# Autonomy, Agency and Community in Teacher Education: Professional Growth through a University and School Partnership

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Outline of presentation

1. Teacher Education (TE) and autonomy
2. Current developments in TE in Tampere
3. Experiential learning and reflection
4. Teacher growth through action research
5. OK-project (1994-98): project design
6. Findings: authenticity in the teacher's professional growth (7 categories)
7. Discussion: some perspectives
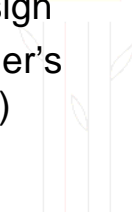
Former US Vice President Al Gore (Nobel Prize Interview, 2007)

**If you want to go quickly, go alone**

If you want to go far, go together

(an African saying)

Two dimensions (and cultures) in teacher education and teaching

1. Professional development and work within a prevailing **individual-cognitive** dimension: cultural socialisation for *teacher isolation*
   (cf. Dan Lortie 1975, *Schoolteacher)*

2. Professional growth and work within a **social-interactive** dimension: socialisation for *collegial collaboration*
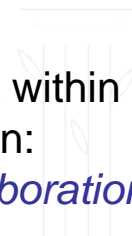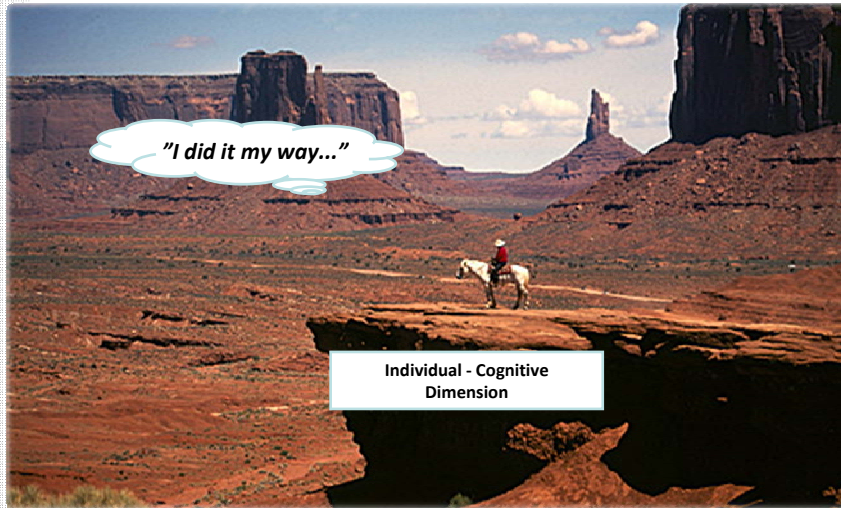
Teacher Isolation

Teacher Collaboration

1. Teacher education and professional autonomy

- Teachers/ teacher educators work in a **historical context** (Carr & Hartnett 1996)
- School as part of local/national (and global) society -> schools to practice democracy: collaborative learning -> aim at responsible citizenship education
- **European Commission** (Report 2007): teachers have a *crucial role* in providing high quality education for personal fulfilment, better social skills and diverse (global) employment opportunities

EU: Principles for Techer Education (2007)

1. *Well-qualified profession:* graduation from *higher education* institutions
2. *Profession of lifelong learners,* with an engagement in continuing professional development
3. *Mobile profession,* entailing work or study in other European countries (for growth)
4. *Profession based on partnerships:* with schools, local work environments and other stakeholders

European Commission:
(Report 2007)

- *Partnerships* between higher educational institutions, schools, community groups, local stakeholders and industry
- Develop **cohesive societies***:* work against marginalization > teacher as a significant *social actor* in education
- Policies for *continuity:* initial TE to be followed by continuous professional development, with collegial work across the curriculum

Global learning: some perspectives

1. **Autonomy** **as a** **socially** responsible person; doing one's own cultural identity-work
2. Skills for **communication**, interaction, networking and **collaboration** in multicultural contexts
3. Seeing oneself as an **intercultural actor**; respect and openness for cultural diversity
4. Higher-order **cognitive skills** for **critical thinking**
5. **Reflective orientation** to learning, with abilities for self/peer-assessment: meta-cognitive skills and strategies
6. **Learning** as **life-long** pursuit: **informal learning**
7. **Acceptance** **of** **ambiguity** and uncertainty

What is professional autonomy?

Autonomy: personal and professional identity
- self-governance self-control, *self-determination,* separatedness, *personal identity and* values: being an authentic self; capacity for ethical reasoning and critical thinking; *agency:* identity as somebody who acts; ability to reflect, choose
- **David Little** (1991, 4), learner autonomy: *"capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action"*

Professional autonomy...

