

IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR COMBINED STUDY

Martina MUKNŠNÁBLOVÁ

Abstract

Combined study is demanding not only on the time management of the student, who has work and family obligations in addition to the study role. In addition, with increasing age, his cognitive condition decreases, especially in the area of memory, especially if he finished his previous studies several years ago and did not train his memory regularly. So asking students to learn by mechanical reproduction is often insurmountable for them. The school can help them to successfully complete their studies by improving the conditions in the form of specific teaching methods, easing the conditions for completing, for example, professional practice at their place of residence, and all this without reducing the quality of the studies.

Keywords

Teaching methods, combined studies, successful student, obstacles in studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The question of how to improve the conditions for combined studies is not only raised by the founders and operators of various school institutions for secondary education. Some students are not only unable to solve the initial difficulties in managing their study obligations without help and needlessly end their studies prematurely. Combined study students have to combine their studies with work and family obligations, which is not easy for most of them. Among other things, the way of teaching by the school management can help, so that the student learns effectively according to the time and mental possibilities and abilities due to age or experience, and also often a long time since the last school attendance. Even from the point of view of the economy and the financial burden not only from the student's resources but also from the state, the option of not completing professional training is not desirable and it is important to find solutions so that the student is able to complete his studies while maintaining the necessary study requirements for the performance of the given profession. (1)

The Mills Higher School of Nursing, which was the subject of research aimed at tracing the reasons for not completing studies and thus the conditions for completing studies, allows its students only combined studies, and therefore

this topic is key for the school, especially at the present time, when the pressure is not only in medical fields for higher education among non-medical workers. And since it is a private school, the degree of burden of higher tuition compared to state schools needs to be reflected in the offered method of study. Therefore, as part of the leadership of the Mills Higher School of Nursing, we decided to first monitor the reasons for not completing the combined study for individual students and then try to improve the conditions. The idea is to focus on improving the conditions so that the quality of studies is still maintained, taking into account the competences of graduates of individual fields. Students were included in the research — certified paramedic (CP), certified medical laboratory technician (DHLT), certified pharmaceutical assistant (DPhA). All are educated in accordance with Act No. 284/2018 Coll., amending Act No. 96/2004 Coll. on the conditions for obtaining and recognizing competence to perform non-medical health professions and to perform activities related to the provision of health care, as well as education according to Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (Education Act), as amended, according to Decree No. 252/2019 Coll., which amends Decree No. 55/2011 Coll.,

establishing the activities of healthcare workers and other professional workers, Decree No. 470/2017 Coll., which amends Decree No. 39/2005 Coll., establishing the minimum requirements for educational programs to obtain professional competence to perform a non-medical healthcare profession and Decree No. 279/2016 amending Decree No. 10/2005 Coll., on higher professional education. (2,3)

The combined study is divided into winter and summer periods, in each period there are 5 weekend blocks of approx. 20 hours. The blocks are divided into a theoretical part at school and practical teaching at professional workplaces. It also includes a similar number of non-contact hours for self-study and the examination period. Not only practical teaching at clinical workplaces around the school, but also theoretical teaching at the school is mostly conceived as practical. It takes place in specialist classrooms or a school laboratory. The goal is to acquire variable nursing methods, skills for implementing a nursing plan and health care evaluation, to learn how to deal with healthy and sick clients, including their family members, and to work effectively as a team at workplaces according to the chosen field. For teaching and subsequent learning of new knowledge during professional practice or as part of self-study, teaching methods corresponding to adult tertiary education are recommended, and which lead to the required key, professional and other competencies in the students' future profession. (4,5,6)

In the 2016/2017 school year, with the new management of the individual study fields, alternative, interactive and student-activating methods were purposefully incorporated into the teaching and recommended during self-study. Since then, both the school and especially the students have preferred group teaching not only for mutual support and help between classmates, but also as training for future work teamwork. The teaching methods used in individual subjects are listed in the modules of the educational program, they are adapted not only to the nature of the subject, but especially to the application of acquired knowledge or skills according to competencies in the future profession. They also correspond to the mental maturity of students after experiences from previous vocational studies

as well as from work experience. Seminars, laboratory exercises, solutions to model situations, discussions on problems, project methods, excursions and professional practice are included and very popular. (7)

