Pedagogical supervision in Poland and Portugal; discourses, projects and teacher development.

Methodology by Wiktor Bernad

1. Introduction

The world is constantly changing and these changes demand reactions and effort that must be made to be able to adopt. This phenomenon concerns also educational systems. In many cases even content knowledge is changing, growing, evolving, and demanding the new skills to be learned[1]. Thus, it seems to be obvious, that the teachers, educators and other stakeholders should constantly compare their knowledge and experience with newly produced knowledge, discoveries and outcomes of research. Participation in groups or workshops might be effective, but might not be enough concentrated on specific situation of each teacher[2]. It means that there is a growing need for self-development and lifelong education implementation due to this constantly changing situation in educational systems, especially in European context. As stated in the literature, pedagogical supervision seen as a tool for teacher` development and lifelong education implementation[3], seems to be very promising, but still there are many obstacles and difficulties of both - sociocultural and political nature. Also the nomenclature connected with education is considered as being not clear enough, what may cause misunderstandings[4]. The research project "Pedagogical supervision in Poland and Portugal: discourses, projects and teacher development" is created as an answer to our personal need of understanding of pedagogical supervision in relation to a broad school context including its culture and system of working in general as well as influence that pedagogical supervision has on individual teacher. The review of the academic literature showed that, even though described, there is not much written about its newest forms and representations. Also in most cases supervisory projects are not seen as an important part of much larger and very complex school reality. Nowadays, within emerging European context in education, there is a strong call for implementing and developing the idea of self-education, lifelong learning and broadly understood collaboration between teachers and all stakeholders[5]. All these values are perceived as undeniably positive and worthy to implement, however in practice the teachers are not as willing to include these values into their everyday workflow as it could be expected. Naturally a question is emerging: why?

[1] Angheluță, P. S., Alpopi, C. & Antonescu A. G. (2014). Managerial Challenges of the Contemporary Society. Managerial Challenges of the Contemporary Society 7(1), 1-4.

[2] Butcher, J. & McDonald, L. (2007). Making a difference: Challenges for teachers, teaching, and teacher education. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

[3] Dudney, G. M. (2002). Facilitating Teacher Development through Supervisory Class Observations. ERIC.

[4] Burns, R. W. & Badiali, B. (2016). Unearthing the complexities of clinical pedagogy in supervision:
Identifying the pedagogical skills of supervisors. Action in Teacher Education, 38(2), 156-174.

[5] Schratz, M. (2005). What is a "European teacher"? A discussion paper. Bucharest: ENTEP

Also brief studies of educational laws from two countries - Poland and Portugal are showing that still not much has been done to really implement these ideas and values into the law. In European documents that refer to teachers' education we may find keywords such as self-development, lifelong education, European context, teacher's development[6]. It might look like those documents are the good guidance in the process of answering to many problems that our educational systems are struggling with. However, at this point a question must be asked if those documents are really providing some detailed ways and practical advices that will help to achieve intended goals? Even if – according to the need of respect for independency of each country in European Union – some level of generality must be maintained, still those documents should provide at least suggestions of concrete solutions. If not – they might remain nothing, but only an overall wish list without real potency of influencing national laws of each country. The same problem might exist on national laws. If lawmakers on national levels will not implement pedagogical supervision in any kind of its representations, it is not likely, that it will be implemented only by bottom-up actions took by teachers or principals. On the other hand, it should be done in a way that will allow to avoid omnipresent overregulation which is nowadays a common problem that may have equally negative consequences. It is then as urgent as delicate and fragile issue to be resolved.

2. Social contextualization and aims of the study.

Every research is done in order to investigate new areas of knowledge, phenomenon or to make previous knowledge more actual or accurate due to the fact, that the reality is in constant change. This particular project of investigation is created to investigate phenomenon of pedagogical supervision from different perspective. Usually, in similar cases, researchers are conducting experiments, designed based research or action research.

In this study I included much broader context unlike it usually is in case of social experiments or other methods with more laboratory environment[7], trying to focus on pedagogical supervision projects as the phenomenon that are occurring in and is influenced by very complex school reality. This reality is also heavily influenced and determined by educational law which designates boundaries, may give or take away possibilities, and may be a burden or helpful tool. That influence - from our perspective - is underestimated in common inquiries done in the field of pedagogical supervision. Moreover, within emerging European context, there is a need to build a transnational understanding of these issues. Teacher learning process occupies minds of scientist, scholars and even philosophers from many centuries, however from few decades it becomes increasingly crucial, important and complex reality as the researchers are giving proofs that more factors should be included when deliberating teacher learning than it was previously considered. It is also observable

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[6] European Parliament and the Council. (2001). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the
Council of 12 February 2001 on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education.
Retrievedfrom http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001H0166
[7] Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

that the specific shift occurred leading from content centred teaching to the idea of teaching skills and letting students achieve their full potential. Such approach produces questions that need to be answered. Most of all modern science should investigate following areas: "What kind of intentional learning opportunities help teachers acquire and develop their vision, knowledge, practices, frameworks and dispositions they need to promote student learning?"[8] Furthermore "It also include studies of what teachers learn from the daily experiment of teaching and from informal interactions with colleagues.

