ABILITY OF THE PROJECT-BASED LEARNING APPROACH IN THE FINAL THESIS IN EDUCOLOGY STUDIES

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Abstract
The goal of the research was to analyse and define directions for improving the methodology for the final thesis in educology studies through examination of possibilities to apply the project-based learning approach as a method suitable for the development and explication of modern competencies of student teachers. A qualitative analysis was conducted using predefined criteria of the project-based learning approach. The research looked at evidence of project-based learning in final theses in the 1st cycle (BA) non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle (BA and MA) university studies in educology. A hypothesis was put forward that evidence of the application of the project-based learning approach can be found within the traditional framework of the final thesis in educology. The findings of the research revealed that this evidence is minimal both in non-university and university studies and that strategic decisions, at least at the institutional level, are required to ensure diversity of methodological approaches in the final thesis.

KEY WORDS: project-based learning approach, teacher training, competences.

Goal of the research: The goal of the research was to analyse and define directions for improving the methodology for the final thesis in educology studies through examination of possibilities to apply the project-based learning approach as a method suitable for the development and explication of modern competencies of student teachers.

Object of the research: Methodology for the final thesis in educology studies.

Methodology of the research: The methodology was based on an attempt to compare two methodological approaches and to suggest new possibilities of positioning these approaches at the stage of the final thesis in educology studies.

Method of the research: Qualitative research of final theses in non-university (BA) and university studies (BA and MA) in the field of educology.

Hypothesis formulated: A hypothesis was put forward that evidence of the application of the project-based learning approach can be found within the traditional framework of the final thesis in educology in non-university and university studies (BA and MA).

Methodology
The methodology of the present research consists of two parts: 1) The first part of the research covers development of criteria for a project-based learning/teaching (hereinafter referred to as “project-based learning”, or PBL) analysis on the basis of scientific literature, publications of individual universities, and didactic publications. The concept of PBL in the context of higher education of Lithuania was framed at this stage; 2) The second part of the research is devoted to a comparative analysis, in the context of the analysis criteria, of the final theses in the 1st cycle (Bachelor’s degree) non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle (Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree) university studies in educology. To this end, nine institutions providing educology studies were selected: three non-university and six university institutions (for an analysis of the 1st and 2nd study cycles). In total, 102 final theses have been analysed in this paper: 31 theses for the professional Bachelor’s degree (coded as PFBA, adding a running number and the year of the defence of the theses), 28 theses for the Bachelor of Arts degree (coded as BA, adding a running number and the year of the defence of the theses), and 43 theses for the Master of Arts degree (coded as MA, adding a running number and the year of the defence of the theses). The codes of the colleges are PFX, PFY, PFZ, and the codes of the universities are U1, U2, U3, U4, U5, U6.

Context of the Research
The Strategic Provisions for Development of Education maintain that the relationship between academic studies and practical training is insufficiently balanced, studies are too academic and oriented towards “pure/share science”, and the content of studies is insufficiently directed towards the fostering of
new skills and competencies, such as critical thinking, dealing with problems, and information literacy (Education Guidelines. Strategic Provisions for Development of Education in Lithuania for 2003-2012, p. 13). Hence, Lithuanian education policy documents emphasise the need to nourish and promote certain qualities in students, such as activeness, entrepreneurship, independence, ability to learn skills, critical thinking, and ability to raise and address problems (General Curriculum Framework for Primary and Basic Education (2009), A Review of Studies on the State of Education in the Light of the National Education Strategy for 2003-2012 and Recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development "), SAC, 2008). Such aspirations accord with the dimensions and goals of European education (The Bologna Declaration (1999)).

The project-based learning approach is especially suitable for purposeful, targeted and systematic pursuit of the said goals in the field of educology studies. So far, only fragmentary attempts to apply the principles of PBL for the preparation of the final theses have been observed in individual institutions of higher education. The possibility formally provided by institutions of higher education to their students to choose the form of the final thesis in the 1st cycle non-university and in the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology has been only a declarative aim since no guidelines for the preparation of the final theses using the PBL approach have been developed; project-based learning is often understood in a narrow sense, i.e. as an alternative – different – form of the final thesis.

An analysis of the PBL evolution has revealed that to date the history of the project-based methodology has been provided in a superficial and contradictory manner. Studies carried out so far (Knoll M., 1997) show that the “project”, as a method of institutional education, is not a result of the industrial and progressive education movement, which spread in America at the end of the 19th century – it is more likely to have developed out of the architecture and engineering education movement, which emerged in Italy at the end of the 16th century. The long historical evolution of the project-based method is divided into five stages: 1) 1590–1765 – the beginning of project-based activities in schools of architecture in Europe; 2) 1765–1880 – projects as an ordinary teaching/learning method and its establishment in America; 3) 1880–1915 – projects as a tool of professional training/learning and general education; 4) 1915–1965 – a shift of the concept of the project-based approach and return of the modified method back to Europe; 5) 1965–present days – revival of project-related ideas and the third wave of the international expansion of the method (especially to Northern and Central Europe). Projects rapidly spread from universities to basic schools as well as from Western Europe to the rest of the world.

The discovery that project-based learning started 300 years earlier than it has been traditionally assumed opens up new prospects for the interpretation of this approach. The development of the term “project” in a wider conceptual and historical context enables adding new aspects to its traditional interpretation, namely: emphasis is given to the creative side of PBL; project-based activity is no longer placed at the end of the teaching/learning process but moved to its centre. Knowledge is integrated into project-based activities instead of providing it to students in advance. Based on experimental methodology and ideas of constructivism, PBL is an effective and valuable tool both for the consolidation of a modern relationship between theory and practice and for the achievement of education policy objectives. Although the philosophy of pragmatism is sometimes viewed with scepticism and thought to never become an official philosophy of education in Lithuania (Duobliene L., 2006), this method has been acknowledged and productively applied in the country (Teresevičienė M., Adomaitienė J., 2000, Gražienė V., 2009 et al.). Reflecting the ideas of constructivism, the PBL approach poses a challenge to classical didactics and encourages positive changes in this field by going away from the behaviouristic standpoint that learners merely reproduce and copy knowledge and culture. The PBL approach empowers the learner’s ability of self-formation while reducing the impact of external factors on education.

An analysis of the PBL concept has revealed a variety of understandings. A project-based activity is understood as a philosophy or a didactic concept, as a teaching/learning method, as a tool for designing a curriculum, and as an instrument of reforms and changes. The analysis of various definitions of a project-based activity (Dewey J., 1996, Staerfeldt, E., Mathiasen, CH.R., 1999, Gibson I., 2005, Carroll C., 2005, Donnelly R., 2005, Barret T., 2005) has lead to a conclusion that project-based learning is both a specific learning technique and a wider education strategy.

