Nowadays, the phenomenon of reflective practice has gained wide recognition in higher education institutions preparing pre-service teachers for their future careers. As research shows, the capability of reflective practice is developmental and highly depends on the attitudes and practice employed by both student teachers and their educators. Guided by these assumptions, the current paper attempts to reveal the role of teacher educators in facilitating reflective practice of pre-service teachers. The main roles of teacher educators as facilitators are disclosed by employing the method of scientific literature review.

Keywords: Higher education, pre-service teacher educators’ role, reflective practice, student teachers, the reflective practitioner.

1 INTRODUCTION

The value of reflective practice as one of the main educational concepts ensuring graduates’ personal and professional development has been widely recognised in the programmes preparing prospective teachers in higher education institutions ([1], [2]). The importance of reflective practice in pre-service teacher education is grounded in the need for student teachers to become reflective practitioners and learn the skills and dispositions of reflective inquiry so that they can in turn teach such ways of thinking to their students [3]. On a broader scale, the need for its implementation nowadays has been conditioned by radical transformations higher education is currently undergoing ([4], [5]) - meeting the need to respond to challenges posed by society, higher education institutions are experiencing a strong urge to implement student-centered studies that put reflective practice at their heart ([4], [6], [7], [8]). This demand is supported by one of the most important goals of higher education - to develop students’ ability to learn continuously, reflecting on one’s experience, in order to build prospective specialists’ holistic competence. The capacity to reflect is recognised as one of the main generic competences and is of high importance in the context of pre-service teacher education as well.

The recognition of a new paradigm to be adopted in the studies they provide, i.e. shifting away from an emphasis on teaching to an emphasis on learning, is closely related to the changes in student teachers and their educators’ responsibilities which are mainly about students taking responsibility for their own learning and teacher educators becoming facilitators of the learning process. There is a substantial body of theoretical and empirical evidence that student teachers’ capacity to reflect on practice is developmental ([1], [9]). Being a complex, rigorous, intellectual, and emotional enterprise [10], reflection is considered to be a critical issue in that it needs time to do well [11]. The latter idea leads to the assumption that, in order to be able to engage in critical reflection so that they could improve their practice, pre-service student teachers need carefully constructed guidance ([3], [12], [13]), which consequently leads to the question – how can teacher educators help their students build the skills necessary to reflect on their practice effectively? Therefore, the purpose of this article is to answer the question: What is the role of teacher educators in facilitating pre-service teachers in the process of their becoming reflective practitioners? Answering this question, the current paper is thought to contribute to the understanding of the significance of teacher educators in the development of their students’ capacity to reflect on their learning and future professional practice. The identification of the roles teacher educators have to acknowledge could serve as a quid for them to move towards the ultimate goal - to enable the growth of their student teachers as personalities and as future professionals who would, in turn, make changes to the whole society. At the same time, clearly understanding their own roles and taking responsibility for their actions teacher educators could make difference in teaching reflective practice to their pre-service teachers not only in their classrooms, but in their higher education institution as well.
1.1 Methodology

1.1.1 Sample

The selection of scientific literature resources for this research paper was criterion-based. The criteria were the following: (1) the resource had to be scientific (based on research or conceptual evidence and published as an article, monograph, PhD dissertation or a research report); (2) the keywords for selection were pre-service teacher educators’ role, reflective practice, student teachers, the reflective practitioner; (3) the resource could have been written in the Lithuanian or English languages.

1.1.2 Method

The current research paper employs the method of scientific literature review which is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers [14]. In writing the literature review, the purpose is to convey to the reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic. As a piece of writing, the literature review is defined by a guiding concept (e.g., research aim, the problem the author discusses). The performed steps of the literature review were as follows: (1) organizing the literature selection and review by relating it directly to the research question the authors develop; (2) synthesizing results into a summary of what is and is not known; (3) identifying areas of controversy in the literature.