- **Jiménez, Lamb & Vieira** *(2008, 1):* *Autonomy: competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empower-ment and social transformation"*
- Same definition applies to teachers AND pupils equally ("It takes two to tango!", Philip Riley 2003)

Professional autonomy...

- **Charles Taylor** (1991): we are what we are because of **participation in a community** (recognition by significant others) > personal values
- *Authenticity as a person:* self-definition in dialogue: mutuality, commitment to shared values and norms in community
- **Social context** necessary for autonomy development: shared norms, respect
- Develops in a **personal relation** with the world, through *participation*

2. Current Developments in Teacher Education in Tampere

Three *principles and values* for action:

1. **Human growth** as a *value in its own right* in all action and partnerships; principles/demands of market economy **not** to be accepted as *educational* values
2. **Specific nature** of an *educative* **relationship:** not to be confused with a "customer" relationship (cf. mother/ father <-> child) >> *DIALOGICAL relation-ship:* respect of human dignity, interaction, accurate listening (and hearing) of the Other
3. Department as a **community of experts** based on equal participation -> assumes an *authority position* in defining its principles and goals

Current Developments in TE in Tampere...

Integrating research and TE practice: strengths

A. **Curriculum studies** (curriculum theory, educational philosophy and psychology, subject didactics; curriculum as a multidisciplinary process)

B. **Pedagogical leadership** and site-based school development (isolation → collegial collaboration)

→ aim at research-based TE/ academic culture: teaching as an exploratory practice (Allwright 2006)

→ use of professional portfolios/ reflection/ interactive learning/ dialogue >> integration of *formal theory* ("in books") with *personal understandings* ("theory-in-practice")

Professional growth: importance of educational beliefs

"Preservice students enter programs of teacher education with personal beliefs about teaching images of good teachers, images of self as teacher, and memories of themselves as pupils in classrooms."

"These personal beliefs and images generally remain unchanged by a preservice program and follow candidates into classroom practica and student teaching" (Dona Kagan 1992, 142)

Professional growth: importance of educational beliefs...

Developmental **agenda** for *student teachers:*

1. Clarify personal image of *self as a teacher*
2. Acquire knowledge of learners and use it to modify the image of self as teacher
3. Experience cognitive (and emotional!) dissonance and question the appropriateness of prior/current images and beliefs
4. Acquire management/ instructional routines in class that enable the beginning teacher to focus *more* on pupils (Kagan 1992)

Working on educational beliefs: portfolio and social interaction

- **Educational beliefs** as "opinions and ideas that learners have about the task of learning a foreign language" (Kalaja & Barcelos 2003)
- **Socially constituted,** interactively sustained assumptions on the roles/ duties of the participants in the social teaching-learning process → *modifiable* through reflection and social interaction (Woods 2003)
- → *Professional Development Portfolio* & interaction as essential tools to facilitate personal/professional growth in *interaction*

Uses of professional growth portfolio in pre-service TE

| Purpose	1. Learning --> growth	2. Reporting >evaluation	3. Applying for a job
Who to?	Self	Mentor	Employer
Goal	Profess. growth	Passing course	Apply for a job
Content	Diary, notes, logbook, lesson plans, feedback	Developmental essay, report (+auth-entic docs)	Certificates, Job testim-onials, Courses; Views of learning/ education
Ask:	Who am I? Where am I going?	What have I learned ? (what aims/action plans?)	What qualifica-tions?; What kind of a teacher am I?
Status	Private	Semi-private	Official
Validity:	For self	As an exam	Truthfulness

Fishing…

- **Give** the man a fish, and he won't be hungry that day
- **Teach** him to fish, and he won't be hungry for the rest of his life

Pedagogical fishing ...

- **Teach** the **teacher (**and the **pupil)** to **reflect** on his/her educational "fishing", and (s)he will develop it ... and also **teach others** to "fish"
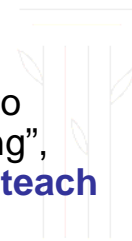
3. Experiential learning and reflection (David Kolb 1984)

- **Personal experience** gives the life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts
- Learning is a **holistic process** that involves the whole person, including the emotional, social, physical, cognitive and spiritual aspects of personality

Experiential learning and reflection...

- **John Dewey** (1938, 87-88): "To reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings ... for intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of ... the disciplined mind."
- Interplay between *looking ahead* (action directed by some idea) and *looking back*
- Learning as a continuous *process of recon-struction of experience:* anticipate -> act -> observe -> organise ideas for future use

Experiential learning and reflection...

Leo van Lier (1996, 11):

"To learn something new one must first *notice* it. This noticing is an awareness of its existence, obtained and enhanced by paying attention to it.

