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Abstract: This book is a result of collaborative research carried out by participants in a community of practice (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). Individuals and networks have contributed to research, education and local development through different kinds of participation. The work was supported by universities, Research and Development (RandD)-units and local school authorities. One outcome of the cooperative efforts is this edited volume.

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12. CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES

Introduction

This book is a result of collaborative research carried out by participants in a community of practice (Wenger et al, 2002). Individuals and networks have contributed to research, education and local development through different kinds of participation. The work was supported by universities, R&D-units and local school authorities. One outcome of the cooperative efforts is this edited volume.

As stated in the introductory chapter, the book has three aims. The *first* is to explore professional practice knowledge and the ways practicum is dealt with in teacher education. *Secondly*, by referring to collaborative experiences in different contexts we aim to identify approaches that may encourage others to initiate participatory research in education. The *third* aim is to make theoretical contributions to the study of practicum. Being part of the international Pedagogy, Education and Praxis collaboration we try to explore traditions and epistemologies of relevance to praxis.

Practicum is a crucial part of teacher education and we think of teacher education and the profession of teachers as crucial for the future of mankind. Preservice teachers' experiences during practicum have an impact on their identity as prospective professional teachers. Educators have a certain obligation to help students and pupils to prepare themselves for a life in present and future society. Teaching is an art and education is a moral endeavor. We understand praxis as a dialectic process where people form history and history forms people. Transforming praxis is a complex and challenging adventure that requires a reflective capacity as well as practical wisdom.

Several questions need to be clarified in this concluding chapter. Key concepts have to be further analysed. The title of our first chapter is: 'What is Practice in Teacher Education?' As the reader will find, professional practice knowledge has been interpreted differently by authors of different chapters. Different aspects are emphasised. Below we will focus on the empirical findings, the theoretical contributions and the research approaches presented in each chapter. But first we would like to clarify a theoretical framework.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE

What is professional practice knowledge when researched through ‘practicum’ in teacher education? Figure 1 was designed to facilitate an analysis of practicum by identifying actors, institutions and perspectives of relevance.¹

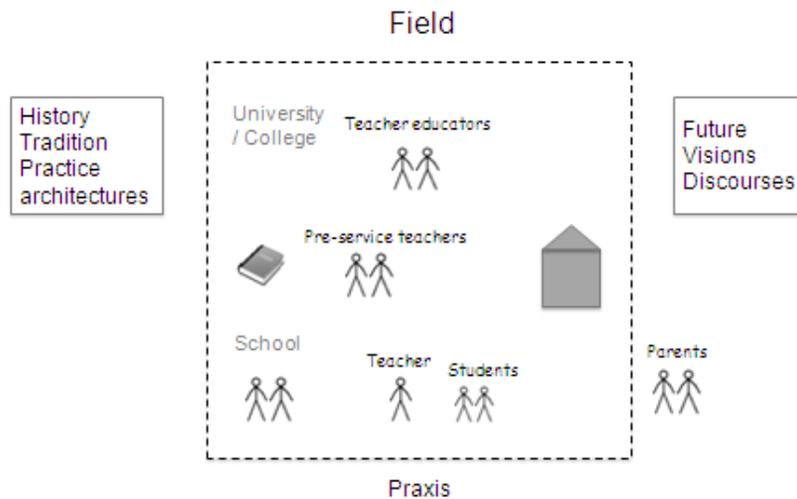


Figure 1. The Field of Professional Practice

We have come to understand professional practice knowledge as a particular kind of knowledge that is manifested as actions located within a social field, formed by history, tradition and practice architectures. The field could be regarded as an arena colonised by actors, institutions, artefacts and discourses that enable or constrain certain practices. Practices are often understood in relation to the actors’ intentions and visions. They maintain and express different discourses by performing practices in particular ways. The field of practice is characterised by complexity, dynamics and uncertainty (Schön, 1983/2003). Kemmis (2005) describes professional practice knowledge using words like dramaturgical, embodied,

¹ The figure was designed during R&D-seminars held twice a year in Stockholm during 2008-2010 organised by the *Network for Practicum and Praxis Projects*. Out of twenty participants on each occasion, ten were researchers, teacher educators, Ph D-students and ten were practitioners (school teachers, school leaders, practicum leaders, local supervisors).

situated and practical (p. 404). He maintains that professional practice knowledge is “discursively codified, socially organised and institutionally supported” (p. 409).

Different Perspectives on Practices

Figure 1 indicates that researchers of practicum can approach the field from an **historical** perspective, a ‘here-and-now-perspective’ (focusing on activities in present time) and a perspective emphasising the future and aspects of practicum that could be improved in future. Several other perspectives are of relevance and we will discuss just a few of them. An important distinction can be made between perspectives emphasising actors’ freedom to choose how to act here and now and perspectives emphasising that actors are prefigured by history, practice architectures and dominant discourses. In the latter case, space for freedom may be minimal. Activities, practices and processes can be regarded as constituting structures. On the other hand, structures can be regarded as determinants of activities, practices and processes. By applying a praxis approach we emphasise a dialectic relationship between processes and structures.

There is a difference between discourse theorists on one hand and others who argue from an empirical and pragmatic point of view. Discourse theorists emphasise the importance of language and discuss our conception of reality as primarily a discursive phenomenon. They maintain that we cannot claim general knowledge about reality. From an empirical point of view there is a reality ‘out there’ to be researched. From a pragmatic point of view we learn about reality from the way we act and by the consequences of our actions: social reality is constructed by activities performed by human beings.

Practice theorists, on the other hand, offer a challenging approach in this context. They are suspicious of ‘theories’ that deliver general explanations of why social life is as it is. They regard ‘the social’ as a field of practices. A practice should, according to Schatzki (2001b), primarily be understood as “a *set of actions* (p.48)”. Actions are bodily doings and sayings. Activities are embodied. So far, it is easy to follow Schatzki. But it all turns quite complicated when he maintains that:

The actions that compose a given practice, consequently, are linked by the cross-referencing and interdependent know-hows that they express concerning their performance, identification, instigation, and response (p. 51).

