Teacher’s pedagogical autonomy as an antecedent for inclusive education

Inclusive teacher education
European seminar
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Aims and rationale

– To address
  • How changes in research paradigms are connected to teacher’s work and education
  • Changes needed in understanding how professional knowledge is generated and how professional practice can be enhanced
  • Changes needed in teacher education (structures, curricula and practices), preliminary steps towards teacher
  • Dilemmas and controversial issues: school policy and teacher education rhetorics
Trends in teacher education literature

- Teacher as a professional
- Teacher-as-a-researcher
- Teacher as a reflective practitioner
- Teacher as a collaborator
- Learning and development as contextually dependent
  - Situatedness of knowledge and practices
- Knowledge as tacit, personal and individual - articulated, explicit, shared, co-constructed
- Teachers’ self or identity into focus

Professionalization of teaching

- providing teachers with autonomy, independence of action, and status
- an autonomy to decide the aims and methods of their practice
  - not only individually, but also collectively
- a common knowledge base
- a special attention to the unique needs of the pupils as well as responsibility for their welfare
- Teaching as a vocation, 'calling'
**Autonomy**

– A state of independence and self-determination

– Core criteria:
  - a person’s thoughts and actions are determined by himself
  - Duty and responsibility are not excluded
  - Duty is always a free and responsible action of an autonomous person

– Freedom:
  - refer to the ability to think for oneself and to make moral decisions without external compulsion, guided by inner convictions and beliefs

**Pedagogy and autonomy**

• Pedagogy:
  - Is concerned with the ability to distinguish between what is good and what is not good for the child (vanManen, 1991)
  - How particular situations appear from the child’s point of view, how the child experiences his or her world at school
  - Good pedagogy: tactful sensitivity towards the child’s subjectivity, an interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of a child’s needs
Autonomy and pedagogy interrelated

• Good pedagogy:
  – Involves love and care for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, and self-critical openness and thoughtful maturity
  – To be able to realise the above characteristics, a teacher needs autonomy, freedom in decision-making and action, sensitive perceptiveness
  – A pedagogically tactful teacher: guided by what is best for the pupils/and each pupil
    • Time and willingness to listen to children’s life-stories, the particular qualities and circumstances of the children
    • Hope, attentiveness and care

• The complexity of the myriad of the factors present in classroom life makes each teaching/learning situation unique, and hence demands unique and authentic action by the teacher
  • Good practice cannot be handed over ready made
  • Good pedagogy is situationally varying pedagogy, involving improvisation of action by the teacher
  • Cf. reflection-in-action
Positivistic research paradigm

• a general theory of teaching?
  – function: prediction, control
  – instrumental view on education
  – teachers: objects of research, in passive role
  – Control of what teachers teach and how they teach it
  – the wholeness, connectedness of classroom life, interaction is divided, and omitted
  – process-product research

Providing objective knowledge, often in fragmented bits (includes knowing what that knowledge should be).
• Control of teachers from the centre
  – Teachers viewed as technicians who will
    • deliver the prescribed educational ends
    • mechanically and uniformly implement the curriculum
      and innovations developed outside
  – Involves external evaluation system → aiming at
    • maximizing efficient and effective delivery of the
      curriculum and standardization of educational
      outcomes
  – i.e. Pedagogical action externally regulated and
    evaluated

Teachers’ external behavior, methods and techniques
emphasized; to find effective teaching methods
Teachers’ thinking: their intentions, goals, values and
personality ignored

Technological perspective on education

School development and innovation; top-down models;
centralised curriculum development
Teachers passive recipients of the knowledge of
researchers or rules given by administrators
Positivism and teacher education

- Behavioristic perspective, technicality; teaching skills, methods emphasized
- Individuality and competition
- Teachers’ thinking omitted

Interpretive research and teacher action

Teachers’ own thoughts, beliefs and subjective knowledge came into the fore

enormous increase since the end of 1970s; ISATT (International Study Association of Teachers and Teaching)

- a forerunner for teacher-as-a-researcher movement
- accepting and respecting teachers’ experienced knowledge
  - giving the voice to teachers
  - related to teacher as a reflective practitioner approach
- aim: to understand and interpret ways in which teachers make sense of, adjust to, and create the educational environments within their schools and classrooms
Interpretive research
Basic assumptions and aims

