

# From *methodics* to *didactics*: policy or a shift of paradigms?

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An intensive reform of education and studies is being carried out in Lithuania, as well as in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The aims and content of higher educational institutions undergo certain changes. Scientific issues have arisen from the ongoing process of changes in the sphere of education. One of the issues discussed in the article deals with the ways by which one gives reasons for a shift from the title of the same discipline *methodics of subject education* to that of *subject didactics*. A relationship between *didactics (methodics)* and the fundamental sciences – *pedagogy* and the corresponding *study (geography)* – has been examined in the present study. A multidimensional as well as multi-staged system of *subject educological studies* is proposed to be compiled as a perspective. One of its models is introduced.

**Key words:** methodics of subject education, didactics, subject educological studies

## INTRODUCTION

The intensive reform of education and studies carried out in the European countries addresses a variety of topics to be touched upon, such as assessment of the contribution of researchers to their scientific investigations, restructurization of higher educational institutions, improvement of the quality of studies and educational environment, etc. Both theoretical and practical issues of education and studies are lurking behind the aforementioned issues. One of such issues concerns reorganization of the content of studies and disciplines: new disciplines appear or old ones are being restructured. These are specific questions which are discussed only in a rather small group of researchers. Therefore, a problem arises: how can one identify the quintessence of a discipline, its status, changeability within the general context of reforming education and studies?

The aim of the present article is to review transformations of one of the subjects of didactics (methodology) in Lithuania within the European context. The material of the article focuses on the analysis of scientific literature, experience of the author's work, his observations and scientific investigations. The statements formulated in the article are illustrated in models.

## DEVELOPING AN OUTLINE OF REFORMING EDUCATION AND STUDIES IN LITHUANIA

The education reform is being implemented at all levels of education, including higher educational institutions, in Lithuania, in Baltic as well as other countries of Central and Eastern Europe since the 1990s. The shift of studies occurs within the general context of science policies in Lithuania; the aforesaid context is oriented towards the OECD Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys of Research Development (*R & D*), Frascati Manual (FM) (Frascati Manual, 2002). The supervisor of FM, however, calls much of attention to natural history and technologies, whereas the humanities and social science are left out of consideration. Chapter 4 distinguishes *basic research, applied and experimental development*. It has been noted that *experimental development* is partially applied to *social science*, while it is not suitable to *the humanities* (Viliūnas, 2004: 48). Therefore, on confirming a new education qualification in Lithuania, physical, biomedical and technological sciences are better structured (Dėl mokslų..., 1998). Seeking to consolidate the development of the humanities and social science as well as scientific investigations, *the Strategy for Developing the Social Science and the Humanities in Lithuania* (SSH) has been worked out:

'STRATEGY for developing SSH in Lithuania is defined with a focus on two interrelated directions: participation in the development of information society and knowledge-based economy overseen by the dominant strategy of science policy, i. e. the strategy of scientific research and experimental development, and the contribution of SSH to the development of democracy and civic society, fostering the national and cultural identity, nurturing the general creative skills and improvement of the interface between society and science in general. This direction is defined as the social development of research' (*Lietuvos...*, 2004: 342).

The education reform is conditioned by general challenges of the 21st century that science has come across. It states that the period of postmodernism is coming to an end. Scholastic thought has undergone the attributes of polarization, dichotomy, hierarchy, play of language and subjectivity. Nowadays, the humanities and social science are facing a new impendence: institutionalization of sciences, technocratic bureaucracy, and fundamentalism of the market (Donskis, 2004). There has dominated project mania, which delimitates researchers from creativity, while educational institutions become business corporations. Such processes are spreading fairly rapidly and can be seen at European universities and colleges.