We understand through engaging with the various projects reported in this edition that this ‘embodiment’ of practice is indeed dependent on pre-understanding, tacit knowledge and positioning. To regard ‘the social’ as a field of cross-referencing practices raises interesting questions about social order. What is then the origin of social structures? If, as practice theorists suggest, “practices are the source and carrier of meaning, language, and normativity” (Schatzki, 2001a, p.12), practicum should be analysed as constituted by practices (understood as a set of actions).

By challenging dominant approaches in education, where practices are analysed as more or less ‘products’ of human intentions, practice theorists argue for the pre-

eminence of practices. Schatzki claims that “Practices, in sum, displace mind as the central phenomenon in human life” (p.11). We understand this claim as a key proposition. Furthermore, he argues:

...the field of practices is the place to investigate such phenomena as agency, knowledge, language, ethics, power and science (pp. 13-14)

In this book we have, to some extent, investigated agency, knowledge, language, ethics, power and science within the field of practicum. Referring to Figure 1, we suggest that practicum should be regarded as an arena, a social field and a location for certain practices. These practices are performed in a certain context, at a particular time, by particular actors who act in a particular way in relation to particular persons having certain intentions that are formed by history and by the actors’ appreciation of future. The figure indicates that the actors are supported or suppressed by institutions, artefacts and other actors. Teacher educators, preservice teachers, school teachers, examiners and pupils are involved. So are other actors like researchers, supervisors, school leaders, special educators, psychologists, parents of school children, ordinary citizens and politicians. The question is still there. To what extent can the actors involved influence practicum if the practices performed are regarded as ‘cross-referencing and interdependent know-hows’?

Institutions, Models and Projects

Figure 1 implies that institutions like universities, schools, local authorities and governmental departments have a strong impact on practicum. From a praxis perspective, these institutions are historically formed by human beings who are in turn formed by institutions. Furthermore, referring to the introduction chapter, practicum is often formed by agreed models for how the actors should collaborate and how the institutions should work. They could for example follow a partnership model, a case based model or a research and development model (Ch 1, this edition). There are several interesting models for practicum that could be combined. The problem, however, is that practicum is too often left to chance. Other priorities are followed by actors in charge of practicum. Supported or suppressed by certain models, we notice that actors try to change reality. They initiate local projects with the intention of influencing certain aspects of practicum. Generally, educational projects reflect the actors’ analysis of present problems and their visions of what could and should be improved.

Figure 1 indicates that activities in the field are related to artefacts like text books, literature, curricula, teaching equipment and class rooms. The social field is occupied by actors, institutions, artefacts and discourses supporting or constraining certain practices. Taking this state of ‘occupation’ into account, it is obvious that individuals are not completely free to act in the here and now, in any way they choose.

From a Bourdieu-perspective, a social field is structured before anyone enters the field for the first time. Bourdieu (1993, 1999) refers to habitus or sedimented intentions that are concealed in social fields and in peoples’ cultures and actions. Such intentions are recurrent and may be activated in particular circumstances.

From a practice theory perspective, on the other hand, ‘practices’ should be regarded as determinants structuring and shaping practicum as well as our understanding of social reality. As stated, with reference to Schatzki, “practices, in sum, displace mind”.

Figure 1 acknowledges that a social field is formed by history, present practices and the actors’ apprehension of future. By including praxis as a key concept, we indicate that there are opportunities for the actors involved to act in a manner that may contribute to a more human world. They can move from practice to praxis. However, ‘practice’ in this respect is not an individual mission. The way a teacher acts, communicates and relates is dependent on the way other people act, communicate and relate in the same context. Individual sayings, doings and relatings cannot deviate too much from the tradition of a particular profession. As MacIntyre (1984) maintains, “a tradition is an argument extended through time”. The possibility to change a certain educational practice is interwoven with the traditions, discourses and practices that are predominant in that specific field. Some sayings, doings and relatings are enabled by the practice architectures, others are constrained. This poses a general problem for emancipatory action research.

Practices as Manifestations

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is relevant here. He talks about habitus as acquired patterns of dispositions to act in particular ways in particular situations. Habitus includes actions informed by reflection as well as actions which merely express inveterate habits. Local cultures composed of sedimented intentions may predetermine peoples’ actions and their understanding of these actions and to an indeterminate extent influence whether and how a particular menu of actions affects praxis in that setting.

Bourdieu regards social fields as constituted by conflicts and contests through which the actors involved try to pursue and realise their intentions. They may gain support or confront resistance from other groups. In that respect, Bourdieu offers arguments for a praxis approach. A social field exists when groups of people and institutions fight about something of common interest (Bourdieu 1993, 1999; Broady, 1991). As is the case in other wars: if there is no battle, there is no battlefield. Bourdieu’s approach is different from Schatzki’s. Bourdieu understands social reality as constructed through conflicts and contests. Schatzki understands social reality as constructed by practices. From our point of view, this distinction is important for understanding practicum.

Figure 1 indicates that practicum is an historically constructed phenomenon. It is located to a social field where certain practices are nurtured while other practices are not. The field is ‘colonised’ by concepts rooted in history, tradition and culture. A teacher is not completely free to choose how to perform his or her profession. The doings and the sayings are related to what other actors believe would be worthwhile and possible to accomplish. Practice architectures prefigure practices, but as suggested, they do not predetermine practices. Practices are, in our view, to some extent, formed by the ways practitioners understand and relate to the

prevailing discourses. Practices are also formed by participants' visions of what is the right thing to do in a particular situation.

From a discourse perspective, practicum is primarily a discursive phenomenon. Practicum can be regarded as a particular kind of educational arrangement that serves the purpose of supporting a specific tradition of noticing, naming and framing a phenomenon. As maintained by Freire (1970/1996), Schön (1983/2003) and Smith (2008), a research process generally includes noticing, naming and reframing phenomena of interest. Research is here understood as examining a phenomenon from a new perspective, bringing new light into the field. We acknowledge that practicum is an indistinct part of a larger ecology of practice that is in itself not fully understood. The sayings, doing and relating that represent the living and dynamic entity of schooling change continually through micro-adjustments and micro-engagements in the interpersonal relationships involved.

