

Fostering Professional Development

Anja Burkert

ELT Connect: Connecting ELT Practitioners

Department of English Studies, KFU Graz, Dec. 2, 2023

Structure of Workshop

Exploring the concepts of *learner* and *teacher autonomy* and the *relation* between them

Discussing tools for *practitioner reflection* and sharing experiences

Presenting the definitions of *Action Research (AR)* and *Exploratory Practice (EP)*; planning a small-scale AR or EP project

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Group work 1:

- Please discuss in groups what you understand by the concepts of *learner* and *teacher autonomy* and *the relation* between them.

Learner Autonomy

- “Learner autonomy is characterized by a *readiness to take charge of one’s own learning* in the service of one’s needs and purposes. This entails a *capacity and willingness* to act *independently* and *in cooperation with others*, as a *socially responsible person*. An autonomous learner is an active participant in the social processes of learning, but also an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows. It is essential that an autonomous learner is stimulated to evolve an *awareness of the aims and processes of learning* and is capable of the *critical reflection* which syllabuses and curricula frequently require but traditional pedagogical measures rarely achieve. An autonomous learner *knows how to learn* and can use this knowledge in any learning situation she/he may encounter at any stage in her/his life” (Dam et al., 1990: 102)

Teacher autonomy

- “Genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest degree of affective and cognitive control over the teaching process, and exploring the freedom this confers.” (Little, 1995: 179)

Teacher autonomy

- According to McGrath (2000), it is possible to identify two dimensions of the concept: *self-directed professional action* or *development* on the one hand and *freedom from control by others* on the other.