Manifestation of project-based learning in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology in Lithuanian institutions of higher education can be analysed using the following criteria:
- philosophical criterion, which is evidenced as a certain learning/teaching strategy (the following aspects are assessed: formulation of objectives, presence of the implementation stage, problem analysis stage, result analysis stage, contextuality (reference to one’s own personal experience, elements of team work));
- methodological criterion, which is evidenced as a coherent combination of methodological provisions, goals and objectives, content, structure, context, process, methods, and conclusions of learning/teaching;
- systematic criterion, which reflects a coherent combination of structure and content;
- criterion of the positioning of the problem, which covers the functional characteristics of the problem;
- criterion of the positioning of empirical research, which covers theoretical contextualisation and variety of empirical research, reasoning, description of the process, design of the research, logic, etc.;
- criterion of the positioning of the development of general personal competences, which covers learners’ activeness and proactiveness, involvement, openness, tolerance to a different opinion/point of view, interest in lifelong learning, creativity, as well as elements of democratic cooperation, taking over responsibility, self-criticism, and skills of understanding goals and prospects of one’s activity.

RESEARCH:
ANALYSIS OF THE FINAL THESES IN THE 1ST CYCLE NON-UNIVERSITY AND THE 1ST AND 2ND CYCLE UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN EDUCOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF THE PROJECT-BASED LEARNING PARADIGM

The analysis of the final theses in educology using the first – philosophical – criterion has demonstrated that all theses contain the stages of the formulation and implementation of goals, problem analysis, and result analysis, which are regarded as necessary in various sources (methodological guidelines for the final theses, methodological guidance, etc.). Hence a hypothesis can be put forward that the final theses in educology studies were written following a specific strategy close to project-based learning. This hypothesis has been tested by analysing five Professional Education Standards and 102 final theses.

The predominant skill addressed in the Professional Education Standards is the ability to apply and use knowledge, methods, etc. For example, the objective formulated in the Primary Teacher Training Standard (2008) is to organise and carry out professional activity research (4.1.3, p. 10). The study objectives provided in the Art and Technology Teacher Training Standard (2008) are as follows: 1.2.2. To analyse pupils’ learning needs (p. 6); 3.1.1; To continuously analyse the process of education (p. 8). The Music Teacher Training Standard (2008) points out the following study goals: 2.3.3. To analyse advantages and drawbacks of the musical learning/teaching process; 3.1.3. To analyse ways and results of the dissemination of pedagogical know-how; 3.2.1. To apply theoretical knowledge in pedagogy and psychology in the practical teaching/learning process; 3.2.3. To address teaching/learning problems (p. 8). The objectives which are the most related to the solution of problems in a specific professional area are as follows: to address teaching/learning problems (Music Teacher Training Standard, p. 8) and to understand reflection, interpretation and adaptation of theoretical knowledge and practical experience (Pre-School and Pre-Primary Teacher Training Standard, p. 7). Accordingly, professional standards are descriptive from the point of view of the integrity of goal setting and problem analysis, i.e. goals are more targeted at declarative description of problems based on collection and analysis of source information and not at solving problems in a specific study area. In this respect, the final theses examined in this research only partially correspond to the Description of the First Cycle Study Results, which defines the knowledge acquired through the professional Bachelor’s degree and their application as follows: “Professional knowledge based on the latest achievements which provides the learner with practical understanding of the activity area and which the learner is able to apply in identifying and tackling complex specific or abstract problems in a specific activity area.” (Description of Study Cycles approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania in 2011).

The criteria to be used for the assessment of the final theses in the 1st cycle university studies in educology given in methodological sources are as follows: specification of the problem, justification of
the methodology (although in the explanations below this justification is attributed only to theses in the 2nd cycle studies), theoretical justification of the problem, structural and linguistic presentation of the thesis, structural coherence of the thesis from the point of view of the content, scope, etc., culture of writing, adherence to scientific ethics principles, analysis of empirical research data, summing up of the research, presentation and defence of the research, preparation of the thesis (U4, 2010, p. 9-10). The entirety of the criteria reflects the integrity of the final thesis because there is a balance between the criteria related to the theoretical part of the thesis and those related to the practical part. A more detailed analysis reveals a disproportion between the importance of theoretical and practical solutions of a problem. As many as two criteria out of eleven ones are intended for the positioning of the problem – specification of the research problem (No. 1) and theoretical justification of the problem (No. 3), both of which are related to the theoretical part of the thesis. Assessment indicators for the final theses are: substantiation of the problem relevance, analysis of the extent to which the problem has been researched, formulation of the problem question, complexity of the research problem, innovation, as well as correlation with the author’s study programme, exhaustiveness of the analysis, etc. (ibid), meanwhile the indicators used for the assessment of the research part are less numerous, e.g. connection of the conclusions with the problematic research issues (ibid). It is also maintained that “Papers in the field of social sciences are considered to have a certain structure which facilitates logical and consistent disclosure and discussion of a problem” (U1, 2005, p. 38). The following aspects are deemed to be the basic structural elements of papers in all study programmes: the research topic, goals and objectives, the object of the research, the problem addressed, the analytical-methodological part devoted to the analysis of sources, and the experimental-research part intended for the description of the research (ibid). However, characteristics of project-based learning, as a certain learning strategy, given in various sources are not sufficiently distinct because problem solutions are not targeted at an activity or a specific product. On the other hand, even in such a strict and universal structure of study papers there is room for alternative: “a specific paper design adapted for a particular topic may be selected in each individual case upon coordinating it with the study supervisor” (ibid). According to methodological sources, the mandatory structural parts of the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies in educology (which have not been recommended for the structure of the final theses in the 1st cycle university studies) include presentation of the research methodology, formulation of the research hypothesis, and presentation of the research stages (U4, p. 11-14). From the point of view of the integrity of goal setting and problem analysis, methodological guidelines are less descriptive than those for non-university studies, i.e. the goals are more targeted at solving problems in a specific study area. The common aspect with non-university studies is that the problem in the final theses in studies of both 1st and 2nd cycle is still posed at the level of theory.

Some of the final theses fail to aim at solving problems in their study areas because of the fact that the topics of the final theses chosen/proposed are too wide and too complicated for the students (such as analysis of the quality of the study programmes in a specific study field, attempts to develop a specific education model in the entire field, or analysis of possibilities and problems in the entire sector). Unfortunately, preference is usually given to the “widening” of the problem instead of in-depth analysis. However, the theses analysed also include papers devoted to topics of reasonable scope, e.g. analysis of a school case, one textbook, one lesson, specific skills of the pupils of a certain class, etc. (PFBA28/2010; PFBA17/2007. BA38/2011, BA39/2011, BA49/2010, BA53/2010 MA76/2008; MA77/2007; MA85/2010; MA89/2007). Also, there were also theses which did not address any problems in the study area at all. The goals of such papers are formulated as follows: to discuss the specific features of ……; to analyse the features of …… (BA92/2011, BA93/2011 MA91/2011). From the point of view of their goals, type, and methods, such theses remind more of term papers or library-research papers – only wider in scope, which do not pursue any problem solution (there were cases where no goals and objectives were formulated in the thesis) (e.g. BA95/2011, BA99/2011).

