

English summaries

Kerstin Bergqvist, 2000: The thesis – a contribution to scientific teacher education? /Examensarbetet – ett bidrag till vetenskapligheten i lärarutbildningen?/ Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 5, No 1, pp 1–18. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.

This article deals with issues that have to do with the traditions of teacher education. The specific focus is on a new compulsory element which, as a result of a recent reform, was introduced into the comprehensive school teachers' program, i. e the thesis. The basic idea behind the reform – and thus behind the thesis – is to integrate the training of teachers into university traditions of teaching and learning. This reform is one of many attempts, which have been made to make teacher education more research based. The article discusses what a thesis can bring to teacher education when it comes to making its context more research based and thus stimulating scientific thinking.

Empirical data from a study of the thesis in teacher education at Linköping University is used. Twenty-one students who had recently completed their theses and ten advisors were interviewed. The students talk about their experience of writing a thesis in relation to their experience of the rest of their education. The thesis is said to represent something quite different and it is seen as being in line with (it must be written in a certain way) or in contrast to (the thesis is something quite new) the rest of their studies.

Their confusion and enthusiasm, when being confronted with a task that is not at all as predetermined as the rest of their studies, tells us about how they perceive their studies. The students have few opportunities to make their own choices and little responsibility in their studies no matter what the department (and culture). Their worries concern »what one is allowed to do» and »how a thesis is supposed to be written». Some students are happy to have learnt »how to write a thesis in a scientifically correct way». However, there are also students who give evidence of a qualitatively different kind of learning and new insights. They say that they have learnt to think and see in a different way. Others say that they have grown and changed as persons as a result of writing the thesis, which is something that you must do yourself.

In the article, it is claimed that the social context and study situation are intimately integrated with students' orientations in their studies and learning (Marton, Hounsell & Entwistle 1986, Ramsden 1992, Bowden & Marton 1998). Thus, learning is seen as part of and an answer to the study context. In a recent study of what the thesis in teacher education means to students, it has

been shown that it can promote different ways of studying and thinking (Lendahls Rosendahl 1998). It is argued in the article that the thesis can contribute to a context that encourages research-oriented approaches and critical thinking. Such an education must be characterised by situations that invite new ways of seeing and thinking and encourage a curious, questioning and analytical approach. This study shows that the thesis can contribute to such a context.

A research-oriented education must abandon some of the culturally established conventions concerning what counts as learning in teacher education. The students need to experience cognitive conflicts that challenge notions and values. They must observe, analyse and understand what happens in classrooms and corridors from different theoretical perspectives and from the point of view of teachers, students and other groups. They must learn to see students, teachers, classroom activities, situations, phenomena, schools, society, etc. in different ways, not the way something »is» or »ought to be», but the way something can be seen. In line with the reasoning of Bowden and Marton (1998), the scientific character can be strengthened in teacher education by making the variation in ways of seeing into a research object and the target for learning and knowledge development.

Lars Berglund, 2000: Concentration problems: structural aspects and perspectives on teacher actions /Koncentrationssvårigheter: strukturaspekter och åtgärds perspektiv/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 5, No 1, pp 19–29. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.

This article presents results from a study of 193 pupils who have been indicated to have concentration problems according to their teachers. A check list with 14 statements concerning concentration ability as well as a list of 10 different actions with 4-grade Likert-scales were used for the data collection. Totally 48 classes (971 children) from year 0 to 6 were chosen from a small and a medium size community respectively. Twice as many boys as girls in the small community had problems compared to seven times as many in the medium size community. The distribution from year 0–6 indicates highest frequencies for the years 2, 4 and 6 and lowest for year 0.

The aim of the study is to investigate if it is possible to find structures in teacher estimations and how they act. Therefore data has been analysed using structural equation modelling (LISREL). Hypothetical models are compared with observed data to see how well they correspond to each other. Observed variables are related to latent factors. In this case also latent factors are related showing how teacher estimations of concentration problems might be connected to actions.

The structural model of how teachers estimate concentration problems indicates four latent variables: motor ability related to the observed variables »motor control» (.98), »motor adjustment» (.17) and »need satisfaction» (.41); socioemotional ability related to »motor adjustment» (.65), »need satisfaction» (.43), »level of activity» (.39), »emotional expressions» (.76) and »social adjustment» (.77); attention ability related to »stimulus sensibility» (.46), »get into work» (.75), »power of endurance» (.73), »planning» (.36) and »day-dreaming» (.25); metacognitive ability related to »understanding instructions» (.85), »following instructions» (.88) and »problem solving» (.52). The observed variables are followed by what can be interpreted as factor loadings.