1.2 Article composition

The article consists of three parts. In the first part the understanding of reflective practice and the notion of the reflective practitioner in the context of pre-service teacher education are revealed. The second part of this paper explores the roles teacher educators perform while teaching reflective practice. The third part of this paper focuses on the teacher educators’ roles to be perceived by themselves so that their own reflective practice skills are to be developed.

2 UNDERSTANDING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER IN THE CONTEXT OF PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION

When addressing the concept of reflective practice in pre-service teacher education, its understanding is most often revealed referring to the propositions of Dewey [10], who considers reflective action (as opposed to impulsive and routine action) to be based on “the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it” (p. 7) and identifies five phases or states of reflective thinking: problem, suggestions, reasoning, hypothesis, testing. The three attitudes, such as open-mindedness, responsibility, wholeheartedness, according to him, are integral to reflective action and necessary for teaching and learning [10].

The most recent and exhaustive understanding of reflective practice in the context of pre-service teacher education is proposed by Beauchamp [15], which is based on the analysis of 55 definitions ranging from Dewey in 1933 to the present and are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of processes, objects, and rationales of reflective practice identified by Beauchamp [15] (cited in Collin et al. [2])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes of reflection</th>
<th>Objects of the reflective process</th>
<th>Rationales for reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Think differently or more clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think and understand</td>
<td>Social knowledge</td>
<td>Justify one’s stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solve</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Think about actions or decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Change thinking or knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Theories</td>
<td>Take or improve action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct, develop, transform</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Improve student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Alter self or society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues of concern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Beauchamp [15], reflective practice is a process (examining, thinking and understanding, problem-solving, analysing, evaluating, constructing, developing, and transforming) related to a particular object (practice, social knowledge, experience, information, theories, meaning, beliefs, self and/or issues of concern) in order to reach a particular goal (or rationale) (think differently or more clearly, justify one's stance, think about actions or decisions, change thinking or knowledge, take or improve action, improve student learning, alter self or society). Collin et al. [2] add two properties characteristic of reflective practice: the grounded property, meaning that reflection, whether abstract or concrete, is always connected to the situation that produces it; and the generic property that refers to a more sociological approach, i.e. reflective practice as a process takes place in the social individual, not just the professional individual and, therefore, being developed and “applied to a professional life, reflective practice operates transversally, involving personal, social and other areas of life” [2], indicating that the presented definitions are not ultimate.

As for the second term relevant to this study, i.e. the reflective practitioner, the most influential philosopher of higher education Barnett [5] provides such an understanding of it:

Higher learning calls for higher order thinking on the part of the student. Whether engaged in propositional knowledge thought or in professional action, students should be enabled to develop the capacity to keep an eye on themselves, and to engage in a critical dialogue with themselves in all they think and do ... it is a reflective process in which the student interrogates her/his thought or actions. The learning outcome to be desired, from every student, is that of the reflective practitioner.

(p.198)

Thus, for Barnett [5] students as reflective practitioners “engage in a critical dialogue with themselves” and “interrogate [their] thoughts of action” and who need to be provided with adequate support in order to be able to develop the skills of critical enquiry, mainly through the dialogue (with themselves and others). In his later work, Barnett [16] clarifies his idea by stating that the task of higher education calls for nothing less than taking seriously students as persons, as critical persons in the making .... the student is challenged continuously to make connections between her knowledge, self-understanding and actions at the highest levels of criticality.

(p.114)

Being “challenged continuously” puts a demand on teachers, first of all, to adopt appropriate attitudes towards their students and to ensure such a learning/teaching process that would foster them “as critical persons”, which might be achieved through reflective practice.

While approaching the concept of the reflective practitioner in the context of pre-service teacher education, the most frequently cited author Schön [17] defines a student as one who uses reflection as a tool for revisiting experience. In his theory of reflective practice, he identifies two types of reflection: reflection-in-action (thinking while doing) and reflection-on-action (thinking after the event). Reflection-in-action occurs when professionals encounter a situation that is unique or contains an element of surprise to them. Then, professionals draw on their repertoire of examples, rather than applying theory or past experience, in order to reframe the situation and find a new solution, i.e. makes a decision intuitively. Consequently, new reflection-in-action is generated, and the new cycle begins. Schön [18] distinguished three key features of the reflection-in-action process:

- conscious (not necessarily expressed in words);
- critical, involving questioning and restructuring;
- immediate, giving rise to on-the-spot experiment and new actions.

