

Use of scientific research knowledge by a professional co-development group of cooperating teachers in their reflective support of trainees

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Introduction

A competency-based approach to pre-service teacher training requires a better relationship between theory and practice (Guillemette and Gauthier, 2008). Research indicates that trainees struggle to establish links between knowledge from scientific research (KFSR) and teaching practice (Altet, 2010; Caron and Portelance, 2017; Portelance and Legendre, 2001). They need training that helps cushion the shock of everyday teaching (OCDE, 2005). It also calls for the support of their cooperating teachers - i.e., field instructors - to mitigate the challenge of reconciling practice with the theory learned at school and university (Desbiens, Borges et Spallanzani, 2012). Faced with this expectation of support (ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2001), some cooperating teachers worry about their ability to respond effectively (Caron et Portelance, 2017). Furthermore, cooperating teachers have few formal opportunities to come together and exchange, exchange with their trainees, little access to scientific references to direct their actions (L'Hostie, Monney and Nadeau-Tremblay, 2013) and feel they lack the resources required to offer trainees reflective support.

The question concerning the relationship between theory and practice is far from new, but regularly frustrates, not only the Quebec research community, but others as well (Albert, 2006, Cooper and

Levine, 2013, Dagenais *et al.*, 2007). Professionals' failure to directly consult and exploit KFSR is a matter of some concern. We believe it is important to describe and understand the use of KFSR in pre-service teacher training, a research topic that has received little attention to date. Hence the following question: How do cooperating teachers in a professional co-development group use knowledge from scientific research in their reflective support for trainees?

This paper highlights the contributions of a professional co-development group to its members and addresses a certain number of core concepts: knowledge; knowledge in education; two approaches to KFSR utilization, namely, transmissive and scientific acculturation; and reflective support. Reflective support is demonstrated during each cooperating teacher's feedback sessions with his/her trainee and involves the development of a dyadic teaching practice based on the use of KFSR within dialogical and dialectical dynamics. Our aim is to identify the practices of the cooperating teachers and their plans to use KFSR in their reflective support of trainees.

Research Methods

We conducted a collaborative research project with a professional co-development group composed of six cooperating teachers who enabled us to answer our research question. Two data collection tools were used: simple and cross self-confrontation interviews. Simple self-confrontation makes it possible to describe and understand practices, actions taken and the justification for those actions (Clot, Faïta, Fernandez and Scheller, 2000). In a cross self-confrontation, members of a professional co-development group meet to describe and comment on each other's practices and motives. Conversation analysis is at the core of the data analysis strategy. Findings are presented in the form of three cases.

Results

At the end of the internship, cooperating teachers' reflective support practices were mainly based on the scientific acculturation approach. Trainees used KFSR to identify their respective knowledge needs: immigrant pupils (case 1 - feedback 3), project pedagogy (case 2 - feedback 3), and manipulation in mathematics (case 3 - feedback 3). Next, the cooperating teachers encouraged trainees to identify KFSR independently, although, in some cases, cooperating teachers assisted in the identification process so as to foster a deeper understanding of problem situations. The process of scientific acculturation, in fact, involves the selective documentary search by the practitioner for the positive effects on his/her teaching. In addition, cooperating teachers proposed a collaborative reading of the texts identified. They appeared to believe that trainees had developed a critical judgment during the internship that enabled them to both evaluate the relevance of KFSR and co-evaluate it as well.

Discussion

The main results indicate that a cooperating teacher's reflective support practices can be both numerous and diverse. The cooperating teacher slowly encouraged the trainees to select and test KFSR in function of pupils' needs in the primary classroom. Their aim was to gradually lead students toward autonomy in analyzing their practices and problem-solving strategies. Our analysis shows that their cognitive

appropriation of the concept of KFSR utilization favoured its integration to their practices. This integration began with a transmissive approach and moved by degrees toward a scientific acculturation approach. With the help of the group, the cooperating teachers became conscious of their use of KFSR in the reflective support they offered their trainees. They verbalized this utilization use, which resulted in mutual inspiration.

Conclusion

This multi-case study permitted us to understand how cooperating teachers use KFSR in their reflective support of trainees. It prompted the observation that the participants used KFSR to focus increasingly on the needs expressed by the trainees, thereby encouraging students' engagement and autonomy. Conversation analysis revealed that exchanges between group members who confront their practices enable the argumentative co-construction of knowledge. This research, furthermore, has impacts for the professional development of both the cooperating teachers and the students themselves. It affects the training of cooperating teachers and, for the students, facilitates the transition between initial teacher education and professional integration.

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