



Power Relations in Classes Taught by Student Teachers

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Contribution

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One of the greatest challenges for student teachers and then for novice teachers is the classroom management. The teacher's ability to perceive the current state of the class climate and the specific setting of individual students is an essential requirement to complete didactic aims in order to be able to teach in the class. Our research was focused on student teachers from Faculty of Education, who have gained one of their first school reality experience in their teaching practice. At the same time, this experience was thematised by the concept of power in a school class. Power can be defined as a potential to affect attitudes and acts of others (McCroskey, 2006) and as such it presents a core area of the teaching process to a considerable extent. Simultaneously, the phenomenon of power is characterised by its reciprocity, which means that a teacher has the power only when their students really attribute it to them. This is the reason why power responds to the interactive character of the teaching process and taking this into account, the process between teachers and students in a class could be better understood. The most influential, traditional typology of power as a relational phenomenon comes from French & Raven (1959). They distinguish teacher's power in relation to a principle on which it is based on: legitimate, coercive, reward, expert, and referent power.

Method

To deal with this complex phenomenon, a design of mixed methods research was applied. The main research question was: How does a process of power negotiation take place between student teachers and their students in classes in Czech lower secondary schools during their long-term teaching practice?

The qualitative part was based on video-studies of eight student teachers' teaching in the course of one semester (48 lessons were videotaped), on semi-structured interviews with these student teachers, and on reflective diaries that were written by these student teachers during their teaching practice.

Quantitative data bring results of the Power Bases: Version for Student Teachers (Vlčková, Mareš, & Ježek, 2015) questionnaire into our study. The questionnaire is an adaptation of one of the latest and most used instruments measuring perceived power of university teacher – Teacher Power Use Scale (Schrodt, Witt, & Turman, 2007) which is based on the most influential typology of power as a relational phenomenon by French and Raven (1959). This typology distinguishes teacher's power in relation to a (by students perceived) principle on which it is based on, i.e. coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, and expert power. This questionnaire was distributed to the 130 students from eight classes where the student teachers from our research sample were teaching.

Expected Outcomes

The students in our sample gradually proceed from student teacher education (i.e. faculty) to the practice (i.e. to "their teacher's desk" in their classrooms). A part of this transition is made by stories of first experience with exercise of power in a school class. Although individual power bases overlap, the findings are structured into a story line of power bases. Firstly, legitimate power will be described. This kind of power will be illustrated on an entry of a student teacher into their new role of being a teacher. The legitimate power is closely related to coercive power because coercion assumes legitimacy of the individual who coerces. The coercion is viewed through its typical forms in a school class, which can be described with a relatively established communication structures, scenarios, eventually mini-scenarios. A contradiction to the coercion is reward power, whose forms make "the other side of the coin". Forms of reward power and situations of reward will be presented. They happen to be sometimes unexpected by student teachers. The power based on teaching skills and knowledge of the school subject will be a focus of the next part of our presentation devoted to expert power. The last empirical part of our presentation will be about reference power, which is built on the relationship of a student teacher with their students. Establishing a relationship with students, which is a long-term task for teachers-to-be, concludes our analysis of power stories. The findings of our research will be discussed both in methodological and theoretical context, mainly in European context (Mainhard, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2011; Molm, 1997, Payne, 2015 etc.). The presentation will be concluded with an overarching concept of power rituals. The importance of this research lies in urgent need of nowadays teachers to meet classroom management requirements that are expected from them.

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