The same reason (breadth of the topic) determines selection of inadequate methods for the achievement of the goals. For instance, due to their complexity and amount, the methods applied in some theses (e.g. PFBA1/2011) are more similar to those used in the 3rd cycle studies (such examples include review and analysis of sources, content analysis, questionnaire, interview, analysis of statistical data, etc.)

Methods used to achieve and implement goals in the final theses in the 1st cycle of both non-university and university studies in educology are expected to be not only more adequate but also more diverse. Theoretical and empirical methods are more clearly delineated and varied in the 1st cycle university studies (methods employed to achieve goals are more varied than in non-university studies). The final
theses in the 1st cycle university studies demonstrate the use of standardised tests (such as J. Jirasek verbal
cognitive test; Controlled Drawing Observation (BA47/2010)); various methods of qualitative analysis
(such as observation of children, analysis of a child’s drawing (BA48/2010)); analysis based on role-
playing in simulation games (BA53/2010); conversation – interview with 12–15 year-old teenagers who
use computers (BA55/2011), etc. The empirical methods employed in the final theses in the 2nd cycle
university studies include SWOT analysis, experiment, observation of children, free essay on a particular
topic, etc. (MA45/2009; MA46/2008; MA79/2010).

A few theses in the 1st cycle university studies display an especially natural combination of the goal
setting and problem analysis components: “With a view to implement the goal of the thesis, first of all,
literature was collected and compiled. Later, the literature was selected, analysed and compared. Also, for
the same purpose, an in-depth interview was conducted with current adoptive parents and experts in this
area and a special programme was developed for the preparation of future adoptive parents for adoption.
Hence, this thesis was written using the method of comparative analysis of the literary sources compiled
and empirical research (in-depth interview) and the research results were processed employing the
method of qualitative content analysis. The thesis aimed to address the main problem: what are the
demands of adoptive parents for special programmes of preparation of future adoptive parents for
adoption?” (BA40/2008).

Manifestation of the comparative analysis criteria defined at the first stage of the research differs in
theses in non-university and university studies in educology: the recommendation for theses in the 1st
cycle non-university studies is to aim at diversity of ideas and actions and to provide for various ways for
their implementation, meanwhile students in the 1st cycle university studies are encouraged to display
originality of ideas and actions and divergent thinking. The aspirations of the final theses in the 2nd cycle
university studies include formulation of goals directed at solving complicated problems, provision of
their achievement and implementation methods contextualized in the scientific research environment,
apparent novelty of ideas and actions and divergent thinking, analysis of a wider or multi-disciplinary
context in the student’s study area. Although a few theses do exhibit a number of unconventional features
and aim at diversity of ideas and actions and divergent thinking, analysis of a wider or multi-disciplinary
field of pedagogic activity (BA48/2010, MA72/2009), the novelty of ideas and actions and divergent thinking is
still something to be desired. It should be noted that the final theses are assessed from the point of view of
“the novelty of the research problem and its connection to the thesis author’s study programme/branch”
(U4, 2010, p. 9-10); however, the novelty of ideas and actions and divergent thinking are not as obvious as
it has been expected. The prevailing feature of the theses analysed is theoretical justification and
discussion of problems (e.g. MA70/2011; MA60/2010; MA68/2011).

The analysis levels observed in the theses in non-university studies include declarative and summary
analyses as well as elements of evaluation analysis. Evaluation analysis is included, as required, only at
the end of the chapter of the theoretical part: “Summing up, it can be concluded that various learning
difficulties are usually determined by internal and external reasons, i.e. pupils’ personal qualities and
peculiarities of the learning/teaching process. A more detailed classification of learning difficulties, or
learning obstacles, distinguishes personal, practical, organisational and social factors which influence the
learning process” (PFBA4/2011, p.15).

The theses in the 1st cycle university studies in educology demonstrate all levels of analysis, namely,
declarative, concluding and evaluative levels. Evaluative analysis is used not only incidentally but also as
a systematic tool of a scientific paper, for example: “Analysis and comparison of the definitions of social
pedagogy and social work has demonstrated that both of these activities are intended to satisfy personal
needs and ensure well-being, only the social pedagogue focuses on the child’s well-being, meanwhile the
social worker – on work with different client groups. Social pedagogy and social work can be
differentiated taking into account that social pedagogy focus on education, its process, meanwhile social
work is treated as a professional activity aimed at planning, organising and providing social support to
clients. Social pedagogy and social work are centred around a specific person, cooperation with him/her,
his/her closest environment and the public, i.e. various support – collective work – is used to solve the
problem” (BA57/2011). Evaluative analysis, as a proof that graduates of study programmes are able to
interpret research data and relate it to the goals and conclusions, should be made more relevant in the final
theses in the 1st cycle university studies in educology.

The desired dominating level in theses in the 2nd cycle university studies is evaluative analysis which
is performed on different levels. For example, evaluative analysis often appears only at the end of a
chapter (like in theses in the 1st cycle university studies): “Contrary to the use of contraception, natural family planning (NFP) specialists have noticed improvement of the relationship between the couples using NFP (Kippley, 1999). Natural family planning teaches couples to treat each other with respect and love because it requires cooperation and active involvement of the husband, spouses have to learn abstinence and to express love in other ways. Although improvement of the relationship between spouses as a result of natural family planning has been observed in practice, it has not been proven in research. A couple of studies have been conducted but they are not sufficient because complex continued studies are required the results of which are not easy to interpret due to a number of factors (Skocovsky, 2008). Nevertheless, it is important to undertake research in Lithuania aimed at finding out what spouses learn using natural family planning” (MA60/2010, p. 6). There are many examples where evaluative analysis clearly dominates throughout the thesis. For instance: “Until 1995, the situation in Lithuania concerning the definition of developmental disorders and disabilities was very vague, with a large number of the names of disorders and undefined and ambiguous criteria used for the establishment of disorders and their groups. A positive step towards dealing with the confusion in the assessment and education of persons with special needs was the development of the Classification of Disorders (editor and team leader A. Bagdonas)” (MA86/2008, p.11).

As demonstrated, the aim in the 2nd cycle university studies in educology is to assess coherence between theoretical provisions and their practical manifestation. The assessment covers processes, their development and quality and is often contextualised in time and space (e.g. MA86/2008; MA61/2011). There was one thesis where Theoretical Discussion is presented as a separate structural part (MA79/2010). It can be maintained that there are more cases of dominating evaluative analysis in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies than in university studies of the 1st cycle. Still, no examples have been found where students attempt to challenge a theory or put forward their own alternative theoretical solutions.

The evaluative analysis criteria defined at the first stage of the research of the application of project-based learning in the final theses in educology manifest differently in the papers in non-university and university studies: problem solution perspectives provided for in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies can be twofold – in-depth and/or in-width, meanwhile the final theses in the 1st cycle university studies pursue both of the said perspectives. The final theses in 1st cycle non-university studies often contain “Recommendations” as a desired structural part of a graduation paper. Such recommendations can be considered as an effort to provide for problem solution perspectives. However, when a problem was only described instead of having been addressed, this is nothing more than an attempt.

