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The Role of the Explicit and the Implicit in Teacher Training: The Case of Emergency Remote Teaching

Marco Giganti (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy)

teacher change, implicit, explicit

As an object of study, the teacher's profession is often examined in its implicit (beliefs and attitudes) and explicit (practical) aspects. Many implicit are ascribable to forms of non-cognitive knowledge (van Manen, 1999) that emerge from specific areas of ordinary class life whose tacit is made explicit to make it available for reflection and professional transmission. Anglo-Saxon didactic research of a cognitive background has long been investigating the predictive role played by these constructs on teaching and assessment methods in the classroom (Calderhead & Robson, 1991). The connection between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices is also supported by theories related to the constructivist approach (Richardson, 2002). The implicit also include attitude (Sharma et al., 2017; Aiello et al., 2016; Saloviita & Schaffus, 2016; Sharma & Sokal, 2015; Forlin et al., 2014; Canevaro et al., 2011; Ianes et al., 2010) intended as a conditioning element the intention to act and determine the practices of teachers, from the perspective of theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) or Theory 3-H (Florian & Rouse, 2009; Shulman, 2004).

This contribution aims to present a multiple case study on three omnicomprehensive schools where teachers' beliefs and practices on formative assessment, engagement, and student learning during emergency remote teaching (activated during the COVID-19 pandemic) have been studied. Starting from the empirical study of these three cases, the role of implicit and explicit in the teaching profession will be deepened, drawing on some data collected through semi-structured interviews with principals, questionnaires administered to teachers and focus groups carried out with some privileged witnesses (principal, Internal Evaluation Unit and two teachers for each school order). The results of the research made it possible to suggest to the schools studied some reflections on the activation of training courses and other general reflections were formulated to be presented to researchers and policy makers.

In general, to design and implement effective teacher training the literature suggests that research should address not only the explicit but also the implicit; if not properly considered, there is a risk of replicating traditional models of professional development that do not affect teaching practice. Changes in teachers caused by emergencies, such as the pandemic, are not enough to achieve lasting change. It is necessary to develop pathways consistent with the implicit and explicit educational needs and beliefs of teachers, extended over an appropriate time, inserted in a community of practice in which to give and receive feedback from colleagues and experts and where to start from the concrete experiences in the classroom and see the impact on the practice. As research evidence shows, only in this way are teachers willing to embark on an effective and long-term path of change and thus be ready to face other possible emergencies.