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DEVELOPING THE PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS OF FUTURE TEACHERS IN A DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH REFLECTIVE SKILLS: A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the educational process and created new requirements for the professional training of future teachers. In this context, the development of pedagogical skills requires not only theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experience but also the ability to critically evaluate one's own professional activities. This article examines a methodological approach to developing the pedagogical skills of future teachers in a digital learning environment through reflective skills. Particular attention is paid to the theoretical foundations of pedagogical reflection, the educational potential of digital technologies, and the integration of reflective activities into teacher education. The proposed methodology includes diagnostic, motivational, practical, analytical, and evaluative stages. Digital portfolios, reflective journals, video-based lesson analysis, online discussions, and peer feedback are considered effective tools for promoting professional self-assessment and continuous development. The article argues that systematic reflection enables future teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses, improve instructional decision-making, and develop professional autonomy. The findings provide methodological recommendations for integrating reflective practices into digital teacher education.

Keywords: digital learning environment, future teachers, pedagogical skills, reflection, reflective skills, professional development, digital technologies, teacher education.

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1. Introduction

The digital transformation of education has become one of the major factors influencing the development of contemporary teacher education. The widespread use of learning management systems, online educational platforms, interactive resources, artificial intelligence tools, and digital communication technologies has changed the traditional understanding of teaching and learning. As a result, future teachers are expected to possess not only subject-specific knowledge and methodological competence but also the ability to work effectively in technology-enhanced educational environments.

Pedagogical skills represent an integrated set of professional abilities that enable teachers to organize educational activities, communicate effectively with learners, select appropriate teaching methods, manage classroom interaction, and evaluate learning outcomes. However, the formation of these skills cannot be limited to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge or the mechanical application of instructional techniques. It requires continuous self-analysis, professional awareness, and the ability to critically assess one's own pedagogical decisions.

In this regard, reflective skills play a significant role in the professional development of future teachers. Reflection allows individuals to examine their teaching experiences, identify difficulties, analyse the effectiveness of instructional strategies, and make informed decisions about further improvement. In a digital learning environment, reflective processes can be supported through electronic portfolios, online journals, recorded teaching sessions, virtual discussions, and digital feedback systems.

The purpose of this study is to develop a methodological approach to improving the pedagogical skills of future teachers through the systematic formation of reflective skills in a digital learning environment.

The research objectives are as follows:

to clarify the pedagogical and psychological foundations of reflection in teacher education;

to identify the potential of digital technologies for developing reflective skills;

to determine the main components and stages of the proposed methodology;

to identify effective digital tools for organizing reflective activities;

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to formulate methodological recommendations for improving the professional training of future teachers.

2. Theoretical Background

Reflection is widely recognized as an essential component of professional learning. It involves the conscious examination of experience, the analysis of actions and decisions, and the development of strategies for future improvement. One of the influential theoretical foundations of reflective education is the work of John Dewey. In How We Think (1933), Dewey emphasizes reflective thinking as an active, persistent, and careful consideration of beliefs and knowledge in relation to their supporting evidence and consequences. From this perspective, reflection is not simply recalling an experience; it is a purposeful process of inquiry and problem-solving.

Donald Schön (1983) further develops the concept through the distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action occurs while professional activity is taking place, enabling practitioners to adjust their decisions in response to emerging situations. Reflection-on-action takes place after an activity and involves a systematic analysis of the experience. Both forms are important for future teachers because teaching requires continuous adaptation and evaluation.

In teacher education, reflective practice is closely connected with professional competence, pedagogical creativity, and self-directed learning. A reflective teacher is able to analyse learners' needs, evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods, identify communication difficulties, and modify instructional strategies accordingly.

Digital technologies create additional opportunities for developing these abilities. Online learning platforms provide spaces for collaborative discussion, digital portfolios preserve evidence of professional progress, and video recordings allow student teachers to analyse their own teaching performance. Consequently, digital learning environments can become not only sources of educational information but also instruments for professional reflection.

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3. Research Methodology

The methodological framework of this study is based on a combination of theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, pedagogical modelling, and the systematization of methodological approaches to teacher education.