“Recommendations” as a desired structural part are also observed in a number of the final theses in the 1st cycle university studies: “1. Aiming at adequate integration of civic education in primary schools, concepts of the homeland should be related not only to the place of living but also to historical events, works completed, national traditions, and cultural heritage; 2. When presenting historical events, objects and personalities to pupils, the teacher could use various measures to make the presentation more interesting, vivid and useful for the children, such as information technologies; 3. Aiming at more interesting presentation of folk art traditions in primary classes, efforts should be made to establish an art and technology room for all primary classes in a school. This would provide conditions for cherishing traditions of folk art in addition to the presentation of various techniques, modern devices and materials (...)” (p. 44) (BA49/2010). With respect to problem solution perspectives in the said thesis, it can be maintained that these solutions are hypothetical rather than definite because the problem was only described and not solved.

In-width perspectives in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies are evidenced in the formulation of recommendations at several levels – for state politicians, education managers, heads of institutions, teachers, and parents (e.g. MA46/2008). In-depth problem solution perspectives are directed towards potential ways to solve a problem other than those already tested (e.g. “Perhaps it could be possible to modify the entering system by both introducing assessment of average annual grades and examinations and organising an interview or a motivation assessment test. In this way the institution of higher education would select not only more able students but also those which are more motivated to work in the socio-education field” (MA46/2008, p. 83). The number of such perspectives formulated in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies is lower than it could be expected. In can be maintained that the importance of recommendations in the final theses should gradually go up until they occupy a
prominent place in a coherent system of theoretical assertions and practical solutions, which is typical of the project-based learning paradigm.

The final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies in educologoy were analysed according to the second – methodological – criterion, which defines project-based learning as a coherent combination of methodological provisions, goals and objectives, content, structure, context, process, and conclusions of learning/teaching and which is manifested as conformity between the identification of the problem and the design of the research; conformity between goals, objectives and analysed sources; variety of and consistency between methods; relationship between the theoretical part and the practical part; relationship between the problem and the outcome/result.

Methodological guidelines for the final theses indicate that “The problem of a research (in Bachelor degree theses, Master degree theses and non-degree graduation papers) is a question concerning the object of the research which is to be answered with that research. A problem is often posed in order to highlight contradictions in the development or structure of an education phenomenon being researched. The problem of a research outlines theoretical or practical aspects, specific features, relations, etc. which are of interest to the researcher and questions of scientific cognition to be answered. There may be different sources of education problems: problems which have not been dealt with due to various reasons or new problems; problems which emerged together with changes in social reality; theoretical and practical problems (the latter ones may be short-term, situational and may not even require a comprehensive scientific research); general educological and pertaining only to the specific feature of a partial object. Generally, the selection of a research problem depends on the creativity of the researcher. However, when choosing and formulating a problem, the researcher should avoid too general formulation of the problem and separation of the problem from the specifics of the object and should take due consideration of its type. The selected problem of the research should be educological and not, e.g. psychological or social. Also, the researcher should avoid selecting a problem which is scientifically or practically irrelevant or which is below his or her abilities.” (U4, 2010, p. 12).

The assessment indicators (related to the theoretical part) of the final theses are as follows: arguments given in support of the relevance of the problem, its novelty, relationship with the researcher’s study programme/its branch, comprehensiveness of problem analysis, adequacy of the theoretical justification of the problems, etc. (ibid); however, the assessment criteria for the research part are not related to the core essence of project-based learning which includes focus on practical solution of the problem and definition of the problem as a phenomenon which has to be addressed and thus requires appropriate actions. On the positive side, apart from theoretical problems, these guidelines also talk about practical problems and a possibility to tackle them with the help of research (although practical problems are considered as “not requiring exhaustive scientific research”, thus underestimating the importance of qualitative, empirical research). It should also be noted that these guidelines pursue conformity between the identification of the problem and the design of the research. The indicator for the assessment criterion “Summing-up of the research” for the final theses given in the guidelines is “validity of the research conclusions, connection to the problematic issues of the research” (ibid, p. 10).

The majority of the authors of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies analyse only sources and usually do not dare to take a closer look at unknown theories. As to the requirements for the theoretical part, guidelines for the writing and defence of the final theses refer only to source analysis (PFY college): “chapter(s) on the theoretical (analytical) part where an analysis of sources of scientific literature used in the final thesis/project is provided (p. 20–25); This part of the thesis should include a brief overview of scientific theories and works on the selected topic as well as present achievements, problems and their assessment. The theoretical (analytical) part shall end with a summing up” (Rules for Writing and Defending Final Theses/Projects in x Department of PFY college). Most of the authors of the final theses provide an explanation, planned in advance, of unknown terms, concepts, and theories related to their study area (all theses (6) of the students of PFX college contain a glossary of important terms, which is expected to broaden their knowledge of the terminology (e.g. “Adaptation – [lot. adaptation – adjustment, accommodation] – the ability of the organism to adapt to environmental conditions. (Andrašūniénė M, 2007, p. 8”)”). Cases have been identified when terms in glossaries are presented as unknown meanwhile they should have been already mastered during the studies.

Definition of a problem as a phenomenon which has to be discussed/analysed and thus requires foreseeing corresponding actions is one of the most important features of project-based learning. Guidelines for writing final theses prepared for the 1st cycle non-university studies in educologoy regard the problem as a synonym of the topic of the final thesis, e.g. “The Introduction shall explain why this
particular topic has been chosen and why it is relevant and present the research already done in that field. The Introduction shall present the problem, the goal of the paper and tasks for the achievement of this goal and introduce the research methods to be used” (ibid). Although the methodological guidelines do mention the formulation of the problem, later in the description of the structure of the final thesis, however, the theoretical part is understood as a source analysis and the problem is not defined as a phenomenon which has to be discussed/analysed and which requires corresponding actions. The definition of the problem as a phenomenon subject to analysis has been observed only in exceptional cases. One of such papers is PFBA20/2008, whose author states the following in the Introduction: “This work is the first attempt to provide a detailed description of EMO subculture in Lithuania discussing its structural background: circumstances of its emergence, features of the identity formed by the members of this subculture and the value system, characteristics of interaction with other subcultures and members of the society and family. Since no studies of EMO subculture in Lithuania have been conducted so far, I had to establish directions of the research and provide for its guidelines. This caused difficulties in collecting relevant material but at the same time the work was very interesting.” (p. 4). In addition, two more such theses were identified in the 1st cycle university studies which pose not only theoretical but also practical problems: “This paper aims at addressing the main problem: what are adoptive parents’ demands for special programmes of preparation of future adoptive parents for adoption? What special programme of preparation of adoptive parents could satisfy the needs of future adoptive parents?” (BA40/2008); “How to recognise temperaments of children of pre-school age and to individualise teachers’ work upon their recognition?” (BA48/2010). It should be noted that in latter two cases both the supervisors and the authors of the theses seem to have “crossed” the borders of the requirements set for the final theses. The final theses where the problem is defined as a phenomenon to be discussed/analysed are exceptional cases (only a few such papers were identified – MA73/2010, MA86/2008). Apart from theoretical questions, these theses also address practical issues: “To develop a strategic model of self-assessment of the quality of school activity and to have a look at possibilities and obstacles to implement and improve this model from the point of view of experts and heads of general education schools” (MA73/2010); “To develop a model of teaching/learning of pre-school children with complex disability” (MA86/2008).

