

The Development of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in the Process of Self-education at the University*

Alida SAMUSEVIČA¹, Santa STRIGUNA²

¹*Dr.paed., professor, senior researcher of Liepaja University Institute of Educational Sciences*

²*Mg.sc.educ., assistant, Liepaja University Institute of Educational Sciences*

E-mail: alida.samusevica@liepu.lv, santa.striguna@liepu.lv

Abstract

The quality problem of teachers' professional work is connected with the students, trainee teachers', self-education options and motivation research during the study process. Students' purposeful self-education and development of self-reflection skills is one of the most significant pedagogic approaches in teachers' education that can guarantee the education transformation process of the 21st century in school practice which will be focused on creativity and innovations. In order to make it possible for the education system to provide a purposeful and productive acquisition of pupils' self-education skills, the issue about the teacher trainees' motivation and self-education skills during the study process has to be promoted, therefore improving formation of students' pedagogic competences during the study process at university. Research question is to encourage a scientific discussion about the significance of university students' independent studies, describing the individualized learning development possibilities in the pedagogic self-education competence formation process during the study time. The subject of the research: self-assessment of students' self-education competence in the study process at a higher educational establishment. Objective of the paper: to describe the competence of students' self-education in professional socialization within the study process. Research methods: analysis of theoretical findings, questionnaires and interviews, student self-assessment and self-reflection analysis. The study of pedagogical competence is based on the self-analysis of the student's practical performance in order to determine the motivation for professional growth. In the publication the significance of university students' independent studies has been described, characterizing the individualized learning development possibilities in the process of pedagogic self-education competence formation during the study time. The results of the research confirm that the dominant of productive studies is "learning" process, which contains the student's purposeful and according to his/her professional development needs carried out independent work. The characterizing criterion of effective, on student's professional growth oriented study process is the determined need and the ability of the future specialist to study independently, as the personal effort and activities of the independent work contribute to acquirement of lasting and qualitative knowledge, the motivation to continue or to enhance the obtained education, the development of purposeful pedagogical skills and competences.

Key words: self-education, competence, students, study process, pedagogical competence

1. Introduction

Nowadays in all professional activity areas the employees, who are able to think in a creative way, adapt quickly, communicate and work in a team, are required. However, quite often one can hear from employers saying that it is not possible to find such people. Why is it like that? As we live in the time of revolutionary changes and if we want to survive and develop, then the skills and competences, which we acquire at school, are essentially important. There is no doubt the character of very many people's work will change pretty soon. Most probably in future people will have to change not only their place of work but also their occupation several times in their lifetime. Pupils' parents wish education would help their children discover their gifts and abilities and also provide a purposeful and meaningful life. The youth desire the same. The more complicated the world becomes, the more creative and pedagogically professional teachers have to become in order to be able to overcome its challenges. Therefore, the society's demands for the change of the education system work and qualitatively educated teachers is justified.

Education plays a significant role in people's life, children's future and society's long-term global development. Education is not a linear process which prepares for the future. Actually, education develops a person's talents and perception abilities with what we are able to live the best life now and build a possibly better life for the future. Tom Friedman reasonably claims that we need not only a bigger number of secondary school leavers, but also more young people with an appropriate education. Our schools have got a doubly hard task: they have to promote not only reading, writing and arithmetic skills, but also the knowledge about business management, innovations and creativity. In order to regain the old good life standards, we have to rearrange not only banks, but also schools (Friedman, 2007).

Education is a tool and foundation for further development of knowledge, skills, culture and personality, implementation of own abilities and talents. As education is a life-long process, then due to it, the person's literacy increases. An educated person's skills are a developed ability to generate personal judgments and behavioral strategies, analyze and evaluate their life activity, improve constantly personal experience, develop self-regulation and plan self-development. The self-education competence is the base of all above

mentioned skills. The issue about the teacher trainees' independent learning and teaching skills has to be promoted in order the education system would be able to provide pupils with a purposeful and productive acquisition of self-education skills, as well as their professional self-realization challenges during their study time, thus developing the students' pedagogic competence formation process at university.

Goal of the Publication

Encourage a scientific discussion about the significance of university students' independent studies, describing the individualized learning development possibilities in the pedagogic self-education competence formation process during the study time.

Research Subject

Self-assessment of students' self-education competence in the study process at a higher educational establishment.