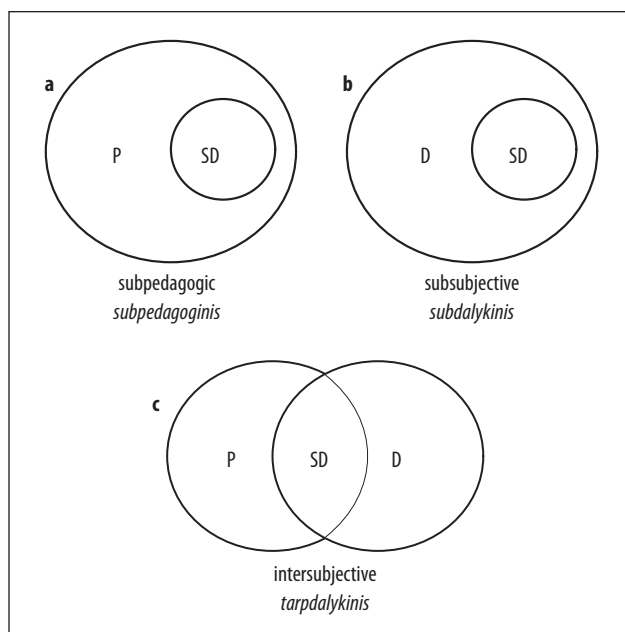
In this instance, we become very interested in the position of pedagogy and didactics in the system of education. The term *pedagogy* in the Lithuanian education classification has been replaced by *education*. There have occurred lots of discussions and misunderstandings in relation to the term *pedagogy*. *Educational Studies* and *Educational Science* are the terms widely used in the world. In Lithuania, *educology* is regarded as a science of teaching, whereas *education* deals with the idea of training, i. e. putting knowledge into practice (Jucevičienė, 1997). The position of *subject didactics* has not been defined in classifying specific terms related to education. One can distinguish the following disciplines in the structure of social science: *pedagogy and didactics* (S 270) and *technical didactics* (S 271). (Dėl mokslų..., 1998). In the interim, other countries have distinguished the key educational disciplines after having considered them with an FM supervisor. These disciplines include *Educational Studies*, *Curriculum Studies*, and *Professional Development of Teachers*, which have been acknowledged in the classification of educational terms. A little space has been left to formulate such terms as *Other Studies or Science and ...Studies or Science not elsewhere classified*. (International..., 1997; R & D..., 2006; Research..., 2006). Accordingly, a complex position of subject didactics has been revealed in a survey drawn in Lithuania, which focuses on problems of the development of the humanities and social science: there are no reviewed scientific journals and corresponding educational associations; academic courses are not well-organized. There would be difficult to publish a journal related to only one discipline in didactics; however, it would be more useful to incorporate topics of didactics according to the fields of education – the humanities and didactics of arts, didactics of social science

and natural history as well as technology (Merkys, 2004). There has occurred a reform in *subject didactics* as a discipline of higher educational institutions, though.

### METHODICS AND DIDACTICS: TWO NOTIONS AND SEVERAL CONCEPTS

Traditionally, one of the disciplines in higher educational institutions and faculties of fundamental studies at universities in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe was *methodics of subject education*. While drawing new plans for the term, it is safe to say that *methodics* has 'turned into' *didactics* just for one day at the Vilnius Pedagogical University. There were neither scientific nor methodical discussions held in response to this question. Some discussion was set only among historians and geographers (Kairaitis, 2000; Stašaitis, 2002). Yet, according to the discussions in Russian and German scientific journals, this is not only the question of terminology (Sarancev, 2000; Darinskij, 2001; Feller, 2002; Grebenev, 2003). However, the "geography" of the *Teaching Methodics* and *Didactics* is not wide. In the European context, the term *Methodics* is more common in Eastern Europe, whereas the boundaries of the spread of *Didactics* end at France. A mixed situation of these terms is in Germany, while in English-speaking countries *Didactics* has a narrow application in educational processes (in addition to others, the *Didactic Teaching Style* is accentuated).

The content of the two concepts, *didactics* and *methodics*, has been deeply revealed in German educational sources (Definitionen..., 2006; Was..., 2006). H. Blankertz's theory and its models of didactics have been utilized for more than thirty years (1969, 1991). Traditionally, one can distinguish the following educational concepts: *general didactics* and *subject didactics*. *General didactics* is treated as a discipline of higher educational institutions, which analyzes general structures as well as principles of the educational process. *Subject didactics* investigates the general educational questions of a concrete discipline. *Educational methodics* apply and complement the general criteria of the educational process (didactics) through a concrete subject-related educational practice (Hein, 1980). German specialists working in the domain of didactics believe that *subject didactics* answers the question *what to teach?*, whereas *subject methodics* deals with *how to teach?* Therefore, another aspect of *didactics* and *methodics* has emerged from it. The term *didactics* is very closely related to the academic society, while *methodics* focuses on teachers. Accordingly, it is quite understandable that didactics is likely to be considered as a discipline of higher educational institutions, whereas *methodics* is intended for institutions wherein teachers work. The question arises: what is the interface between subject didactics and fundamental sciences – *pedagogy (educology)* and *geography*? Subject *didactics* is viewed as a branch of science of *pedagogy* (Fig. 1a). Real circumstances of life sometimes incorporate it into the educational space of a corresponding science (*geography*) (Fig. 1b). Model 1 is



