

# Teacher's pedagogical autonomy as an antecedent for inclusive education

Inclusive teacher education  
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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

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## 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

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## 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'**

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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- 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 situational varying pedagogy, involving improvisation of action by the teacher
- **Cf. reflection-in-action**

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## 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

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- *Providing objective knowledge, often in fragmented bits (includes knowing what that knowledge should be).*

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- **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*

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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

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## Positivism and teacher education

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

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## 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

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## 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*

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### 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

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## 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)

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## 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 practioner*
  - **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

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- 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*

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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 (Bredenkamp 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)
- *(Adapted from Bennett, J (2004) Curriculum Issues in National Policy-Making Paris, OECD p9)*

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## 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).

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## 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

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## 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 practitioners (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

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## 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**

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## 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

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## 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-→ **analysing 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**

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## Integrating theory, practice and research studies

- 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

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## 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)

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## Integrating theory, practice and research studies

### 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**

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## 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*

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## 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**

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- *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)