Giving Reading, Thinking and Studying Back to Initial Teacher Education

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When the present and the future of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes are discussed, the focus is often on how to relate university lectures to the real practice of teaching, on how to create a more practical and useful environment of learning in ITE. This chapter¹ takes a theoretical approach which considers that (1) everything able to improve ourselves and our practice is useful (Ordine, 2013); (2) study practices define university life for both students and professors and their future (Biesta, 2017; Ingold, 2017); and (3) ITE programmes should provide the time and space to develop the necessary virtues to address the moral density and social responsibility that teaching implies as a professional activity. This chapter presents a university teaching experience within an ITE programme that put to work precisely this theoretical approach.

—— **Keywords:**
initial teacher education
reading seminars
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practices of study
thinking skills

¹ This work has been done as part of two larger teaching innovation projects at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (#PIMeFIM: FPE_017.18_INN and FPYE_010.19_IMP).

Introduction

Since the Bologna Process in the early 2000s, many changes have taken place in European universities, but particularly with regard to learning and teaching. Research on perceptions throughout European universities on this matter shows that "in the area of learning and teaching, there is evidence of many initiatives to increase and widen participation, provide students with opportunities to develop transferable skills through community engagement and to include external stakeholders in core institutional activities" (Sursock, 2015, p. 10). When institutions were asked, most stated that introducing new ways of teaching was important to them. They were also willing to develop new methodologies and activities to create a suitable environment for more active learning. However, many institutions confessed that the implementation of the Bologna Process was taking place without radical ways to improve how curricula and examinations were developed (ibidem, p. 13), concluding that this was an area that still needed some work. This rapid sketch of the European framework coincides with the situation of Faculties of Education in Spain, where they, following the Bologna Process, have happily and rather uncritically shifted from students working individually to working in a team, from lectures to students' presentations, from exams to applied tasks, and from a professor who was a "sage on the stage" to one who is "a guide on the side" (Biesta, 2017). These changes brought some positive elements to university students' academic experiences, such as the ability to co-operate with others, the improvement of oral communication skills, and getting in touch with educational realities through applied research and actual teaching practice. However, while doing this, and this is the argument we want to defend here, Faculties of Education might be forgetting an important feature of university studies: the intellectual formation of student teachers. While being technically and socially trained through the celebrated set of soft skills, they have misguidedly decreased the intellectual education that allows student teachers to judge and to act professionally and critically rather than just efficiently.

The transition of Spanish ITE programmes into the European Higher Education Area ten years ago² activated, among many other things, the search for new ways to broaden student participation in one particular module while making sure intellectual training and critical reasoning were not cramped or narrowed along the way, trying instead to ensure that each activity was backed by a comprehensive training purpose.

Breaking the common structure of 60 students per class was one of the first and more visible changes. Instead of trying to juggle theory and practice, teaching and participation, lecturing and teamwork all at the same time, different teaching methodologies, learning spaces, and student participation levels were distributed in different in-class sessions and devoted to work through different module contents. The main pedagogical principle was that the method of knowing an object is imposed by the object, and our object is to learn the foundations of education in the course called "Values Education: Equality and Citizenship".

Thus, it was proposed to divide the mandatory in-class sessions of the module into two main activities: lectures and reading seminars. Lectures were held in a large room with all the students together. During these sessions, students were expected to actively listen and take handwritten notes, punctuated with Socratic question-answer moments. Every week there was a two-hour lecture session. Reading seminars took place once per week in smaller groups of only 15 to 20 students, each lasting for one hour. The groups discussed selected readings on the philosophical and pedagogical ideas of the texts with their module leaders. The purpose of creating small groups was to encourage student participation and engagement with the course contents by creating a closer sense of community of inquiry. Moreover, students were allowed to choose from four different assessment systems. Each student was able to choose their own best way to demonstrate what they had learnt in the final exam.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain what we like to call a pedagogically conservative yet innovative university study experience that has been promoted for the past two academic years at the Faculty

2 To have a clearer understanding about the changes this transition provoked in ITE programmes and where Spanish universities are at now, see Manso (2019).

of Teacher Training and Education at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain). It is pedagogically conservative because it aims to reintroduce thinking, reading and writing practices in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). It is an innovative university study experience because ITE students have fewer and fewer opportunities for careful reading, attentive listening, and well-argued conversations in today's mainstream higher education methodological approaches. Thus, what some time ago was seen as "old-fashioned" can today be presented as an actual innovation that breaks the general rule, that changes present landscapes. Specifically, this experience seeks to enrich the university experience of student teachers who enrolled in a course called "Values Education: Equality and Citizenship" in a four-year university ITE programme. A total number of 233 students in the academic year 2018–2019 and 150 students in the academic year 2019–2020 took part in the experiment.