Our point is that history, as well as future, is manifested in context-related practices. Praxis should be understood as a dialectical process in which humankind changes the world and the world changes humankind (Aristotle, 2004; Bernstein, 1971/1999; Bourdieu, 1993, 1999; Freire, 1970/1996; Habermas, 1974; Marx, 1888). One figure cannot cover all aspects of importance to practicum. Even so, we hope that the reflections generated by Figure 1 may be enlightening when we try to conclude the research presented in each chapter. What conclusions can be drawn and what are the challenges? Several authors refer to 'a practicum turn in teacher education'. What does this mean?

QUESTIONING DOMINANT DISCOURSES

Rorrison (Ch 2) approaches practicum by questioning dominant discourses in teacher education. Practicum is regarded as a particular kind of educational arrangement that serves the purpose of supporting a specific tradition of noticing, naming and framing a phenomenon. Rorrison tries to reframe practicum by discussing the field in relation to guiding principles that emerged from her previous study in Australia (Rorrison, 2007). She has made further inquiries to explore if the same principles are relevant in different national contexts and local settings. Her empirical findings are based on action research carried out in Australia (twelve schools), Canada (six schools) and Sweden (six schools). The action research performed follows a narrative methodology based on field data collected from over 200 hours of observation of preservice teachers in class rooms. The narratives, and the responses from preservice teachers and mentors, reveal that practicum is often left to chance. This is why Rorrison argues for 'a practicum turn'. Improving practicum requires that the actors involved reframe their understanding and their way of talking about practicum learning. There is need for

New ways to ensure that practicum learning for preservice teachers is meaningful, rigorous, authentic, relevant and connected and not left to chance ... (Ch 2, p.x).

The principles outlined by Rorrison should be understood as conclusions of her findings and as recommendations to the actors involved to improve practicum.

They cover different aspects that need to be reframed: theories of learning, collaborative relationships, recognition of different learning needs, transparency, a learning community, reflective dialogues and international perspectives (see appendix chapter 2). These aspects, she argues, are not carefully attended to by established practicum models. By listening to preservice teachers, mentors, practicum leaders and others involved in teacher education practicum, Rorrison concludes that a new model for practicum is needed, one based on a new relationship between university and school community. A new model seems to be emerging:

With more and more teachers in schools maintaining the currency of their professional knowledge through further study and research, it may be time to put more value on their role as teacher educators and educational leaders similar to the model of the VFU and basgrupp system in Sweden (Ch 2, p. x).

The basgrupp system in Sweden is part of the *integrated practicum model* which gives school teachers important roles as teacher educators (Ch 1, p.xx). The basgrupp as such is a manifestation of a shift of power from university to local schools. Practice architectures have changed.

Referring to Figure 1, Rorrison approaches practicum from a perspective emphasising discourses, future options and visions. Her research includes participant action and narrative research as ways to bring about a change. She argues for a new way of talking about practicum. *From this perspective, professional practice knowledge is primarily a discursive phenomenon. So is practice.* Several of Rorrison's practicum principles gain support by findings presented in chapters by other authors approaching practicum from other perspectives. Increased collaboration between universities at a national and international level is necessary if we are to develop a conceptual framework to articulate the important understandings of practicum learning.

LEARNING BY INTER-ACTION WITH STUDENTS

Preservice teachers generally seem to regard practicum as the most important part of teacher education. What they experience during practicum is of great importance for their prospective professional identity. *Männikkö-Barbutiu & Rorrison* (Ch 3) have studied practicum from a pre-service teachers' perspective. As illustrated by Figure 1, there are several other legitimate perspectives. However, Männikkö-Barbutiu and Rorrison argue that to understand practicum:

It is...important that their [preservice teachers] voices are being heard by the teacher educators and that their learning in practice is acknowledged as part of their scholarship. This is what we understand as the 'practicum turn'. (Ch 3, p. x).

Future teacher education should, according to the authors, take as a point of departure the experiences articulated by preservice teachers during practicum. Such a bottom-up strategy is here presented as 'a practicum turn'. Männikkö-Barbutiu

and Rorrison have tried to identify critical incidents by asking pre-service teachers about their experiences. ‘Practice’ is identified through analysis of 27 narratives constructed in Australia, China and Sweden, nine from each site. The empirical field is a heterogeneous geographical area. It consists of 27 preservice teachers doing their practicum in three very different national settings. Practicum is located to different schools. Teacher education is organised in different ways. Different models for practicum are applied. In Sweden the *integrated model* is prescribed. In parts of China and Australia a *community development model* for practicum is relevant. The question answered by preservice teachers from different settings deals with their experiences during practicum: “What did you learn from this moment?”

Their responses reveal that ‘practice’ from their perspective is a certain kind of learning. It is the kind of learning that may occur during practicum. Preservice teachers in this study emphasise moments when they themselves act in relation to ‘their’ pupils. They describe the ‘memorable encounters’ as learning opportunities that are ‘fruits’ of their interaction with pupils. Practicum learning is nurtured when preservice teachers themselves are in charge of a certain social and educational situation. Männikkö-Barbutiu and Rorrison maintain:

The preservice teacher narratives provide witness of personal growth and deepening insights on the complexities of the teaching profession. They also reveal the frustration and uncertainty that the preservice teachers feel when facing situations where their careful planning is set aside by unexpected events in the classroom or the school. But despite the hardships, preservice teachers look back at their practicum with a certain pride and recognition of its important role in their learning and developing teacher identity. (Ch 3, p. x).