Newly introduced, field-specific teaching methods were included in all monitored fields at Mills Higher vocational school. On the basis of previous independent research on the possibilities of increasing selected cognitive functions of students of individual fields during their combined studies, where it was proven (Muknšáblová, 2021) that it is desirable to support a different cognitive function for each field, given the future work activities of graduates, based on the nature of the involvement of the selected cognitive functions mostly. For pharmacists, methods for improving (mechanical and logical) memory to increase the ability to retain information in precise wording were more frequently included. Therefore, when preparing medicines in pharmacies, follow exact compositions and procedures. Methods were used (classical and alternative, discussions and methods, e.g. snowball, outer and inner circle, etc.) supporting cognitive learning with a focus on the accuracy of knowledge. While paramedics, who must find a unique procedure for each patient in order to individually solve each emergency case due to the comorbidities of individual patients, and therefore use and connect the knowledge learned and find the optimal solution, they must especially train their thinking when learning. It is not enough for them to remember the learned procedure, but to draw up an individual therapeutic plan for each patient, and all this under time pressure. That is why rescuers practice logical thinking during their studies, e.g. by means of role-playing, brainstorming, demonstrations, and above all solving problem tasks immediately when acquiring new information, so that the process of proposing a solution to an exit situation becomes natural for them and does not increase the already heightened stressful situation. For laboratory technicians, it is primary to learn to be as attentive as possible to detailed differences, so that they are able to capture even small pathological variants, since many differences are not even enough to learn during studies, and therefore they use and strengthen specific attention during their work. The teaching takes place in the real

environment of clinical laboratories, e.g. in the form of a flying team with the possibility to monitor and evaluate an abundance of preparations and look for differences not only in the appearance of a specific biological material. (1)

2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was not only to demonstrate an increase in the successful completion of studies after the introduction of specific teaching methods, but also to identify the most common reasons for not completing the combined studies and to look for possibilities on the part of the school to adapt the studies more to the current educational needs of the individual and thus society.

The research group of respondents included all students (n=551) of the Mills Čelákovice Higher Vocational School of Health from the fields of Diploma Pharmaceutical Assistant (DPhA), Diploma Medical Laboratory Technician (DHLT) and Diploma Medical Paramedic (CP) studying at this school between 2014 and 2021. The DHLT field was only introduced at the school in the 2015/2016 school year. Students could be admitted to the field of physical education at vocational schools (according to Act 96/2004 Coll. in the current wording) for the last time in the 2018/2019 school

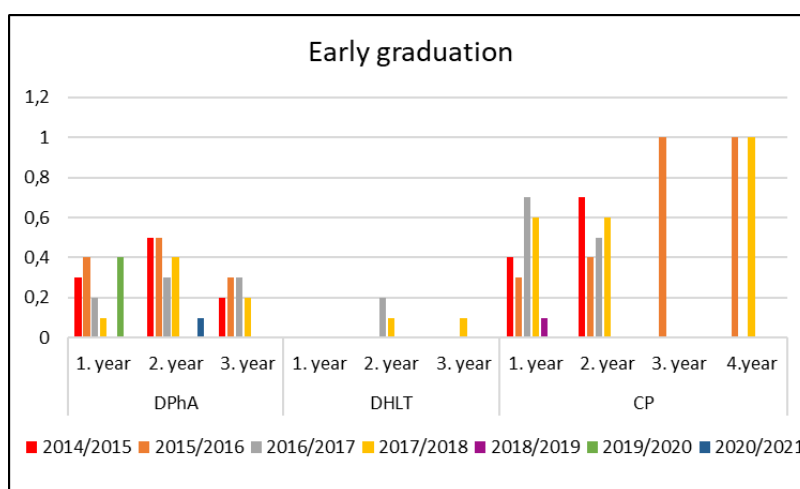
year, after which they can only gain eligibility after graduating from a university in the relevant field.

The resulting data were obtained in the form of individual semi-structured, non-standardized interviews with students who were not successful in their studies and requested to interrupt or end their studies.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After 2016/2017, when new teaching methods were introduced, a reduction in the number of unsuccessful students who ended their studies early in the following year can already be seen in some grades. In the first year after the introduction of the methods, the reduction was not yet so striking, probably the pedagogues had not yet practiced all the possibilities and methods of teaching, and the school management was also fine-tuning the possibilities of connecting the methods and the acquired knowledge cross-subjectively, but in the following years the number of early terminations significantly decreased across all disciplines (by 40-100 %). Even when comparing the proportion of students finishing their studies early to the total number of students in a given year of a specific field, a significant decrease is evident.