The chapter presents and discusses the reasons to support this pedagogically conservative university innovation as well as the main elements of this pilot experience. Some final conclusions are also presented as a result of this experiment in the framework of teaching and learning during university ITE courses.

Reasons for rethinking ITE programmes

When the present and the future of ITE programmes are discussed, the focus is often on how to relate university lectures to the real practice of teaching, how to create a more practical and useful environment of learning in ITE, or how to be sure that we are assessing the impact of teacher education to improve the self-efficacy of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017; Burn & Mutton, 2015).

Nowadays it is also crucial to understand the evidence in favour of teaching one way or another. Evidence-based policies and practices are increasingly not seen as a toolkit to use when needed, but as the main step to improving teaching practices, the teacher's professional development and teacher education (Thoilliez, 2018). There are even publications from Eurydice (2017) that describe the mechanisms and practices that support evidence-based policy-making in the education sector in Europe.

In contrast to this trend are other voices that want to raise the importance of the teachers' own experiences and practices

as professional knowledge, giving a secondary role to what papers, articles, research, statistics or experts can say (Popp & Goldman, 2016; Battersby & Verdi, 2015; Hökkä, Vähäsantanen & Mahlakaarto, 2017; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). Advocates of this approach see evidence-based policies as a threat to their autonomy and as an affront to their professionalism. Therefore, for them, the main step towards improving the teaching profession would instead be to create more professional learning communities of teachers in order for them to share their professional knowledge based on their teaching experiences. This way, by sharing specific examples of discouragement, anxiety, success or failure, they can help each other to undertake new and better practices in the future.

The perspective offered here is also opposed to the imperative of evidence-based education by arguing that reading, thinking, and studying are the core foundations of teacher education, but without diminishing the relevant part that evidence, methodologies, strategies, and all the didactics can have for the teaching profession. The main thesis is that universities' classic pedagogical activities (reading, studying, thinking, and writing) are still (perhaps more than ever) highly relevant for the growth of a university student, and therefore also for an ITE university student.

Hence, the theoretical approach taken here considers that (1) everything that improves ourselves and our practice is useful (Ordine, 2013); (2) study practices define university life for both students and professors and their future (Biesta, 2017; Ingold, 2017); (3) ITE provides both the time and space to develop the necessary virtues to address the moral density and social responsibility that teaching implies as a professional activity; (4) nowadays there is a lack of pedagogical foundations in the discussions regarding ITE (Biesta, 2017; Thoilliez, 2019); and (5) the teacher needs to engage in critical thinking and authentic choices instead of uncritically accepting a ready-made, standardised scheme (Greene, 1973; Kohli, 2016).

Unlike other explicit theoretical perspectives on the importance of theory or reading in teacher education, a fundamental aspect here is to use lectures and reading seminars to show the students the *usefulness* of the ideas under discussion for the education practice. Lectures and readings offer new horizons, new moral imaginations,

orientations and reasons to improve their pedagogical judgement and thus their teaching practice throughout their career.

The experience we designed to address the needs of ITE at our university is based on the latest data available from the European Commission and Eurydice (2013) to portray the current highlights in ITE in Europe and in Spain. The resulting overview provides a wider understanding of the challenges at both the local and global level:

1. Across Europe, the prevailing qualification for schoolteachers is the bachelor's degree, except for upper secondary teachers, who in most countries are required to have a Master's degree.
2. Spain uses the concurrent model in ITE. This means that the professional component (which provides prospective teachers with both the theoretical and practical skills needed for teaching and includes in-class placements) may be provided at the same time as the general component (which refers to general education courses and mastery of the subject(s) that candidates will teach when qualified). In Spain, over the 4-year degree, students must go to school placements for 700 hours between the second and the fourth year of ITE. However, in the first year, they only have to follow the course, which provides an important factor to consider in our pilot study of a course in the first year of ITE.
3. Within the programmes for pre-primary and primary teachers, specific professional teacher training (which includes theoretical and practical parts and is distinct from education in a particular subject matter) amounts to approximately a third of the whole course load in most countries. In most countries, the minimum requirement for professional training for future pre-primary teachers amounts to at least 25% of the whole programme. The amount of professional training is particularly high in Spain (87.5%). Puzzling in that regard in comparison with secondary teachers in Spain is the fact that secondary student teachers have only 20% of their professional training as part of their Master's degree, in contrast to the 85% that pre-primary and primary student teachers have. This vast difference between them is remarkable and surprising, especially in light of two factors: (i) that secondary student teachers already hold a bachelor's degree in their specific subject; and

- (ii) that pre-primary and primary student teachers do not need to do a Master's degree before entering the teaching profession. The fact that practical training is longer for teachers of lower levels of education is a trend in Europe but is especially pronounced in Spain, where it is symptomatic of the social conception of pre-primary and primary teaching as a simplified or reductive craft rather than as a profession. Accordingly, this is reflected in the lack of studying, reading and writing practices in the ITE programme mentioned above.
4. In most countries, central guidelines indicate that ITE programmes should develop students' knowledge and skills with regard to educational research. The problem comes when we try to define "knowledge relating to educational research". Having student teachers enter the field of educational research means inviting them to learn from studies that have already been done, to read what others past and present have written and said about education, and to familiarise them with the educational debates that are going on from a global and local perspective.

With that knowledge, they not only learn what others have already researched, but also to observe, judge, and act better in their educational practice.

However, in Spain, the guidelines on pre-primary and primary teacher training include the perspective of educational research as a methodology to apply. This is why the components that it includes, as stated in a Eurydice report (2013), are: (1) theoretical instruction in educational research methodology, (2) an end-of-study dissertation on pedagogical issues based on the student's own research, (3) the possibility of using educational research in teaching practice being included in a list of final competences, and (4) practical educational research work being conducted during studies.

From this data, the following can be synthesised:

1. The first year of the bachelor's degree is free from school placements, so it is one of the best moments to introduce practices that need more time to be processed, such as reading long papers or comprehending a lecture or a discussion of others' ideas in order to find one's own voice.

2. The short time devoted to "general training" pushes curriculum developers to design the contents, methodology and assessments very carefully, not just in each module but also taking into consideration the role of the module itself in the provision of "general training" knowledge to students.
3. There is a lack of recognition in the pre-primary and primary curricula regarding reading, thinking and studying activities, as they are not considered part of the process of learning how to carry out research in education.

Concerned about this, other scholars in Europe have started to create spaces specifically to discuss this issue. For example, in Leuven, scholars organised a conference³ on study practices at university and how they shape university life. The result is a special issue of the journal *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* entitled "Answering the Question: What is Studying" (forthcoming). In addition, there is the recently published monograph "Studying: Pedagogical Investigations of its Educational Value" in the Spanish journal *Teoría de la Educación: Revista Interuniversitaria*⁴. Moreover, in Spain, there are other recent publications regarding the problems of the reading and studying skills of student teachers (e.g. Elche & Yubero, 2019).

All this motivated us to design the innovative experience at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid to improve the thinking, reading and studying skills of student teachers in the first year of their ITE programme.

Reading, Thinking and Studying

The traditional university pedagogical practices of reading seminars and lectures were considered worth re-experiencing, re-inviting and restoring, in addition to alternative practices to evaluate student learning. Accordingly, the programme we designed was implemented in the first year of BA programmes in ITE.

3 Reclaiming Study Practices, 18–20 September 2019, Leuven, Belgium, <https://ppw.kuleuven.be/phec>.

4 See Touriñán 2019; Bárcena 2019; López 2019; Schildermans, Vandenabeele & Vlieghe 2019; Rechia & Cubas 2019, and Larrosa 2019.

A total number of 233 students in the academic year 2018–2019 and 150 in the academic year 2019–2020 who enrolled in the subject "Values Education: Equality and Citizenship" (a mandatory module in the first year of both BA programmes) have so far taken part in this experience. The module consisted of 6 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) and took place over a 12–13-week period during the first term of the academic year.