From this perspective, professional practice knowledge is a certain kind of knowledge that can be developed through preservice teachers’ interaction with pupils. Practice knowledge follows routes other than conventional learning processes. A practicum turn could be supported or suppressed by the way teacher education is organised. Even if different models are applied in different national settings, teacher education should be organised to maximise preservice teachers’ interaction **with pupils**.

PARTICIPANTS IN LOCAL PROJECTS

Another approach to ‘practice’, ‘practicum’ and ‘a practicum turn’ is demonstrated by *Eilertsen, Furu & Rørnes* (Ch 4). They take as a point of departure a national project intended to improve practicum in teacher education.² The project is based on analysis made and initiatives taken by people in charge of teacher education practicum at Tromsø University and the region of Tromsø. The actors, including the authors themselves, try to establish practicum as an integrative element in

² PIL Practicum as and Integrative Element in Teacher Education

teacher education. Compared to the *integrated model* described earlier (Ch 1, pp xx) they look for a change. They identify professional practice knowledge by challenging the dominant Norwegian model for practicum. In a collaborative action research approach they support local educational projects. Collaborating with school teachers and local authorities, they try to create opportunities for preservice teachers to be participants in school development. Their approach resembles the *community development model* for practicum described earlier. Two local projects are in focus here: The Navigare Project and The High North Project.

The aim of The Navigare Project is to promote children's social competence. Five Tromsø schools are included and ten preservice teachers volunteered to participate. Instead of having the normal six weeks of concentrated and supervised practice, the preservice teachers were offered seven to eight weeks practice, distributed over a year, in one of the Navigare schools. 'Practice' is exemplified here as a dialogue conference which is, according to the authors, "a place to learn and re-learn". Practice is defined as an authentic dialogue between preservice teachers and professional teachers when they meet in conferences. A dialogue conference is a research method that favours a democratic way of noticing, naming and reframing professional practice knowledge.

The other project, The High North Project, is initiated by the Tromsø municipality. The aim is to strengthen the regional focus in primary and lower secondary school, update **teachers and pupils** on regional development and ultimately promote a regional identity that might encourage young people to stay or return to the region. Seven preservice teachers volunteered to participate in the The High North Project. Practicum was **located in** schools involved in the project. One of the schools offered an opportunity to two preservice teachers to explore energy and environmental issues. The preservice teachers (at master level) were asked to investigate the challenges local authorities face in relation to expansion of oil production in Northern Norway. Fisheries are still very important regionally and in the particular local community where practicum was located. Here, the conflict between new and traditional industries and the environmental issues is of vital interest. The preservice teachers completed their assignment by reporting new views on the issue based on relevant and updated knowledge. Being well educated they served as experts in a public plenary discussion where they presented the perspectives of oil companies, fishers, politicians and environmental organisations. Reflecting on preservice teachers' involvement in local projects, the authors conclude:

An important finding of this project is that we see preservice teachers' achievements partly as a result of their access to *expanded arenas of professional discourse and exchange*, compared to more traditional practicum arrangements. In addition to the everyday discussions with mentors and others, their participation included school based seminars, regional conferences and in some cases also presentations at national and even international conferences. In addition to the learning potential of these events we also highlighted the element of *authenticity* in their contributions that was very different from that of traditional examinations (Ch 4, p. x).

Their conclusions are related to the *platform model* for practicum as well as to the *case based model* (Ch 1, pp xx). In the Tromsø case, *professional practice knowledge is nurtured by preservice teachers' participation in learning communities*. Teacher educators have constructed an alternative model for practicum based on local projects giving 'practice' a new meaning. A 'realistic' teacher education serves as an alternative to the dominant model. They face several obstacles related to logistics and traditions. However, preservice teachers are offered expanded areas of professional discourse. This is an important aspect of 'a practicum turn'.

PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY

A similar action research approach to 'practice' and 'practicum' is reported by *Heikkinen, Kiviniemi & Tynjälä* (Ch 5). However, they have a different focus. **Their starting point is a R&D-project aimed at** improving practicum learning as part of a certain curriculum. They challenge the dominant practicum model in Finland which is the laboratory **model** (Ch 1).

The major actors in this case are the researchers, teacher educators, school teachers and preservice teachers. The institutions involved in practicum are the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Jyväskylä in collaboration with Jyskä Primary School in the city of Jyväskylä in Central Finland. The project, carried out during the period of 2006-2011, tried to introduce a new model for practicum: The Integrative Pedagogy Model. This model resembles what has earlier been described as an integrated model (Ch 1, pp xx). Compared to the examples from Sweden and Norway the Finnish case is **different in regard to what** should be integrated. Here they try to integrate different parts of the educational system. The object of the study in Finland was practicum learning as part of a university course of Ethics and Philosophy in Education. Empirical data, collected during a period of five years, included 89 preservice teachers' learning assignments, an on-line-feedback questionnaire, focus group discussions, reflective notes and e-mail correspondence. Preservice teachers and local supervisors participated. The researchers explored how professional autonomy could be promoted through practice. More specifically, this was the research question:

How do preservice teachers and their supervising teachers experience the integration of practicum and studies on philosophy and ethics of education, especially with regard to the development of teacher autonomy (Ch 5, p. x)?

The authors maintain that autonomy is a key element for professional teachers. Educators must know how to act in relation to context, situation and participants. However, professional autonomy is not considered as an individualistic endeavour. It refers to the code and culture of the profession. A crucial part of practicum in this case is 'School-hijacking'. Preservice teachers 'hijack' the school and take the role as a professional teacher. During a couple of days they work in the classroom without the physical presence of a supervising teacher. The purpose is to provide

preservice teachers with the authentic experience of acting as teachers. Some of the preservice teachers responded:

For the first time I had the feeling after a practice that I really loved the practice and I got the feeling that, hey, I can be a teacher (Preservice teacher 12/2009; focus group).

This all clearly confirmed my idea that I am in just the right field and I want to be a teacher (Preservice teacher 9/2009; focus group) (Ch 5 p. x).