The latent factor »motor ability» has the strongest relation to a single observed variable (»motor control») indicating that lack of motor control is important for how teachers interpret the concentration concept. »Metacognitive ability» has in average the strongest relations to its observed variables followed by »socioemotional», »motor» and »attention ability». It is notable that »motor adjustment» has a stronger relation to »socioemotional ability» than to »motor ability». Understanding and following instructions have strong relations to »metacognitive ability». It is probable that this factor is important in most learning situations owing to its general character.

Actions for handling concentration problems can be described by using four latent variables: Sociomedical action related to »school welfare officer» (.49), »school nurse» (.62) and »community social welfare» (.36); psychosocial action related to »community social welfare» (.56), »child psychiatry» (.90) and »psychologist» (.44); organisational action related to »pupil assistant» (.62), »small group» (.29) and »special class» (.29); special educational action related to »special class» (.51), »co-ordinated special teaching» (.62) and »adjusted course of studies» (.16).

Child psychiatry has a very strong relation to »psychosocial action» indicating that teachers use this resource frequently while factor loadings of »adjusted course of studies» and »small group» indicate the opposite. Connecting teacher estimations of concentration problems with actions to handle them shows that they have a very modulated panorama using different alternatives concerning the factors »socioemotional» and »attention ability». Exceptions are how to handle lack of »motor ability». This is strongest related to controlling and planning motor activity, which has practically no relations to teacher actions. »Metacognitive ability», with relations only to »special educational action», also fits as an exception.

As the latent variable »metacognitive ability» has such a pedagogical composition, its deviance can be explained. Circumstances concerning motor ability seem however to be an acute problem. Using structural strategies to describe behaviour problems and actions to handle them offers possibilities to avoid simplifications resulting in labelling. Hopefully it may contribute to deeper understanding and a more concrete conceptualisation leading to better actor readiness.

Staffan Larsson, 2000: The lust and discomfort of authorship /Skrivandets lust och olust/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 5, No 1, pp 30–42. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.

Writing texts is an important part of the work of any researcher and forms one of the main conditions for the existence of research. These »existentials» include at least three fundamental aspects of writing. The first is that researchers in social science must produce texts, that these texts are the result of an act of creativity to some extent and that you cannot rely on already existing texts when producing new. The second is that publication is necessary in order to make the texts produced available for others to have opinions about. The third is the fact that researchers have to continue producing new texts. These conditions must be met in order to work as a researcher. They also frame the work of writing.

The experience of writing is ambiguous: it can be one of joy, but also of distress and agony. This can be seen in the stories that fiction writers tell about their work and can be seen in their ways of organising this work in order to deal with the anxiety that the existentials produce. The importance of disciplinary devices is very clear here. Authors seem to use a number of techniques too keep themselves on the track. Often these are not very sophisticated: counting the number of words produced during a day, writing a certain number of hours each day or having rigid schedules for each day. It is suggested that these techniques are often reified expressions of organisation, that work as disciplinary devices, since they are simple and visible.

Pleasure is also experienced in the act of writing. The metaphor of »flow» in this experience seems to be useful here, just as it is in relation to other kinds of artisanal work. Flow is a feeling of being absorbed by the work. It has been pointed out that this feeling is related to work processes when the skill is challenged, but not more than that the problems can be dealt with. If a problem cannot be solved the enchantment will come to an end. This kind of absorption will sometimes result in a desire to write even in situations when researchers are occupied by other activities. One aspect of the flow experience is that the existentials are bracketed as motive forces.

It is argued that it is possible to create situations where writing becomes joyful, not least through the self-disciplinary techniques that were mentioned earlier. Researchers as well as authors can work themselves into the situation where flow starts. Advice about how to do this is therefore justifiable.

If writing is accompanied by ambiguity, so too is the publication of texts. To become known through texts is a prerequisite for being recognised and also forms the identity of a researcher. It is thus the moment of potential success, but also possible failure. Authors report of their neurotic attitudes to publication. Some experience an intensified awareness of the mistakes and fear of reactions from colleagues, i.e. stress before publication. In order to reduce this researchers are advised to test the reaction in diverse audiences before the final publication. In that way there will be a gradual encounter with the audience.