Paying attention is focusing one's consciousness, or pointing one's perceptual powers in the right direction, and making mental 'energy' available for processing".

Experiential learning and reflection...

- **Experience** is an important *key to learning* – but not sufficient as such
- Experience needs to be **processed consciously**: notice learning -> develop awareness -> understand phenomenon better
- **Transform observation**/ information into *personal understanding* and knowledge
- Learning has to be done by the student/ teacher/ teacher educator

4. Teacher growth through Action research

Problems in traditional classroom research:

1. **Research by outsiders:** divorced from classroom realities > getting outsiders' advices, but fewer insiders' insights; teacher as a "consumer" of knowledge *created by others*

2. **Pupil diversity ignored:** prior knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, distractions: focus on "average" learners in generalised situations

3. **Significance of contextual nature** of education (classroom/ local school/ national) > principles can be general, but the **problems** are **local** and contextual > how do we identify > frame > conceptualise them?

Action research - what?

- **Kemmis and McTaggart** (1988, 5): a form of *collective* self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to *improve:*

  - rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their

  - *understanding* of these practices, and the

  - situations/ contexts in which these practices are carried out

Key points in A-R:

1. **Improve education** by *changing* it
2. **Participatory** and collaborative
3. **Cyclic process**: plan > act > observe/ reflect/ conceptualize > revise plan >> act...
4. **Self-critical**: openness, flexibility -> contextual understanding of complexities
5. **Systematic** action and data collection
6. **Critical** data analysis in a long-term developmental perspective: make changes visible, uncover possible connections
7. **Document** -> disseminate the findings

What kind of an A-R design to aim at?

A. **"Technical":** "top-down" implementation, with (little) teacher training: using somebody else's plans (with modification) > easy to get started; but: *whose* project is it? Who *owns* it?

B. **"Practical":** combining "top-down" + "bottom-up" design; more substantial teacher training: slower start, but better contextual relevance > stronger teacher engagement

C. **"Emancipatory":** critical analysis of the aims in context: Why? "What? How? > set own goals and curricula, involve all participants > slower process, but site-based ownership/ commitment

5. OK Project (1994-98): Learner, Curriculum and Culture Change

- **6 schools** (40 teachers) + **TE Department**
- **Goal Orientation/ perspectives on:**
1. **Pupil:** self-directed, active learner, working cooperatively > self-confident, reflective person aiming at intercultural understanding
2. **Curriculum:** site-based, worked out in school > process-orientation: content + process + environment of negotiated learning
3. **Culture Change:** collegial teacher professionalism involving communicative action, dialogue and respect of diversity

Principles of the OK Project Design…

1. **Site-based curriculum design:**

- Ownership to schools: *equal* partnership between the schools and the TE Department (Viljo Kohonen and Pauli Kaikkonen); *monthly* in-service workshops, planned together (by a planning group)

2. **Collegial collaboration:**

- Site-based teacher teams in each school, involving collegial support in the groups

  –> support *cooperative classroom* learning

Principles of the OK Project Design...

3. **Networking of schools**: by levels: primary; lower/ upper secondary, vocational; interests

4. **Openness**: within schools (info at staff meetings); share experiences regularly (in groups) at the in-service workshops; steering group of the head teachers: joint evaluation

5. **Teachers as researchers**: hermeneutic orientation: reflect on personal projects > reports, developmental essays; interviews; teacher diaries and portfolios

6. Findings: *authenticity* in the teacher's professional growth

- *Genuine interest* in the *pupil* as a human being and the *contents* being taught, sound *knowledge-base;* strong, supportive *presence* in the classroom; focus on *task, pupil* and the learning *process*; being *connected* with the pupils; authentic *encounter* of the *Other* in the class (Heidegger 1927)

- **Authenticity** based on professional *ethics:* promoting the human growth of the pupil as a commitment that guides the teacher's ***professional identity*** (Taylor 1991)

- Undertaking a *personally meaningful task* (such as learner education), aspiring to the goals of such a *big* task (Laursen 2006)

Teacher's authenticity:
7 categories (Laursen 2006)

(1) Personal educational intention
(2) Making the message alive
(3) Respect of the pupils
(4) Building a collaborative work environment
(5) Collegial interaction and collaboration
(6) From the educational will to outcomes
(7) Taking charge of one's own *professional growth*

Authenticity 1: Personal educational intention

- Knowledge of the subject matter to be taught > selection of important contents > negotiated, interactive learning (ground rules)
- Teacher's conception of man: evident in the teacher's educational praxis

"Being a teacher is not changed unless the teacher's values and conception of man are changed"

"Knowledge transmission and authority were not the basic idea of being a teacher. What then? Could it be that the teacher is also a human being in class, someone who can also make mistakes and admit them?" (Kohonen 1999, 39, 41.)

