory into practice with the professional and collegial support of teacher mentors at schools is extremely important. Similar response of students can be found in many international studies (Smith, Lev-Ari, 2005; Ng et al., 2010; Goodnough et al., 2009; King Rice, 2003; Molin et al., 2015). In the pre-service teacher education, a symbiosis between theory and practice is crucial, as teaching practice enables students to connect theoretical (academic) knowledge with practical pedagogical, psychological, didactic and andragogical knowledge (Resnik Planinc, 2019). Unfortunately, one of the main objectives of the projects Partnership of Faculties and Schools I and II, to establish a network of mentoring schools in Slovenia and comprehensive training for teacher mentors, has not been achieved yet. For the time being, mentoring is unregulated both from the systemic and professional points of view, and is mostly left to individual professions and individuals, not to even mention the fact that teacher mentors need proper education, training, professional monitoring and evaluation of their work, and consequently, an adequate financial compensation for their work.

Although the interviewees generally evaluated the competences acquired during the course of their study very positively, some of them expressed a desire for a greater share of professional geographical knowledge and school geography in the programme.

The lack of professional cooperation between participating educators in the Teaching Module results in inconsistent terminology, order and selection of educational content, and redundant work for students. The participants reiterated the need for a larger share of individual special didactics in comparison with the JPTM. Unfortunately, so far no initiative has been undertaken to consider some necessary changes.

All in all, it seems that although the teaching profession in Slovenia is not one of the most sought-after and valued professions, the answers of the participants show that the desire to become a teacher still lingers in many young people's minds. We can conclude that students who choose to become teachers do so regardless of the obstacles ahead of them. Although they are aware that teachers need to encourage learners' independence, their creativity, self-reliance and self-criticism, help them learn to debate and negotiate, take part in decision-making processes (Teacher Education …, 2011), and cooperate with other teachers, professionals and parents (Resnik Planinc & Kosten Zabret, 2007), they do not seem to be afraid.

The interviewees expressed a rather high level of self-efficacy, which relates to the beliefs teachers hold about their own perceived capability in undertaking certain teaching tasks (Pendergast et al., 2017). Bandura (1997, p. 3) defines self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments". They were also inclined to question the authority of knowledge.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In Slovenia, we should work towards a closer cooperation between educators and all other stakeholders in the process of future teacher education. And above all, we should be aware that in order to become a highly-developed, knowledge-based innovative society, we must not overlook the key role of teachers in the process. Moreover, we should not neglect the quality of teachers, which is the most important school-related factor influencing students' achievement (King Rice, 2003). Regrettably, it seems that too many people in Slovenia underestimate the importance of teachers in our society. According to King Rice (2003), education is a compilation and product of many and varied resources, and among these, teachers stand out as the key to achieving high standards that are increasingly emphasized in schools and school systems. First, we should reach a consensus about what specific qualities and characteristics make a good teacher and what teacher attributes really contribute to the desired educational outcomes. Then, taking into account all the results of extensive research work, we should finally find a common path towards an efficient, high-quality teacher education study programme, as high-quality teachers need high-quality training. To achieve this, it would be necessary to (1) establish a network of mentoring schools in Slovenia with suitably qualified teacher mentors, whose work should be properly supervised and rewarded (e.g. reduced regular pedagogical obligation); (2) harmonize the content and objectives of the curricula of the courses of the JPTM and special didactics; (3) change the credit ratio in favour of special didactics and professional content (e.g. geographical, historical, linguistic, etc.); (4) increase the share of pedagogical practice; and (5) integrate innovations in education into the study process as much as possible.

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