The final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies display a number of variants, formulating either a problem or a problem and problematic issues, or only problematic issues. Most of the papers contain and focus on analysis of the extent to which the problem has been investigated so far. The formulation of the relevance of the problem/topic differs from university to university – it is defined as novelty, significance, practical or theoretical/practical applicability of the topic, etc. The final theses lack the following elements of quality indicators connected to problem raising and solving: goals directed towards solution of complicated problems; planned ways to achieve and implement these goals contextualised in examples of scientific research; twofold problem solution perspectives – in-depth and in-width; apparent novelty of ideas and actions; definition of the problem as a phenomenon to be addressed/investigated.

The criteria which closely relate to the methodological criterion, according to which project-based learning is aimed at a coherent combination of methodological provisions, goals and objectives, content, structure, context, process, methods, and conclusions are the criterion of problem positioning and the criterion of the positioning of empirical research;

The final theses in both cycles, university and non-university studies in educology have signs that their authors are interested in the topic being researched; they pose new questions; demonstrate critical thinking; look for personal development ways; try to understand the problem realistically – with their own past, present and future (although the dominating aspect in the papers is present; discoveries made in the past are ignored or, at best, the problem is contextualised in a 50 years’ period) and to propose innovative ideas aimed at tangible solution of the problem (although usually only one solution is proposed); desire to receive feedback concerning the problem; and develop problem solution skills. The aspect of present is no longer observed in the final theses of the 2nd cycle university studies as compared to the 1st cycle studies; students try to put forward innovative ideas aimed at realistic solution of the problems posed (with more than one solution presented); they are interested in the solution of the problems and seek feedback when the problem is further discussed as well as develop problem solution skills.

There are features in the final theses in both cycles in both university and non-university studies in educology that sources are analysed according to theoretical contextualisation of empirical research; that there is a variety of empirical research and that attempts are made to provide support to the research and appropriate description of the process, design and logic of the research, and adequate supplements to the
research; that the demand of the research is based on deliberate attempts to solve the problem and to find out or create something new – an idea, interpretation, or method; that theoretical and empirical research is naturally integral, with empirical-experimental methods (observation, interview, research of activity) occupying the dominating position; that the research results are applicable in the study area.

Features have been observed in the final theses in the 1st cycle university studies in educology which prove that their authors aim at providing a coherent combination of methodological provisions, goals and objectives, content, structure, context, process, methods, and conclusions. Also, there are fewer cases of failure to meet these features than in the final theses in non-university studies, however, there were theses where either the topic fails to correspond to the goals and objectives or the conclusions do not reflect the topic (e.g. BA55/2011). In the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies, there is less failure to conform to the above-said features than in the theses in the 1st cycle university studies, however, there were theses where either the topic fails to correspond to the goals and objectives or the conclusions do not reflect the topic (e.g. MA60/2010; MA68/2011).

Correspondence of goals, objectives or sources analysed has been found to be insufficient in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies in educology. The goals set in the papers are rather ambitious and identified with solution of the problems in the study area, however, the sources are either of fundamental type (e.g. course books on psychology, hodegetics, educology, didactics) or methodological-popular type (e.g. a press article on disobedient children), which do not reflect the students’ efforts to solve the problem on their own; the problem is only described; there are few references to foreign authors, documents, data bases, etc. The level of correspondence of goals, objectives or literary sources analysed in the final theses in the 1st cycle of university studies in educology is higher than in theses in non-university studies. The goals set in the papers are rather ambitious and identified with solution of the problems in the study area, and the sources are not only of fundamental type (e.g. course books on psychology, hodegetics, educology, didactics), there are more references to foreign authors and internet sources.

The level of correspondence of goals, objectives or literary sources analysed in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies in educology is higher than in the theses in the 1st cycle university studies, there are many more instances of the use and quotation of and references to foreign authors and internet sources as well as the use of sources in several foreign languages, legislation, studies, and research. A rather problematic issue in the 2nd cycle university studies concerns the sample, or amount of sources, which in the papers analysed varies from 40 to 146 (e.g. 113 (MA35/2010); 111 (MA42/2010); 110 (MA61/2011); 146 (MA44/2011). It can be assumed that an extremely large number of literary sources (more suitable to the 3rd cycle of the study system) has also been determined by the focus of the final theses on theoretical solution of the problem. A smaller number of references would enable the authors of final theses to pay attention to the practical positioning of the problem.

In the Analysis part of the final theses, the existing theoretical explanations have been noticed to receive very little criticism; only comparisons of sources on one and the same topic have been observed: “A comparison of the definitions of inappropriate behaviour given by all these authors enables formulating a short and clear definition. Inappropriate pupils’ behaviour is an aggressive, hostile and conscious action which prevents smooth activity.” (PFBA3/2010, p.12). Summing up of the theoretical part (or its individual chapters) is basically also rather mechanical. A number of cases have been observed when analysis of sources is understood as merging quotations without any comments: “Preparatory school education is started to be provided to the child when he/she turns six years old in that calendar year. Preparatory school education may be provided earlier at the child’s parent’s request when the child is sufficiently mature for such education. But not before he/she turns five years old. Such education may be started to be provided to the child when he/she turns six years old in that calendar year. Preparatory school education may be provided earlier at the child’s parent’s request when the child is sufficiently mature for such education.” (PFBA11/2010, p.10). In topic analyses, criticism of the existing explanations is more extensive in the final theses in university studies than in non-university studies, but it lacks depth; most often comparisons of sources on one and the same topic have been observed: “According to various authors, these two professions, which are one of the most important professions in the process of education, require that the activity is conducted in a qualitative manner.” (BA39/2011). The final theses in the 1st cycle university studies show clear indications of the students’ attempts to reason, interpret, compare, assess theories, ideas, approaches, provisions, processes, etc.: “Another motivational theory, which, in my opinion, deserves to be mentioned, is F. Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation. This
theory is based on an assumption of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in work. F. Herzberg called factors which can remove dissatisfaction in work hygiene factors and factors which can influence satisfaction – motivational factors.” (BA 54/2010); “Some authors (Ruškus, Mažeikis, 2007) consider the social participation paradigm as a positive alternative to the concept of social integration, noting that the latter has been vulgarized and has lost not only an operationalised and defined content but also its meaning. A different opinion concerning this issue is held by Ebersold (2009), who maintains that participation is not possible without integration and vice versa – there may be no integration without participation.” (BA40/2008).

