RECENT DISSERTATIONS

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Entanglement of Science Teachers' lives and work

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Abstract

The thesis focuses on science teachers' lived experience, their social position and their teaching. The guiding research question has been: How is science teachers' work related to their lives? The teachers' work and lives in the contemporary school settings are based on the continuity of their experiences and the relations that have formed them. The interaction between critical influences and tensions shapes the personal and professional experiences, and further produces negative or positive outcomes in terms of teachers' sense of commitment, resilience, well-being and capacity to teach.

I have been studying how contemporary changes within educational politics affect the conditions for science teaching in general. The empirical basis for this research was curriculum, administrative orders, political statements, etc. These texts were investigated for discursive intertextuality.

I have more intensively studied how personal and professional experiences relate in science teachers' work and teaching. The relation between the actual life, the lived experience and the stories told about these experiences is not straightforward. Feelings, emotions, desires, thoughts, etc. influence the way the experience relates to what actually happens or happened and how it is retold. I work with three dimensions of experience, one dimension dealing with the temporal continuity of actions and experiences, one dealing with the educational settings of the actions and experiences, and a third dealing with social, material and personal relations of the actions and experiences.

Science teachers care about, and are dedicated and committed to, children, science education, their own professional development and nature. They care in a manner that is both dependent on and entangled in their personal life history. Like pea plants entangling themselves and their immediate vicinity with their tendrils as they grow; science teacher's commitment is a personal entanglement of past and present experiences.

Teachers recognize the balance of the complex intensity of everyday teaching described in the observations. They also recognize how their life stories told in the interviews reflect their intention to improve the life opportunities for their pupils. The past and present experience of the participating teacher acquired outside teaching is entangled in their practice in science education. This is a potential frequently overlooked in the pre- and in-service education of science teachers. Teacher narratives reveal how the individual teacher's personal entanglement of life and work is constituted, thereby providing an understanding of the interpretation the individual teacher has of the implementation and/or evaluation in process. Science teachers' work relates to their lives in an entangling manner that makes it impossible, and even a mistake, to try to separate the two.

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