Authenticity 2: Making the message alive

- Personal goals in work, interest in the pupils > self-reliance, calmness, credibility as a teacher/ classroom leader > taking charge of leadership, being a demanding educator, negotiating the ground rules in the classroom

"I come along with my pupils and am that strong adult who holds the threads in her hands and guides classroom work in the right direction. This is seen in the positive working atmosphere in my classes ... I feel strong as an educator". (Kohonen 1999, 53.)

Authenticity 3: Respect of the pupils

- Respectful, educative relationship to the pupil: accurate listening, encountering the pupil as an *individual;* building *rapport* by own modelling
- *Participatory* work: cooperative learning, drama, project work > observing the pupil "in action", giving him/her *space* to come out as a *person,* being *interested* in pupils > tailoring guidance to actual needs: being demanding with respect to ability, indicating that the teacher really *"cares for the child and believes in his/her abilities"* (Kohonen 1999,43)
- Encouraging pupils to learn *"for themselves and for their future, not to please the parents or the teacher"*

Authenticity 4: Building a collaborative work environment

- *Supportive* work environment important for teacher satisfaction; living with the tension between one's *own goals* <-> *institutional goals/culture*
- Conflicts among colleagues consume *"unbelievable amounts of energy"*; an innovative teacher may be *"silenced"* by ignoring his/her work in the work community > deep frustration > temptation to give up and withdraw to own classroom *("let them do whatever they wish")* > persistence and tolerance of ambiguity
- Development of a new *school culture* question of time, determined effort and professional commitment to change, living with the *slow progress/ resistance*

Authenticity 5: Collegial interaction and collaboration

- From the ethos of teacher isolation to collegial collaboration: also responds to the teacher's growth needs *("colleagues act as a mirror for reflecting on professional identity"*)
- Participatory new culture, emotional support > empowerment as an educator: *"I have come to understand each of my colleagues as a resource which is daily within my reach (...) collaboration with colleagues has given me new new personal joy and inspiration for classroom work"* (Kohonen 1997, 279)

There has been a manifest change in our school culture: we have learned to work together, plan together and give collegial support to each other… We had a heartily good time together during the brainstorming session. We found each other and it was energizing to laugh at everything that had been irritating before." (Kohonen 1997, 279)

Authenticity 6: From the educational will to outcomes

- **Authenticity** related to professional autonomy: setting goals, sharing progress > quiet self-confidence as an educator > facilitating pupils' growth > realising the significance of the work

"The OK project has given me a new kind of courage and belief in my work." (Kohonen 1999, 53).

"I still 'teach', of course, and am still a certain authority and adult in my class, but I have also become a counsellor of my students' learning. I attempt to create a positive climate in my classes. I have become an observer of learning and I continuously encourage my students …" (Kohonen 1999, 46, 52)

"When I have got high enough I notice that flying does not take energy any longer. I can just glide up there and let the currents in the air (that is, the new ideas and projects) carry me further. Now that I have learned to fly I also have the courage to visit new lands and enhance my experiential world."

Authenticity 7: Taking charge of one's *professional growth*

- **Professional identity** begins to develop from the conscious choice of teaching as a career > TE to support identity development: clarify conceptions of man/ learning > taking responsibility for one's professional growth: personal goals/ reflection
- **Emotional** process: anxiety, conflicts, uncertainty, crises > self-understanding as an educator

"We touch each other through our imperfection, not through impeccability"

"Will these doings of mine have any bigger significance? I feel that while gliding among the clouds I have been a too hopeful idealist" (Kohonen 1999, 45, 54)

If only I had time! Time to discuss with my students, to listen to them, negotiate, plan, make agreements and follow them up, time to get to know each student better as a person!"

Conclusions: Support for continuous professional growth

(1) Pre-service teacher education:

- **Reflection:** getting in touch with oneself as a person & teacher; assuming a reflective orientation
- **Work on educational beliefs:** own autobiography as a pupil > what models/images of being a teacher?
- **Curricula in TE:** integrating contents and processes, aiming at interactive collegial learning
- **Inquiry:** developing as a "reflective practitioner"
- **Research:** theory+tools to promote critical inquiry
- **Culture of counselling**: collegial learning environment – what kind of models by teacher educators?

Support for continuous professional growth...

(2) Induction teacher education:

- **Support:** how to facilitate professional socialization/ identity development as an autonomous, collegial teacher?
- **Work overload:** liberal ideas are easily "washed away" under pressure (regression)
- **Collegial models:** culture of the schools in which new teachers work during the first few years > role/attitudes of school principals/ senior teachers? > what kind of mentoring arrangements for the beginning teachers?