Features have been observed in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies which prove that their authors aim at providing a coherent combination of methodological provisions, goals and objectives, content, structure, context, process, methods, and conclusions (PFBA17/2007; PFBA30/2010; PFBA20/2008, etc.). However, in very many cases the topic fails to correspond to the goals and objectives or the conclusions do not reflect the topic. For example, the goal stated in thesis PFBA3/2010 is poorly matched to the topic and objectives of the paper: “Goal of the thesis: To establish characteristics of teaching pupils with behaviour problems in the primary school. Objectives of the thesis: To disclose a conception and expression of problems related to the child’s inappropriate behaviour; to discuss reasons of pupils’ inappropriate behaviour; to consider ways of support for pupils with behaviour problems; to analyse teachers’ attitude to possibilities to teach primary school children with behaviour problems.” In thesis PFBA29/2008, the goal has little connection to the topic and objectives of the paper as well: “Goal: To analyse the importance of competencies provided in the Music Teacher Training Standard for the Basic School for the improvement of the musical training process. Objectives: To review characteristic features of the professional competencies of the music teacher. To evaluate the influence of the competencies and artistic self-expression of the music teacher on pupils’ musical training. To conduct a survey of the importance of the music teacher’s competencies in musical training, to sum up the survey results.”

The methodological criterion of project-based learning also covers suggesting innovative hypotheses in a particular study area. This characteristics is reflected in the theses (14 theses) of only one of the three colleges (PFY): “The hypothesis of the thesis: the social support provided to social risk families not always meets the needs of such families” (PFBA17/2007, p. 3). This feature is more evident in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies than in the 1st cycle university studies (in the latter ones, hypotheses were formulated only in 4 of 28 papers (14 per cent); no hypotheses were provided in the final theses of universities U1 and U5). Hypotheses are put forward or problematic issues are raised in the majority of the theses. It is likely that this happens as a result of the requirements given in relevant methodological guidelines, which clearly point out the need to formulate hypotheses in Master degree theses (e.g. U4, 2010, p. 12). There is a wider variety of innovative hypotheses and those of high quality. Hypotheses have been observed which remind more of archetype rules which merely have to be illustrated with a research (e.g. MA45/2009), as well as assumptions have been made attempting to connect theory with practice (e.g. “Hypothesis: Shortage of interest of the members of specific institutions of pre-school education in methods of work with hyperactive children limit rendering of teaching services, as described in methodological guidelines and provided for by the state, to hyperactive children of pre-school age.” (MA80/2010, p. 6). A general observation is that the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies lack more innovative formulation of assumptions. Having suggested hypotheses, the authors sometimes to go back to them in the Conclusions part and do not discuss how and to what extent the hypotheses were proven.

The highest importance in the project-based learning paradigm is assigned to empirical ethnographical methods, which enable unfolding the pedagogic reality in an objective, detailed and vivid manner. There are many signs in the final theses in the 1st cycle university studies indicating efforts to apply a variety of methods and to use both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The following qualitative methods may be mentioned: interview, observation, case study, content analysis, etc. (Nevertheless, there are theses where the research methods used are insufficiently varied and not focused on analysis of phenomena of the pedagogical reality, e.g. BA92/2011, BA93/2011; such theses remind more of term papers or library-research papers, only larger in scope).

Although the final theses in the 1st cycle university studies do display coherence of methods, however, in the absence of conscious understanding and targeted introduction of project-based learning provisions, manifestations of a variety of methods and coherence are only a partial reflection of this philosophy and
methodology. A number of methods are missing in the final theses, such as observation, brainstorming, mind mapping, SWOT analysis, etc.

There are many signs in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies indicating efforts to apply a variety of methods and to use both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The following qualitative methods used in the said theses may be mentioned: observation, interview, etc. (Nevertheless, there are theses where the research methods used are insufficiently varied and not focused on analysis of phenomena of the educational reality, e.g. MA91/2011). Although the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies do display coherence of methods, however, in the absence of conscious understanding and targeted introduction of project-based learning provisions, manifestations of a variety of methods and coherence are only a partial reflection of this philosophy and methodology.

The least number of signs of coherence in relation to the context and process have been observed in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies. There are only few cases of association of a process description with personal evaluation, identification of self-learning prospects (filling in knowledge gaps, checking whether the knowledge is sufficient), sharing of insights with a group, and reflection of the team-work process in a thesis – all of which can adequately reflect the project-based methodology. The most obvious manifestations of the coherence between the context and the process, on the one hand, and the remaining elements of the theses (methodological provisions, goals and objectives, content, structure, context, process, methods, conclusions), on the other hand, are elements of a reflexive text and meta-language. For example, “Accordingly, on the basis of an analysis of a questionnaire and interview with a social pedagogue and social worker, I studied the specific features of the work of these specialists when solving problems encountered by social risk families” (PFBA17/2007, p. 30). It should be noted that narrative of the “naive empty rhetoric” type is rather widely spread in the final theses analysed, for example, “Such behaviour is rather dangerous and our failure to take any measures would result in the absence of any order in the whole world, prevalence of children’s violence, and maybe even aggressive governing of the society.” (PFBA3/2010, p.12).

Also, a number of excellent examples have been observed when process descriptions are linked to personal evaluation (“Based on my own experience, I can maintain that...”, “In support of this, I could provide an example from my work...” (PFBA17/2007, p.31): “The first difficulty encountered in collecting the material for my thesis was uncertainty as to which category fan clubs should be attributed – youth subcultures or popular (mass) culture. This uncertainty was present throughout the thesis writing process. Consequently, the main problem of the research was formulated – relationship between mass and alternative cultures in the medium of fan clubs. Analysis of this problem facilitated a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of the culture of fan clubs.” (PFBA19/2008, p. 2). Contextuality (reference to personal experience, elements of team work, expression of personal point of view), which is typical of project-based learning, is more an exception than a rule. Only a few theses did contain references to the students’ own professional experience, for example, “I used to think that bad intonation, incorrect singing of notes is mainly related to differences in talent, hearing or lack of skills...” (PFBA28/2008, p. 31).

A number of examples have been observed in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies when the authors referred to their own emotional experience (although this cannot be matched to reflections on professional experience) or simply demonstrated their emotions. For instance, “We see that a family with healthy children will never encounter experiences of a family who has a disabled child. However, should a family with healthy children be only happy about their own health and close their eyes to what is happening in the hearts of people who are raising a child with a disability? Because no one is protected from injuries, accidents and blows of fate. Families with disabled children need help because they are unable to cope with all difficulties on their own. However, support is usually given to the child with a disability, meanwhile the family is forgotten.” (PFBA2/2009, p. 8). None of the theses analysed contain any manifestation of the elements of team work – all of them were prepared individually.

It has been observed that there are very few signs of coherence with respect to the context and process in the final theses in the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies. The most obvious manifestations of the coherence between the context and the process, on the one hand, and the remaining elements of the theses, on the other hand, are elements of a reflexive text and meta-language (which are more apparent in non-university studies theses than in the theses in the 1st cycle university studies). For instance, there are certain reflections of the association of process descriptions with personal evaluations: “It is obvious that everything gets connected in an analysis of a poetic text, every word or sentence has a meaning which must be revealed and understood in a certain context. Poetry is like a flow of speaking, with endless
communication and search of meanings and answers to the questions of the being. The present paper holds an opinion that poetry texts not only reflect their general norms but also rise above these norms in search of individuality.” (BA102/2011).