Chart No. 1 Failure to complete studies - early termination



(Source: own processing)

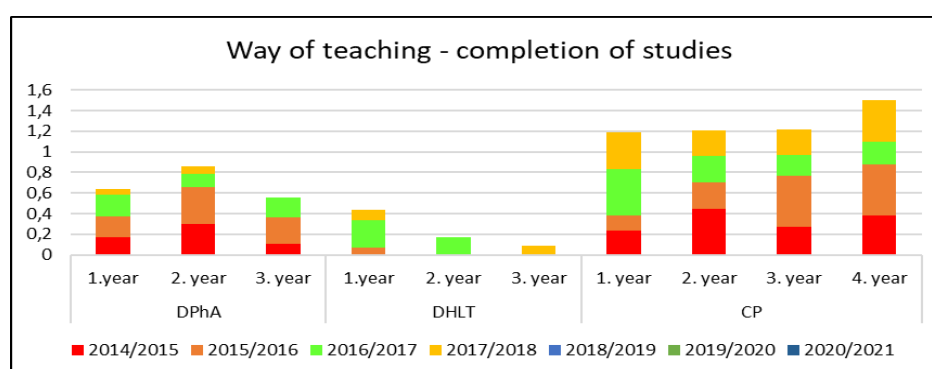
Students who did not finish their studies and ended it prematurely without the possibility of

returning, most often cited as the main reason for leaving the lack of time to study, not only for

attending school but especially for professional practice, which for non-medical health workers represents many hours (specifically DPhA - 600 hours, DHLT – 720 hours and CP – 1600 hours during the period of study). The second most common reason (especially in the lower grades) was a bad choice of study, when students only found out in the process that their idea of the essence of the work activities of a graduate of a specific field is different from reality and the field ceases to be

attractive to them. This reason appeared most often right at the beginning of studies or after starting professional practice in the 2nd study period. The third frequently cited reason was an inadequate teaching method, insufficient understanding of school curriculum and the inability to learn a given subject through self-study. However, this reason was significantly reduced after the introduction of specific teaching methods for individual fields.

Chart No. 2 Inadequate form of teaching as a reason for early termination of studies

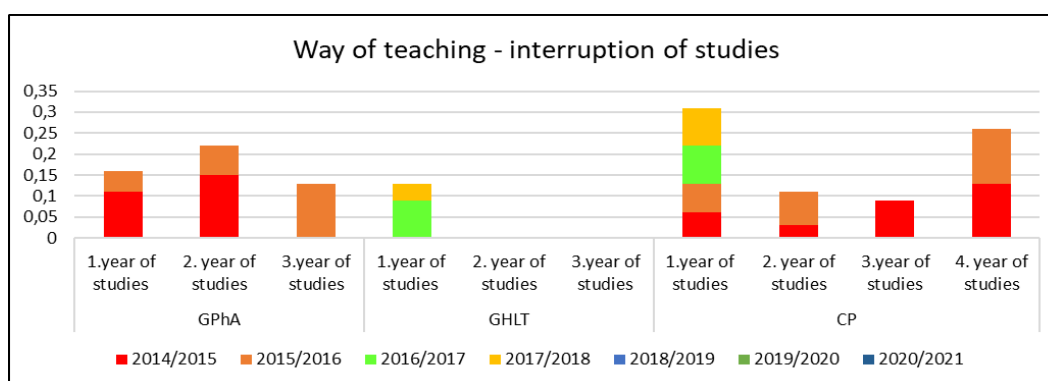


(Source: own processing)

Similar reasons for not completing their studies were given by students who decided to discontinue their studies for the time being. Again, the most common reason was lack of time, impossibility or inability to combine work, family and study obligations. Before starting their studies, not all students realized the necessity to devote themselves to studying not only once a month on the weekend at

school, but significantly several times more during self-study or professional practice (which, in order to improve the study conditions, is allowed for students near their residence and at a time chosen by the student himself, according to his time possibilities, only with the condition of fulfilling the total number of hours and the nature of the workplace).

Chart No. 3 Inadequate form of teaching as a reason for not completing the grade and interrupting studies



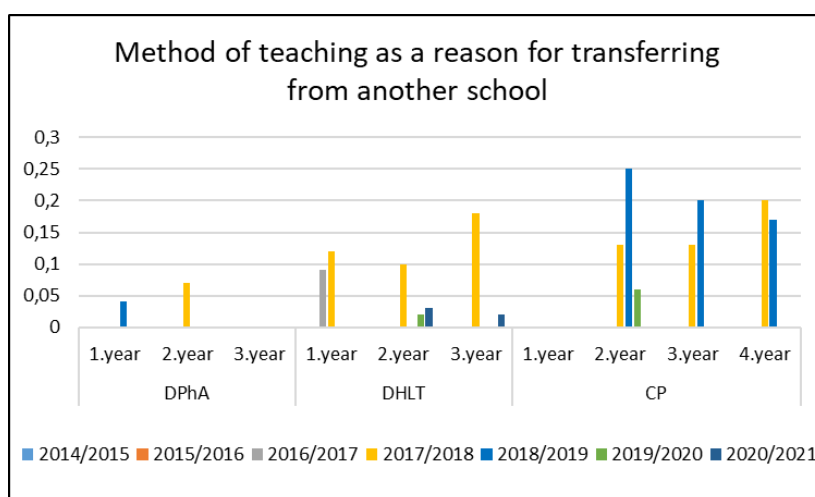
(Source: own processing)

Another reason was again the unmanageability of the difficulty of studies, and just as with termination, so with the interruption of studies, the occurrence of this reason was significantly reduced after the introduction of specific methods, and on the contrary, the school saw an increase in the influx of students who transferred to Mills from other schools of the same field and reported as the reason for transferring to us is a different teaching method than the classic frontal form. Face-to-face teaching is not suitable for either younger or older students, just as it is not a welcome method for learning the connection of theoretical

knowledge and practical skills, not only manual but also intellectual or social.

