Media Education in School Context

This PhD study investigates grade 2 parallel class teachers' ('Sini' and 'Visa') practical reasoning in the area of school's media education. Media education refers widely to the education, especially teaching, studying and learning, with a meaningful connection to media interpreted as content, a tool and/or societal agent (e.g. the press). The study investigates the integration of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and media culture into the classroom. The critical literature suggests that ICTs and media culture are not easily integrated into school's everyday operations and learning activities (Cuban, 2001; Salomon, 2002). Various mechanisms in school institution have a tendency to preserve the school institution itself instead of allowing teachers simply to choose between the best approaches that the learning psychological research for example can offer.

The data gathering was employing video observation and interviews. The combination of these can be classified under the stimulated recall (STR) method (see Calderhead, 1981). Fenstermacher and Richardson's (1993) teacher's practical argument approach has been used for the elicitation of the STR interview data.

The conclusions are drawn from the use of ICTs in the data gathering with the stimulated recall method as well as from the results of the data analysis. First, I argue that the traditional use of the stimulated recall method in teacher thinking research can be advanced by focusing also on the student's learning process with the recordings of the student's digital concept map creation for example instead of plain teacher performance analysis on the video. Second, Sini's and Visa's practical reasoning in the area of media education could be categorised into moral dilemmas and efficiency of teaching categories. Based on the preliminary analysis, the moral dilemmas had practical arguments with number of explicit and implicit value premises, e.g. what is 'normal' in school and what is not. The efficiency of teaching in Sini's and Visa's practical argumentation was built on several situational and empirical premises around 'good' teaching and learning, e.g. what makes the individual student's learning process efficient.

Problem statement:

- The concept of media education in the school context can be viewed from the curriculum point of view or teacher's point of view. The teacher's point of view provides relevant knowledge about the problems that might occur in reforming schooling in terms of ICTs.

- Teacher reasoning differs depending on the situation. The structure of the reasoning differs between moral dilemmas and teaching efficiency.

Round-table questions:

- How to border the target of the research in the school settings? What is your understanding about research on primary teaching without predefined subject domain (e.g. Math) or general didactical matter (e.g. use of inquiry learning as a teaching method) in the teacher's thinking or in the events of the school?

- With the categories of moral dilemmas and efficiency of teaching, what might be excluded/neglected in the teacher thinking research?

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TWO EXAMPLES FROM THE DATA

Example 1 - Effective teaching

Sini: Many students were in a really different phase, these students here, were fussing very long and others again, students at this age bear only a short time in front of a screen. In the classroom, it goes somehow but in front of a screen it is such that... But I think in here [computer lab] we can't proceed synchronously. The teacher just has to jump here and there, because like I tried a few times to get everybody's attention, it was almost impossible.

Empirical premises

R: Is this because of the computer lab environment? Does all this relate to the fact that you are in an environment like this, compared to your own classroom?

Sini: Those machines... Somehow this computer lab is nowadays a huge establishment. The former arrangement was such that they were in cooperational groups of four computers. The computer lab was pedagogically more sensibly organised. Now there are many things better of course, you get 30 students in, you can see all the screens from the back of the computer lab. For secondary classes, this is more practical than when there were 16 computers in the groups of four, but with these [second grade] students, it functioned better.

Situational premises

ACTION: Teacher visits students at their computers instead of instructing the whole class.

Example 2 - Moral dilemmas

Visa: There are two boys who, at least, say that they watch movies and play games allowed only to adults, and it is a kind of thing to brag about. So I said that there has been many adults deciding about the age ratings and it would be good to cleave to those at home and the school. It is a kind of way to show that I dare to do that. But you can also see that many of the students are interested in that [age limited material] and they get a lot of violent input and it affects at least their scheme of things. They are interested in that and they want to vent it. It is fairly challenging to handle because you can't always just say 'no' but you should think why are these [age ratings] important and why one should not watch that stuff. Or when it appears in their drawings, there can be very violent drawings so it has to be vented somehow. There are always two sides, the internal world, in those cases where one has seen too much of that, and then there is the thing about showing off to the others that I dare to do this.

Empirical premise

Explicit value premise

Implicit value premise

Stipulative premise

R: How do you see the age ratings from the teacher's point of view?

Visa: As a teacher, you have to cleave to age ratings. Though you would think this could be appropriate to watch… how should I put it… for your own judicial relief it is sensible not to. There is no reason to pose a problem since no movie is that important that you would have to see it younger than the age rating says.

Situational premises

ACTION: Teacher first tries to dodge the issue and keeps the focus of the discussion on the movie that the class will go and see. Finally he advises students to cleave to the age ratings of the movies and games.

PRACTICAL ARGUMENT PREMISES (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1993, p. 106)

- Value premise - statement of the human benefit or good to be derived.

- Stipulative premise - statement that defines, interprets or establishes meaning.

- Empirical premise - statement subject to empirical scrutiny (to test).

- Situational premise - statement that describes the context