Contextuality (reference to personal experience, expression of a personal point of view), which is typical of project-based learning, is given a high priority in methodological guidelines, for instance, “the purpose of the theoretical part of the paper is to provide methodological background to the problem under analysis, to understand the extent to which the problem has been investigated, to present one’s own point of view, and to look at the social, historical or cultural context of the problem” (U4, p. 14). However, such contextualization in the final theses is more an exception than a rule.

For instance, there are certain reflections of the linkage between a process description and personal evaluation: “All interviewees unanimously agree that intercultural education is merely mentioned in formal education. In formal education, intercultural education is integrated in various lessons, for example, in the civic education lesson, extracurricular activities, etc. However, there is no such programme as intercultural education, so education is provided in an informal manner. The absence of ready programmes gives grounds for interpretation, which is not good. Educators who hold different views may provide the notion of intercultural education differently hence it may be understood in a wrong way. Although no party can be blamed for that, in the opinion of both the authors and respondents B and C, this problem would be solved if an official intercultural education programme were developed” (MA71/2009, p. 54). The use of meta-language in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies is more effective and frequent than in the theses in the 1st cycle university studies (e.g. “Thus, after having reviewed the main elements of legal education, possibilities of the development of legal education will be discussed in more detail.” (MA41/2008, p. 2)). References to personal emotional experience or simple demonstration of emotions are less numerous in the final theses in the 2nd cycle university studies than in the theses in the 1st cycle university studies and even less frequent than in the theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies. None of the theses analysed contain any manifestation of the elements of team work – all of them were prepared individually.

It can be maintained that although the final theses in non-university studies do contain certain manifestations/elements of contextuality, contextuality is insufficiently holistic. The criterion which is closely related to these issues is the fifth criterion of the positioning of the development of general personal competences, which reflects the features characteristic to project-based learning: the author’s activeness and proactiveness, involvement, openness, tolerance to a different opinion/point of view, interest in lifelong learning, creativity, as well as elements of democratic cooperation, taking over responsibility, self-criticism, and skills of understanding the goals and prospects of one’s activity.

The final theses have been analysed using the third criterion – systematic criterion, which reflects consistency and targeted development of work and manifests itself in a coherent combination of the structure and content and may be analysed in the following four aspects: sufficiency of coherence between the theses structure, problem solution and activity; observance of the order of priority of problem solution stages, adherence to the logic of the learning/teaching strategy (goal – achievement process – results); reflection of a balanced relationship between theory and practice; correspondence of specific competencies to professional Bachelor’s degree qualification.

From the aspect of the sufficiency of coherence between the final theses structure, problem solution and activity, the guidelines for the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies in educology view the problem only as a synonym of the topic of the final thesis. For instance, “The topic of the final thesis/project shall reflect teacher’s activity areas, competencies and relevant timely issues in various child’s/teenager’s life areas (…) in the institution (preference is given to integrated topics). The topic should also be suitable to perform comprehensive analysis and provide independent solutions or recommendations on the basis of the knowledge, skills and professional competencies gained during the studies.” (Rules for Writing and Defending Final Theses/Projects in x Department of PFY college). It is emphasized here that the topic should reflect activity areas and relevant timely issues, however, nothing is said about substantial and targeted impact on the study area problems.

The logic is maintained from the aspect of the observance of the order of priority of problem solution stages and adherence to the logic of the learning/teaching strategy (goal – achievement process – results); however, since the problem in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies is usually identified with the topic of the final thesis and theoretical definition of the topic, this logic cannot be regarded as fully reflecting the logic of project-based learning; when the goal achievement process is only descriptive, the results will also be descriptive.
The aspect of the reflection of a balanced relationship between theory and practice is very important in the project-based learning paradigm (where the focus is placed on practical solutions and theory is not the dominating element). Research, as a mandatory structural part of final theses, was carried out, analysed and described in all final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies in educology analysed during this research. As already mentioned, the problem is identified with the topic, which has a descriptive nature, therefore the mere fact of the performance of a research in this case does not prove that the final theses are attributable to the project-learning paradigm. The practical part is often only an illustration of the theoretical part and their relationship is one-sided – theory stands higher than the practical part in the hierarchical system. When defending his/her thesis, the graduate demonstrates the following skills: “(…) the skill to support empirical observations with theoretical arguments” (Rules for Writing and Defending Final Theses/Projects in x Department of PFY college). Two-sided coherence between the theoretical part and the practical part has been observed only in a few theses in non-university studies, e.g. in PFBA11/2010.

An analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university studies from the aspect of the correspondence of specific competencies to professional Bachelor’s degree qualification has demonstrated that from the point of view of the width and formulation of topics, complexity and number of methods, and amount of research the theses sometimes remind of the results of the 1st or even 2nd university cycle programmes in educology. Some final theses do not pursue solution of problems in their study area because the topics chosen/proposed are too wide. For instance, students attempt to analyse either all competencies of their professional area or all participants of the pedagogical relationship – teachers, parents, children, etc. (PFBA4/2011; PFBA2/2009; PFBA5/2008; PFBA29/2008).

From the aspect of the sufficiency of coherence between the final theses structure, problem solution and activity, the guidelines for the final theses in the 1st and 2nd cycle university study programmes in educology do provide a possibility to pursue practical problem solutions, however, such tradition has not been established in practice so far.

The logic is maintained from the aspect of the observance of the order of priority of problem solution stages and adherence to the logic of the learning/teaching strategy (goal – achievement process – results); however, since the problem in the final theses in the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies is usually identified with the topic of the final thesis and theoretical definition of the topic, this logic cannot be regarded as fully reflecting the logic of project-based learning.

An analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle university study programmes from the aspect of the correspondence of specific competencies to professional Bachelor’s degree qualification has demonstrated that from the point of view of the width and formulation of topics and amount of research the theses sometimes remind of the results of the 2nd university cycle programmes. The final theses have also been analysed from the aspect of the reflection of a balanced relationship between theory and practice, which is very important in the project-based learning paradigm (where the focus is placed on practical solutions and theory is not the dominating element). Two-sided coherence between the theoretical part and the practical part has been observed only in a few theses in the 1st cycle university studies (e.g. BA38/2011, BA39/2011, BA48/2010, BA49/2010, BA53/2010) and in the 2nd cycle university studies (e.g. MA42/2010; MA46/2008/MA86/2008).

As already mentioned above, research, as a mandatory structural part of final theses, was carried out, analysed and described in all final theses in the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies analysed in this paper. The problem is identified with the topic and its theoretical analysis, therefore the mere fact of the performance of a research in this case does not prove that the final theses are attributable to the project-learning paradigm. The practical part is often only an illustration of the theoretical part and their relationship is one-sided – the theory in the hierarchical system stands higher than the practical part.

