Vilija Targamadze
Vilnius university, Lithuania
Vaiva Juskiene
University of Applied sciences, Lithuania
Mariam Manjgaladze
Caucasus University, Georgia

TEACHER TRAINING: EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

Teacher training has always been a challenge as teachers are prepared for work in the future, with a focus on developing the competencies required for a future person. Therefore, it is expedient to identify the competencies that he or she needs to develop. It is likely that those will be new directions of competence: creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, taking responsibility. In order to implement these or other competencies and literacies, it is necessary to model the study programmes of teacher training and educational activities used by teacher educators in pursuit of these goals. It is the suitability of educational activities used for the training of educators, working with the new generation, that is analysed in this article. In 2018, an empirical research was carried out on the suitability of the types of educational activities, as distinguished by D. Leclercq and M. Pournay (2005), used by the teacher educator in the preparation of pre-service teachers, with respect to the opinion of educational science researchers – experts. The research included nine researchers selected according to particular criteria, who were from three countries, namely Georgia, Latvia and Lithuania. There were three researchers from three different countries who assessed the suitability of educational activities by answering in writing to the questions submitted in the questionnaire. According to the experts, all types of educational activities may actually be suitable as long as they are targeted and properly designed to achieve the intended learning goals.

Key words*: teacher training, types of educational activities, empirical research.*

Introduction

Teacher training in the 21st century is a great challenge. Lithuanian documents such as *Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030"* (2012) and *The National Education Strategy for 2013–2022* (2013) raise the main goal, which is to enable Lithuanian education to become a sustainable basis for the welfare of the state. *The Good School Concept* (2015) and *The Guidelines for the Change of General Education Schools* (2017) shape the change of school so as it would become the school of discoveries, success, and meaning based on humanistic values and agreements between the

members of the school community. What is more, the new generation, being distinctive, requires a new approach towards their teaching and learning (Targamadzė V. et al, 2015, Targamadzė V., Bulajeva T., 2018 et al.). In addition, in many cases, an emphasis is put on transformative competencies which will be necessary in the future.

"The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030" programme by OECD refers to "transformative competencies" and development of new directions of competence:

- Creating new value
- Reconciling tensions and dilemmas
- Taking responsibility.

Thus, in order to implement the objectives of teacher training, it is not only expedient to identify them, to reconsider their suitability and to identify appropriate directions in the study programmes, but also to choose the right educational activity for the new generation, focusing on teacher training and future competencies that they require. Educational activities used by teachers of higher education institutions have been researched from various points of view. The topic has been analysed by such researchers as D. Leclercq, M. Poumay (2005), A. Targamadzė, R. Petrauskienė (2008), A. Targamadzė, R. Petrauskienė, D. Rubliauskas (2010), V. Targamadzė (2014, 2017) and others. However, the suitability of educational activities used by the teacher for working with the new generation has not been investigated so far.

Thus, this article aims at emphasising the types of educational activities, distinguished by D. Leclercq and M. Poumay (2005), which are suitable for work with pre-service teachers in the opinion of researchers – experts.

The object of the research is a type of educational activity distinguished by D. Leclercq ir M. Poumay (2005) with regard to the opinion of researchers – experts on its suitability to be used for teacher training when working with the new generation.

Research methods: analysis of scientific literature and documents, empirical qualitative research, i.e. expert survey by means of a questionnaire.

Methodological provision of the article is based on social constructivism according to A. Kukla (2010), i.e. people construct their personal understanding and it is not a mirror reflection of the knowledge or skills transferred to them, but rather their personal reflection.

The article is important from a theoretical point of view, since the educational activities assessed by the experts open up the opportunities for greater in-depth research of such activities, their application, understanding and other aspects. It is also important from a practical point of view, since a proper choice of educational activities may help teachers improve their educational activities.