The theoretical analysis focuses on scientific literature related to reflective practice, teacher professionalism, digital pedagogy, and professional development. Comparative analysis is used to identify the relationship between traditional reflective practices and digitally supported reflection.

Pedagogical modelling serves as the basis for constructing a methodological system aimed at developing the pedagogical skills of future teachers. The proposed system integrates educational objectives, reflective activities, digital tools, assessment criteria, and expected learning outcomes.

The methodology is organized around five interconnected stages:

1. Diagnostic stage. At this stage, the initial level of students' pedagogical skills and reflective abilities is identified. Digital questionnaires, self-assessment scales, and diagnostic tasks can be used to determine students' ability to analyse teaching situations, recognize professional difficulties, and evaluate their own performance.

2. Motivational stage. This stage aims to develop students' awareness of the importance of reflection in professional activity. Online discussions, problem-based learning tasks, and interactive presentations encourage future teachers to understand reflection as an essential condition for continuous professional growth.

3. Practical and activity-based stage. Students participate in microteaching, online teaching simulations, collaborative projects, and lesson-planning activities. Their teaching sessions may be recorded and uploaded to a digital platform for subsequent analysis.

4. Analytical and reflective stage. Students examine their teaching experiences through reflective journals, video analysis, peer assessment, and teacher feedback. They identify successful instructional decisions, recognize weaknesses, and formulate strategies for improvement.

5. Evaluative and developmental stage. Students assess their professional progress by comparing initial and subsequent performance. Digital portfolios,

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reflective reports, and assessment rubrics are used to document their achievements and determine further development priorities.

These stages form a continuous methodological process in which practical teaching experience is followed by reflection, evaluation, and improvement.

4.Developing Pedagogical Skills through Reflective Activities in Digital Learning Environments

The effective development of pedagogical skills requires the integration of reflection into different forms of digital educational activity. Digital tools should not be used merely to transfer traditional learning materials into electronic formats. Rather, they should create conditions for active participation, professional self-analysis, collaboration, and independent learning.

Several digital instruments can be particularly effective in this process.

4.1. Digital Portfolios

A digital portfolio is a structured collection of students' educational achievements, teaching materials, lesson plans, feedback, and reflective reports. It provides an opportunity to monitor professional development over time.

Future teachers can include the following materials in their portfolios:

lesson plans and instructional resources;

recordings of microteaching sessions;

self-assessment reports;

feedback from peers and instructors;

reflective analyses of teaching experiences;

evidence of professional progress.

The portfolio helps students recognize the relationship between their teaching decisions and learning outcomes. It also encourages responsibility for individual professional development.

4.2. Reflective Journals

Digital reflective journals enable students to record their experiences, difficulties, observations, and professional conclusions after completing educational activities.

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A reflective journal may be organized around several questions:
What was the main objective of my teaching activity?
Which instructional strategies were effective?
What difficulties did I encounter?
How did learners respond to my teaching?
What would I change in a similar situation in the future?
Such questions encourage students to move beyond simple descriptions of events and develop analytical and evaluative thinking.

4.3. Video-Based Reflection

Video recording is an effective instrument for analysing teaching performance. By watching recordings of their own lessons, future teachers can identify aspects of their pedagogical behaviour that may not be easily recognized during the teaching process itself.
Video analysis can focus on classroom communication, explanation techniques, time management, questioning strategies, interaction with learners, and the use of instructional materials.
This approach creates opportunities for objective self-observation and evidence-based professional improvement.

4.4. Online Collaboration and Peer Feedback

Digital learning platforms support collaborative reflection through discussion forums, shared documents, video conferences, and peer-review activities.
When students analyse each other's lesson plans or teaching demonstrations, they become familiar with different instructional approaches and develop the ability to provide constructive feedback. Peer feedback also encourages professional communication, mutual support, and collaborative problem-solving.
The combination of self-assessment, peer assessment, and instructor feedback creates a more comprehensive picture of professional development.

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5. A Methodological Model for Developing Reflective Skills

Based on the theoretical and methodological analysis, the development of pedagogical skills through reflective activities can be represented as an integrated educational model.

The model consists of five interconnected components:

1. Target component. This component defines the main objective: developing pedagogical skills and professional reflection among future teachers in a digital learning environment.

