

GIDEON VAN TONDER

North-West University, South Africa

MARY GROSSER

North-West University, South Africa

MAGDA KLOPPERS

North-West University, South Africa

HOW TEACHER EDUCATION CAN REMAKE ITSELF FOR A CHANGED CONTEXT: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CLASSROOM TEACHING AND LEARNING

Abstract:

In addition to subject knowledge, thinking skills and dispositions are required for living and working in today's technology-driven environment characterised by information explosion. In the context of the presentation, we argue that teachers themselves need to possess well-rounded knowledge and well-developed thinking skills and dispositions, and should know how to nurture and instil these among the learners whom they will teach. Unfortunately, initial teacher education curricula seem to emphasize the teaching of well-rounded knowledge and neglect the "how" of infusing the teaching of thinking skills and dispositions into subject content.

In order to address the aforementioned observed limitation, a group of researchers at the former School of Education Sciences, North-West University (Vaal Triangle), South Africa, provided training in Cognitive Education to in-service teachers via an 80-hour Short Learning Programme (SLP) that contains seven study units, as part of a SoTL research project during 2017. The main objective of the research project was to train in-service teachers in the theory and application of Cognitive Education (how to purposively infuse the teaching of thinking skills and dispositions into subject content). The presentation will focus on reporting the initial findings of mixed method research conducted with a heterogeneous group of 21 purposively selected in-service primary school teachers to (i) establish their understanding of Cognitive Education, and (ii) the teaching strategies that they apply in their classrooms to advance Cognitive Education prior to and after the SLP training by means of a questionnaire with open and closed Likert scale items. By means of qualitative inductive content analyses, the presentation will also (i) explore the reflections of the in-service teachers in relation to their experiences with the information contained in the seven study units of the SLP, and (ii) gauge the experiences of the teacher participants regarding the training after the completion of the SLP by means of semi-structured interviews.

Based on the findings this presentation makes suggestions and recommendations on how to gear initial teacher education to train teachers who (i) themselves have developed the propensity of skillfully and mindfully applying cognitive tools when confronted with problems, and (ii) who would be able to instil more thoughtful and intelligent working ways among the learners whom they will teach. In particular, new perspectives to reshape teaching and learning in the classroom will be highlighted.

Keywords:

Classroom teaching; thinking skills; dispositions; teaching strategies

JEL Classification: I20, I23