Characteristics of the types of educational activities used by an educator as distinguished by D. Leclercq and M. Poumay (2005). The new generation is immersed in the virtual world, and it is inevitable for the teachers to consider it in their educational activities. What is more, studies are based on a student-centred paradigm, so the educational activity used by the educator must correspond to the requirements of this paradigm. Therefore, depending on learning goals and conditions, it is necessary to choose the most effective way to implement these activities in real and/or virtual space. It is noteworthy to take into consideration the insights of A. Targamadzė, R. Petrauskienė (2008), A. Targamadzė, R. Petrauskienė, D. Rubliauskas (2010), V. Targamadzė (2014, 2017) and others who claim that the teacher should plan his/her educational activities in a way that is oriented towards the student and enables to construct educational interaction in real and virtual space. The types of educational activities proposed by D. Leclercq and M. Poumay (2005) may be used for this purpose, because they are oriented towards a student-based paradigm, and create possibilities to act both in a virtual and real environment. D. Leclercq and M. Poumay (2005) distinguished eight types of educational activities, a brief overview of which is provided below:

1. Receiving and transmission.

This is a general activity included in all other educational activities and used to find information necessary for the tasks at hand and to analyse, assess as well as select and systemise the information. Commonly, the teacher gives the students information or indicates where it can be found and students receive information from a variety of sources (verbal information from the teacher, books, study materials, dictionaries, articles, web, etc.).

2. Research and documentation.

The student learns by researching, searches for information and answers to questions posed, independently analyses, observes, registers and documents. The teacher gives the task, data and/or sources, observes, consults and provides access.

3. Imitation and modelling.

The teacher chooses situations in which processes or objects are modelled. The student learns by observing, afterwards – by imitating processes in the same situations and later on in the new ones by understanding and mastering consistent patterns.

4. Creation and supplementation.

The student learns during the creative process by creating or constructing something new for him/her: texts, objects, devices, plots, events and films, thereby realising own or

group ideas and including new or already known things. The teacher presents the assignment and supports, advises and supplements.

5. Practice and guidance.

The student's skills are formed by performing the actions which might be routine and repetitive but in this way the student accumulates practice. The teacher formulates assignments, presents work tools, explains, corrects and supports.

6. Experimentation and reaction.

The student experiments and learns to handle objects and processes by changing their characteristics, conditions of functioning and the environment, explores their essence, possibilities and ways to handle them when pursuing the foreseeable results. The teacher presents the assignment and the environment of experimental activities, relevant models or laboratories, helps and advises.

7. Meta-reflection and co-reflection.

The student reflects, generalises the cognitive process and knowledge, activities, the situations of learning 'before', 'during' and 'after' and uses self-analysis, conversations and tests. The teacher advises, interprets the situation, suggests actions and supplements the student's meta-reflection with co-reflection.

8. Discussion and discussion guidance.

The student learns through social interaction between him and the teacher or other students: discusses, explores, probes, reasons, suggests, tries to find compromises and sort things out. The teacher initiates discussions, observes, leads or supports them and summarises the results of discussions.

Each type of educational activity is undoubtedly student-centred and may be used by the lecturer to improve his / her educational activities.

The empirical research on the suitability of the types of educational activities used by the teacher as distinguished by D. Leclercq and M. Pournay. In March – February 2018, an empirical research was carried out with the aim to find out whether the types of educational activities, as distinguished by D. Leclercq and M. Pournay (2005), used for teacher training by teacher educators are suitable with respect to the opinion of researchers – experts.

The selected research object was the types of educational activities used by the educator in terms of their suitability for teacher training.