Another difference in this project was that the Jyväskylä teacher educators introduced 'faded scaffolding' as a way to support professional autonomy. The idea was that autonomy is best supported by teacher educators gradually decreasing the support and supervision of preservice teachers.

Teacher educators should be able to judge when a preservice teacher has passed the threshold and become a professional and autonomous teacher. To pass this 'magic point', preservice teachers have to make the experience of being in charge of a class as if they were already professionals. By teaching they learn how to teach. *A conclusion from this study is that practicum should offer preservice teachers proper scaffolding for authentic experiences in schools and class rooms.* Autonomy, as an aspect of professional practice knowledge, can be developed when practised. A practicum turn is here promoted by an *integrative model* based on collaboration between researchers, teacher educators and school teachers.

SITUATED PROFESSIONALISM

Hedegaard-Sorensen & Tetler (Ch 6) have studied special education and arrived at a similar conclusion regarding professional practice knowledge. The kind of knowledge required could be developed by practitioners in collaboration with researchers who support a reflective mood.

The field of special education has become central to the political agenda in Denmark as well as in other countries. An increasing number of pupils are being taught in separate settings, that is in special classes and special schools. A national survey indicates that 5.6 percent of the pupil population in Denmark is excluded from mainstream educational contexts. One conclusion made, is that to avoid the segregation Danish teachers need to improve their skills in coping with the increased academic, social and cultural diversity in their classrooms. The problem seems to be a lack of professional practice knowledge. That is why 'special education', as a specific subject in Danish teacher education, has recently been reintroduced.

Hedegaard-Sorensen and Tetler discuss what kind of knowledge should be developed and how it could be nurtured. They challenge the dominant discourses in Danish special education characterised by psycho-medical approaches, neuroscience, biomedicine and sociological perspectives. The authors introduce 'situated professionalism' as an alternative and a challenge. This concept is based on findings from three different field studies in Denmark focussing on pupils' learning experiences and teachers' work in class rooms. One study included 27

pupils. Another study was carried out in 10 different settings. Research narratives, interviews, observations and action research indicate, that teachers do not follow prescriptive programmes nor ideological and normative 'theories' when 'implementing' inclusive strategies:

Teachers seem to understand the task of educating pupils, diagnosed for example with autism, from a broader knowledgebase. It is neither the psycho-medical nor the sociological approach they see as necessary to draw upon, but 1) specific knowledge about the 'diagnosis' and 'special needs', 2) knowledge about inclusion (about creating differentiated learning environments, creating communities and classroom climate) as well as 3) knowledge about pedagogy and didactic (about teaching in general and coping with situations in everyday life in schools) (Ch 6, p. x).

Hedegaard-Sorensen and Tetler regard practicum as an educational arrangement that has to be changed in order to support the kind of practice knowledge needed. They criticise the 'theory and practice dichotomy'. 'Situated professionalism' implies the kind of knowledge and skills needed in everyday life in classrooms. The authors emphasise that teachers make judgements and adjustments in such situations.

Being a teacher in special educational settings (and presumably in every kind of setting) requires the competence of ongoing improvisation and adjustments to the plan, according to the way pupils react and respond. This is included in the concept of 'situated professionalism'. The challenge for teacher education, then, is to prepare their pre-service teachers to become 'situated professionals', in the sense of enabling them to act, to make judgements and adjustments and to reflect and theorise in learning situation (Ch 6, p. x).

This approach resembles the *case based model* for practicum (Ch 1, pp xx). *Professional practice knowledge should be developed by practitioners, teacher educators and researchers taking 'practice' as a point of departure for reflections.* 'Situated professionalism' requires a change of epistemology, practice architectures and the relationships between researchers and practitioners. Collaborative studies inspired by action research are needed, that is, studies where teachers, preservice teachers and researchers work together to describe practice (complex learning situations) and analyse practical situations.

A PROCESS OF SELF-FORMATION

In a small study, *Brodin* (Ch 7) has examined how teachers and students of social work conceptualise professional practice knowledge. How do they learn, what do they learn and what kind of knowledge is there to be learnt? Her study includes three focus groups established with teachers and students of the Study Programme in Social Work for the Care of Elderly and Differently Abled Persons at Stockholm

University. One focus group consisted of lecturers, the two others of students: one of students before their practicum (term four) and one of **students at the end of** their studies when they have experienced practicum (term five). The focus groups were asked to discuss: What does professional practice knowledge mean to you?

Brodin analyses their discussions in relation to two different 'paradigms': a competence-based and a reflective learning paradigm. In a competence-based learning paradigm there is an emphasis on technical and practical aspects of social work. In a reflective paradigm there is a focus on students' learning through the dialectical process of knowledge, action and reflection. While the competence-based learning paradigm tends to encourage the prescriptive, regulating and controlling aspects of the profession, the reflective paradigm promotes the socially situated knowledge that the professional social worker is expected to develop. Practicum within the competence-based learning paradigm is regarded as a way for students to acquire the necessary technical skills. Within the reflective paradigm, practicum is considered as a way for students to explore professional practice on the basis of theoretical knowledge and to interpret this experience in relation to the self and the world around. Both kinds of knowledge are needed in social work and education.

It is interesting to note that the students talk about practicum as the most valuable part of their social work education. They would like to have more time allocated for practicum: more practica would give them more opportunities to recognise different aspects of social work. In this study professional practice knowledge is a kind of theory and self-knowledge that supports a reflective approach in relation to others. One of the teachers **in the course** said:

... a large part of the degree is about self-knowledge and it becomes obvious at practicum, because there they shall look on themselves, their own learning process, what happens and how they handle different situations in their own learning (Ch 7, p. xx).

Here practicum is an arena where students learn a certain way to think. One of the students responded:

It's hard to get a receipt for my knowledge, I think, because I feel that I learn very much a way to think when I study this programme. And it's very hard to put it in words like that, but I know a way to think (Ch 7, p. xx).