According to Schön [18], “the immediate significance for action” (p.29) is central. For him, reflection-in-action should be implemented into the practicum or preparation of professionals, where the “coach” (the teacher or mentor) plays the main role. Reflection-on-action (or after action) enables professionals consciously review, describe and evaluate their past practice gaining at the same time the insight how future practice could be improved. Reflection-in-action usually merges into reflection-on-action.

The overview of both concepts (reflective practice and the reflective practitioner) clearly shows that the skills and dispositions need by a reflective practitioner, the one who actively reflects on experiences in order to develop professionally, can be developed in the process of critical examination of practice. The role of teacher as a guide in this process is central. The overview also provides the evidence that
both concepts are rather complex and may be challenging for teacher educators to teach them. The latter argument leads to a more careful analysis of the role teacher educators perform in fostering pre-service teachers' capacity of reflective practice.

3 THE ROLES TEACHER EDUCATORS PERFORM IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Pre-service teachers gain knowledge and understanding of teaching in two different contexts: formal coursework undertaken at university and practicum experiences at schools, where they integrate theoretical knowledge and professional practice. Therefore, in pre-service teacher preparation programmes students of teaching are to (1) develop knowledge and skills of teaching and (2) to learn how to competently apply these in practice. Consequently, if the term practice encompasses both the practice of learning and the practice of teaching, then teacher educators should be aware of the appropriate support to be provided. This argument puts a great demand on teacher educators to choose the most relevant ways of teaching in order to nurture and model effective and meaningful reflection, i.e. to facilitate it. The meaning of the term facilitate is defined as "to make it easier for a process or activity to happen" [19].

Cavanagh and Prescott [1], drawing on the evidence provided by research, assert that pre-service teachers, especially beginning teachers, lack proper skills needed to reflect on their practice or do it in a superficial way. On the other hand, the complexity of the concept of reflection can be difficult to articulate it in a helpful for student teachers way so that they would learn the skill to reflect properly. As Jay & Johnson [20] put: “It is difficult for novices to learn what instructors fail to describe” (p. 74). This leads to the question: should reflection be taught explicitly or is it enough to engage students in the activities?

The general agreement reached in research indicates that explicit teaching and modelling on evidence-based practice are necessary for building proper reflective practice skills [21]. This highly resonates with Elliot-Johns [22], who states that “learning to reflect should be consciously embedded in the teaching/learning process explicitly teaching about reflection as a “skill” (one that needs to be practiced regularly) and directly linking this to understandings of personal action and professional learning” (p. 120). According to Elliot-Johns [22], facilitating the learning of thinking, intentionally allocating time, introducing a guiding framework (discussed in class as early as possible), providing ongoing support and constructive feedback would enable students to engage in meaningful reflection as professional learning and stimulate their critical thinking. These considerations highlight the role of teacher educators as enablers who through a carefully organised teaching-learning process would actively engage student teachers in it and provide them with the possibilities to gain proper awareness of reflective practice making it a skill. On the other hand, the organisation of a proper educational process, which would nurture reflective practice skills, emphasises the teacher educators as organisers' role.

In Ostorga’s [23] opinion, in order to incapacitate students to start reflecting, it is very important to promote the development in student teachers’ values and beliefs about learning, i.e. their epistemic stance, since only then they are able to begin reflection. This requirement is directly linked with the teacher educators as promoters' role.