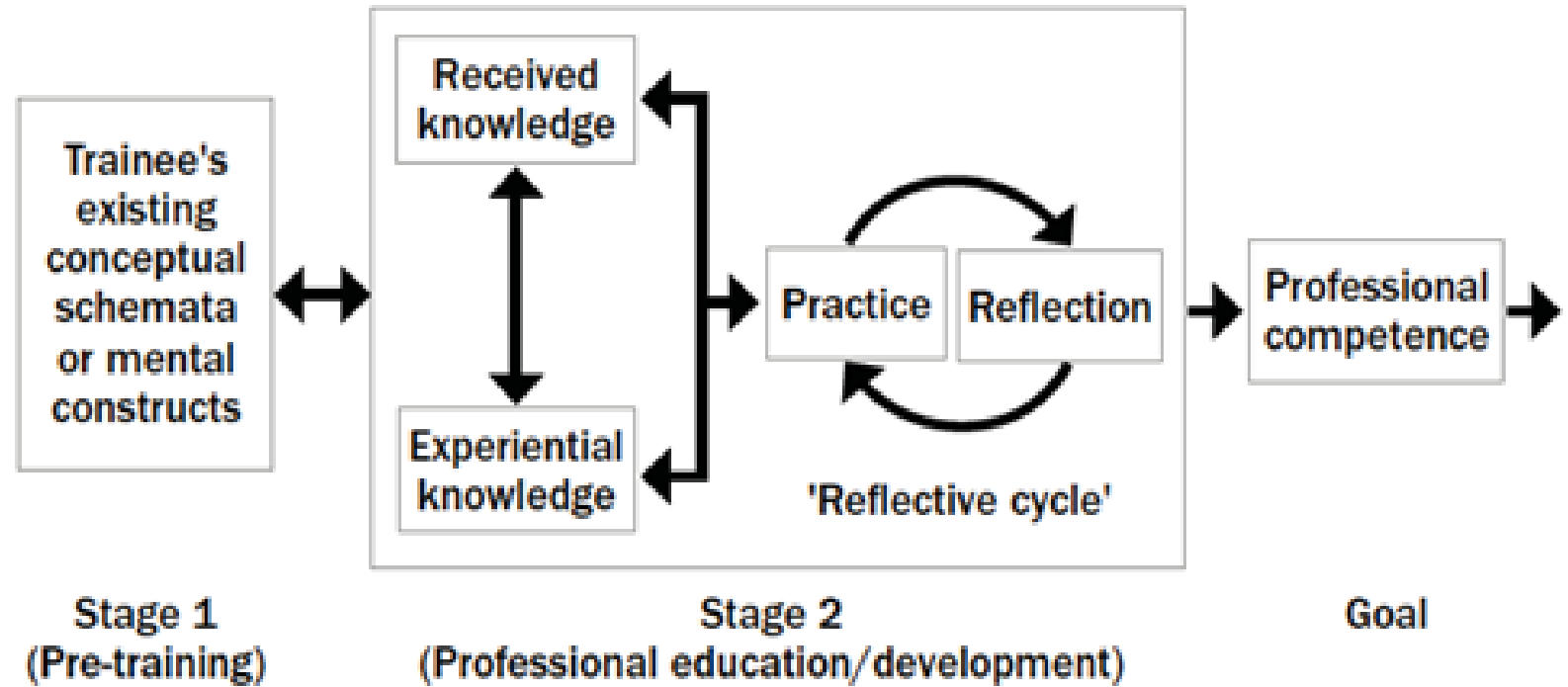
Teacher autonomy

- In relation to *professional action*:
 1. Self-directed professional action, i.e., *self-directed teaching*
 2. Capacity for self-directed professional action, i.e., teacher autonomy (*capacity to self-direct one's teaching*)
 3. Freedom from control over professional action, i.e., teacher autonomy (*freedom to self-direct one's teaching*)

Teacher autonomy

- In relation to *professional development*:
 1. Self-directed professional development, i.e., *self-directed teacher-learning*
 2. Capacity for self-directed professional development, i.e., teacher-learner autonomy (*capacity to self-direct one's learning as a teacher*)
 3. Freedom from control over professional development, i.e., teacher-learner autonomy (*freedom to self-direct one's learning as a teacher*)

Practitioner reflection



The reflective practice model (Wallace, 1991)

Group work 2:

- Please discuss in groups what *tools for reflection* you are familiar with and share your *experiences* with any of these.

Action Research (AR)

- “One of the main aims of AR is to *identify a ‘problematic’ situation or issue* that the participants – who may include teachers, students, managers, administrators, or even parents – consider looking into more deeply and systematically. (...) The central idea of the *action* part of AR is to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to *bring about changes* and, even better, *improvements in practice.*” (Burns 2010: 2)

Action Research (AR)

Four steps in Action Research proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988)

- *Planning*: identify a problem and develop a plan of action
- *Action*: intervention in teaching situation, exploring ways of doing things differently
- *Observation*: systematically observe and document the intervention over an agree period
- *Reflection*: describe and evaluate the effects of the action

Exploratory Practice (EP)

Seven principles for inclusive practitioner research (Allwright and Hanks, 2009 : 149-158)

- **Principle 1** – Put ‘quality of life’ first
- **Principle 2** – Work primarily to *understand* the life of the classroom
- **Principle 3** – The work should involve everyone
- **Principle 4** – The work needs to bring people together
- **Principle 5** – The work needs to serve mutual development
- **Principle 6** – Working for understanding is a continuous enterprise
- **Principle 7** – Integrate the work for understanding into existing curricular practices

Exploratory Practice (EP)

Five propositions about learners (Allwright and Hanks, 2009: 5-6)

- Learners are unique individuals who learn and develop best in their own idiosyncratic ways
- Learners are social beings who learn and develop best in a mutually supportive environment
- Learners are capable of taking learning seriously
- Learners are capable of independent decision-making
- Learners are capable of developing as practitioners of learning

Exploratory Practice (EP)

- “By treating *learners as practitioner researchers* in their own right, EP brings to life our Five Propositions about learners, and so directly addresses our purpose of actually assisting learners to develop as practitioners of learning.” (Allwright and Hanks, 2009: 149)

Group work 3:

Please form new groups according to your interests. Each group should come up with an *action plan* for their professional development (i.e. planning a small-scale *AR* or *EP project*).

References

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