Even students who failed to finish the year in the regular or substitute term and chose the option to repeat the year, in the school years after the introduction of specific teaching methods, less often cited the inability to learn the required amount of material, lack of understanding of the given issue or other reasons related to the organization as the reason for not passing the year studies on the part of the school, but rather the lack of time to study for private reasons was to blame.

Chart No. 4 Method of teaching as a reason for transferring from another school



(Source: own processing)

Specific teaching methods adapted to the future competence of graduates are also a very common reason for a student to transfer from another higher vocational school or university. This justification appeared more often after their introduction in 2016/2017, but in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, probably due to online teaching across all disciplines and schools, this reason appeared less often.

4 CONCLUSION

Older students, not only because of their age, but especially those who return to study after a longer break from their last study, experience great difficulties at the beginning of their studies connected with the change of regime, including not only contact teaching at school,

but especially with combined studies, where learning is expected with most of the findings during self-study, back to being able to learn. However, as the current society requires, the emphasis is not so much on the mechanical, monologic reproduction of the learned material, but on the actual application in practice, during training during studies, at least on a theoretical level. That is, straight away learning what they will be able to apply. They can be supported by teaching instructions presented by the used teaching method, how to process new information while learning and be able to use it and connect it with previous knowledge and experience. It is innovative teaching methods with greater involvement of students that not only allow students of combined studies to learn the required material more easily, but

are also more attractive and fun for them, which keeps their attention longer, which strengthens the result of memory and the involvement of thinking. It is desirable to teach combined study students to use their previous study and, above all, work experience and thus try to eliminate the decreasing mental condition for learning new knowledge.

In teaching, it is important to use various activation methods to involve multiple sources of information reception, processing or fixation, which, in addition to creating the required skills, also especially increase student motivation and positively influence their relationship to learning and to a specific teaching module, which is often the case in a combined study very difficult for students in employment.

It is obvious that the method of teaching is, in addition to personal (family or work) matters with clearer time management, a very influential factor influencing not only the choice of school but also the assumption of completing the degree.

LITERATURE

1. Muknšnáblová, M. (2021). Změny vybraných kognitivních funkcí studentů vyšší odborné školy v průběhu jejich kombinovaného studia. Disertační práce, Univerzita Jana Amose Komenského, Praha.
2. Česko. Zákon č. 284/2018 Sb., o nelékařských zdravotnických povoláních [online]. 2018 [cit. 8.9.2021]. Dostupné z <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2018-284>
3. Česko. Vyhláška č. 252/2019 Sb. kterou se

mění vyhláška č. 55/2011 Sb. o činnostech zdravotnických pracovníků a jiných odborných pracovníků[online]. 2017 [cit. 6.9.2021] Dostupné z

<https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2019-252>.

4. Vyšší odborná škola MILLS. (2014). Vzdělávací program Diplomovaný zdravotní laborant Kód 53-43-N/2. Čelákovice: Vyšší odborná zdravotnická škola MILLS, s.r.o.
5. Vyšší odborná škola MILLS. (2015). Vzdělávací program Diplomovaný farmaceutický asistent Kód 53-43/N1. Čelákovice: Vyšší odborná zdravotnická škola MILLS, s.r.o.
6. Vyšší odborná škola MILLS. (2016). Vzdělávací program Diplomovaný zdravotnický záchranář Kód 53-41-N/2. Čelákovice: Vyšší odborná zdravotnická škola MILLS, s.r.o.
7. Muknšnáblová, M. (2022). Interakce vyučovacích metod volených dle pracovních kompetencí absolventů a úspěšnosti v rámci kvalifikačního studia na vyšší odborné škole. Disertační práce, Vysoká škola Jagielloňská v Toruni.

7 CONTACT THE AUTHOR

PhDr. Martina Muknšnáblová Ph.D., MBA

College of Physical Education and Sport
Palestra Ltd., Prague, Czech Republic

Slovačikova 400/1, Praha 19 – Kbely 197 00

e-mail: m.muknsnablova@worldonline.cz