The research included nine researchers from three countries, namely Georgia, Latvia and Lithuania. There were three researchers from each country. The selection criteria of researchers were as follows: teachers with scientific degrees, including at least one teacher with a scientific degree in educational science;

teachers working in teacher training programmes; at least one teacher working for no more than three years; teachers who have participated in or have conducted training of educational activities. Questionnaires were submitted to the experts and they answered to the questions in writing. The questionnaire was designed with regard to eight educational activities distinguished by D. Leclercq and M. Poumay (2005):

1. Receiving and transmission
2. Research and documentation
3. Imitation and modelling
4. Creation and supplementation
5. Practice and guidance
6. Experimentation and reaction
7. Meta-reflection and co-reflection
8. Discussion and discussion guidance

All these activities have already been discussed. The experts were asked to reasonably evaluate the suitability of each of the presented educational activities for teacher training at university. Besides these eight items, there were additional three items in the questionnaire:

Scientific and academic title, name and surname;

The date and programme in the preparation of which you participated;

Programme(s) that you work in.

Thus, the questionnaire consisted of an introductory part and eleven items.

The article presents only more prominent ideas on the types of educational activities. Each type of educational activity is equated to a category, the latter being divided into subcategories according to expert answers.

The first category is *receiving and transmission*. Two subcategories can be distinguished after the analysis of expert answers:

Suitability for teacher training and suitability for integration with other activities. Suitability of the activity was indicated according to the selected particular type of educational activity. In the opinion of Expert 8, it is suitable if it "corresponds to the aim of the educational activity"; in the opinion of Expert 1: "We live in an information society where media competences are necessary, so finding, sharing and dealing with information is very important."

The other subcategory is integration of receiving and transmission with other activities:

"There may be particular elements, but I would rather consider this activity as integrated with others. At the Bachelor and Master level, mere information transmission is not meaningful, it is too simple, does not encourage creativity and additional interest. Afterwards, such a practice comes to schools when the teacher is unable to work without a textbook." (Expert 7); "Receiving and transmission is linked to the classical (passing) paradigm of teaching, but for students with low learning experience, who do not have their competence of learning how to learn developed yet, it is still

relevant when the teacher transmits information to students or indicates where to find such information. However, students get quality preparation for pedagogical studies only by testing various teaching/learning strategies that allow a relatively passive position of the student to be changed into an active one, when it is necessary to discover, create, explore, test, reflect, etc." (Expert 9)

Research and documentation consists of two subcategories: *meaningfulness of the activity* (first subcategory) and student involvement (second subcategory).

The following expert answers may be provided to support the first category: "It is a very meaningful activity. Research encourages curiosity, inquisitiveness and brings the joy of discovery. When it comes to my work, all my students were happy the most about doing the research activity, especially at the end, because not everyone can easily overcome such tasks. Research develops the ability to observe, evaluate situations and phenomena critically, search for alternative solutions, and it is the engine of constant change and renewal. Research is a precondition for innovation" (Expert 7); **"**Research and documentation when the student learns by researching, searches for information and answers to questions posed, independently analyses, observes, registers and documents, fosters students' research capacity"(Expert 2); "The activity is meaningful because the research is carried out expediently, it is based on arguments and thus becomes meaningful." (Expert 5) According to Expert 1, this activity is very meaningful because "this already has a higher level of competence than just finding, exchanging and dealing with information."

The second subcategory emphasises student involvement: "It is important to take into consideration the specificity of a subject: if it is a foreign language, when a teacher focuses on developing speaking or listening skills, then it is not necessarily recommended to give students these kinds of tasks, but when a subject intends to develop researching, analysing and etc. skills, then a teacher will usually give such tasks. E.g. when I was teaching sociolinguistics to Master students, my students would do a lot of research." (Expert 4) In the opinion of Expert 6: "The student learns by researching, searches for information and answers to questions posed, independently analyses, observes, registers and documents", and this is how they are involved into the activity.

The third category *imitation and modelling* may be divided into two subcategories in terms of suitability of the educational activity for teacher training: suitability according to the selected goal and being not suitable or being not suitable enough.

