

A Study of Elevate Teaching Learning Process Important for Education: In Current Educational Scenario

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 13 March 2019

Keywords

teacher learning, teacher professional development, innovation, educational change, 21st century skills.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to understand the state of play in today's research into the field of teacher learning and teacher professional development, as well as to make a connection with the need for change in how education is implemented in schools of 21st century. The title makes a staggering impression and alludes to a state of urgency that is oriented towards innovation. Yet, the words were purposefully selected and composed bearing in mind the state of the traditional education and its tendency towards status quo. Thus, it is in the aftermath of dreadful happenings in the world today that makes educational researchers think about the purpose and the potential of education that has been unharvested or, what is even more frightening, used to wrong outcomes. And while education cannot and should not be a sole element in causing or solving the multiple social problems in the world today, it most definitely can play its part and take its role in changing the minds of future generations. The study portrays the accelerated learning curve for teachers in innovative learning environments which as such demand collaboration, experimentation and questioning of one's own practice. The conclusions point out the need for spreading the examples of successful pedagogical and technological innovations and further stimulating teacher learning in order to get better results for schools, pupils and societies in the future.

1. Introduction

As an initial contribution to the framework research theme The Learning Teacher, this article shall look into and explore the contemporary literature and debates related to teacher professional learning and development, as well as the state of innovation in education. In particular, by contextualizing innovative instructional provisions as the main setting for teaching, the question about the benefits for teachers in terms of their further development will be the central theme here. From the standpoint at which it is believed that education has the ethical duty to support a positive change in society, this paper intends to create a debate about the state of urgency on how we approach education today. Additional to this, the role of the teacher is seen as one of the most crucial – the skillfulness of manipulating and leading the learning process and the astonishing importance of teacher-student relationship and feedback are just two of the core predicaments that can make a difference in the classroom. It has been identified at several levels that teachers are “the most important single factor determining the quality and effectiveness of education”. Henceforth, this article shall examine two elements, the potential of education and the significance of teachers' role, in a joint manner to develop a greater understanding of their interconnectedness, mutual dependence and significance to educational research today. In order to narrow down and sharpen the focus, the article intends to look into the innovative educational practices as the ways of exploiting the potential of education, as well as the ways teachers in such environments exceed themselves and their traditional images by engaging in accelerated learning and development.

Teachers teach – teachers learn

Learning is a part of everyone's life, personally and professionally, thus it is inevitable to imagine that learning happens all the time, regardless whether intentionally or unconsciously. In educational science, and particularly in the research field of teacher learning, understanding the concept of learning is of utmost importance. Darling-Hammond (2015) notes that not even half of what is known in the field of learning is used in today's schools across the globe. This article reiterates the importance of learning within the teaching profession by approaching it from these three perspectives:

1. Learning (opportunities) created by and among teachers
2. Learning (patterns and discourses) of students
3. Learning as the environment of schools as institutions

Willingly or not, teachers learn about the profession and the world around them through interactions, consultations, experimentations, reflections and solving problems, but also by observing other professionals in schools and outside calls it an interaction between the learner and the environment, which once absorbed and connected to prior learning, produces a new learning outcome. This new learning can transpose into a cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural change. As Jarvis (2009) reminds, learning is a process involving a whole person – body and mind – thus affecting person's biography. Today, more than ever, teachers need to be quick in acquiring new knowledge and skills in order to provide effective learning in the classroom. Therefore, teacher learning in the 21st century is no longer an option but a sort of a moral duty that comes with the profession and to be able to conduct their jobs, teachers need to know how to work with others, with different types of knowledge, technology and information and how to work with and in society (European Commission, NN).

