

# **Always a Student. Lifelong Learning for Teachers**

## **Systems of Formal Education**

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## our research: the context

- we have worked as trainers and mentors on a training and development programme for local teachers
- 70 teachers have been trained in 6 areas of interest
- the programme has been developed as a mix of face to face, mentoring and unconventional activities
- the research we are presenting is part of the process of monitoring and evaluating the programme
- it is a small scale qualitative research meant to reveal how teachers are conceptualising LLL, how they construct relevance



## *It's not relevant: the critical incident*

*Yes, we are all doing research;*

*...it's true, nobody has taught us explicitly to do research,*

*...aha, we are 'exercising' research and talking about doing  
research*

*....finally, the session irrelevant!*

**This critical incident has lead to the 'intellectual puzzle' that  
triggered our research.**



## our research: **methodological overview**

**approach:**

action research

**researching:**

qualitative, interpretive

**research question:**

**How do teachers perceive themselves in relation to LLL? **response to activities****

**participants:**

teachers /in-service TT&D

**data collection instrument:**

questionnaire

**data collected:**

20 questionnaires/responses

**analytical frame:**

grounded theory

discourse analysis/content analysis

**researcher:**

**reflective practitioner**



our research: **theoretical framework**

**Grounded theory:** Glazer and Strauss

**Critical Discourse Analysis:** Fairclough (social view of language, multilayered view of language)

**Literacy Studies:** Hassan (relationship between knowledge and literacy)

**Sociology:** Bourdieu, Passeron (knowledge as symbolic capital)



## the findings: measuring relevance

It presents a common “language” with that of the students and it obviously must be included in the teaching activity

[because] I can make all my students stand out in a good way and I can allow them to develop and grow in their own rhythm

interesting, but too difficult for me, inapplicable

there were no irrelevant activities, maybe some could be applied immediately and others couldn't

[because] I hope that during my first years of retirement I will have a chance to finalize some research papers in the field of assessment and to find solutions to some “queries” like the bizarre way in which families and students regard learning nowadays.

because I have understood what I lack but also what opportunities there are to develop and I have even begun to develop professionally



## our research: **discussion**

(i) we can look at 3 perspectives teachers take , seen as multilayered (3 if we consider micro and macro social: classroom – society

**they position themselves at**

**classroom level:** events, products, processes inside classroom

**social level:** career...professional network /inside 'community'

**epistemological level:** meta-cognition



## our research: **discussion**

### **positioning at classroom level:**

Learning placed at the discrete level of a product or an event

Translation in interests/training results: I see an activity /instrument...I take it to the classroom

Learning at the level of process - interaction inside classroom

Translation in interests/training results: I see an activity/instrument...I can re-create it in the classroom..it's about interactign with my students



## our research: **discussion**

### **positioning at social level:**

career...professional network /positioning

Learning at the level of proces – interaction at social level

Translation in interests/training results: I see the trainers behaviour, I understand myself as a profesional...I see myself as a professsional...it's about interacting with peers and institutions

### **positioning at epistemological level:**

meta-cognition

Translation in interests/training results: I reflect on my own and on other people's learning, I know how it happens, I can control it...it's about my values, beliefs



## the findings: measuring relevance

*I can't give three examples, but I think that one of them is doing research. To really do research in the education system it takes a lot of work and I don't know whether the relevant results of research are appreciated. I don't like to do things which I consider without utility or maybe I am not prepared and motivated to do such an activity. I have some materials which implied a mini research project, but This activity was never a passion for me. I'd rather develop worksheets for my students because I can see the results faster and that motivates me. R18/4*

*...I liked the content of the module, the trainer and the fact that he taught us tactfully how to do an evaluation[...] R18/2*

*... because the achieved knowledge can be used in the classroom – the activity for which the Rumanian State pays us R18/3*



## our research: **discussion**

### (ii) the relationship to learning and making new knowledge

(Hassan identifies three relationships/positionings to knowledge and meaning making)

1. **recognition:** knowledge as finite and non negotiable, knowledge produced by other people and taken for granted....product and form important
2. **action:** knowledge as process, more substance added to it, but processes seen mostly within school, classroom
3. **reflection:** knowledge and meaning newly produced starting from old pieces of knowledge...questioning, reasoning, challenging ways to do and understand things...each person participated in creating knowledge



## our research: **discussion**

### (ii) the relationship to learning they favour (

- 1. recognition:** **For us: learning as reproduction:** I take a product/instrument as it is, I repeat an activity I was taught to do, I collect info (what for?)
- 2. action:** **For us: learning as action:** re-creating processes, developing processes, altering and adapting processes, reviewing relationships (students, etc)
- 3. reflection:** **For us: learning as reflection:** knowledge about knowledge making, looking at learning situations, development opportunities, generative learning...learning that changes...this is the closest to autonomous learning, this leads to assumed and understood change



## the findings: defining LLL

A way of living

Never becoming complacent

Being permanently open to new things, being willing to adapt to changes, being interested in improving your activity, in all aspects - not just being willing but acting in this direction, by reading, experimenting and consciously making changes

Flexibility in setting your learning goals and a permanent reshaping of one's competences

My contribution to developing a qualitative educational system

Finding good solutions to new problems in the professional activity...

Being open to everything that is new, adapting to the needs of the society, having the ability to absorb new information, but most of all applying everything you learn in order to bring about change. I think this concept does not only resume to taking part in different training sessions, or learning something new, but most of all it means being able to use each experience in order to develop personally and professionally.



## the findings: **expressing training needs**

... to find answers

to change the setting

to get out of the rut

to make at least one change in my teaching activity, to find out how to be  
different

to learn in a different way from what I was used to

to find people like me who are desperate to make a change

to reflect on what I am as a teacher to find solutions to problems in education



our research: **conclusion**

**the response of the teachers to practical activities within a training program envisaging to create an autonomous LLL depends on**

(i) the approaches to learning that the participant teachers are taking

**and on**

(i) (ii) the relationship to learning they favour

**(both aspects can be seen on continuums , and we speak fo dominant positioning teachers are taking)**



## our research: **what's in it for you?**

Analysing feedback sheets/programme evaluation forms or questionnaires can give traces of

- how teachers position themselves within different levels of context
- how they conceptualise knowledge and how they engage with knowledge

**there are other factors that surely agregates the response (learning style, rhythm of the sessions, the blended sch, teacher fatigue), but it is beyond our aim in this**



## our research: **what's in it for you?**

- our course aimed at reflective learning and the epistemological level, through experiential learning DOING – REFLECTING – GENERALISING – TRANSFERRING
- > possible mismatches with expectations (caused by the same two elements described above)
- the reactions to practical exercises and the definitions of 'relevance' can be different or even divergent
- > possible mismatches between what they look for (according to the view learning and participation in knowledge making) and what /how they go through things in training sessions



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