Pre-service teachers’ experiences of empowering and challenging events of teaching practice

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Introduction

• Pre-service teachers’ cognition - knowledge and beliefs base of teaching

• Paying attention to different types of teacher cognition is increasingly important in teacher education (see e.g. Kansanen et al., 2000; Korthagen, 2001; Meijer, 2010)
  1. to learn to observe the true practice of teaching,
  2. to reflect on one’s own and other’s action during the practice of teaching,
  3. to extract “patterns” from the teaching activities in order to develop a theory of the action (Mena, 2010).

• Dominant activity for developing teacher cognition is reflection (Korthagen, 2001, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Korthagen & Wubbels, 2000).

• Nature of teacher cognition related with teacher learning and professional development: e.g. shifts from focus on subject -> oneself -> student learning.

• Video learning during teaching practice as an opportunity to foster teacher learning (Connell, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006).
Aims and research questions

• The aim of the study is to explore which challenging and empowering significant events pre-service teachers from different European contexts identify based on the video recording of their practice of teaching.

• Research questions
  1) What aspects of practice do the pre-service teachers experience as empowering or challenging?
  2) What characterises the most empowering and challenging aspects of practice?
Participants

• 92 pre-service teachers
• 30 from Finland, 21 from Estonia, 20 from Spain and 21 from The Netherlands
• Different teacher education curricula
Data collected using the procedure of guided reflection (ACTTEA 2012-2015)

VIDEOTAPED LESSON
- Classroom events

VIDEOTAPING
- Done by student teacher at classroom
- Focus on teacher’s action
- max 2 days

INDEPENDENT REFLECTION
- What happens during the lesson?
- What are the most important incidents (2) for you during the lesson? Why?

INCIDENT
- Incident
- Incident
- Incident

2 CRITICAL INCIDENTS:
- Positive, empowering
- Challenging, difficult

CLASSROOM EVENTS
- Classroom events chosen by the student teacher according to her/his aims for teaching practice

A) INDEPENDENT REFLECTION
- What happens in this incident?
- Why is this incident important and meaningful?
- What is the more general meaning of this incident in a wider context?

B) PEER REFLECTION
- At the end
- VIDEOTAPED LESSON

C) REFLECTION WITH SUPERVISOR
- What happens in this incident?
- Why is this incident important and meaningful?
- How has this incident affected to your thinking and actions?
- What is the more general meaning of this incident in a wider context?

WRITTEN REFLECTION IN POFO/REPORT
- What will you do with that you have understood?
Data analysis

• Pre-service teachers’ video recorded lessons from teaching practice
  – pre-service teachers identified a challenging and an empowering critical event (cf. Tripp, 2012) from the lesson
  – 183 critical events (92 challenging and 91 empowering events) were identified based on lesson videos

• The core themes of the events were defined.
• The core themes were analysed by utilising the abductive strategy and the framework of instructional core (pedagogical, didactical, and content relations).

• Chi-square and Fisher’s exact tests were used to compare the distributions of challenging and empowering events and curriculum groups in different countries.
Instructional core framework utilised in the data analysis

Figure 1: Framework for analysing challenging and empowering events (cf. Herbart, 1835, Kansanen & Meri, 1999; Toom, 2006)
Results (1): Quality of the critical events

Table 1. Content, pedagogical and didactical relations in different curriculum groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Relations in the incidents</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content relation N (%)</td>
<td>Pedag</td>
<td>Didact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>15 (42)</td>
<td>21 (58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school teacher</td>
<td>3 (4)</td>
<td>19 (22)</td>
<td>64 (74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject teacher</td>
<td>10 (16)</td>
<td>25 (41)</td>
<td>26 (43)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (7)</td>
<td>59 (32)</td>
<td>111 (61)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ACTTEA @ AERA 2015
Results (1): Quality of the critical events

Table 2. Content, pedagogical and didactical relations in subject teachers’ group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of critical incident</th>
<th>Relations in the incidents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content relation (% N)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
<td>31 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>6 (20)</td>
<td>30 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (16)</td>
<td>61 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogical relation (% N)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>9 (29)</td>
<td>18 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>16 (53)</td>
<td>27 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 (41)</td>
<td>45 (74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Didactical relation (% N)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>18 (58)</td>
<td>31 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
<td>30 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26 (43)</td>
<td>61 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results (2): Characteristics of the critical events focusing on the didactical relation

- 59% (n=65) of the critical events focusing on the didactical relation were identified as empowering.

- Empowering critical events focused on students
  - guiding students’ learning during the activity,
  - supporting students’ motivation.

- Empowering critical events focused on the pre-service teacher
  - giving clear instructions prior to the activity,
  - summarising the activity, and
  - revising what was learnt during the activity.
Results (2): Characteristics of the critical events focusing on the didactical relation

• 41% (n=46) of the critical events focusing on the didactical relation were identified as challenging.

• Challenging critical events focused on students
  – guiding students’ learning,
  – supporting their motivation, and
  – involving students in the learning process.

• Challenging critical events focused on the pre-service teacher
  – problems with giving instructions and
  – on experiencing difficulties with using demonstrational tools.
The differences in the meaningful events between the pre-service groups were significant in revealing the different emphases and orientations of the groups.

The student teachers had identified events focusing on the didactical relation, as the most empowering and challenging aspect of their teaching.

Viewing recordings of own teaching seemed to aid pre-service teachers to identify meaningful aspects of their action in the classroom and their student learning.

These findings should be taken into account in teacher education while supporting and guiding student teachers on the aspects of their practice where the true need lies.
Discussion

• Viewing one’s own professional actions seem to have resulted in essential reflections on the instructional core relations and might have effect on acquiring action-oriented knowledge (Mena, 2010).

• Student teachers need to be supported systematically in their learning to become professional teachers (Grossman, 2007; Husu et al., 2008; Toom et al, 2014).

• Videos should be utilised more effectively in the modern pedagogies of teacher education (e.g. Pedaste et al., 2014).
Key references


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