Practicum is a field where students learn how to 'think as professionals'. They learn how to reflect and their reflections often focus on their own feelings, emotions and values in relation to the clients they meet. They learn how to explore the self as part of practicum. Brodin concludes:

In both preservice teacher and social work education, the basic idea of reflection is that it will help the students to prepare for situations or incidents that will occur when they begin their career as professional practitioners. However, while reflections on personal qualities and

abilities are explicit in the practice learning of social work, this is more implicit in preservice teacher students' practice learning (Ch 7, p. xx).

From this perspective, professional practice knowledge is a way to think and a process of self-knowledge and self-formation. Practicum should include the process of forming a personal and professional identity. This is an important aspect of a practicum turn.

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS

Emsheimer & Ljunggren de Silva (Ch 8) approach professional practice knowledge from a different angle. They do not ask preservice teachers about their conception of 'practice'. Instead, they explore how preservice teachers understand educational theories. The authors are interested in the relationship between theory and practice. They want to know if preservice teachers are able to theorise their practicum experiences and whether teacher education supports a 'teaching stance'. The conclusions made are similar to those reported in other chapters. It is a small study based on discussions and interviews among 15 preservice teachers at Stockholm University. The initial question for focus groups was:

If you encountered something strange in your practicum – how did you handle it, and how did you relate it to theories learned? (Ch 8, p. xx).

The authors found that just a few of the preservice teachers could explain theories in a reasonable way. They referred to Vygotsky, Piaget, Skinner and sometimes Bourdieu, indicating that they understood 'theories' as 'grand theories'. They demonstrated a general idea of these theories, but they could not relate them to their own practicum experiences. One of the preservice teachers said:

We think it is a disaster having to learn so many theories especially when reality is very far away from theory... (Ch 8, p. xx).

Emsheimer and Ljunggren de Silva conclude that preservice teachers seem to expect that 'theories' should serve as guidelines for action. When this does not work they become disappointed with educational theories. However, some preservice teachers responded that a 'theory' could serve as a stimulus for reflection. The problem, they said, was that teacher education seldom offers proper opportunities for discussion about theories.

The authors conclude that teacher education seems to introduce 'theory' in a way that alienates preservice teachers from their practicum experiences:

The respondents suggest a 'seminar education', meaning large possibilities for seminar discussions as they believe this would have given them better possibilities of developing their understanding of teaching as well as of theories and relating them. This view is conflicting with the tendency of higher education which is becoming more academic where theories are taught and it is then up to the learner to make his or her own adaptations (Ch 8, p. xx).

The authors also criticise the dominant ‘theory-first-approach’. It appears that the prescribed integrated model is not very effective. As an alternative, they offer arguments for a *case based model*. Alternative approaches are described in chapter 8 as ‘practice-first’ and as ‘a teaching stance’. A conclusion from this study is that *preservice teachers’ experiences during practicum should serve as a point of departure for reflections about teaching*. Teacher educators should, to a greater extent, support preservice teachers’ reflective capacity. Teacher education should be organised as a dialectic process in which preservice teachers learn how to theorise practice in situ. This change of teacher education requires ‘a practicum turn’.

HOW TO ASSESS TEACHER COMPETENCY

Jönsson & Mattsson (Ch 9) approach the issue of ‘professional practice knowledge’ by exploring how teacher competency is assessed. ‘Competency’ is discussed as being

...able to *act knowledgeably* in *relevant situations*; a definition which emphasises: (a) the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes into a functional whole; (b) that competency is something that we acquire and not something that we are born with, and (c) the situated nature of knowledge, where competency depends not only on the individual but on contextual factors and the actions of others (Ch 9, p. xx).

From this perspective, assessment is a complicated task. A preservice teacher may write an excellent academic text about teaching but the text will not prove that the author knows how to teach. Jönsson and Mattsson maintain, that although practice knowledge is difficult to assess, teacher educators should be able to certify that preservice teachers have reached a certain standard. Furthermore, preservice teachers should be informed about the criteria agreed upon and how they are applied. However, research indicates that teaching performance often is based on the assessors’ subjective experiences of teaching, their tacit understandings and on their own preferences.

Recently, similar models, instruments and criteria for assessing preservice teachers’ teaching performance have been introduced at Malmö and Stockholm University. According to the instruments introduced, a preservice teacher is expected to make progress in three different areas, moving from a ‘novice’ to a ‘professional teacher’. The areas are ‘Professional Identity’, ‘Didactical Awareness’ and ‘Communicative, Democratic Leadership’. Furthermore, according to the new model, teacher educators should conduct assessment dialogues in collaboration with local supervisors and preservice teachers. They are expected to use the same frame of reference. The assessment dialogue could be regarded as an example of the *case based practicum model* described in chapter 1.

In a small empirical study, Jönsson and Mattsson have investigated the intended use, as well as the actual use, of the models, instruments and criteria introduced. They have **analysed** documents (such as guiding principles for organising and

assessing practicum), interviewed teacher educators, participated in assessment dialogues/conferences and observed actual class room performance.

One finding is that the new assessment tools are used in different ways by different teacher educators. Some refused to use it, some used it just to facilitate group discussions and some thought it was a good tool for preservice teachers' self-assessment. However, most of the teacher educators interviewed expressed their appreciation of the new model. They maintained that the descriptive criteria facilitated their conceptualisation of preservice teachers' progression. Several teacher educators maintained that the new model better recognises the importance of practice knowledge.

On a whole, however, it seems as if the instrument was primarily used for formative assessment. In this study it was seldom used for summative purposes. The authors conclude:

It is not reasonable to expect the educators to be able to make a well-grounded assessment of preservice-teacher performance on the basis of a few observations and some campus-based meetings... The assessment dialogue gave the participants an opportunity to conceptualize professional experiences and to reflect on critical pedagogical issues. This is an important contribution, which might potentially aid in improving practicum learning and even teacher education (Ch 9, p. xx).

A more important and general conclusion is that *models, instruments and criteria for assessing practice knowledge need to be developed. Preservice teachers and their school based mentors should be included in the process.* The practicum part of teacher education will be left to chance, unless practicum learning is subject to appropriate, systematic and transparent assessment. In 'a practicum turn', all of those affected by the assessment have to be actively engaged in the process.