**Fig. 1.** Models of subject didactics (SD), pedagogic (P) and subject discipline (D) relations (Kairaitis, 2000)

**1 pav.** Dalyko didaktikos (SD), pedagogikos (P) ir dalyko (D) santykių modeliai (Kairaitis, 2000)

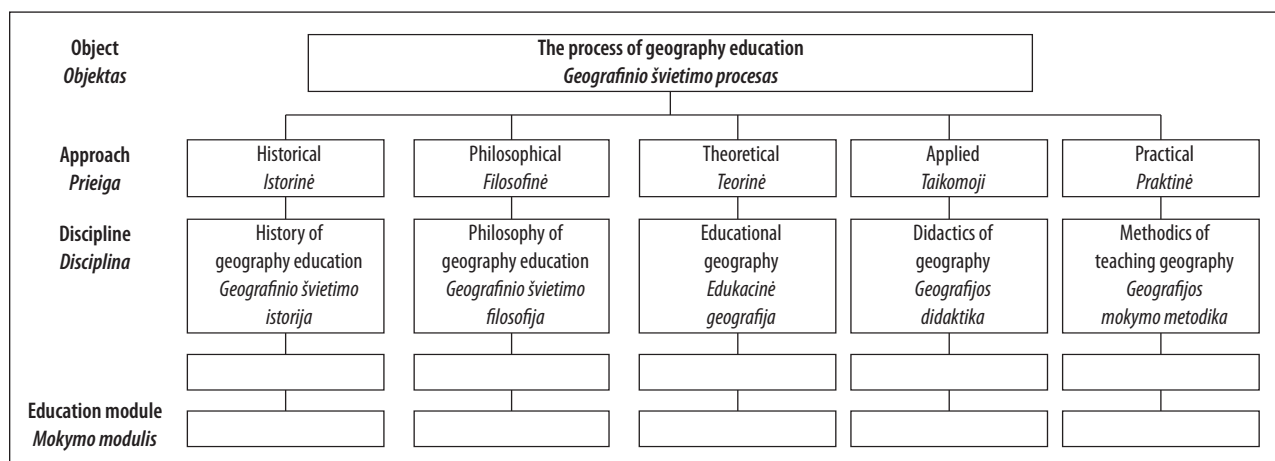
a classical one which requires little explanations. Model 2 is much more complicated. It can also be called ‘professional’ when people from a particular sphere of social activity care about their subject prestige at school or in society, write instructional / training aids, etc. Here stands one rule: if you do not take care of yourself, nobody will care. Both models have disadvantages as well. The first one ‘dissimulates’ a subject under educational categories; the second makes it too academic. Model 3 is considered to be the most rational one, i. e. intersubjective (Fig. 1c). In this instance, subject-related didactics assumes ‘autonomy’ and becomes methodologically independent in setting its own aims as a discipline, creating the structure as well as the content (Kairaitis, 1998, 2000). American geographers stick to the same opinion (Bednarz, 2000).

### SYSTEM OF SUBJECT EDUCOLOGICAL STUDIES IS A PROSPECT

Today, when preparing teachers of the relevant subjects, one special subject is not sufficient, no matter how we would call it: *Methodics* or *Didactics*. One of the reasons why the situation should be changed is that the content of the subject *Teaching Methodics (Didactics)* is very wide – from the *history* of a relevant science to *theory* and *practice*. Such content was formed throughout the long history of the subject. The endeavours were made to reflect in one subject (*Methodics* or *Didactics*) various aspects of geographical education. Secondly, the management and monitoring of education requires that teachers should be prepared efficiently so that they could solve the miscellaneous educational problems. The problems of audit, testing of the march, Matura exams, application of new educational techniques are topical in education. Such topicalities shall be reflected in the didactics of separate subjects. Thirdly, the three stages of studies (bachelor, master and doctor) require the vertical differentiation of the subject *Methodics* and *Didactics*. The main problem which was faced after implementation of the multi-staged study system was the repetition of subject content in bachelor and master studies.

*What decisions should one make in redefining the conception of didactics (methodics) and in reforming the structure of education?*

It is advisable to create a multidimensional and multi-staged system of subject educology, taking into consideration the aforementioned OECD Standard requirements. Moreover, the following three levels of education: *basic research, applied and experimental (practical) development* should be integrated in every discipline. Within such a system of *subject educological studies, didactics (applied aspect) and methodics (practical aspect)* should be treated as separate subjects of study. It would be reasonable to include such disciplines as *history of geography education, its philosophy and theory as well as educational geography (basic research)*. One of the possible models is presented in Fig. 2. It is high time we start thinking



**Fig. 2.** The system of educological studies in geography  
**2 pav.** Geografijos edukologinių studijų sistema

about this matter. *Geography subject benchmark statements* have been worked out (Geography, 2000). However, they are devoted to the geographers' training in general. This national standard needs to be applied in geography teachers' training.

In the context of the Baltic Region and European countries, universities should be encouraged to specialize in various issues of geographical education research. Thus, students and lecturers would have more opportunities to participate in exchange programmes among universities.