"The activity is suitable until the practice begins. On the other hand, it can be useful in modelling conflict/emergency situations that may not happen in practice. For example,

inadequate reaction of the father/mother, relationship with a colleague, bullying, mobbing, etc." (Expert 7); "This is a useful activity when it comes to developing speaking skills among students, who study a foreign language (in my case – Georgian), they memorise the phrases and the situations where those phrases or collocations can be used" (Expert 4); "Imitation and modelling, as an educational activity, is successfully being used in contemporary Lithuania for teacher training, what is more, the students are very fond of it, so it must stay. By applying theoretical modelling, observing and analysing the lessons delivered by others, and then imitating the pedagogical fragment, students become more aware of the theoretical aspects, gain confidence, and are better prepared for practical activities." The experts argued about imitation and modelling not being suitable as follows: "It is an imitational activity, which in most cases is detached from the real context and does not help to objectively imitate and model situations" (Expert 3). According to Expert 1, it is "one of the partial search methods, when part is determined by a teacher, and some even by a student", therefore, it cannot be suitable enough since it is not always efficient and there is a lack of objectivity. Two more experts identified it as not being suitable, but they did not provide any comments.

It is not expedient to distinguish subcategories of the fourth category *creation and supplementation*, because the experts argued that it is a very important educational activity and it is linked to the development of the creativity of future teachers, e.g. "During teacher training, the conditions are created for development of creative activities of students, and this should be maintained, because the teacher works in a changing environment, and one of the properties of his/her quality work is creativity, so it should also be developed while studying." (Expert 9). Expert 2 considers also it to be important: "I find **creation** as a useful strategy since students learn during the creative process by creating or constructing something new for him/her: texts, objects, plots, events, thereby realising own or group ideas and including new or already known things,". Expert 4 considers the suitability of this educational activity in a clear and concise manner claiming that "*this is one of the most useful activities with fruitful results!"*

Practice and guidance is the fifth type of educational activity. This category may be divided into two subcategories:

The first subcategory considers the focus on acquisition of useful practical skills during studies and the second subcategory is concerned with low applicability because the work of a teacher is merely related to routine.

The first subcategory is particularly reflected in the explanation of Expert 1: "repetition and reproduction within specific algorithms during independent professionals' activities. Execution of instructions." A similar approach is maintained by Expert 9:

"Practical activities of a future teacher are an integral part of teacher training as students learn to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, solve emerging problems, they reflect on and analyse their activities. However, it is important how the practice is organised, how long it takes, how feedback is provided, what kind of help is provided to the student and by whom." Although justification of the second subcategory is not very categorical, it signals about low adaptability of this educational activity due to the specificity of the work of a teacher: "I, personally, use it less frequently because there is not much routine in the work of a teacher (educator). The activity is suitable for mastering everyday, procedural processes such as lesson planning, programme preparation steps, etc. Practical work corresponds with the development of new ideas, imitation. In my lectures, I use an activity, which is called presentation of the idea to different audiences. The process is the same, however, students learn to react quickly and adapt to different situations."(Expert 7) Expert 3 expressed a similar point of view: "The work of a teacher is creative, it has little routine, so this educational activity is used only in rare cases."

Attention should be drawn to the observation of Expert 8: "I would probably define this activity as experiential learning. The student accumulates experience, the teacher guides this process." And while this statement has neither confirmed nor denied the suitability of this type of progressive activity for the training of future teachers, it sent a message that experiential learning is important, and the authors of the article believe that it should be quite significant because certain future stereotypes of activity can be developed for the future teacher.

Experimentation and reaction (sixth category) is divided into two subcategories: significant activity because it systematises knowledge and develops creativity (first subcategory) and acquisition of research experience (second subcategory). The first subcategory is quite clearly identified by Expert 1: "Experimentation is an important part of the research activity, which requires systematised knowledge, experimental skills, incl. skills to document as well as assess creativity." " The student learns to manage not only objects and processes, but also subjects. During practical and laboratory classes, such situations of the educational process are developed so that mentality, cognitive, social, etc. abilities, and behaviour change." (Expert 8)

For students, the acquisition of research experience (second subcategory) is emphasised as a rather important result of the type of educational activity: "This type of educational activity provides opportunities to experiment, reflect on the activity and acquire research experience that is very important in their future pedagogical activity." (Expert 3) In the opinion

of Expert 7, it is also related to research experience: "To my mind, the activity is very important, but I must admit that I have to think quite much on how to organise such activities in the study programmes I teach. Sometimes we do this by imitating, through role-playing, creative tasks, projects. I have a general observation that it is one of the most student-engaging activities, because something new, unusual is being tried out. The tolerance for risk and uncertainty is being developed, students realise that failure is also a result. This encourages them to try and experiment in the future without the fear of failing."