A PRACTICUM TURN AT RISK

Van de Ven (Ch 10) discusses 'a practicum turn' referring to experiences in the Netherlands. There is a risk that the new focus on practicum is accompanied by an old disregard for theories:

... the role of theory has decreased sharply. 'Practice' is just taken for granted but not discussed (Ch 10, p. x).

Furthermore, he questions the idea advocated by Korthagen (2001) of 'a realistic teacher education'. Van de Ven analyses the relation between theory/rhetoric and practice using three interrelated categories: epistemological considerations, division of labour and consequences. Considering epistemology, he argues for an interpretative perspective on knowledge including practical wisdom, care and ethics (*phronēsis*). Considering division of labour he maintains that there should be a dialogic relation between universities and local school communities. As for consequences, he understands preservice teachers' discontent with 'theory' as a

consequence of prevailing discourses about the relation between theory/rhetoric and practice. Van de Ven concludes:

... what passes for valid knowledge, for legitimate educational objectives is the reflection of the world view of an elite which manages to formulate vital social problems in such a way that it pretends to solve these problems by means of its world view and the related definition of valid knowledge. This problem-solving pretension is an important aspect of a rationality. (Ch 10, p. x).

From this perspective 'practice', 'theory', 'education' and 'competence' are discursive phenomena. Discourses are maintained by powerful groups in society at large and in the field of education. Internationally, a technocratic and positivistic rationality is dominating. The form of knowledge of the natural sciences dominates other forms of knowledge. It dominates education and society as a whole. Ways of seeing certain forms of knowledge become ways of being. Ways of being become self-evident ways of thinking and acting accordingly. It seems as if actors involved in practicum are trapped in a cage of discourses. However, Van de Ven maintains:

...I have often experienced the need to understand the gap between theory and practice from a deeper, theoretical perspective that involves partnerships between theorists and practitioners, that is, between teacher educators and teachers in school. Understanding that other participants experience the same gap can be an important condition for collaborating, a condition that appears to have motivated this edited edition (Ch 10, p. x).

He concludes that a practicum turn taking place in an environment dominated by a technocratic rationality risks being assimilated. *There is a risk that a practicum turn is interpreted and applied from a technical rationality stance with strong emphasis on instrumental knowledge and skills whilst neglecting moral and ethical values.* Taking this reflection into consideration, a practicum turn might very well become a U-turn.

SPACE FOR DIALOGUE?

Brennan Kemmis & Ahern (Ch 11) outline a general framework for understanding the relationship between 'practices' and 'practice architectures'. Students engage in the practices of the practicum through sayings, doings and relatings that are shaped by the arrangements or practice architectures that surround them. This is a complex interplay formed by history, traditions, governmental regulations, market economy and agents with conflicting interests. Referring to Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Australia, the authors maintain that **this state of affairs** is quite different compared to developments in other parts of teacher education. There are new requirements for 'fast tracking' (intensive program of university teaching generally lasting about six weeks). Teachers in VET are recruited primarily on the basis of their industry qualifications

and experience in their designated trade. Generally, they know the trade but not how to serve **as an educator**. To provide them with necessary training in teacher leadership is, for many reasons, a challenge. One reason is that practicum is difficult and expensive to organise and supervise:

In our context, the practicum entails discussions of highly practical problems. We need to encourage students to travel further afield to take up a practicum placement and many of these students have both financial and family commitments that make this difficult. Transport, travel arrangements and accommodation are expensive and often difficult to organise when distance is such a factor in our lives (Ch 11, p. x).

Furthermore, practicum for prospective VET teachers is no longer a compulsory component **of their teacher preparation in university**. The authors describe a shift that has occurred because there is no staffing for assessment in the professional experience subjects. When previously teacher educators would collect programs, lesson plans, reflections and assessment and mark them at the end of placement, they now simply check off a sheet signed by an associate teacher/local mentor indicating that the student has satisfactorily planned and evaluated their lessons. As a consequence, the role of university has diminished and practicum is often left to chance. Brennan Kemmis and Ahern maintain that these problems could be solved by negotiations between universities and local schools, but it is hard to find a proper “space” for such dialogues:

In Australia we are confronted with anomalies and inconsistencies as a consequence of the silence on these issues. The country needs more people to hold higher level VET qualifications therefore we need more highly qualified teachers and trainers capable of delivering these. ...We want greater levels of VET and Higher Education intersection with seamless pathways for students. These delicate negotiations and levels of student preparation and scaffolding demand sophisticated teaching skills if they are to succeed (Ch 11, p. x).

The authors conclude that *there is need for improved strategies to build a more dialectical relationship between university scholars and school teachers*. This requirement is relevant also for other parts of teacher education. Referring to Zeichner (2010), they suggest:

- involve experienced teachers in every aspect of teacher education programs and provide them with necessary training in teacher leadership;
- bring teachers' work into the university curriculum;
- develop new methods courses that focus on issues of teaching practice in the field placement schools;
- develop hybrid teacher educators who know both theory and practice;

- incorporate knowledge from communities into university curriculum and field experiences.

We find these conclusions and proposals very supportive to the idea of ‘a practicum turn in teacher education’.

THE CHALLENGES

Studies have been completed in Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden providing significant research evidence to deepen understanding and ultimately generate new theories that inform the complex practicum landscape. The chapters in this addition offer different empirical findings and theoretical contributions based on different research approaches.