## CONCLUSIONS

At present, scientific research is being evaluated according to the requirements of the OECD *Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys of Research Development* (R & D). These requirements mainly focus on physical, biomedical and technological sciences. However, has been paid to the humanities and social science in the recently drawn system of education classification, little attention. The spheres of subject didactics and curriculum studies have not been reflected in the aforementioned classification at all. To rectify the situation, Lithuanian specialists of the humanities and sociologists have prepared *the Strategy for Developing Social Science and the Humanities in Lithuania* (SSH). In implementing the education reform in Lithuania, especially in the Vilnius Pedagogical University, *methodics of subject education*, defined as such above, has been replaced by the term *subject didactics*. Educationalists did not touch upon the alteration (shift) of the terms *methodics* and *didactics*. However, the aforesaid terms are not synonyms. They describe the educational process differently and are treated as separate disciplines. Upon reviewing the relationship between didactics and its congener sciences, we can distinguish three models – *subpedagogic*, *subsubjective* and *intersubjective*. Considering the teachers' training of the relevant subject in the future, one discipline will not suffice, no matter how it is termed – *methodics* or *didactics*. It is of great importance to introduce multidimensional and multi-staged subject educological studies (subject pedagogy) corresponding to the bachelor and master studies.

Thus, how can we answer the question which is the title of the present article? Most probably in the 1990s it was *policy*; in the mid 1990s it was *silence*; nowadays, I assume that it is a search for the new *paradigms*.

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## NUO METODIKOS IKI DIDAKTIKOS: POLITIKA AR PARADIGMŲ KAITA?

### *Santrauka*

Lietuvoje pažymint Švietimo reformos 20-metį daugiau dėmesio skirta bendrojo lavinimo mokyklai – čia reformos procesai buvo gana intensyvūs ir esminiai, tačiau būta pokyčių ir aukštosiose mokyklose, jų studijų programose. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama dalykų didaktikos turinio ir studijų sistemos padėtis. Esminis straipsnio leitmotyvas – buvusių dalykų mokymo metodikų virsmas dalykų didaktikomis ir dalykų edukologinių studijų sistemos formavimasis. Nors dalyko edukologinių studijų klausimai nagrinėjami geografijos didaktikos pavyzdžiu, jie būdingi ir kitų dalykų didaktikoms.

Nors ir pavėluotai Lietuvoje, kaip ir kitose, ypač Vidurio bei Rytų Europos, šalyse, vyksta arba prasidėjo intensyvi aukštojo mokslo ir studijų reforma. Keičiasi aukštosios mokyklos disciplinų studijų tikslai ir turinys. Šiame procese kyla svarstytinų bendrų mokslinių problemų: kaip identifikuoti disciplinos esmę, jos statusą, kaitą bendrame mokslo bei studijų reformos kontekste? Viena jų kaip tik ir analizuojama straipsnyje – kuo / ar motyvuota tos pačios disciplinos dalyko mokymo metodikos pavadinimo kaita į dalyko didaktiką, kaip šią disciplinos

identifikacijos transformaciją galima panaudoti gerinant dalyko edukologinių studijų struktūrą ir turinį? Edukologinių studijų ir tyrimų padėtis apžvelgiama remiantis OECD *Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys of Research Development* (R & D), Frascati Manual (FM) vadovu, taip pat Lietuvos humanitarinių bei socialinių mokslų padėties analize ir plėtros strategija. Iš jų matyti nedžiuginanti dalykų didaktikos mokslo ir studijų padėtis: nėra recenzuojamų mokslo žurnalų, atitinkamų mokslo draugijų, silpni akademiniai didaktikos kursai. Konceptualiai įvertinus dalyko *didaktikos* (*metodikos*) santykį su pamatiniais mokslais – *pedagogika* (*edukologija*) – ir atitinkamu *dalyku* (*geografija*), galima išskirti tris jo modelius: *subpedagoginį*, *subdalykinį* ir *interdalykinį*. Vykdamas studijų reformą Lietuvoje, konkrečiai Vilniaus pedagoginiame universitete, anksčiau įvardyta *dalyko mokymo metodika* pervadinta *dalyko didaktika*. Apie šią terminų kaitą pedagogai visai nediskutavo. Tačiau *metodika* ir *didaktika* nėra sinonimai, šie terminai skirtingai apibūdina edukacinį procesą. Žvelgiant į dalyko mokytojo rengimą ateityje, jau nepakanka vienos siauros disciplinos, kaip ją bevardintume – *metodika* ar *didaktika*. Būtina formuoti daugialypę ir daugiapakopę *dalyko edukologinių studijų sistemą* (dalyko pedagogiką, edukologiją), pritaikytą bakalauro ir magistro studijoms.

**Raktažodžiai:** dalyko mokymo metodika, didaktika, dalyko edukologinės studijos