Attention should also be drawn to the observation of Expert 9: "The presented fragment is not clear. The suitability of experimentation and reaction for teacher training can only be supported by having a clear vision of its implementation, and in this case it is not presented. The science knows many examples and consequences of bad experiments. Given that the educational process is based on two-way interaction (between the educator and the learner), the studies should be organised in a responsible and thoughtful manner. Management has developed various types of simulation software when students learn by experimenting. "

The seventh category *meta-reflection and co-reflection* may be divided into three subcategories: the first subcategory focuses on the student's learning to reflect, the second subcategory focuses on the development of a pedagogical activity and the third one on linking reflection and creation.

The experts argue about the suitability of this educational activity for self-development of student reflection as follows: *"The students often lack the experience of self-assessment and reflection on the activity. In the study process, the teacher provides opportunities for students to develop reflection skills." (Expert 8); "Students lack the ability to reflect, and this educational activity teaches to reflect on and self-assess their activity." (Expert 3)*

The second subcategory is related to improvement of the activity. Such subcategory is distinguished on the basis of the following expert observations:

"Reflective learning is successfully applied and is particularly relevant for future educators as it allows the student to systematically monitor, analyse, evaluate and improve one's own activities. This is due to the subject of reflective teaching, which is one's own experience of learning, i.e. when one thinks about how he/she feels, how he/she is doing, what his/her weaker areas are, and the result of this process leads to the improvement of learning. However, reflective learning is not easy, since the student must be honest and objective, and an open, responsible and sincere approach is necessary." (Expert 9); "*I have used feedback and self-analysing questionnaires among students, have given them advice on how to improve their knowledge, more effective methods of studying,*

etc. though I think co-reflection is that which I have less referred. I used this activity with my colleagues especially who also teach Georgian as a foreign language."(Expert 4)

The third category which links meta-reflection and co-reflection with creativity is quite important, since the development and self-development of creativity and creative activity are an integral part of reflection. The observation of Expert 2 is important in this regard:

"In teaching I also **prefer meta-reflection and co-reflection when** student reflects, generalises the cognitive process and knowledge, activities, the situations of learning 'before', 'during' and 'after' and uses self-analysis. I find **creation** as a useful strategy since students learn during the creative process by creating or constructing something new for him/her: texts, objects, plots, events, thereby realising own or group ideas and including new or already known things." Expert 5 draws attention to performance and results of performance: "It is an expert-level activity, when the student confirms the reflection and self-reflection competence, is able to analyse and evaluate, including their strengths and weaknesses, their performance and results of performance." It is also linked to creativity.

When discussing this type of educational activity, attention should be drawn to the observation of Expert 7: "It is an integrated activity involving research, modelling, experimentation, etc. However, I have noticed that students in later years of Bachelor studies are tired of this activity, and they understand it quite narrowly – only as a writing of reflection and so on. So the challenge for the teacher is to be able to integrate this activity with other activities." It is like a warning that this educational activity needs to be thoughtfully and purposefully used in an attractive form for students and should not be "overdone".