2. Content component. It includes pedagogical knowledge, instructional methods, digital literacy, reflective thinking, professional communication, and self-assessment.

3. Process component. It covers diagnostic activities, microteaching, digital collaboration, reflective journaling, video analysis, and portfolio development.

4. Assessment component. It involves diagnostic instruments, observation criteria, reflective reports, peer feedback, and digital assessment tools.

5. Outcome component. It represents the expected development of pedagogical skills, professional self-awareness, independent decision-making, and the ability to improve teaching practices through reflection.

The relationship between these components ensures the continuity of the educational process. The target component determines the expected outcomes, the content component provides the necessary knowledge and skills, and the process component creates opportunities for practical implementation. Assessment and reflection, in turn, support the improvement of professional performance.

For practical implementation, the following criteria can be used to evaluate the development of reflective skills:

Assessment criterion Indicators

Cognitive Understanding the principles and importance of pedagogical reflection

Analytical Identifying strengths, weaknesses, and causes of instructional difficulties

Evaluative Assessing teaching performance using relevant criteria

Motivational Demonstrating interest in professional self-improvement

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Practical activities	Applying reflective conclusions to improve subsequent teaching
Digital development	Using digital tools effectively for self-assessment and professional

According to these criteria, students' reflective development can be assessed at three levels: basic, intermediate, and advanced.

At the basic level, students can describe their teaching experiences but may require guidance to identify underlying problems. At the intermediate level, they can analyse their performance and formulate possible solutions. At the advanced level, they demonstrate independent, systematic, and evidence-based reflection and use its results to improve their teaching practices.

These levels are proposed as a methodological assessment framework and should be validated through empirical research before being treated as an experimentally established measurement scale.

6. Results and Discussion

The theoretical and methodological analysis indicates that reflective skills can serve as an important mechanism for improving the pedagogical skills of future teachers in digital learning environments.

First, reflection strengthens the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experience. Students do not simply reproduce instructional techniques; they analyse why particular methods are effective or ineffective in specific educational situations.

Second, digital tools expand the opportunities for professional self-assessment. Digital portfolios, recorded lessons, and online reflective journals make it possible to document teaching experiences and observe professional progress over time.

Third, collaborative reflection promotes professional communication and critical thinking. By evaluating the teaching practices of their peers, future teachers learn to consider different perspectives and develop more flexible approaches to instructional problem-solving.

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Fourth, systematic reflection contributes to professional autonomy. Students gradually become more capable of identifying their learning needs, setting professional goals, and selecting appropriate strategies for further development.
However, the effective implementation of this methodology requires several pedagogical conditions. These include sufficient digital competence among students and instructors, clear assessment criteria, access to appropriate digital platforms, constructive feedback, and a supportive educational environment.
It is also important to recognize that the use of digital technologies alone does not guarantee the development of reflective skills. Digital tools become educationally meaningful when they are integrated into a structured pedagogical process with clearly defined objectives and systematic feedback.

7. Conclusion

The development of pedagogical skills among future teachers in a digital learning environment requires an integrated approach that combines professional knowledge, practical experience, digital competence, and reflective abilities.
The analysis demonstrates that reflective skills play an essential role in helping future teachers understand their professional actions, identify instructional difficulties, evaluate teaching outcomes, and develop effective strategies for improvement.
The proposed methodology includes diagnostic, motivational, practical, analytical, and evaluative stages. Its implementation involves digital portfolios, reflective journals, video-based lesson analysis, online collaboration, and peer feedback.
The following conclusions can be drawn:
Pedagogical reflection is an important condition for the continuous professional development of future teachers.
Digital learning environments provide additional opportunities for organizing systematic self-assessment and reflective activities.
The integration of digital tools and reflective methods strengthens the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experience.
A structured methodological model can support the development of analytical thinking, professional autonomy, and pedagogical decision-making.

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The effectiveness of the proposed methodology should be further examined through experimental studies in teacher education institutions.

Thus, developing reflective skills through digital educational activities can serve as a significant methodological direction for improving the professional preparation of future teachers and enhancing the quality of contemporary teacher education.

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