2. Research Methods

The qualitative research methods have been used in the studies of the theoretical literature, normative and other documents: analysis and synthesis, analysis of students' self-education competence self-assessments with the help of a written questionnaire and oral interview, the logically constructive method in the development of conclusions and generalizations.

Teacher Education: Theoretical Framework

Teacher learning is a complex problem entwined with beliefs and experiences (Berenson, 2012, 113). A teacher's competence is regarded as a strategic matter in most countries, and the training of teachers and a discussion about what kind of competencies are needed to teach seem to be ongoing issues (Goodwin & Oyler, 2008). The „new“ professionalism of the teaching fraternity is anchored, to a large extent, on the ethos of the teaching profession. This ethos helps teachers to articulate the shared understanding of the values, beliefs and attitudes that are essential to guide present and inspire future generations of teachers to a higher level of professional excellence (Gopinathan, et.al 2008). The professional identity determines the paths then teachers choose for their professional development and it impacts their attitudes towards educational changes and reforms (Kozminsky, 2012, 13).

The concept of teachers as lifelong learners is a key component in considering teachers' life cycles, starting with their introduction to the profession via initial teacher education and continuing via professional development throughout their careers (Devitt, Oldham & Kerin, 2012). Changes in educational policy and proposed reforms can confront teachers and teachers-educators with a sense of professional identity crisis, which affects their commitment to teaching and may hinder their motivation, feelings of self- satisfaction and professional pride, and their sense of internal coherence (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005). Collinson (2012) see career-long professional development as both professional and personal development, both formal and informal learning (Collinson, 2012, 59).

Competence is perceived as ability on knowledge, values and attitudes, an ability, which ensures readiness to act in authentic situations. The notion of competence, understood in this light, reflects didactic and methodical aspects relying on an overall simple structure: knowledge, abilities, experience, attitudes and values. The structure of competence enables the description of learning as well the theoretical and practical aptness to bring it to be realized. Competence as a stimulating factor of social stability and development bears on individual ability to adapt to incessantly changing world, but also change future through application of responsible understanding, professionalism and effective self-realization (Дахин, 2009). Competence as the promoting factor of social stability and development is individual's ability to adapt in the changing world and also change the future, by applying responsible understanding, professionalism and effective self-realization (Дахин, 2009).

The term *competence* is not necessarily a clear and neutral term to describe the qualities of teaching. According to Biesta (2011) there is a tension in the competence discourse between on the one hand a behavioristic approach that emphasizes doing, performing, achieving, observing, measuring and, ultimately, control, and on the other hand an integrative approach that emphasizes knowledge, skills, understanding, values, purpose and, ultimately, teacher agency.

Evaluating teachers' competencies

Evaluation of new teachers during the induction year raises a number of questions about the evaluation practices that are created. Research shows that certain issues need to be addressed, such as the processes involved, the focus of the evaluation and its validity (Fransson, 2012, 74).

Self – evaluation is used the organization of the study process of institutions of higher education as one of the forms of evaluation on regular basis (Rutka, 2009). Analyzing self-evaluation criteria offered to the students, one can conclude that they are mainly based on the requirements defined by the teachers' professional standard on the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the teacher. Therefore, gradual recognition and independent planning, adjustment and implementation of own development (professional, life, personal), readiness to analyze oneself in time and constantly find personally important significance of the professional activity becomes the objective of professional self – implementation (Schein, 1993). Research into evaluation in accordance with specified standards highlights the accompanying, challenges and dilemmas (Delandshere & Arens, 2001; Imig & Imig 2008). For example, the risk that complex competencies and knowledge dimensions, might be simplified is stressed, as well as the fact that evaluation is a complex process that is almost impossible to judge fairly (Berliner, 2005; Samuseviča & Striguna, 2014). In this context, Biesta (2009) questions whether standards really measure what is regarded as valuable competencies and wonders whether what is measurable becomes what we value. Successful and experienced teachers who have obtained pedagogic authority have to share their experience and cooperate with their new colleagues.

Reflection

As for reflection, the teachers consider it a necessity for becoming exemplary (Korthagen 2004). C. Rodgers (2002) formulates reflection as a multidimensional phenomenon:

- it is a meaning- making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas;
- it is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry
- it needs to happen in community, in interaction with others;
- it requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others (Rodgers, 2002, 845).