The ethos

For the sake of the *ethos* of the course as a BA module, it was very important from the beginning to tell the students the main ideas of the course and the importance of the environment and external tool for them to be better disposed to significant study practices. To meet that purpose, in the first class of the course we explained the goals and some external factors to take care of in order to generate a better environment for the lessons. Students were encouraged to persevere on these points:

1. Punctuality. Classes start on time, so all of them are expected to be punctual. If they are tardy, they have to enter silently. If they arrive ten minutes or more after the beginning of the session, they are not allowed to enter the classroom. The importance of being on time to a university class is for some rather old-fashioned, as pedagogical relaxation has come with an overall relaxation in common basic rules. The idea was therefore to make this requirement part of the students' academic experience in the module.
2. Compact Group. They must sit without gaps between seats in the classroom as a compact group as a way of embodying the community of inquiry and study the module was proposing to them all.
3. Attention Training. The use of any electronic devices was not to be allowed in the classroom, not even for taking notes, because despite the increasing popularity of typing at lectures, there is evidence of the positive impact of handwriting on information processing in education situations (Manzi, Martinez & Durmysheva, 2017).

The study practices

There were mainly two types of study practices: (1) lectures and (2) reading seminars. Following what has been defended by many other teachers these past years (Reyero-García, 2014; Gil-Cantero & Sánchez-Rojo, 2015; Thoilliez & Valle, 2015; Esteban, 2019; Esteban & Escardíbul, 2020), what makes universities recognizable and unique institutions is not their buildings but the particular set of educational practices that they make happen. Thus, what would grant our student teachers the social value they deserve may have something to do with their full participation in the intellectual university life that comes with the study practices of reading, thinking, and writing.

1. Lectures

The purpose of lectures is for the teacher to present the thematic contents of the subject orally. The talks were accompanied by a simple visual support, and it was essential that the students took notes. For each lecture, students were given a list of references to complete and/or expand on the notes they took in class. Lectures took up to 60% of the total amount of the module's compulsory in-class time. Once per week, the group attended 2-hour lectures on the module's contents (see Table 1).

Table 1. Lectures programme (academic years 2018–2019 and 2019–2020)

PART I. BASIC CONCEPTS OF VALUES AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION	1. Foundations of Education and Ethics
	1.1. Epistemological foundations of education: What is Philosophy of Education? How do we define education?
	1.2. Basis of ethical reflection and values education: What is Ethics and why do we need it? Why are values so difficult to define? Why is it necessary but difficult to teach values?
	2. Globalisation, Interculturality, Citizenship and Human Rights
	2.1. The culture of globalisation and human rights: What is globalisation? How does it affect our relationship with culture? What are human rights?
	2.2. Possible pedagogical quests: How do we teach human rights? How do we go from cultural diversity to intercultural education? How do we cultivate global competences?
	3. Moral Culture and School Life
	3.1. The ethical specificity of pedagogical action with children: What is childhood? What is the "best interest of the child"?
	3.2. Reasons and definition of schools' moral culture: Why talk about moral culture in schools? What is a school's moral culture?
	3.3. The study of schools' moral culture: What was the pioneering research in the study of schools' moral culture? How can we pedagogically analyze schools' moral practices?

4. Education in Values in the School Curriculum

- 4.1. Europe's view of citizenship education: Eurydice Reports on "Citizenship Education at School in Europe".
- 4.2. Social and Civic Competencies in the Spanish curriculum: Definition, Evaluation dimensions.
- 4.3. Transversality and education in values: Regulatory framework, interdisciplinarity and transversality.
- 4.4. Curriculum contents on education in values: Social and civic values in Primary Education. What about Pre-primary Education?

5. Democratic Coexistence: Participation and School Mediation

- 5.1. What is the meaning of living together and how do we teach to live together? Concept of coexistence, Strategic Plan for School Coexistence 2016-2020.
- 5.2. What school documents articulate living together? The School Coexistence Plan, Tutorial Action Plan, complementary organisational and curricular strategies.
- 5.3. How to identify and what to do before bullying: Definition of bullying, school plan, the role of educational inspection.

6. School Practices for the Development of Democratic Values

- 6.1. Do school practices for the development of democratic values do any good? What the Europeans think, what a teacher thinks / what a teacher should think.
- 6.2. Can we educate by avoiding controversial issues? What is controversial? Why do we avoid talking about controversial issues? Why do we need to address them? What challenges does the teacher face?
- 6.3. How to educate in democratic values? Three examples: Philosophy for Children (Lipman & Sharp, 1970), Visual Philosophy for Children (Duthie & Martagón, 2014), Documentary "It is only the beginning" (France, 2014).