– teacher’s subjective school-related knowledge determines for the most part what happens in the classroom (cf. Pope, 1991; Halkes & Olson, 1984)
  • teachers are active agents in the development of educative events; not only delivers of mandated curriculum, but interpreters, and makers of curriculum

– reality: the world is real but individuals vary in perception of it

– aim is to describe, interpret and understand teachers’ work and world

Interpretive research

– concept of knowledge:
  • teachers generate knowledge, personal theories, test and modify them in and through their action, teachers use personally pre-existing theories, and beliefs to explain and plan their teaching, tacit knowledge
  • connected to constructivism, socio-constructivism, narrative approach
  • situationality and contextuality of teacher thinking and action (vs. universal laws)
  • Case studies; particularity and interconnectedness

Humanistic perspective on education
Interpretive research and teacher’s work

- Theory, knowledge is also seen to be created in practice; knowledge-in-action

- Teachers create personal theories, in and through practice

- Innovations: always interpreted by teachers; teachers are filters of innovations; aren't successfully implemented if teachers don’t understand or accept them (cf. top-down innovations)

Interpretive approach and teacher education

- Developmentalist, humanistic approach in teacher education (Zeichner & Liston, 1990)
  - Teacher as a naturalist observer, interpreter of classroom events, and developing through sensitive perceptions, reflective practitioner
  - Keen observer of children, their development. paying attention also to their individual and personal needs, to pupil diversity
  - A teacher’s self, own personal development emphasized
Accordingly educating is seen as:

- **Allowing ‘full realization’ of self or ‘full potential’ of an individual (which is already there but not evident) to emerge**

Experienced curriculum authors in ECEC tend to see curricula in the following broad terms:

- As open frameworks that **encourage children to choose** (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1988)
- As **emergent, framed by child research**, and research on learning giving rise to many approaches
- **Broad and comprehensive**, sustained by developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp and Copple 1997)
- As **in touch with vital interest of families and communities and not referenced in external standards or norms** (Carr and May in Penn (ed) 2000)
- **Focused on wellbeing**, where the concept of being connected positively to the inner world, to significant others, to society and the eco-system is central (Laevers, in OECD, 2003)

From interpretive to critical approach

- The question 'how do things work' is also a question of how to change those things. The study of 'what is' has reformist as well as descriptive qualities (Popkewitz, 1984, 184).

What does well being mean?

- imply a generalised state of feeling valued, socially, intellectually and, eventually, economically
- Actual indicators of well being
  - Establishes effective relationships
  - Is able to empathize
  - Attributes responsibility sensitively and knows boundaries
  - Is able to be assertive
  - Has an awareness of self-worth
It will generally show as

- Rich understanding
- Critical thinking
- Autonomy and choice
- High locus of control / self efficacy
- Concern for others / empathy

Critical perspective
Teacher as researcher, participatory research, action research, feminist research
- making academic research relevant to practioners (in UK)
- aim: emancipation and empowering
  - aiding teachers to analyse their work on ‘scientific’ grounds
  - liberating the teacher from the control and constraints of administration, mandated curriculum, and ready-made teaching materials
- Stenhouse (1975) sees teacher research perspective as fundamental to improvement:
  - "...it is difficult to see how teaching can be improved or how curricular proposals can be evaluated without self-monitoring on the part of teachers. A research tradition which is accessible to teachers and which feeds teaching must be created if education is to be significantly improved" (ibid., 165)
Critical stance and teacher action

- Emphasis on a teacher as a reformer and conscious, critical agent in school activities
- Societal awareness and aiming for democracy and equity emphasized
- Becoming aware of constraints and barriers in learning and education
- Emancipatory view of education

Critical stance and teacher education

- **Reconstructive tradition** in teacher education (Zeichner & Liston, 1990)
- Teachers transformative intellectuals in society, political agents
- **Interventions, deviating critical experiences needed** to make teachers aware of cultural constraints, taken-for-granted in education
- **Action research** and collaboration of schools and university, improving practices and understanding
- Teacher initiated, **grassroot innovations**
One example of action research