Characterizing teachers' reflection it could be said that it is a specific way of thinking about pedagogical situations which cause confusion and perplexity, and emotions. Reflective skills, if practiced, can be learnt and improved. Essentially, we are talking of five criteria, which, in their collaborative action and personal interaction, may lead towards a new profile of teacher education and training: professionalism, life-long learning, responsibility, co-operation, flexibility (Schulz, 2012, 184).

Description of self-education competence

Self-education is a purposeful and independent cognitive process which is directed by a person's needs, interest to obtain or develop knowledge and skills, create attitudes and new experience. Self-education in a particular area characterizes completeness of activity and simultaneously it is also the source of personal development. Self-education is a type of the subject's personal development which greatly affects its abilities in the experience enrichment. The goal of self-education is the subject's self-realization in one of the topical work dimensions: personal, social or professional.

Teachers' pedagogic competence is one of the education quality keys which is forged in the personal professional development process during both the study time and professional activity. In the modern society the phenomenon of the prevailing academic knowledge inflation is one of the strongest indicators which confirms the necessity of changes in education. Changes at school have to start with the teachers' help who are active self-education experts themselves and provide their pupils with a motivating personal example. Not a single teacher will be able to find their way in the complex future environment unless their knowledge, motivation and professionalism are connected with a constant personal, social and professional development. To what extent does a teacher trainee develop the self-education competence during the study process at university?

The description of higher education acquisition process and outcomes quality by the education theory lecturer Ken Robinson arises a justified analytical contemplation: *"most of the big universities have almost none individual training possibilities. The most often used study methods are mass lectures which are read by the teachers alienated from practice, and well-attended seminars which are led by badly-paid postgraduates. Homework is assessed without any feedback. The standardized tests and uniform evaluation system make the study process even more impersonal, for attention is focused on a better success statistics and fundraising, and not on every student's abilities"* (Robinson, 2013, 78). It is hard to admit, but we still do have in teachers' education the system which definitely could be called as the "initial filling model", because it envisages that during the study time a student develops the academic abilities and stores the necessary education resources for practice and supplements them gradually during the following years of work. The term "academic abilities" means here intelligence or development of mental abilities, less attention is paid to the development of skills and particular competences.

The theoretical researches emphasize that a student in a particular sociocultural environment, obtaining an individual education experience, creates own learning and interaction culture (Виготский,

1984; Macke, Hanke, Viehmann, 2008). Just the competence “becomes the expression of such a skill which gives a person a chance to manage and work in the social and cultural diversity which is obtained through learning” (Eichorst, 1998, 12-13). When analyzing the essence of the competence, implementation and expression specifics, groups of several skills are highlighted:

- disciplinary competence which characterizes planning, analysis, synthesis, methodology;
- professional competence which includes professional communication, activity in a multicultural environment, development of abilities;
- institutional competence, with which an innovative activity, implementation of innovations into practice, ability to work autonomously and in a group, interdisciplinary transformation are understood (Perrenoud, 2004).

An essential element of competence formation is the connection between the motivation and personal values, progress takes off only in the conditions where a human being is personally interested and motivated in the particular activity (Apsalons, 2013, Павел, 1999). Therefore the individual’s ability to use efficiently and develop the obtained experience is understood with competence, for competence is a complex unity of knowledge, skills and attitudes which are manifested in activity, achieving the result. Knowledge includes the areas of activity, facts, principles and theories. Skills provide capacity with the help of learning in order to perform activity applying knowledge (Key Competences for Adult Learning Professional, 2010). Competence from a potential opportunity turns into real abilities and professional ability only through an independent and active subject’s activity. Thus one can confirm that the self-education competence develops and improves through activity.

If in the pedagogic process the acquisition of professional activity is implemented, focusing on the structure elements of activity approach, then such a didactic model gives a possibility to notice the regularities between the lecturers and students’ goals, motives, interests and needs in connection and unity, which facilitates the formation of self-education competence (Леонтьев, 1986, Špona, 2006). Being competent in the self-education activity means to be able to update and mobilize knowledge, skills and experience, and also transformation skills in particular situations have got an essential meaning. Self-education competence is one of the leading personalities in the teacher’s professional activity (Zaire-Beck, 2000).