2. Reading seminars

The purpose of seminars was to live the university experience of careful and concentrated reading and collective discussion around different topics in the module. Students were required to do in-depth reading assignments before each session; they had to come to the session with a printed hardcopy of the reading and a notebook to take notes. They were arranged into different groups, with the time being rotated but not the group, i.e. they stayed with the same group of classmates from the beginning of the course to the end. On the online learning platform, they could see the day and time each session and subgroup were held.

In order for students to get the most out of the reading seminars, they met for one hour a week in smaller groups of 15 to discuss the philosophical and pedagogical ideas in the readings with the module leaders. Each seminar was run five times to accommodate the small discussion groups. This meant that the group leader repeated the same seminar five times each week with the different subgroups of 15 to 20 students. To make that possible, all the students attended the weekly lectures jointly in a larger room.

Every other week we read one chapter from the selected book (Esteban, 2018), and in the other weeks the reading was from a philosopher whose ideas helped the students' understanding of teaching practice, as listed in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Reading seminars programme (academic year 2018–2019)

1ST WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 1	Francisco Esteban (2018)
2ND WEEK	Philosopher 1	Adela Cortina (1994)
3RD WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 2.1	Francisco Esteban (2018)
4TH WEEK	Philosopher 2	Javier Muguerza (1986)
5TH WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 2.2	Francisco Esteban (2018)
6TH WEEK	Philosopher 3	Max van Manen (1998)
7TH WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 3	Francisco Esteban (2018)
8TH WEEK	Philosopher 4	Hannah Arendt (1968)
9TH WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 4	Francisco Esteban (2018)
10TH WEEK	Philosopher 5	Fernando Savater (1997)
11TH WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 5	Francisco Esteban (2018)
12TH WEEK	Colloquium with the author of the book (Francisco Esteban), where students had the chance to ask him different questions on his book they had read.	

Table 3. Reading seminars programme (academic year 2019–2020)

1ST WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 1	Francisco Esteban (2018)
2ND WEEK	Philosopher 1	Adela Cortina (1986)
3RD WEEK	Philosopher 2	Iris Murdoch (1971)
4TH WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 2	Francisco Esteban (2018)
5TH WEEK	Philosopher 3	John Dewey (1916)
6TH WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 3	Francisco Esteban (2018)
7TH WEEK	Philosopher 4	Paulo Freire (1970)
8TH WEEK	Philosopher 5	Max van Manen (1991)
9TH WEEK	Selected Book, Chapter 4	Francisco Esteban (2018)
10TH WEEK	Philosopher 6	Hannah Arendt (1968)
11TH WEEK	Philosopher 7	Massimo Recalcati (2014)
12TH WEEK	SELECTED BOOK, CHAPTER 5 FRANCISCO ESTEBAN (2018)	
13TH WEEK	Philosopher 8	Fernando Savater (1997)

The assessment

Each student was allowed to choose from among four types of final exam as the best way for her/him to demonstrate what she/he had learnt. The exams proposed were intentionally within the traditional university pedagogy, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Type of exams offered to the students

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
MULTIPLE CHOICE	Students have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge through a 60-question test, of which 60% was taken from the lectures and 40% from the seminars. The multiple-choice test requires in-depth knowledge of many ideas, the ability to differentiate them, and a mastery of the course's contents. Time: Up to 90 minutes.
ORAL	Students have the opportunity to show their knowledge orally. Students go to the exam one by one. In the exam there are always two teachers, and it is recorded with a recorder, as per UAM regulations ⁵ . The teachers ask the student three questions. Two of the questions are in relation to the lectures and one to the seminars. They are short, specific questions, but they give the student the chance to answer with several topics from the subject. After the question is asked, the student is given two minutes to make an outline on a sheet of paper. Time: Up to 20 minutes.
DISSERTATION	The exams are varied. Some may be on a single concept to be developed, others may be on relating two concepts or answering a question with all the contents of the topic, or an excerpt broad enough for the student to be able to use all her/his knowledge of the subject to relate it. Time: Up to 4 hours.
TEXT COMMENT	A text not worked on in the course is selected, usually from a philosopher who, as in the case of the dissertation, addresses a large number of topics covered in the course so that the student can organise his or her comment by referring to several topics studied. Time: Up to 2.5 hours.