Ultimately research on teacher learning must consider how the outcomes of teacher learning contribute to student learning"[9]. Not without the meaning are also questions connected with socio cultural conditions and the fact that teacher education and learning processes are always submerged in culture and depending on historical determinants. For instance - from our own experience - in Poland, during communist times, the teachers were very often perceived as officials and representatives of oppressive governmental system and that fact was shaping relations between teachers and society for many decades. Emerging European context and meaning of europeanness seem to be a growing issue in last years among the authors of scientific journals as well as by European Commission itself. An article written by Schratz is a good example. In his work Schratz[10] shows some important competences like reflection and discourse, professional awareness, collaboration and collegiality, ability to differentiate, personal mastery as crucial in terms of achieving level of professionality high enough to successfully face all problems and challenges of today's school reality. All those values and competences are very important, but deeper analysis shows a particular pattern. It seems that all responsibility for change lays on teachers´ side. From our point of view, this concept lacks of most crucial questions: what the system/government would do, to really help the teachers to face and resolve problems they are struggling with? What the system/government will do to really support teachers in achieving this goals? In the texts there is also information about growing need of mobility, exchange between teachers from different countries, implementing multilingualism, organizing workshops, events and engaging teachers into their own research and constant development. Although there is no information about how to secure and provide required resources for the teachers to implement all mention above ideas into their workflow. My own practice shows, that common teacher does not have enough time even to do everything what he or she is responsible for. In many European countries educational systems are struggling with increasing problem of burnout teachers. If the teacher doesn't feel enough support, has to work under pressure and in difficult conditions (lack of money, overcrowded classes, very demanding parents, etc.) it is most likely that he or she will not willingly participate in additional activities or learn new things. In conclusion: to be the teacher in today's Europe means not only to learn more, to participate more etc., but also to work in system which truly provide possibilities to achieve all goals. Bearing in mind all mentioned

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[8] Cochran-Smith, M., Feiman-Nemser, S., McIntyre, D. J. & Demers, K. E. (2008). Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts. New York: Routledge.
[9] Ibidem.
[10] Schratz, M. (2005). What is a "European teacher"? A discussion paper. Bucharest: ENTEP

issues and problems to be resolved, I decided to formulate concrete aims to be achieved during the studies. The aims are as follow:

- Describe and comprehend relation between Portuguese and Polish educational laws as well as recommendations from European Union Council and its possible impact on ongoing supervisory projects. The way the law is written and implemented may have a significant influence – positive or negative – on developing and sustaining supervisory project.
- Clarify and systematize of notions connected to pedagogical supervision due to the need of establish their common understanding among stakeholders in European Union
- Deep understanding processes that are occurring in school involved in projects with pedagogical supervision on a macro (educational policies), meso (general school performance, level of teaching, students performance, etc.) as well as micro scale (individual changes in level of professionalism, relations between teachers, etc.) through the lens of specific notions such as: life-long education, teachers professional development, leadership and professional identity.
- Deep understanding of wide range of factors – negative and positive – that are playing a key role in shaping teachers approach (beliefs, predictions, hopes, fears, good and bad experiences) to pedagogic supervisory projects and how this approach is changing through the time.

To be able to achieve all aims, we will conduct our project basing on four research questions that we help us to shape and constitute our research:

- How the practice of pedagogical supervision is defined in educational law in Poland, Portugal and documents provided by European Union?
- How pedagogical supervision is understood by stakeholders in European Union.
- How do the teachers in primary schools understand the idea of supervision, its variables and possible implications for their work?
- What are the main causes, external and internal factors of the supervision process being a failure or success from teachers´ perspective?

3. Study design

In order to be able to find the answers in accordance to scientific rigor, following research framework has been implemented: Firstly - the deep literature study on supervision was conducted, jointly with analysis of educational laws of Poland and Portugal. All documents were reviewed in terms of used notions, connected with supervision and the ways that these notions are understood by the authors of those documents. I also tried to find an answer to the question "if" and "how" these documents can influence or change day-to-day school reality. Secondly, in each country one primary school will be chosen and treated as the separate case study. In Portugal I chose school with ongoing supervisory project to be able to

observe how the project works, what is the reality connected to the project and what are the downsides and positive aspect. I participated in day-to-day life in school accompanying participant (chosen teachers, headmasters and coordinators) in their work, observing classes, participating in meeting, activities and making informal interviews as well as formal semi-structured interviews. In Poland I chose the school whos director agreed to let me implement the project. At the beginning of the school year I brought two teachers from the polish school to Portugal to let them experience how the project works in the school in which I previously did my research. Shortly after I organized workshops for teachers in polish school with help of two portuguese teachers to introduce the idea of pedagogical supervision. Participation in the project was compulsory for all teachers, but I observe only those who agreed. Aslo four coordinators were chosen to supervise the process of implementation and collect outcomes of observations from the teachers. During the school year - similarly to Portugal I was observing teachers and their work, collecting fieldnotes and observations. At the end of the school year I will make 10 interviews that will help me summarize the projects and its outcomes.

References

1. Angheluță, P. S., Alpopi, C. & Antonescu A. G. (2014). Managerial Challenges of the Contemporary Society. Managerial Challenges of the Contemporary Society 7(1), 1-4.
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