Chapter 1

Professional Vision Narrative Review: The Use of Videos to Support the Development of Teachers’ Reflective Practice

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ABSTRACT

Using a Narrative-based Review approach in this chapter we aim to provide a system perspective on the use of videos in supporting teachers’ professional development, with specific regard to professional vision. We first look at the ‘affordances’ of video: the capacities that it adds to the toolkits of teacher educators. We then look specifically at evidence for the development of specific abilities related to the professional vision through video: capacity for reflection, noticing and other potential benefits. Later, we focus on how to analyse video so as to develop reflective practice in teachers by presenting meaningful experiences and studies. Lastly, we propose an in-depth view of the possibilities related to collaborative analysis for professional vision development paying specific attention to the more widely used and validated methodologies such as lesson-study, teaching video club, and the dialogic video cycle.

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NARRATIVE-BASED REVIEW: METHOD AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the last few years, professional vision activities have been the subject of a large number of empirical research activities and analytical reflections which have highlighted their worth, through the use of both synchronous and asynchronous video products, to support teacher professional development.

The professional vision studies described in the present chapter illustrate the potential of such practice in supporting the development of critical observation, analysis, and reflection competences in relation to teaching practices of teachers who can, thus, re-think their action process within an analytical, critical, virtuous, and shared circuit. Moreover, theories related to professional vision highlight how such practice permits/enables teachers to: connect their practical and theoretical knowledge more easily, acquire a sharper/more precise and contextualized language, and, lastly, improve collaboration competences through shared vision practices. This is not a question of providing a possible extemporaneous education & training offer; rather, it is a long-term critical approach to one’s own professional activity whose values and possible limitations we intend to highlight in the present contribution.

Given the growing availability of studies in this area, the need to develop a stronger theoretical framework in this context arises: a place of reflection for the research community which permits the broadening of one’s knowledge horizons which goes beyond the single studies on the topic.

Providing greater clarity on how epistemic knowledge is developed and used can make its role more transparent in relation to the other domains of knowledge (Gough, 2007). Systematic synthesis is a set of formal processes to bring together different types of evidence so as to clarify what we know from research and how we know it (Gough & Elbourne, 2002; Gough, 2004). More specifically, the review or synthesis, aka “research synthesis”, or secondary research is based on the basis of (the reporting of) the observation of single studies, the setting-up of the same, the critical evaluation and the synthesis of results from primary research studies in an integrated approach. Currently, there are different study types in systematic reviews (Harden & Thomas, 2005; Elliott, 2001, Egger, 2003).

More specifically, the methodology on which this review is developed is of a qualitative nature (Estabrooks, 1994) which is characterized by combining information gathered from the different studies and the description of the results in a “narrative form” (Montù, 2011) by identifying similarities and strands of thought. Moreover, the specific approach followed is that of the emergent or iterative method in which the different phases of analyses emerge en route, in constant dialogue with the Literature analysed. The latter can be modified or repeated if necessary. Even in the case of an emergent method of reviewing, it is, nonetheless, necessary to preserve the systematic nature of the analysis by exemplifying, in a rigorous manner, the choices made and the actions employed.

The preparatory work for the Literature Review involved the selection of topics, the delimitation of the research field, and the choice of questions. This preparatory stage guided the choice of studies to be analysed as well as the identification of new studies on the basis of citations and coherence with the initial questions in a continuous integration process.

Figure 1 presents in a schematic way the workflow for a literature review. It identifies relevant research related to the specific questions and themes posed in the form of specific research questions: what are the macro functions/objectives of the use of video practices? What is the professional vision and can teacher competence be defined? and, if so, in what way? Which abilities are characteristic of the professional vision? What processes support the professional vision? Professional vision is a competence which develops individually or can it avail of video-based collaborative strategies? and, if so, of what type?