⁵ Regulation of Academic Evaluation, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Approved in the Governing Council of February 8, 2013), which says: "In the case of an oral evaluation test whose maximum grade is 40% or more of the final grade, this will be public for the rest of the students enrolled in the subject and defended before an evaluation commission, which will record in writing the reasons for the grade obtained by the student".

The general evaluation criteria that applied to all exams were:

2. **Contents of the module.** It was key that the content they wrote about be part of the module. It was very important to avoid clichés and trite or general knowledge, i.e. popular phrases and words void of meaning. Students were expected to show how they had appropriated the different contents of the module.
3. **Relevancy and pertinence.** The content must be not merely from the table of contents of the course, but also clearly relevant and pertinent to answering the particular question asked.
4. **Organisation, reasoning and justification.** Good statements without the development of the main idea were not taken into consideration. All the statements had to be argued from all the available sources throughout the module. Careful organisation and the use of connectors were also very important in both oral and written exams.

In the second year, the multiple-choice option was not offered. Students tended to choose that particular option thinking it would be "easier" or "more accessible", but the exam results showed exactly the opposite. The options were therefore limited to oral, dissertation and text comment, as shown by comparing Figure 1 with Figure 2:

Figure 1. Students' performance, academic year 2018–2019

Figure 2. Students' performance, academic year 2019–2020

Results and discussion

The main results of this attempt at giving reading, thinking and studying back to ITE university programmes are summarised below.

First and foremost is **the importance of institutional support**. To join three different groups and divide them, we asked the Dean's Office for permission to make slight modifications to the timetable of one group. It is important to have institutional support on contra-cultural innovations, given that the tendency of many of the actors will be towards resistance. Another idea to bear in mind before implementing this experience is **the key factor of repetition**. The session leaders must be aware that they will repeat the same reading seminars several times in order to foster the participation of each student in the discussion of the readings. Despite being tedious, repeating a lecture has a silver lining: it gave the lecturers a higher level of mastery at leading specific debates and ideas, and testing which kinds of examples, questions, and ways work better in the different groups.

Although it is not always possible, it is highly advisable to have **the help of a teacher assistant in the reading seminars**. Having this help will make it easier to split the seminar groups into smaller ones. Otherwise, an alternative solution could be for the module leader to go around the small groups in the same class of students, helping them come up with better ideas or challenging their questions and helping them with the main ideas of the readings. One of the first things the instructors will notice in these reading seminars is that the **students'**

prejudices are the first barrier to giving reading, thinking and studying back to ITE. Students' expectations and claims during their first year of ITE are very much rooted in a particular idea of finding solid empirical evidence for their practice. One of the reasons for that barrier from the students' perspectives is that **constant comparisons with modern methodologies will be at play**. At the beginning of the experience, the students showed discomfort towards traditional strategies to learning (listening to lectures, reading papers, and studying), because the rest of the modules of the first year used other methodologies closer to contemporary pedagogical approaches that mainly promote soft skills, disregarding studying, thinking, and reading as core activities for the intellectual training mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

This integral position towards ITE requires the understanding that **time must be our ally**. After some readings and lectures, students started to recognise the importance of studying the broad nature of education as a practice that admits a space for response. This experience makes them become **adult learners with agency**. After a few months on the course, students started listening, asking questions, reading and confronting the authors' papers and leader modules as a starting point to building their pedagogical judgement throughout the BA. Most students in the reading seminars increased their ability to think for themselves, living the academic practices of inquiring, discussing, debating, thinking, and relating new ideas to their professional practice. In the anonymous and voluntary questionnaire they filled out at the end of the course, many of them left comments on this idea. This was one of the most celebrated results. However, as regards the exams, we confirmed that **inertia prevails in choosing the assessment's modality**. Most students in ITE seemed to follow the inertia of their school system experience, making the multiple-choice test modality the most chosen one (90%), thereby sidestepping the option of expressing their knowledge in writing or speech. Nevertheless, that does not mean that students were following the easiest possible path, because **one fourth of them were in pursuit of excellence**, choosing to follow all the extra activities that we proposed. The greatest surprise was the number of students who took on every single voluntary activity, given the low impact those activities would have on their final marks.

