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Congruence and dissonance between micro-teaching and macro-teaching

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Abstract

All the faculties of education in Turkey follow the structured programme prepared by the Higher Institute of Education and teacher trainees require to take many classes on methodology in language teaching and practice in the class before they are sent to the schools of Ministry of Education. The literature on supervisory lesson observation during initial teacher education implies the full preparation of the teacher candidates and tends to focus on the supposedly ideal lesson plans checked and supervised by mentors, tutors or supervisors (e.g. Cameron-Jones & O’Hara, 1995; Saunders et al., 1995; Rikard & Veal, 1996; Geen, 2001; Hopper, 2001; Lombardi, 2001; Hobson, 2002) and on discussion in the post-lesson conference (Waite, 1992; Parkinson & Davies, 1994; Roberts, 1992, 1994; Williams et al., 1998; John & Gilchrist, 1999; John, 2001). For this purpose, a qualitative case study method is followed. The participants are 100 senior year students at The English Language Teacher Training Department, Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir, Turkey. The data are analysed by seeking patterns and themes in relation to each research question. The participants believe that a close connection between the course materials and practical application in real classrooms do not always exist. They also state that they do not have enough opportunities for micro-teaching and practice before going to secondary schools for the Practicum class and the main problems they encounter are qualitatively classified and analysed.

Keywords: Practicum; microteaching; macroteaching.

1. Introduction

All the faculties of education in Turkey follow the structured programme prepared by the Higher Institute of Education and teacher trainees require to take many classes on methodology in language teaching and practice in the class before they are sent to the schools of Ministry of Education. The literature on supervisory lesson observation during initial teacher education implies the full preparation of the teacher candidates and tends to focus on the supposedly ideal lesson plans checked and supervised by mentors, tutors or supervisors (e.g. Cameron-Jones & O’Hara, 1995; Saunders et al., 1995; Rikard & Veal, 1996; Geen, 2001; Hopper, 2001; Lombardi, 2001; Hobson, 2002) and on discussion in the post-lesson conference (Waite, 1992; Parkinson & Davies, 1994; Roberts, 1992, 1994; Williams et al., 1998; John & Gilchrist, 1999; John, 2001). For this purpose, a qualitative case study method is followed. The participants are 100 senior year students at The English Language Teacher Training Department, Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir, Turkey. The data are analysed by seeking patterns and themes in relation to each research question. The participants believe that a close connection between the course materials and practical application in real classrooms do not always exist. They also state that they do not have enough opportunities for micro-teaching and practice before going to secondary schools for the Practicum class and the main problems they encounter are qualitatively classified and analysed.

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During the past half-century, several efforts have been made to reform or re-orient teacher education on the basis of an explicit theoretical paradigm. These efforts were made on the assumption that they could improve the effectiveness of teacher education by a more careful definition of ends and means, open up this practice to discussion and inquiry for the purpose of planning and evaluation, and promote synergy among teacher educators (Van Huizen, Van Oers, and Wubbels 2005:268). The latest trends in teacher education are the paradigm of competency-based of the late-1960s and 1970s, with the personal orientation to teaching and teacher education as its counterpart, and the paradigm based on reflection and inquiry of the late-1980s and 1990s. Advantages of the competency based teacher education are

---it is explicit about objectives and assessment criteria,
---it emphasizes the need for teacher education to bear fruit in effective performance in the daily practice of teaching.

On the other hand, this paradigm leaves little room for a personal interpretation of the teacher’s role in the light of either personal preferences or specific demands and conditions of the situation in which the teacher is engaged. Hence, this paradigm has been criticized for reducing the teacher’s role to that of a ‘technician’ or ‘executive’ (Valli and Rennert-Ariev 2002: 203).

The 1970s see the personal orientation in teacher education. Teachers use their own personality to ease the teaching process and establish the rapport between themselves and students. The downside is an appeal to personal creativity, self-development, and self-fulfilment may be self-defeating if it is not accompanied by a recognition of the stimulus and support these qualities require from outside the lone individual (Buchmann 1990).

The 1980s witness the paradigm of the reflective teaching in teacher education. This paradigm advocating a combination of the teacher as researcher and the reflective practitioner has attracted attention because the qualities it singles out are regarded as core qualities of the professional teacher. In action-research projects (Ponte 1999, 2002), this approach has been used for improving the professional functioning of teachers and for developing the curriculum.

Wood’s choice (2000) of an experiential rather than a cognitive perspective on teacher education, as well as his focus on meaningful learning both by trainee teachers and their pupils, are akin to the one developed by Van Huizen, Van Oers, and Wubbels (2005) who follow Vygotsky in developing their own paradigm.

