Chapter 10
Video-Analysis and Self-Assessment in Teaching Work

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ABSTRACT

Video-research, which represents a multi-methodological practice and an interdisciplinary study area, responds to various knowledge problems created by the complexity of the didactic phenomena to be investigated, and proposes instruments and technologies that have a very high potential about phenomena description, reproduction and comprehension, not only for researchers but also for teachers themselves who are the protagonists of those phenomena. Starting by these preliminary remarks, this chapter will be focused on the introduction of the preliminary results of a video-research itinerary achieved by the DidaSco group (School Didactics) throughout a project itinerary that involved six infant, primary and secondary (first degree only) schools in Bari and its province, working on History didactics intermediary processes. In the meantime, in this chapter a particular attention will be paid to the introduction of a video analysis form which was realized by the authors.

INTRODUCTION

Can teachers’ professionalism be assessed? If so, which tools should be used? What theoretical frameworks should be considered?

This paper aims at providing a potential answer to the important issues raised in Italy after the ratification of the Regulation on the National Education Assessment System (Italian Republic Presidential Decree 80/2013), even though these questions have been involving the educational scientific community for almost a century. Art. 6 of the Decree associates the assessment procedure of school institutions with actions that may enhance the role of schools in self-assessment procedures, thus recognising the primary role of this kind of actions. No assessment procedures can be scientifically recognised if they are not included in self-assessment and quality-based methodologies (Perla, 2004). The same criteria

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were established by the European Commission in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the European Council (February 12, 2001) on the assessment of quality in teaching; this document introduced some guidelines on assessment and self-assessment procedures in the school system, recommending Member States to support effective systems for quality assessment by means of self-assessment methods. In Italy, the Regulation of the National Education Assessment System has been ratified twelve years after the EU recommendation. It affirmed the relevance of the connection between self-assessment and external evaluation, and the resulting relationship between self-assessment and enhancement of quality in school systems.

It should be reminded that in the last two decades the assessment of teachers’ conduct has been increasingly taken into consideration, as the interest for teachers’ evaluation increased. The initial and ongoing teachers’ training quality has been recognised as a key factor by institutions like OECD, UNESCO and the European Commission, which have carried out broad research (EC 2005; 2012; OECD, 2005; 2013a; Dordit, 2011). Among the research on teachers’ assessment (like Teaching and Learning International Survey, TALIS), in 2009 OECD carried out a research to analyse assessment policies and practices for schools, students, teachers (OECD, 2013b).

At present, in Italy the issue of teachers’ assessment is part of the political, scientific and professional debate. There is a transition from a period in which teachers’ assessment was missing towards a delicate stage in which some methodologies are even superficial and intrusive (Previtali, 2012). The risk for polarisation is a serious issue. Assessing teachers’ actions is not a mere certification, and it has to consider the practical point of view in research (Perla, 2010). Enhancement processes in schools cannot be triggered without the active co-participation of the professional community in the actions and projects that aim at assessing teachers’ actions. This implies the pressing achievement of theoretical-methodological frameworks that consider the specific, professional features of Italian teachers and can be consistent in identifying assessment criteria to evaluate teachers’ actions, including their relating and effective tasks.

In this paper we would try to support an argumentation: assessing teachers’ actions is the same side of the identical question, that is the achievement of a system that could ensure and direct towards teachers’ lifelong training; a system that could rely on scientifically valid tools that could trigger a “triangulation” of different points of view (teachers, researchers, students) on the same element. One of these innovative tools is represented by video-analysis, as described in a following section.

If innovative training is considered the starting point for teachers’ professional enhancement, an effective assessment process can be carried out. This choice is intentional, and it is connected with an independent decision made by each school, being only partially managed by external agents. It should start from the promotion of recognised training for career-oriented aims (as hinted by the Italian Decree 107, July 13, 2015), with scientific grounds (therefore it should be carried out in partnership with Universities and/or research institutions) and aimed at the differentiation of teachers’ professional profiles.

Training is a “strategic lever” for assessment procedures, and it should be a system action within which meritocracy is awarded and teachers’ professional careers are supported. Only in this way assessment actions could stimulate the “hunger” for professional enhancement, thus having comebacks in terms of productivity in ordinary education practices. The system should be organised following the steps shown in Figure 1.

Training is a way to enhance teachers’ competence, and a spur for innovation. In turn, innovation is meaningful if it is seen in relation to teachers’ training needs and not as a formal adaptation to the normative framework. The internalisation of an innovative process can only spring from the experience-based research, the knowledge of experience, the analysis of one’s actions. Innovation is included in four