- 'Boys of the North at school' – project
  - aim: to enhance equity and enhance boys' school motivation and improve school attainments
  - University & school collaboration
  - Teachers learn to *share their pedagogical ideas and develop them together*
  - Important to pay attention to local cultures, history and sources of living
  - Parents’ participation

Current trends in Finnish (Lappish) teacher education

- Interpretive approach seen in that;
  - Pre-service teachers’ own assumptions, beliefs, personal histories and interests are paid attention to
  - Teacher learning is experiential—analyzing and interpreting, reflecting one’s experiences important, metacognitive skills
    - make them also conscious of their prior experiences, school memories, unconscious beliefs etc
    - aid them to gradually build their professional identity and professional knowledge, personal theories
Current trends in Finnish (Lappish) teacher education ...

- Critical stance is seen in:
  - Inclusive education
  - Prohibiting exclusion and striving for enabling environments, as well as equity and equality in education
  - Action research, collaborative enterprises with schools, teachers, parents and local communities

Teacher-as-a-researcher approach

- Inquiry-orientation
- In each phase: different foci of attention, script for describing and noticing events (portfolios)
- Dialogue with theory and practice
- Integrating studying research methods with pedagogical studies; research approaches and data gathering learned in authentic teaching situations
- Engaging in pedagogical development and innovation work as part of teacher studies
Integrating theory, practice and research studies at the University of Lapland

1. Orientation practicum, 1st year
   - Theoretical studies: educational psychology course
   - Observation of classroom and pupils
     - Knowledge of pupils, social relations and group dynamics and classroom culture
     - Recognition of pupil individuality and diversity
   - Focus: a classroom as an environment of children’s development and overall growth, sociocultural and pedagogical perspectives
   - Principles and tools of ethnographic research
     - Observation skills, documentation, starting pedagogical portfolio work

2. Subject didactic practicum, 2nd year
   - Acquiring the basics of teaching and guidance of learning
   - Focus: a classroom as a learning environment, pedagogic/didactic perspective
   - Studying one’s own action, students’ learning and studying processes, describing and interpreting situations and events; video-analysis and reflection
     - Recognizing and paying attention to students’ individuality, and diversity in learning
     - Constructing one’s pedagogical and didactic knowledge, skills
     - Attention to learning context, situations and events
     - Learning collaborative habits
Integrating theory, practice and research studies ....

- Theoretical section: subject didactics, basics of teaching, learning and curriculum, inclusive pedagogy
- Research approach:
  - Phenomenographic study; recognizing pupils' individual concepts and beliefs, and knowledge
    » Acquainting with pupil diversity in learning (interests, capacities, learning styles, motivational aspects etc)
  - Diagnosing and assessment methods, reflecting one's action as well as interaction in the classroom (videotaped lessons)

3. Field practicum, 3rd year
Acquainting with the whole of a teacher’s work,
As well as with school development and pedagogical innovations
- Focus: teacher’s work as a whole, multiple, interacting environments, collaboration with parents
- Research approach: action research, innovation and development research; integrating own master thesis with practicum
- Theoretical section: Curriculum, assessment and school development course
Integrating theory, practice and research studies ...

• 4th Advanced practicum: developing an expanded pedagogical and didactic competence and ethical thinking
  — Constructing own professional identity, and pedagogical theory; → justified, principled knowledge and decisions
• Focus: classroom as a pedagogical environment, oneself as a creator, collaborator and influencer in the environment, pedagogical tactfulness
• Growing awareness of the interrelationships between, social, cultural, economic and political contexts and professional practice

Integrating theory, practice and research studies ...

• Research stance: a deep and wide (critical) reflection of one's own development, thinking and action, a deeper understanding of pupils’ development and learning needs, pupil diversity and responding to these
• Narrative study, autobiography, self-reflective study
• Use of the digital, pedagogical portfolios written throughout the teacher education, and discussed in pedagogical seminars
• Theoretical section: Teachers’ professional and personal development course
• **Ultimate aim:**
  – *practice becomes praxis; a form of practice that is ethically informed, committed and guided by critical reflection of practice traditions and one’s own practice*

Hopes:
• "**Teachers make a difference**"

• "**It’s teachers who in the end will change the world (of the school) by understanding it**”
  (Lawrence Stenhouse, 1985)