TEACHER EDUCATION: A JOURNEY OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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Session Overview

- Introduction
- Experiential Learning
- Current Practices: The Questions
- Evaluation of Reforms
- Conclusion: Critic & Findings
Introduction

“Teaching can only be understood as an intellectual and a critical intellectual undertaking.” (Giroux, 1988)

- To investigate the teacher training programme within further education and;
- To showcase the effectiveness of experiential learning for the development and progression of teachers and trainees.
- Assume that trainees and teachers learn from observations and traditional methods of knowledge transmission by experienced persons.

Experiential Learning Theory

- Call for a change in the delivery of the personal development opportunities and equally, a review of teachers’ training provisions.
“EVERYDAY LIFE IS STRANGELY AN UNRESEARCHED SUBJECT WHEN IT COMES TO HUMAN LEARNING.”

Jarvis, P. Learning from Everyday Life, 2012, HSSRP vol. I, no. 1

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.

Carl Rogers
The “Lived” Experience

- Carl Rogers *On Becoming a Person* (1961)
- ‘Potentiality’ to learn
- Experiences:
  - Perceived + Realised = Relevance
  - A change in both “self-organization and self-perception”
  - Self-initiated learning: Learning & retaining an *openness* to experience
  - Dynamic and active ever-changing beings.

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The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change. Carl Rogers

Learning occurs when the self is *not* threatened…
Current Practices: The Questions

I. To what extent do trainee teachers draw upon their own unique past experiences as a foundation to engage with new experiences?

II. As part of trainee’s professional development, can experiential learning as a suggested approach to teaching and learning, realistically motivate trainee teachers to try new practices, and accordingly, to make innovative changes to the curriculum?

III. Can teachers on a teacher training programme offer trainees an authentic and meaningful experiential learning opportunity where they can develop personally and intellectually?
A Humanistic Approach to Learning & Teaching

- **Structured series of observations**: 8 observations throughout the year including 4 tutorial meetings and 2 days of in-class engagement.

- **Reflective Accounts/ Rationales: Importance & practice**
  
  I. Though forms part of the assessment requirement, the verbal and written reflective accounts are barely discussed openly, emphasised as important, given allocated time on the curriculum, appear on the lesson planning or on the timetable of professional personal development opportunities (PPD).

  II. Reflective accounts- rationales- are not only restricted and overlooked, but also, over time, they have lost their aim of supporting the trainee’s journey in finding meaning and purpose.
Current Practices: Evaluations of Curriculum Reforms

- Insufficient support provided for teachers and trainee teachers to adjust and develop new practices to their own contexts. (Camburn and Han, 2015)

- Personal development Programmes (PDPs) & Continuing Professional development (CPDs).

- Transmission of information and observation of ‘expert teachers’ within experienced classes” (Girvan et al, 2016).

- Observe, Witness and Replicate! (Datnow et all, 2002)

- “Artificially constructed” and “controlled experiences” aimed to produce desired outcome. (Roberts, 2012)

- “Not all experiences result in learning.” (Dewey, 1933)
Conclusion: Critic & Findings

- “Simply inserting experiential activities into teaching without providing a consistent experiential pedagogical framework diminishes success for learners. (Blair, 2016, p. 5)

- Professional development models are teacher-led. And if learning occurs, is “change” immediate?

- Appraisals

- PDPs are “insufficient to foster learning which fundamentally alters what teachers teach and how they teach it.” (Boyle, While & Boyle, 2004)

- Accepting that aspects of one’s teaching may be problematic. (Bell and Gilbert (1994, p.47) “Deficit within the teacher”.

- Holistic approach to one’s personal development and growth
Q. Can we as teachers and educators orchestrate and equally engage in a collaborative dialogue about concrete situations with our learners to awaken their critical consciousness?

- Teachers as evolving beings on an equal experiential learning journey: A senior-learner. (An intellectual humility)
- The journey of experiential learning and professional development of the teacher and the trainee is not separate.
- It involves the co-creating of the educational process, a mutual evaluation of one’s own learning and development and establishing the challenges to move both beyond what is known.

Conclusion: Authentic & meaningful experiential learning
References

- Baehr, J. Intellectual Virtues Academy