In pedagogic practice *self-education competence* is characterized by not only a set of specified capacities and skills, but also by experience reflection of a systemized professional activity which develops creativity and innovations in the education area. The quality of professional activity in the pedagogy area greatly depends on the teacher’s self-education competence, which, in its turn, reveals the necessity within the activity of the pedagogic higher education establishment to be aware, plan and implement the study process, which forms the trainee teachers’ capacities and skills that are necessary for further development of self-education competence.

The analysis of theoretical cognitions confirms that *student’s self-education competence is an integrative quality of their study activity*, which is characterized by a purposeful, planned, systematic and independently organized cognitive activity, reflection of the acquired knowledge and experience, as well as a self-constructed and self-managed development in the professional mastery nuances of pedagogic activity.

The study environment, collaboration with lecturers and teachers from schools, as well as the test of own pedagogic skills and abilities into practice influence essentially formation of students’ self-education competence, which determines formation of other key competences, for in the study work self-education competence is not only a goal, but also a tool for the development of the trainee teacher’s personality.

Independent studies require from students self-discipline and high motivation, independent decision making, ability to find one’s way in information and choose the most suitable ability to adapt and transform. Every student themselves has to be responsible for the opportunities in their professional development. The theoretical analysis confirms that the structure of student’s self-education includes several important components:

- personalities and motivation which characterize awareness of personal development and attitude towards the necessity and need of self-education
- individual self-education experience: psychological and practical readiness for self-education implementation; planning and realization of self-education;
- assessment of the self-education process and results.

3. Research outcomes

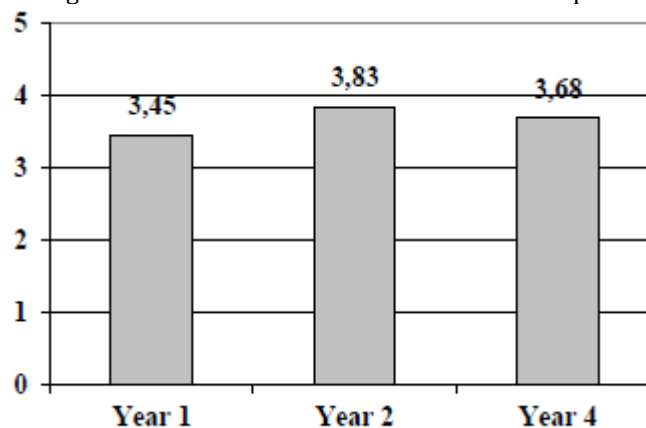
In order to find out the development level of the students, trainee teachers’ self-education competence, diagnosing the criteria of the individualized independent learning, a questionnaire was worked out which gave the students a possibility to assess on a five-point scale their self-education skills, which are necessary for the acquisition of a purposeful pedagogic activity during the study process at university.

The students were offered in the questionnaire to assess and analyze the characteristic features and skills of the study activities which reveal the students' self-education motivation: purposefulness, independence, self-education and need for personal development; characteristics and skills of the real practical activity that confirm their independent learning habits: the need to extend their knowledge and skills, the skill to self-educate independently, the skill to solve learning problems during the study process, self-initiative in the profession acquisition, participation and activity in studies; also statements were offered in order to ascertain the development of self-adjusting habits during the study process: the ability to organize their learning process, the skill to carry out the self-control of learning quality, the skill to carry out self-assessment and reflection.

To implement the research, on a basis of a random selection and students' voluntary choice to participate in the research, the 1st, 2nd and 4th year students (N=67) of different qualifications (preschool, primary school, basic school, music, sports, dance and special education) from the study program "Teacher" were involved, who were interested in assessing their self-education skills. To ensure the data reliability, during the research specified, individual studies were carried out about every student, providing every student the necessary time to fill in the questionnaire and some additional time for an individual interview about the procedure of the study process and students' learning skills. The choice of interviews as a research method is based on the cognition that every student constructs enthusiastically their individual reality of special experience, every student's reality is different and it is constructed socially. Therefore every student's evaluative statements are important to be aware of their individualized learning experience. The obtained information during the interview gave a chance to supplement the interpretation and generalization of the obtained data, facilitating understanding of the self-assessment data analysis provided by students.