The eighth activity is *discussion and discussion guidance*. This category is divided into two subcategories: the role of teacher/student upon application of this type of educational activity (first subcategory) and the significance of the activity for students (second subcategory). The first subcategory was distinguished on the basis of the association of experts with the role of a teacher: *"I think discussion is one of the useful activities with great results, in this case a teacher's role is only that of a facilitator. I use it a lot!" (Expert 4). Expert 1 claims: "Participation in discussions is the ability to express and argue in defence of one's opinion. However, it is a higher level of competence if the student himself is able to assist the discussion guidance (teacher's assistant) or through even independently managing a discussion."* The second subcategory emerges from the answers of other experts:

"The activity is usually used in integration with other activities. It promotes critical

thinking, the formation of a culture of dialogue, and the construction of general cognition (metacognition). I have noticed that, unfortunately, not all students find it easy to discuss, join, and for them it is often easer to agree with another's opinion. The role of the teacher is very important, it includes openness to the students, support, encouragement, showing that another's opinion is important. Activities are preferred by senior BA students and MA students." (Expert 7); "Discussion and discussion guidance since it is a useful strategy in developing students' ability to discuss their opinion, when they learn through social interaction between other students and the teacher: discuss, explore, probe, reason, suggest."(Expert 2); "The student learns through social interaction between him and the teacher or other students. And it is very important.(Expert 6)

It should be noted that this position was particularly emphasised by the experts as being very suitable. However, in this respect attention should be drawn to the observation of Expert 9: "Discussions are often inadequate, time-consuming and should be used to a very moderate extent, however, when discussing students learn to think critically, collaborate, listen, argue, and compromise. Discussion is also related to reflective learning." It is argued again that the effectiveness of the educational activity depends on the ability to design it in the study process. Particular attention should also be drawn to the approach of Expert 1 and Expert 3, who associate the types of educational activities with Bloom's taxonomy, emphasising their relevance to study purposes. This manifestation of their relevance encourages seeking connection of the educational activity with study goals.

To sum up, the following can be stated:

All eight student-centred types of educational activity based on the categorisation of D. Leclercq and M. Poumay (2005), namely, receiving and transmission, research and documentation, imitation and modelling, creation and supplementation, practice and guidance, experimentation and reaction, meta-reflection and co-reflection, discussion and discussion guidance, were identified as suitable for in-service teacher training. Some types of educational activities were distinguished as not being very suitable, namely, receiving and transmission, imitation and modelling, etc. In any case, in the opinion of experts, educational activities should be targeted and properly designed to achieve the intended goals. Otherwise, the education activity may become not suitable and even unbalance the process of studying in pursuit of the intended goal.

According to some of the experts, the types of educational activity may be associated with Bloom's taxonomy levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation. This association is important because it is possible to relate study goals with educational activities on the basis of the said levels – modelling of each educational activity should be oriented to the purposeful harmonious activity of the student and the teacher in order to achieve its effectiveness.

References

Kukla, A. (2000). Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Science. New York: Routledge.

Leclercq D., Poumay M.(2005) The 8 Learning Events Model and its principles. LabSET, University of Liège, 2005. Available at: http://www.labset.net/media/prod/8LEM.pdf.

Targamadze A., Petrauskiene R.(2008). The quality of distance learning in the situation of technological change. The quality of higher education, No 5, 2008, p. 74-93.

Targamadze A., Petrauskiene R., Rubliauskas D.(2010). Influence of Technologies on Quality of Distance learning // Electronics and Electrical Engineering. – Kaunas: Technologija, 2010. - No. 6 (102). – P. 131 – 134

Targamadzė V. (2014). Bendrojo ugdymo mokykla kryžkelėje: akivarai ir kūlgrinda. **[**Mokslinė monografija]. – Vilnius:Vilniaus universiteto leidykla./ Lithuanian general education school at a crossroads:quagmires and pathways. [Scientific monography] - Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla.

Bendrojo ugdymo mokyklos kaitos gairės [The Guidelines for the Change of General Education Schools], (2017). Available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/aa1823b06c d11e 7827 cd63159af616c

Commission staff working document accompanying the document proposal for a council recommendation on Key Competences for LifeLong Learning, (2018). Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018SC0014

*Geros mokyklos koncepcija [The Good School Concept], (*2015). Available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/f2f65120a7bb11e5be7fbe3f919a1ebe