Below we conclude and discuss the main findings of this experience with the hope that they will inspire other scholars to justify and

undertake the incorporation of study, reading, and thinking practices in ITE.

One of the main contributions of this work highlights the differential importance of our understanding of innovation, which has to do with discernment rather than creating or expressing new things and new ideas. This mind-set might be shared by the community in the faculty, but it must also be shared with the institutional leaders. Flexibility from the institution gives instructors the autonomy they need to improve teaching. The awareness of faculty members of the need to do more research on better ways to teach in ITE was an important factor in this pilot experience. Along with this, the faculty agenda included the importance of increasing the level of academic exigency in ITE⁶.

Another controversial point in contemporary pedagogy is the role of repetition. In our case, however, recovering the use of repetition proved very positive, with the professors repeating their lectures on the one hand, and the students relating and repeating the interwoven ideas they learnt across readings on the other. The first kind of repetition allowed us to assess the quality of their lectures and reading seminars with different students. Repetition also allowed us to change or adapt some things that did not work in the first lectures and try out alternatives in the following sessions. Repetition therefore led to improvement. The short experience of the course showed that the last lecture on the same topic was the best one for both sides, i.e. both professors and students. Therefore, there is a sense of mastering by repeating.

For professors, the recent revolution of co-teaching (mainly at compulsory education levels) was tested at the higher education level. Co-teaching proved to be helpful in several respects: it allowed an exchange of ideas in the design and in implementation phases; it widened the multi-perceptions of the lectures; it gave a chance for one teacher to observe the other so as to help each other improve; and it gave students a chance to hear two different people speak on the same topic with different teaching styles, even if they both share the same epistemological approach.

6 This sharing view has been a catalyst for PIMeFIM teaching innovation projects (FPE_017.18_INN and FPYE_010.19_IMP). See <http://pimefim.com>.

For the students, one of the most remarkable responses was regarding the barriers they built. The newcomers were very reluctant to read, to study, and to think. In a sense, it is perplexing to think that they were expecting something different than reading, thinking, and studying in a university degree programme. This suggests that in the social imaginary, ITE is not seen as a hard discipline in which students must read and study for many hours in order to succeed. On the contrary, they were expecting to learn how to teach through practice, how to become more efficient through controlling the performance of teaching. Their first reactions towards the invitation to think about the foundations of education, citizenship education, or controversial issues in education were not pleasant. They gave little importance to such matters, or even worse, they considered them a waste of time, the entry price to learning applied didactics and strategies and new methodologies later on.

It is important to note that the ideas mentioned here are not only shared by newcomers in ITE. Many staff and faculty members in ITE have the same approach towards teacher education. Moreover, two questionable ideas predominate in the European university arena as well as in ITE in Europe: (1) ITE must be the school laboratory, and (2) students, by creating, are being innovative. By innovating, they are becoming good teachers. This lack of consensus on the importance of these activities pushes us to be more convinced of them than ever. Furthermore, this also confirms the mistaken idea that something innovative is something we have not seen before, and its corollary: something is good because it is new. That is why our first step here has been to provide a careful theoretical justification for our perspective on this innovative teaching project.

It seems from our results that the "aha moment" arrived several months into the course, when the students suddenly made sense of one idea, and they used it over and over again from that moment on. One noteworthy example of this was the idea of Arendt (1968) and Savater (1997) that education must be conservative because it tries to conserve the good things for the next generation. That "aha moment" provided the scaffolding for participants to build up new ideas and to make sense of their own educational experiences and practices. On the same line, the famous Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) was tested again. Difficult readings and demanding lectures became the way to tell

them of the high expectations we had of them and of the importance of their future profession.

Regarding the assessment experience, different inputs collapsed. The students' conservative mood and commitment combined together. Students mainly chose, as mentioned, the multiple-choice exam. Elche and Yubero's (2019) concerns about how student teachers do not feel comfortable when reading and writing were confirmed. This showed a low level of reading skills, given that student teachers usually come from vocational training programmes and not directly from the high school system or A levels. Moreover, the low marks required to enter the ITE programme may be related to this lack of reading and writing skills. Further research should address the academic dimension of ITE programmes focused on the experience presented here.

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