Below are the conclusions and propositions. Some are overlapping and some are distinctive:

- Whatever practicum model is applied, teacher education institutions should allocate proper time, economy, personal and material resources for practicum. Research about professional practice should be encouraged (Ch 1).
- Professional practice knowledge is primarily a discursive phenomenon. So is practice. Practicum is an educational arrangement that supports or suppresses certain ways of noticing, naming and framing practicum learning (Ch 2).
- Professional practice knowledge is a certain kind of knowledge that can be developed through preservice teachers’ interaction with pupils. Practice knowledge follows routes other than conventional learning processes (Ch 3).
- Professional practice knowledge is nurtured by preservice teachers’ participation in learning communities. Through involvement in local projects, they gain access to expanded arenas of professional discourse and exchange (Ch 4).
- Practicum should offer preservice teachers scaffolding for authentic experiences in schools and class rooms. Professional autonomy is an important quality that can be developed **when practised** (Ch 5).
- Situated professionalism can be developed by practitioners, teacher educators and researchers taking ‘practice’ as a point of departure for reflections. Practice should be understood as a complex learning situation (Ch 6).
- Professional practice knowledge is a way to think and a process of self-knowledge and self-formation. Practicum could include the process of forming a personal and professional identity (Ch 7).
- Preservice teachers’ experiences during practicum could serve as a point of departure for reflections about teaching. Preservice teachers should learn how to theorise practice in situ (Ch 8).
- Models, instruments and criteria for assessment of practicum learning should be developed. Preservice teachers and school mentors should be participants. If there is no transparent assessment - practicum will be left to chance (Ch 9).
- There is a risk that ‘a practicum turn’ is interpreted and applied from a technical rationality stance with strong emphasis on instrumental knowledge and skills whilst neglecting moral and ethical values (Ch 10).

- There is need for a more dialectical relationship between university scholars and school teachers. Experienced teachers should **be involved in** every aspect of teacher education programs and provided with training in teacher leadership (Ch 11).

A practicum turn in teacher education requires a change of epistemology, practice architectures and the relationships between the actors involved. It calls for a new relationship between university and local school communities. In the chapters referred to, 'practice' is generally interpreted as *reflective practice*. An educational practice should not be regarded as just any activity. A practice understood as a menu of routinised activities and inveterate habits has to be conceptualised in order **to serve as a starting point** for communication and reflections. A practicum turn does not mean that theories and concepts are of minor importance. Freire's (1970/1996) view of praxis is most relevant here. He talks about "an authentic praxis" as a synthesis of action and reflection (p. 48). He maintains that action without reflection is "pure activism" and reflection without action is scholasticism. The dialogue between researcher and co-researcher should be based on mutual experiences. Freire maintains that

To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action–reflection (p.69).

To 'name' the world is part of a revolutionary and critical process. To act and to reflect is not a neutral practice. As several co-authors in this edition maintain, preservice teachers should be given the opportunity to develop their competence of noticing, naming and reframing experiences manifested during practicum. They should develop their reflective capacity and their capacity to make a change. Education is an art and praxis is a practical-critical activity where participants need to reflect in action. Discussing professional knowledge, Schön (1983/2003) calls for an epistemology of practice, emphasising "reflection-in-action". He maintains:

It is this entire process of reflection-in-action which is central to the 'art' by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict (p. 50).

A PRACTICUM TURN

Several authors have demonstrated that a practicum turn can be achieved through collaborative efforts by teachers, school leaders, preservice teachers, teacher educators and researchers taking 'practice' as a point of departure for reflection on educational issues. In several chapters we find arguments for a *case based model*. Discussing teacher education, Lindström (2008) maintains that:

Cases add context to theory. They allow the exploration of precepts, principles, theories, and perennial issues as they actually occur in the real world (p. 182).

The idea is that preservice teachers, in an educational practice should encounter a large number of authentic cases in order to learn how to identify resemblances and distinctive traits. They should learn how to analyse and interpret cases in the light of research, theory and experience. Otherwise there is a risk, as Van de Ven points out (Ch 10), that ‘practice’ is just taken for granted but not discussed. We think that this risk can be avoided. As our research demonstrates, practice can serve as a point of departure for ‘a realistic teacher education’. However, it is vital that this approach is scaffolded by competent teacher educators.

As demonstrated by action research projects in Australia, Norway and Finland, preservice teachers’ **participation in local projects gives them** access to an ‘expanded arena of practices’. The Norwegian example refers to the *platform model*, which is flexible and open to preservice teachers’ individual needs and interests. The platform model is built upon an analysis where essential knowledge for teachers’ work is to a greater extent to be found outside the university system rather than within it. Preservice teachers can learn from practices in schools, organisations, companies and other institutions and they can find new areas for producing and disseminating knowledge. As a consequence, a reconceptualisation of ‘practice’ includes new and creative ways of documenting and presenting the results of student teachers’ projects. Their projects should not be regarded as internal academic assignments. Eilertsen and Strøm, (2008) maintain that:

An actual and relevant teacher education demands a dismantling of the academic dominated tradition to the advantage of a more flexible, net-based platform which can both safeguard more adaptable qualifications and give a basis for research and development to the good of all partners (p.153).

Innovative strategies call for a change of practice architectures and practicum models. That is why teacher educators engage in R&D-projects providing long-term access to schools and local communities. In Norway (Tromsø) and Finland (Jyväskylä), the work is supported by a *partnership model* involving other actors trying to improve teacher education. A similar approach is applied in Denmark in order to nurture “situated professionalism” in the field of special education. Practicum in Australia, China and Norway offer preservice teachers opportunities to participate in projects for school development. Their projects could be understood **as carriers of analysis** and aspirations to improve reality. They serve **as a start for** ‘a realistic teacher education’. Preservice teachers make contributions to school development and their practice gives them experiences of what is at stake. These examples are based on long term access to schools and communities. Their work follows a *community development model*.

As stated, ‘practice’ has been interpreted differently by different authors. Generally, relevant experiences for preservice teachers are to a greater extent to be found outside the university system rather than within it. As a consequence, local school communities and their teachers should, to a greater extent, be acknowledged as partners in teacher education. Their development as leaders and teacher educators is a general challenge for teacher education. A valuable contribution from the authors of this book is

the idea that exploring practice from a theoretical perspective is best enacted in practice. This notion points to a need for transparency and cooperation within and between the organisations and professionals involved.

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