Conclusions

1. The analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology according to the first – philosophical – criterion, which defines project-based learning as a certain learning/teaching strategy which embraces formulation of goals, presence of the goal implementation stage, problem analysis stage, and the result analysis stage, did not confirm the hypothesis that the final theses were written following a specific strategy close to project-based learning.
2. The analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology according to the second – methodological – criterion, which defines project-based learning as a coherent combination of methodological provisions, goals and objectives, content, structure, context, process, methods, and conclusions of learning/teaching and is manifested as conformity between the identification of the problem and the design of the research; conformity between goals, objectives and analysed sources; variety of and consistency between methods; relationship between the theoretical part and the practical part; relationship between the problem and the outcome/result, has demonstrated that the methodological coherence is insufficient to be able to attribute the theses analysed to the project-based learning paradigm.

3. Manifestation of the criterion of the positioning of the problem and the criterion of the positioning of empirical research is far from the project-based learning paradigm. Only partial practical manifestation of the criterion of the positioning of the development of general personal competencies has been observed in the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology.

4. The analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology according to the third – systematic – criterion, which reflects consistency and targeted development of work and manifests itself as a coherent combination of the structure and content and may be analysed in the following four aspects: sufficiency of coherence between the thesis structure, problem solution and activity; observance of the order of priority of problem solution stages, adherence to the logic of the learning/teaching strategy (goal – achievement process – results); reflection of a balanced relationship between theory and practice; correspondence of specific competencies to professional Bachelor’s degree qualification, has demonstrated that the systematic criterion has been insufficiently manifested in the final theses analysed and may not be used to attribute the theses to the project-based learning paradigm.

5. The analysis of the manifestation of the predefined project-based learning criteria in the final theses in non-university and university studies in educology has demonstrated different levels of the manifestation of the philosophy, methodology and methods of project-based learning in the theses in colleges (PFX, PFY, PFZ) and universities (U1, U2, U3, U4, U5, U6): manifestation is more obvious in non-university studies than in university studies.

6. An analysis of the manifestation of the predefined project-based learning criteria in the final theses in university studies in educology has demonstrated that the manifestation of the philosophy, methodology and methods of project-based learning in the theses in the 1st and 2nd cycle university (U1, U2, U3, U4, U5, U6) is more similar than different.

7. The analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology has demonstrated that the manifestation of the predefined project-based learning criteria in the final theses of individual universities (U1, U2, U3, U4, U5, U6) have more features of universality than individuality.

8. An analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university study programmes in educology has demonstrated that the manifestation of the predefined project-based learning criteria in the final theses in individual study programmes have more features of universality than individuality.

9. The analysis of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology has demonstrated that the manifestation of the predefined project-based learning criteria in the final theses of individual universities (U1, U2, U3, U4, U5, U6) depends not only on the tradition of the writing of final theses but also on supervisors’ conscious motivation to apply the philosophy, methodology and methods of project-based learning to a wider extent.

10. The analysis has demonstrated only minimum correspondence of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology to the project-based learning paradigm; the final theses are based on the continental tradition where theory is a more important element than practice. Such point of view does not encourage directing students to take divergent actions.

11. Correspondence of the final theses in the 1st cycle non-university and the 1st and 2nd cycle university studies in educology to the project-based learning paradigm has development potential because elements of the relevant features of the PBL paradigm have been both found in methodological guidelines for the final theses and evidenced in a number of the final theses.

12. Institutions of higher education could update their methodological requirements for the final theses providing space for an alternative method – project-based learning.
13. General guidelines for the final theses encompassing the PBL approach would provide for conditions for updating the methodological requirements for the final theses in institutions of higher education and facilitate implementation of an alternative methodology and methods in addition to the traditional ones.

14. Introduction of the philosophy, methodology and methods of project-based learning would provide for conditions for institutions of higher education to focus on graduates’ competencies (and not only to knowledge and skills).

15. Introduction of the philosophy, methodology and methods of project-based learning would provide for conditions for institutions of higher education to focus on the reality of educological phenomena in the professional – teacher’s – activity field deeper and in a more practical manner.

16. Introduction of the philosophy, methodology and methods of project-based learning would provide for conditions for institutions of higher education to better observe the requirements of the Description of Study Degrees (Description of Study Degrees approved by Order No. V-2212 of the Minister of Education and Science of 21 November 2011).

References

7. Description of Study Degrees (21 11 2011) [Description of Study Degrees approved by Order No. V-2212 of the Minister of Education and Science of 21 November 2011].
Tyrimo tikslas buvo ištirti ir apibūdinti neuniversitetinių ir universitetinių I-os ir II-os pakopos edukologijos studijų baigiamųjų darbų tobulimo kryptis, remiantis kokybiniu baigiamųjų darbų ir kitų šaltinių (metodinių rekomendacijų, metodologiškų darbams rengtų, profesijos standartų) tyrimu. Tyrimo metu pagal išskirtus kriterijus buvo analizuojama projektinio mokymo(-si) filosofijos, metodologijos ir metodikos raiška. Tyrimo metodologija buvo grindžiama tradicinės ir alternatyvios – projektinės – paradigmų lyginimu. Straipsnyje analizuojama projektinio mokymo(-si) filosofijos, metodologijos ir metodikos raiška neuniversitetinių ir universitetinių I-os ir II-os pakopos edukologijos studijų baigiamuojuose darbuose. Keita hipotezė, kad neuniversitetinių ir universitetinių I-os ir II-os pakopos edukologijos studijų baigiamuojuose darbuose galima aptikti projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmos požymiai ir raiškę įrodymų; jog baigiamieji darbai sukurti, vadovaujant specifine strategijai, artima projektiniam mokymui(si), nepasitvirtino. Tyrimo duomenys leidžia teigti, kad neuniversitetinių ir universitetinių I ir II pakopos edukologijos studijų programų baigiamųjų darbų atitikties projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmai turi potencialios plėtros galimybių, nes atitinkamų projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmos bruožų elementų aptinkama ir metodiniuose patarimuose patariama. Tyrimo duomenys leidžia teigti, kad neuniversitetinių ir universitetinių I ir II pakopos edukologijos studijų programų baigiamųjų darbų atitikties projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmai turi potencialios plėtros galimybių, nes atitinkamų projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmos bruožų elementų aptinkama ir metodiniuose patarimuose patariama. Tyrimo duomenys leidžia teigti, kad neuniversitetinių ir universitetinių I ir II pakopos edukologijos studijų programų baigiamųjų darbų atitikties projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmai turi potencialios plėtros galimybių, nes atitinkamų projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmos bruožų elementų aptinkama ir metodiniuose patarimuose patariama. Tyrimo duomenys leidžia teigti, kad neuniversitetinių ir universitetinių I ir II pakopos edukologijos studijų programų baigiamųjų darbų atitikties projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmai turi potencialios plėtros galimybių, nes atitinkamų projektinio mokymo(-si) paradigmos bruožų elementų aptinkama ir metodiniuose patarimuose patariama.