During the development process of the self-education skills self-assessment and research planning, in the implementation period the publication authors' hypothetic assumptions were linked with the cognition that just the 4th year students' self-education average indicators would be the highest, for in the previous study period a significant amount of work was invested both in the acquisition of the chosen qualification at university and in practice at school and alongside the studies the independent learning skills have been developed in a purposeful way that can be judged by their collaboration with the lecturers in the scientific work. The analysis and summary of the research data did not confirm the previously made assumptions.

Picture 1. Average indicators of students' self-education competence assessment



As it can be seen in Picture 1, the 4th year students' average self-education competence indicators are lower than the 2nd year. It can be explained with the obtained information in the individual interviews that when the individual self-education experience in the 4th year increases, the students' self-assessment becomes more critical and adequate, for their own experience has been identified and updated analytically in the context of social and pedagogic reality, awareness about the real opportunities of their own pedagogic activity has been strengthened, the areas of professional activity have been crystallized in which they have to develop purposefully. From the 4th year students' point of view they are:

- purposefulness of professional activity (3.35);
- need to broaden their knowledge and skills (3.42);
- necessity for self-education (3.5)

As one can see, all of the above mentioned qualities are connected with the trainee teachers' motivation and development of professional dimension.

The 2nd year students' responses in the interviews confirm their high motivation in teacher's profession acquisition and reveal the increased self-assessment level in the assessment of their learning skills. The varying self-assessment of self-education competences is greatly affected by the students' learning

experience obtained in the previous school. The 2nd year students are the pupils who have already encountered the initiated reform in transition to the development of pupils' competences in their school practice and it has provided a positive approval for their individual awareness about their abilities and skills. When arranging pedagogic studies, more attention has to be paid to the self-education skills, which have got the lowest indicators by the 2nd year students' assessment: skill to solve study problems (3.52);

- skill to carry out a self-assessment (3.57);
- skill to implement the learning self-control (3.6);
- planning of independent studies (3.67).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In theoretical researches the approach of competences is characterized in different ways in compliance with the nuances of the professional activity specifics, but practically all scientists come to a common conclusion that in the specialists' educating process the focus on personal development and formation of professional competence is the most important.

In the pedagogic process of competence approach implementation at university the education results are offered not only in the context of the terms' knowledge-skills-knacks development, but also to guarantee the teacher trainee's readiness for professional activity (and the level of the readiness, i.e. competence), implementing the professional activity into its diverse and complex synthesis.

Self-education ability is one of the most topical items of professional competence, because the ability to self-educate independently is included in the requirements of education outcomes. In the modern society self-education is one of the professional activity's preconditions which is set for education and simultaneously it is an influential factor of the teacher's personal professional development.

The personalities, which higher education and teachers' education are associated with, are independent, critical and creative thinking, purposefulness, objectivity and honesty, ability to think in an abstract way and debate in a reasoned way, ensure and inspire. All these features are equally rooted in both the prevailing atmosphere of the educational institution, study process arrangement, and in the students' enthusiasm the particular education is acquired with.

The teachers' training programs have to guarantee the opportunity to promote students' individual reflections about the progress of competences and collaboration with lecturers and teachers from schools, and not only to assess the success of studies in compliance with the academic and professional standards. Despite the time restrictions at university that is given to the lecturers for their individual work with every student, the lecturers have to be ready to adapt to the society's development challenges and help their students develop in themselves such self-education skills which will be able to guarantee in practice the future specialists' successful professional activity, providing their pedagogic mastery.

The fact, how the teacher trainee has been directed to their professional development searches and confidence that the pedagogic mastery depends on personal self-development and self-improvement, greatly determines a successful practicing teacher's self-assertion in the professional activity.

The quality of the teacher trainee's self-education competence is provided with a close connection of the professional development areas such as: purposefulness, necessity to broaden own knowledge and skills, the need of self-education, the skill to solve learning problems, the skill to carry out a self-assessment, promotion of the skill to implement learning self-control in the acquisition of professional activity during the study process.

The transformation of skills in the professional activity competence is only possible in such a study process, where students themselves are active promoters and members of their development. Therefore in the study process the pedagogic competence formation factors as students' motivation and values orientation, personal responsibility, pedagogical interaction and active participation in their skills development obtain a special topicality.

Students' purposeful self-education and development of reflection skills is one of the most significant pedagogic approaches in the teacher trainees' education process, which can provide in school practice the transformation process of the 21st century education based on creativity and innovations.

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