Teacher's ability to perform automatically connects and reflects on student learning (Hattie, 2013). Their capacity to

successfully and effectively deliver a learning is (still) seen as the main denominator of value. In such a paradigm, teachers are inevitably tied up to student learning outcomes, which in a number of cases are assessed through standardised national and international tests that focus on only few specific skills and knowledge. By analysing this, Martin-Brown (2015) argues that teachers are no better than factory workers that are directed to make a standardised product and are fearful to experiment and innovate as the new output might not fit the uniformed, comparable and regulated measurement. Yet, even with such restrictions, teacher's job is to learn and understand patterns and discourses of student effective learning. Darling-Hammond (2015) reminds us that there are scores of available literature on learning and unfortunately most of it is not used in improving schools of the 21st century. The patterns currently used in majority of schools are those that have been designed for the needs of the industrial era, and not for the knowledge era. Thus, the term student effective learning carries a mixed message fluctuating between a standardised outcome in terms of literacy and numeracy, and a set of soft skills such as critical-thinking, creativeness and aptitude for continuous learning, which are rather difficult to measure and compare. This said, student learning is a must for teacher's teaching, and teaching in the 21st century requires teacher learning more than ever.

2. Teacher Learning: Professional Knowledge In The Workplace

In most of the professions, including teaching, there is an important dilemma that opens up when approaching professional learning and professional knowledge. It was in the early 1980s when Schön (1983) evoked a discussion on professional learning and what he described as the crisis of confidence. To complement the above, according to Eraut (2007) there are few very distinct characteristics of professional knowledge that makes it very hard to systematically evaluate and measure. These characteristics suggest that professional knowledge has:

1. A large and important tacit dimension
2. A significant implicit part to it making people unaware of the processes and outcomes of learning
3. A sense of complexity which is needed for dealing with complex tasks.

These features create significant considerations when researching what and how learning occurs in the workplace, as well in understanding what distinct factors affect learning efforts. Eraut (2007) reminds that by looking into the form of delivery, most of the learning within the workplace is informal type of learning "triggered by (1) consultation and collaboration within the working group, (2) consultation outside the working group and (3) the challenge of the work itself". Although there might be a large difference when approaching various workplaces, from highly innovative to those very routine, it can be argued here that Eraut's idea of learning is applicable to all working places, although with different intensity, frequency and depth. This includes classrooms and schools. The above statement only proves that professional knowledge is deeply and inseparably immersed with the workplace, thus largely stems from learning acquired through the job itself. Likewise, Cochran-Smith and Demers (2010) suggest that learning to teach is not a set of lessons that happens at a particular point

in time and has a determined finish, but is rather an ongoing process that occurs across time and throughout one's career. However, in order to keep things simple, Baijaard and his associates (2007) suggested that learning of teachers can be divided into initial teacher education – the formal education and training that a student acquires in order to enter the profession – and continuous professional development – a set of formal, semi-formal and informal activities that practicing teacher undertakes in the lifespan of their careers. Arguably, another type of learning could be added to the idea of "becoming a teacher" considering Illeris' learning triangle (2009; 2015) and Ban - dura's learning by modelling theory. This is the early learning about the profession, which happens in early childhood and adolescence. Young generations perceive specific trades of teacher(s) which makes them implicitly learn about "being" a teacher, of what are the benefits and what are the negatives of becoming one.

3. Imperative To Innovate: Through Schooling, Teaching And Learning

It is quite common to learn; people (consciously and unconsciously) do it every day which is why Gert Biesta (2012) argues in favour of returning to the terms educating and teaching as more conscious, directed and purposeful activities through which teachers take command. While his argument stands strongly in support of the teaching professional, it would be uncomfortable to completely agree with Biesta in the current state of educational provisions worldwide. From the perspective of a possible contra-argument teachers today need a different set of skills and knowledge compared to their colleagues from the past simply by a mere fact that they are teaching a different kind of population and preparing them for a different kind of future (OECD, 2009). Thus, it could be argued that only those teachers that are conscious of the responsibility of teaching today and for the future, which has a high requirement of their constant development, could and should take back the control of teaching and educating. Darling-Hammond (1998) boldly suggested a wide-ranged list of skills that a teacher needs to know, including understanding the subject matter in great depth, having the foundations of pedagogical content knowledge, comprehending child and adolescent development from cognitive, social, physical and emotional aspects, as well as having the capacity to inquire sensitively, with a close look at students' work. According to her, teachers also require knowledge about learning, from different learning types and preferences, to understanding the dynamics of learning among students. In addition, a teacher ought to grasp the value of collaboration and to be adept to analyse and reflect on their own practice. It is important to mention the element of contextual understanding – in every sense, cultural, technological, and societal – of both the immediate surroundings and the worlds around. As the European policy document proposes: "conceptualization's of teacher competences are linked with visions of professionalism, theories of teaching and learning, quality cultures and socio-cultural perspectives". Importantly, in Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes a need to understand teacher competences as "dynamic combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills" is emphasised through assuming four fundamental approaches:

- Learning to think as teachers
- Learning to know as teachers
- Learning to feel as teachers
- Learning to act as teachers

The striking common denominator of learning is quite exactly what this article is trying to emphasise and what is sometimes missing in the practice of teaching in the traditional schooling system. Knowledge today is not static which is why it is important to emphasize on teachers who are not only conducting their jobs and performing their "common, traditional" duties, but those who create and who see the duty of learning equally important as the duty of teaching. OraKwo (2010) describes this phenomenon with a term teachers as artists and teachers as researchers. It is a new relationship among teachers and educationalists that seeks to re-define and challenge the existing setting, proposing a cross-boundary collaboration and critical discourse and with a moral commitment to education. In her words: "teacher learning involves interpretation of dissonance from latent knowledge and determination to accept complexity of the change process, given that a professional is held accountable for both the existing system and the call for reform".

Thus, the element of the innovative school fits almost naturally and logically within this scientific pursuit, the one that considers teacher learning and shifts in educational paradigms. This is why, here, practices of teachers in innovative environments are considered as the necessary "new normal", as an imperative in order to keep the idea of schooling and education alive for a certain while. Ellis and her colleagues agree that "innovative teaching practices are often tried in an effort to make one's teaching more effective or to tackle an instructional problem or challenge connected to an overall desire to improve students' learning". Furthermore, instructional innovations such as cooperative learning techniques have indeed become widespread. Yet they have still not managed to become a common practice in many contexts around the world, despite its strong theoretical background, validation in research and the fact that it has been operationalised into clear procedures for teachers and educators. Cooperative learning methods, along with other novel approaches, have shown concrete evidence to produce diverse and positive outcomes for preventing and coping with a spectrum of social issues, such as racism, sexism, exclusion of special needs students, delinquency, drug abuse, bullying and violence, as well as

supporting development of self-esteem and a sense of community. Additionally, project-based learning has also proven to be helpful especially in deprived contexts and among students with lower socio-economic status, in particular for raising their achievement level to the level of those with high socio-economic status.

4. Conclusions

It is a question worthwhile asking for any researcher in the field of education: what is or what has become the purpose of education? According to some, the creation of mass education was built with a specific function – to make pupils sit and listen, develop a specific routine and discipline, so that they could become good factory workers. Furthermore, the debate over standardised assessment and the readiness to innovate has become a rather heated one. Hampson and her colleagues have recently compiled a study of 10 cases of 21st schools, students. This brings schools to the model of preparing their students for passing the test better, and not necessarily being any better at things that might matter the most, e.g. to think critically, to be creative and innovative, to be more compassionate and collaborative, etc. Thus, the question that the authors propose is whether this will actually bring a change to the satisfaction of students themselves, parents and teachers. The changing world and the uncertainties that wait inevitably push educational practices and goals to change, including the ways of assessment. Brown-Martin explicitly notes that when teachers get awarded on the base of the league tables, and when their job is restricted with standardised assessment criteria, few dare to try out something new and risk their reputations and sometimes their jobs. In such model, it is of an utmost importance to ask who benefits from the traditional models of education and why are they not modified in a quicker manner. However, there are changes that push education forward; for example, a commitment from the OECD to understand the best way to measure innovativeness and how it affects schools and reflects on education systems, and just recent announcement in finding ways to assess young people's understanding of global issues and attitudes toward cultural diversity and tolerance, has been a welcoming news. Yet, this does not mean that research could take it easy; more so it only means that topic such as teacher learning in innovative learning environments is a topic worthwhile exploring further.

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