Support for continuous professional growth...

(3) Inservice TE: partnerships

- **Action-research orientation:** supporting inquiry-oriented work; openness for interaction
- **Collegial school culture:** from teacher isolation to collegial collaboration
- **Ownership:** teachers to design their own action plans > taking charge of their professional growth
- **University:** partnerships with schools to provide professional support; bringing research to schools as an equal partner in mutual professional learning
- **Reflective work culture:** self-assessment/ peer-reflection as an inherent part of the TE programs

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7. Discussion 1: Enhanced teacher's identity

a) *Subject matter/discipline-based expertise:* of the subject(s) taught/ theory-base > traditional identity basis of *secondary* school teachers

b) *Pedagogical expertise:* knowledge of the students (as individuals) > how to encounter/ guide them *individually,* how to facilitate their (*subject-matter)* development/ *study* and *social skills* > work as a curriculum developer

c) *Partnership in school development:* understanding the personal and institutional change processes > taking a responsible role in developing school as a collegial work place > social actor in school/ community

Discussion 2: Encountering an educational change

- **Potentially threatening:** some skills get *obsolete* > need to be replaced by new skills, attitudes and self-understandings > *conflicting tensions:* old, familiar *safety <--> discomfort,* insufficiency
- **Rewarding feelings:** success ("empowerment")
- **Skill learning:** *"DIP" phenomenon* (**D**ecrease **I**n **P**erformance, Michael Fullan 1996) > feelings of "phoney" behaviour, losing control, doing less well > resistance to change
- **Emotional work:** reflect, share, give up something old to *make space* for new understandings *("grief work")* > question of time, commitment and effort > colleagial support: dialogue, sharing crucial

Discussion 3: Towards trans-formative professional growth

1 **Significance of *interaction*** for professional growth > *new collegial culture*

2 *Critical professional stance to work*

3 *Reflective attitude as a habit of mind,* reflecting on educational practices and their philosophical underpinnings

4 **N*ew self-understandings*** in concrete situations

5 Reflect on *critical events* in life and work history, learn from the personal insights

6 R*isk-taking:* act in new ways in school > *social actor*

7 *Acceptance of ambiguity:* living in *uncertainty*

Discussion 4: Professionalism as collective knowledge creation

- **Innovative knowledge construction:** going *beyond current* knowledge > working at the *frontiers of new understanding* (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1993: "Surpassing ourselves") > taking challenges
- **Collective professional empowerment:** enhancing the profession by working on increasingly complex tasks > **collegial interaction/ dialogue** as an essential element of professional renewal
- **Management of professional knowledge:** Is the teaching profession aimed at *collective knowledge construction?* Does it develop continuously through *creation* of *new knowledge*? (Bereiter 2002)

Discussion 5: Eploratory Practice as "quality of life" in classrooms

- **Classrooms** as **communities of practice** with complex social relationships
> integrating *locally helpful understandings* into the teaching-learning events: *teaching, learning* and quality of *life* closely intertwined
➤ focus on *understanding* the local, contextual nature of classroom "problems" before attempting to "solve" them
➤ provide a range of learning opportunities/ individual options, encouraging autonomous life-long learning (Allwright 2006)

Discussion 5: Situated classroom learning..

- **Situated classroom discourse:** participants talk to each other in the context of a *shared history of interaction*
- ➢ creating opportunities for learning, based on contextual understanding: using elements of *time, space, affective engagement, social participation* and *cognitive resources* to enhance the quality of classroom life
- ➢ a **puzzle-oriented** view of classroom life, inviting participants to be *seekers after their understandings* → *social actors*

Discussion 6: The turbulent context of professional growth

- **Educational market orientation**: "effectiveness" (of change), "efficiency" (outcomes) and "economy" (more with less), brought from neo-liberal business life (Sachs 2003) > *not automatically valid for education*
- **Fashionable ethos:** power of all-pervasive competition to improve quality (cf. public "league tables" of schools) > evaluation for "quality assurance"
- **Contradictory educational context:** rhetorics of site-based freedom (decentralization) <--> "hidden" control mechanism (centralized measurable achievement)
- **Educational power** to be related to the consequences: who bears the *responsibility* for marketising education? What can the teachers/ teacher educators do?

Teacher Development:
some quotes

- **There is no curriculum development without teacher development** (Lawrence Stenhouse 1975)
- **There is little significant school development without teacher development (David Hargreaves 1994)**
- *It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of school through understanding it* (Stenhouse1975)