

# Pre-service teacher training

## How to prepare upcoming teachers for the future

by Ana Moreno Salvo

### INTERVIEW WITH JOAN-ANTON SÁNCHEZ VALERO

He holds a PhD in Education and is director of the Department of Didactics and Educational Organisation at the University of Barcelona (UB). He coordinated the programme "Propuesta interuniversitaria de formación inicial de maestros en tecnologías digitales". He has served as president of the Asociación Espiral, Educación y Tecnología. He is the author of more than 60 scholarly publications, the most cited article being "Fomentando la competencia digital docente en la universidad: Percepción de estudiantes y docentes", published in the "Revista de Investigación Educativa".

**T**he other day I was reading an advertisement for a university offering a two-year teaching degree for undergraduates. From the standpoint of an expert in pre-service training, what does this proposal suggest to you?

On this point I will be categorical: I believe that two years are absolutely insufficient for pre-service teacher training, even if they have degrees in other fields. Another issue is the training of secondary school teachers, where it is best if they receive simultaneous training in pedagogy and their field of specialisation, although doing it sequentially is also fine. In this vein, I agreed with the document prepared in 2017 within of the Programme for Improvement and Innovation in Teacher Education

(DOCSMIF4) in which a 3+1+1+1 model was proposed; that is, 5 years of pre-service training with a total of 900 ECTS: a three-year Bachelor's in Education, the first with core courses and the next two with a specialisation: early childhood, primary and secondary; a post-graduate specialisation degree in Education; and a master's degree consisting of a one-year resident internship. In this proposal, connections were designed that would allow students to shift between stages as long as they were trained in the 3+1+1+1 model. Also, only for secondary education, non-education graduates were allowed in the Postgraduate Education Programme, provided that they had taken 30 ECTS of complementary training during or after their degree. For baccalaureate teachers, this

additional training would not be necessary.

**For some time now, education has been plunged in a crisis regarding the professional competencies that a good teacher should have. Could you specify the most important ones for now and for the future?**

Joan Corbalan says that training people was a priority for the Republic. Along these lines, I believe that a good teacher must be able to: a) train citizens capable of decoding

**The most important skills for teachers: digital, diversity and classroom management**



and re-signifying information and transforming it into knowledge, and b) develop student-centred ways of teaching and learning based on the collaborative and shared construction of knowledge.

At a specific level, some of the most important competencies for teachers include those related to emotions, digital teaching competency, diversity and classroom management. But in a few years I have no doubt that we will be talking about others.

**Today there are many different ideas about educational quality. There is a lot of talk about evidence-based learning, as well as the importance of UDL (Universal Design for Learning), active methodologies, the “flipped**

**classroom”, gamification, project-based learning, etc. How can all this be combined in pre-service training? What are the essential lessons in this regard?**

Sometimes there is a kind of fixation on one methodology or another. I believe that what is important is not what methodology we train future teachers in or what methodology the teacher should use. What is essential is to reflect on the most appropriate methodologies to meet the challenges we are facing, both for each educational context or situation and in relation to the overall challenges we face as educators, which I raised in the second question.

In the case of educational technologies, which is my field, no tools are better than others. There are ways of using them that only

replace the analogue ones, add little or no value to the technology and do not generate methodological changes, along with other ways that allow for a significant redesign of learning activities or a methodological change (SAMR). We need to focus our training and educational practice on these latter ways of using technology, not on the tools themselves.

**Many people say that the key to education today is lifelong learning. What do you think the pre-service training of a teacher who has to teach their students that learning never ends should be like?**

This is a crucial question. When I was the graduation sponsor of a graduating class of teachers, I told them that if I had to choose one wish

for their future, I would only want them to think about what it means to teach and learn at each stage in their careers, because their answer at each one will probably be different than their answer today. It involves keeping abreast of trends and changes in education, among other things. That's difficult to do when teachers have little time and space for reflection on their practice.

In the field of digital technologies, students are very focused on knowing and mastering all the existing tools, when most of them will be obsolete or no longer exist a few years into their teaching career. My task is to make them competent in acquiring more transversal skills that allow them to interact with emerging technologies and use them to modify and redefine the educational processes, as I mentioned in the third question.

**When teachers land in a school after university training, do you think they are prepared to face a classroom? If not, what could schools do to support them as they get started?**

In the second question, I said that two of the most important specific competencies for future teachers were attention to diversity and classroom management. One way to address these issues would be to establish the figure of the university professor working in education, which today only exists in the field of medicine. In this way, we would have teachers who could improve the connections between the university

**We must be competent in learning about emerging educational technology and in redefining educational processes**

and schools, especially with future teachers' internships.

Currently, the figure of associate professor already exists. It was created so that professionals in the field can contribute to university education. But it is particularly difficult for teachers to combine these two functions due scheduling conflicts. The creation of this figure would make it possible for current teachers who have the appropriate training to also become per-service teacher trainers at the university.

**Lately, there has been a lot of talk about the importance of family-school collaboration in high quality education. Some schools have begun to set up family-teacher meetings to provide personalised follow-up for each student and optimise teamwork between both parties. Do you think that teachers are prepared to provide this type of support? What training would be the most appropriate from your standpoint?**

Family-teacher meetings to personally monitor each student and work together are nothing new and are quite common, but it's true that the family-school relationship is increasingly complex, especially because we are immersed in a changing and diverse society. This is why it is necessary to deepen future teachers' training in this, which right now is quite residual in their training.

Leaving aside theoretical-reflective training, which is always necessary in any kind of pre-service teacher training, it could be approached through simulation, which has long been used in medical training. This would consist of teachers, students or actors hired for the part simulating teacher-family meetings where they would have to deal with situations they may encounter when they have to follow up and support the students' processes with their families. There are experiments underway with the use of simulation

**Simulation is useful in the practical training of teaching skills**

in education, but they are still very incipient.

**Anything else you would like to add?**

I would like to make two brief final comments: first, pre-service teacher training, unlike secondary teacher training, must be focused solely on pedagogical aspects, and linguistic, mathematical, scientific and other competencies cannot be addressed in the degree but should be a prerequisite for admission.

The second is that it is necessary to further interdisciplinarity and move away from subject-based compartmentalisation. The latest draft of the Ministry of Universities regarding teaching degrees, dated 2023 and currently stalled, includes an interdisciplinary project of the subjects of each semester to be carried out by the entire teaching staff. This initiative is still insufficient, but it is an interesting and feasible starting point.

