Coercive Power Scenarios in the Classes Taught by Student Teachers

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Our aim is to describe how coercive power is negotiated, used, and perceived by student teachers and their students in lower secondary classes (ISCED 2A). Power is an ability of a person to influence opinions, values, and behavior of others (McCracken, 2005). In our study we use the most influential, traditional typology of power as a relational phenomenon by French and Raven (1959). It 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. Coercive power is based on student’s expectations that their behaviors will be punished by the teacher if they do not concur to the teacher’s influence attempt (French & Raven, 1959).

Our research question is: How is the process of coercive power negotiation between the student teachers and their pupils realized in Czech lower secondary classes?

Methodology: Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used

In our mixed methods research design the quantitative part is based on a survey and focuses on student’s perception of student teacher’s power bases in accordance to French and Raven’s (1959) typology. In qualitative part of the study, which aims at validation of the French and Raven’s theory in a broader context, we focus on younger learners (i.e., lower secondary students), their social and cultural conditions of power in the classes and on student teacher’s power (i.e., beginning teachers) instead of teacher’s power. For this purpose we adopted one of the most criticised and used instruments measuring perceived power of teacher – Teacher Power Use Scale (TPUS, Schottt, Witt, & Turman, 2007).

The qualitative part is based on an ethnographic research design. Data about power negotiation processes were collected via direct (field notes) and indirect (video-recording) observation and the data about student teacher’s perception of power via semi-structured interviews and their reflective diaries.

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

Qualitative data uncovered the structure of the coercive power bases within student teachers’ practice. According to the coercive power use intensity, we describe strengthening and weakening coercive power structures within the classroom, which we named scenarios, their anticipation and their consequences within classroom settings are interpreted.

We discuss our research findings in the context of other research on power: mainly in European context (Maiman, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2011; Molm, 1997 etc.). 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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References