Vygotsky (1896–1934) gave his name to a tradition in social science currently termed cultural-historical psychology or cultural-historical activity theory. Chaiklin (2001: 21) defines cultural-historical psychology as ‘the study of the development of psychological functions through social participation in societally-organized practices’. Thus, a neo-Vygotskian perspective foreshadows a way of integrating the valuable elements of the teacher education paradigms we outlined above because it concentrates on the connections between individual functioning and development and the sociocultural practices in which individuals take part. The chief distinguishing mark of this perspective is that it does not set out from opposition between organism and environment (or individual and society), but from the idea of a unified system in which these two elements are joined together in a dialectical relationship (Van Huizen, Van Oers, and Wubbels 2005:271). The anthropology of the Vygotskian tradition considers humans as both shaped by and shaping their living conditions. Hence, in neo-Vygotskian theory ‘activity’ is the most fundamental and comprehensive concept, suggesting that the functioning and development of human individuals are to be studied in the context of their participation in sociocultural practice and, more concretely, in a variety of activity systems, of which the field of teacher education is but one example.

The interplay between the exploration and development of public and personal meanings is another example of the neo-Vygotskian perspective. In a teacher-education programme based on an explicit professional image of teaching, this image (for example, the teacher as coach, as team-worker, as co-innovator) may be presented in such a way that it serves trainees as a starting-point for clarifying their personal motives for entering teaching. One important further step in this approach concerns the conceptualization of personality and identity.
Vygotsky emphasizes the motivational basis of thought, the role of emotional experiences in personality development, and the unity of intellectual and affective processes in consciousness as a dynamic system for assigning meaning.

Principles that can be drawn from the framework are that professional learning and development are best conceived and conditioned as an aspect of evolving participation in a social practice. Participation involves being drawn into a setting that includes a programme directed to the realization of values and goals, forms of social interaction and co-operation in an institutional context, and the use of cultural resources.

The view that personality and identity development involves an integration of intellectual, emotional, and volitional elements leads to the principle that teacher education should acknowledge and use the emotional experiences of apprentices.

2. Method

The present study aims at probing the problematic areas teacher trainees encounter when they are sent to the schools of the Ministry of Education in their last year. It is a study which analyses the written feedback given by practising teacher trainees to their teacher trainer.

2.1. Participants

The participants in this case study were 100 senior year students enrolled in the practice teaching course and all participants were asked to write an extensive evaluation report concerning all the methodology and practice courses they had taken. They were asked to write their opinions on

--how well the methodology courses at the university prepared them for the Practicum class
--what their suggestions are for the improvement of the methodology courses of the undergraduate programme
--what their main difficulties were

Participants were told that their reflections and feedback were very valuable, and that they would be used in improving and redesigning the courses. The participants were asked to provide as many details as possible and give clear examples and their personal accounts where relevant. The data were analysed by seeking patterns and themes in relation to each research question.

2.2. Data

Participants mentioned that their main areas of difficulties are:

--management of learners. They state that students are misbehaving and they could not handle the unruly students on the spur of the moment. When they recognize the problem, it is too late for them to solve it.
--management of teaching and learning. They are not able to use the student contributions effectively as springboard for further teaching and they stick doggedly to their lesson plan and they are not able to improvise.
--English language competence. They realize that their use of English is too limited. For the intermediate or advanced learners they are inhibited; for the elementary learners they resort to Turkish and cannot adjust their English to the level of learners.
--Lesson plan preparation. Although they say that they learn the details of the lesson plan preparation, they are still stuck at sequence and integration of the activities, monitoring progress, consolidation of the aims, achievement of the lesson objectives and timing.

Participants believe that their lack of experience in microteaching leads them to encounter more problems at microteaching. They believe that their knowledge is solid but practice is what they lack. They maintain that the personal attributes they have reinforce their desire to teach better. The attributes they mention they believe empowering them are warmth, support, affection, enthusiasm, care, motivation, idealism, consistency, creativity. They believe they are good at interacting with students enthusiastically, responding to their feelings, creating a lively atmosphere and attending to their individual differences.
3. Conclusions

The participants of this study believe that a close connection between the course materials and practical application in real classrooms is sometimes missing in the methodology courses they have taken in the second and third years. They also state that they have not had enough opportunities for micro-teaching and practice teaching. They wish to have more individual presentations rather than group work or project work presentations in the methodology courses. They claim that it would help them more and give them a clear idea if they could observe many different teachers, students with various proficiency levels, and many different school settings when they are sent to the schools of the Ministry of Education. Moreover, the participants suggest that several more focused observation forms for observing different aspects of the teaching and learning process should be provided to be used in observations (Bunton and et al 2002).

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