

EDITORIAL

HOW TO LINK TEACHER EDUCATION TO EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

This monothematic issue of *Studia paedagogica* examines teacher education, professional development, and how these relate to educational research. Our call for papers for this issue was inspired by our interest in how these two domains can influence and benefit each other.

It is often claimed that there is a gap between the world of research and universities and the world of real educational practice (Smagorinsky et al., 2004). Representatives of academic knowledge have criticized some aspects of teaching at schools (such as transmissive teaching and authoritative classroom discourse) and offered theory- and research-based alternatives in their stead (such as constructivist instruction and dialogic teaching). However, there is a different perspective to consider. The suggestions of academics have been considered as having a limited impact on real practice. Teachers often see educational science as detached from reality. In their opinion, academic concepts are difficult to apply because they are too idealized and disregard the institutional conditions at schools. Similarly, the education offered to teachers may be seen as impractical and insufficiently sensitive to teacher needs (Lefstein, Snell, 2011).

The current issue aims to challenge this almost habitual lamentation about the lack of synergy and even respect between researchers and teacher educators. The author of the first paper, Subin Nijhawan, pursues the question of how to bridge the well-known gap between theory and practice and how to make the voices of practicing teachers louder in the discourse on education. Nijhawan sees the solution in design-based action research, which is research carried out in close partnership between teachers and scientific researchers that aims to produce reliable and replicable theories that work in practice. Such research enables making use of teachers' practical knowledge and common sense. It also emphasizes the need to find pathways to generate broader theories from this very useful knowledge. In other words, the paper examines how to make practical knowledge scientific.

The next three studies (Patrick Hales, Sami Lehesvuori et al., Klára Šedřová et al.) follow in the path established by the first paper. They all describe projects that were implemented as both research projects and teacher development programs aimed at improving the level of teaching practice among the teachers involved. Patrick Hales joined a professional learning community that used concepts from participatory action research to discuss and improve the writing instruction practices of the teachers involved. Hales believes that effective teacher education should not aim to provide teachers with new or ready-made knowledge. Instead, he thinks that it is necessary to activate knowledge the teachers already have and encourage them to reflect and share it with others. Hales therefore believes that teacher talk is a key factor in effective teacher professional development. In his study, Hales traces how polite expressions of affirmation are exchanged over time for asking questions and challenging ideas. He takes the latter two to be key elements supporting authentic professional learning.

Sami Lehesvuori, Markus Hähkiöniemi, Kaisa Jokiranta, Pasi Nieminen, Jenna Hiltunen, and Jouni Viiri describe a professional development program focused on implementing dialogic teaching in classrooms. They emphasize versatile and continuous cooperation between scholars and participating teachers. The study implies that cooperation from both sides is necessary for anticipated changes in teaching practices and also for gaining a new understanding. In their view, scholars can offer educational science's latest knowledge to schools while teachers can ensure that it is implemented in a successful and sensible manner. While Patrick Hales examines changes in teacher talk, this paper studies whether teacher awareness changes during a professional development program. It shows that teachers can act in a dialogic manner if they have a developed awareness of dialogicity.

A study by Klára Šedřová, Zuzana Šalamounová, Roman Švařiček, and Martin Sedláček pursues a similar approach. Their paper also describes a development program focused on transforming the teaching practices of the teachers involved. The paper pays special attention to the role of emotions in professional development. Šedřová and her colleagues show that a broad spectrum of emotions arises among researchers and teachers and that these are both positive and negative. They arrive at a surprising conclusion according to which negative emotions inspire learning. They also show that if negative emotions are absent, teachers lack the impetus to change their teaching practices.

The subsequent contribution of Lieveke Hellemans and Stefan Haesen looks at the relationship between teacher education and educational research from another point of view. It examines how to conduct academic research that is also practical in the context of a university of applied sciences primarily

focused on teacher education. They show, using the example of a small study investigating the effect of inquiry-based learning, that conducting research leads to professional development for the involved lecturers and that its findings can be embedded into the curriculum of teacher education.

This monothematic issue also contains a fitting paper by an emerging researcher, Vasileios Symeonidis, which examines the continuum of teacher education. Symeonidis understands it as an overarching unity of initial teacher education, induction, and continuing professional development, and he shows how these have been influenced by various political changes and preventive steps in Hungary. Vasileios Symeonidis is an early stage researcher included in the European Doctorate in Teacher Education, a project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (see www.edite.eu). We find this both significant and cheering: we are to welcome a group of young researchers prepared to link their expertise in research with their interest in teacher education.

All of the studies collected in this special issue illustrate many facets of the relationships between teacher education and educational research. There is symbiosis when a teacher development program is treated as a research project at the same time. The papers in this issue can serve as evidence of this. A different kind of symbiosis can be achieved when findings from research are immediately included within the curriculum of teacher education and/or teaching practices. This is documented by some of the studies in this volume. There is no doubt that researchers can offer scientific knowledge to teachers that is beneficial for teaching. No less important is the fact that teachers can inspire researchers and scholars to reflect on their theories and consider the suitability and usefulness of these theories. As Luneberg and Korthagen (2009) have claimed, practical wisdom in teaching is always connected to both theory and experience.

To make this kind of symbiosis happen, close collaboration among teachers, teacher educators, and researchers is necessary. It is not coincidental that many of the authors who contributed to this issue do not have only one role in this regard. Some of them are primarily researchers (Hales, Lehesvuori et al., Šeďová et al.), while others are primarily teachers or teacher educators (Nijhawan, Hellemans, and Haesen). Nevertheless, we can feel a double commitment: to educational practice and its improvement on the one side and to educational theory and scientific knowledge building on the other.

We hope that all of the studies collected in this issue will be a source of inspiration for those who are interested in teacher education and/or research on teaching. We wish our readers pleasant reading and thinking.

References

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