There is a great variety of tools teacher educators can employ to assist the development of professional reflective practice in the context of pre-service teacher education in higher education institutions, which highlights teacher educators as assistants’ role. In this study, the research carried out by Huntley [8] whose investigations into how critical reflection in pre-service teacher education might be supported is highly significant. Based on the analysis of 10 different studies, Huntley [8] draws the conclusion that undoubtedly reflection can be taught through guided reflective practices, which are summarised in Table 3.
Table 3. Some types of guided reflective practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study type</th>
<th>Measurement Instrument</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal writing</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Provide feedback on student writing teaching issues raised by students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debriefing, Online reflections</td>
<td>Encourage more in-depth discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written assignments</td>
<td>Analyse in terms of knowledge and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field experience</td>
<td>Student Teaching Evaluation Forms &amp; Portfolio Presentations</td>
<td>Enable student teachers to reflect and question on their teaching practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>Rate student teachers’ propensity to reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation, Field Notes, Interviews, Written Artefacts</td>
<td>Intentionally develop critical reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/Mentoring</td>
<td>Record of Thoughts</td>
<td>Facilitate instructional activities and empower student teachers to explicitly build on and challenge existing belief structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debriefing, Journal Writing</td>
<td>Facilitate deeper reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Discuss and reflect on how theory can guide practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Inquiry Using Action Research</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Facilitate reflection regarding improvement of teaching practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Huntley [8] asserts, all the guided reflective practices, applied in the studies, focus on higher levels of analysis and thinking and are supposed to have a great impact on teaching reflective practice than thinking focused on technical issues. Through the student teachers’ engagement in the discussion on their reflective practice (providing feedback on the written assignments and commenting them in person and groups, organising debriefing sessions) teacher educators become mediators between student teachers’ tacit and espoused knowledge of teaching, in this way encouraging student teachers’ self-awareness of their epistemic stance relevant to their future profession. In such a discussion teacher educators may highlight more effective ways of how to reflect on the experienced practice (reflection-on-action) for them to be employed by student teachers. In this case, teacher educators become advisors. The discussions on student teachers’ reflective practice are usually arranged through the method of reflective dialogue considered to be highly effective in facilitating reflective practice in teacher education ([5], [16], [24]). Through the reflective dialogue with others and a teacher educator, teacher students can not only reflect on their practice, check their understanding of their professional knowledge but also reframe it. On the other hand, the engagement of student teachers in a critical dialogue enables teacher educators to examine student teachers’ values and beliefs about their learning and teaching in this way promoting deeper learning as well as to assess the level of teacher students’ reflection. Therefore, it can be assumed that reflective practice through reflective dialogue with other, or others, may promote transformational learning ([24] p.95).

On the other hand, the application of the instruments intended to measure different aspects of teacher students’ reflective practice capacity allows teacher educators to explore and diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of student teachers’ ability to reflect and analyse their performance, which requires from teacher educators to become investigators.

Summing up this part of the research paper, it becomes evident that the teaching-learning process of reflective practice requires from teacher educators to play a wide range of roles.
4 THE ROLES OF TEACHER EDUCATORS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS

The above discussed ideas are closely interrelated to the following question: how do teacher educators understand the concept of reflective practice and its importance themselves? since proper perception of these ideas would allow teacher educators to choose effective teaching methods and strategies needed for the development of teacher students as reflective practitioners and allocate adequate support, time, resources, opportunities, and create the environment, which would encourage reflective thinking to become a habit of mind in prospective teachers’ learning process and their future professional lives. This argument poses a requirement for teacher educators to become reflective practitioners themselves and is closely related to the overall understanding of teachers’, as facilitators’, role in the student-centered learning paradigm. Commonly understood as a process of self-examination and self-evaluation, reflection poses the need for teacher educators to regularly engage in careful considerations of their professional practices so that they could be improved. Constant engagement in reflection on and in the action, would ensure that teacher educators’ espoused practice (that they believe in) is as close as possible to her practice-in-use.

What is more, teacher educators should build proper educational competence consisting of: metalearning competence, learning competence, competence for developing (or participating in development) educational environments, and teaching competence, putting the metalearning competence at the heart of the teacher educational competence ([25], p.715). Metalearning competence emphasizes the development of teacher's cognitive methods and ways of seeing the reality, the understanding and management of his/her learning by doing ([25], p.716). The latter idea highlights the importance of teachers’ consciousness and intentionality in relation to modelling of the teaching/learning process ([24]), since by engaging students in reflective practice and drawing their attention to it (the process by which reflective practice can be undertaken), teacher educators not only engage students in reflective practice, but also enable the acquisition of the skills needed for students to do it themselves. Thus, teacher educators play as models of teaching and teach their student teachers about teaching ([26]), which in turn requires from them to adopt the stance of reflective practitioners.

Reflection on their own practice is considered to be of high importance to teacher educators striving to enhance their teaching of reflective practice. By engaging in reflective dialogue with other colleagues, teacher educators would be able not only to reflect on their teaching practice, examine it in a more critical way and advance it, but also learn from the experiences of others. Thus, depending on the level of experience gained in teaching reflective practice, a teacher educator can become a learner, a collaborating colleague or a senior friend. Through reflective dialogue teacher educators from different programmes would be able to develop a common understanding of the nature and features of quality reflection, share models of their best practice, design reflective tasks, and develop a common set of indicators for assessing reflection and providing feedback to their students [21]. Continual dialogue among teacher educators might result in the proposals for the administrators of their higher education institution concerning proper implementation of reflective practice in pre-service teacher education programmes, which might be revised and improved in this way ensuring a better preparation of pre-service students for their future careers.

The assumption that being a teacher educator requires up to date expertise puts a demand on teacher educators to be familiar with the ideas emerging from the recent research in the domain of pre-service teacher education, which emphasizes the teacher educators as scientists’ role.

Reflective practice in teacher education has been constantly approached by different theoreticians and practitioners. Building upon existing literature, the information (by no means exhaustive) is summarised in Table 2 that demonstrates the areas of interest and embraces the main contributions made to the concept of reflective practice in the last decades.
The investigations into different aspects of reflection (its depth, dimensions, levels, types) support the assumption that it is developmental and can be enhanced through the employment of appropriate models and assessed with the help of instruments (rubrics), specially devised for this purpose. Careful analysis of the research findings, their comparison with the personal understanding and experience gained in teaching reflective practice may result in the design of new models and the development of more effective strategies to be applied in teaching practice and shared with other colleagues. In this respect, a teacher educator becomes an innovator and makes his or her contribution to the development of pre-service teachers as reflective practitioners.

2 CONCLUSIONS

Reflective practice has become common within the discourse of teacher education and is widely acknowledged as an essential component in the professional development of student teachers. The need for its embedment in study programmes of pre-service teacher education is dictated by the transformations higher education institutions are undergoing nowadays and adopt the learning paradigm, which requires from teacher educators to fulfil their role as facilitators.

In the teaching-learning process of reflective practice teacher educators facilitate pre-service teachers at different levels. The first level encompasses their roles directed to the student teachers’ reflective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proponent</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee (2000) [27]</td>
<td>Depth of reflective thinking</td>
<td>Recall, rationalization, reflectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korthagen &amp; Vasalos (2005) [29]</td>
<td>Phase model of core reflection</td>
<td>Experience/problematic situation; awareness of ideal situation/awareness of limitations; awareness of core qualities; actualization of core qualities; experimenting with new behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorsen &amp; DeVore (2012) [31]</td>
<td>Developmental Continuum of Reflection-on/for-Action Rubric (DCRo/FA Rubric)</td>
<td>Analyzing teacher candidates' indicators of reflective thinking, reflective communication, and cognitive processes; reflective practices as continuum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alsina et al. (2017) [34]</td>
<td>The Rubric for Narrative Reflection Assessment (NARRA)</td>
<td>The academic or professionalizing experience, situation or activity, Ideas and prior beliefs, Inquiry and targeting, Transformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arranged by the article authors.
practice with the aim to help them to learn and reflect on their own practice. The second level is composed of the roles oriented towards the reflection on their own practice. At the third level, teacher educators’ roles are directed towards the implementation and improvement of reflective practice at the higher education institution. All these roles properly perceived and performed by teacher educators would significantly contribute to the development of pre-service teachers as reflective practitioners.

REFERENCES


