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Promoting Publications in Inservice Work

Inservice educators usually teach, they do not write.

This can be stated as a kind of general experience. But of course there are different exceptions from that rule, and some promising experiences of how to bring inservice people to reflect and write about their work.

1. Barriers to publication work

To start with some reasons why inservice educators do not write:

- Lack of time to sit and think is the most heard argument. The inservice work is a full time demanding business of preparing, organising, planning, implementation, guidance, and communicative work. Even feedback and reflective phases in professional processes lead directly to new planning or organisational consequences in the next coursework. There is almost no personal need to write something down or to communicate with people who are not directly involved in the certain coursework.
- Lack of time to reflect upon one's own work means also: not to make use of a clarified frame of reference, not to set up structure in terms of theory, and on the long run not to be able to communicate how and why the inservice work is done. Very often inservice educators have developed a certain attitude ('habitus' in Bourdieu's terms) of action and reaction in inservice situations which leaves no room to rational-reflective work from a distant view.
- The inside image of how a "good" inservice educator should be is mostly dedicated to a charismatic person directly interacting with teachers. His/her personality and intuitive handling makes the effectiveness, not her/his ability to reasoning, arguing, reflecting, and writing. To write about one's work is considered as a marginal ability in the inservice professionalism.
- There could be a real lack of indepth theory, lack of didactic conceptualisation, lack of structure, not only the lack of time to think about it. Inservice educators very often work as "lonely wolves". Similar to the work of school teachers there

is a lack of professional control in the inservice work unless one is continuously working in teams. Reflecting one's own work, doing research and write about means to ask questions on what one is doing. Questioning can undermine the safe position from which the inservice educator is professionally acting.

- Who cares? Many inservice educators do not write about their work as far as they feel unable to think about certain readers. The scientific community seems not to be interested in practical research on a low-inference level. There inservice community is too small, and the lack of experience in a professional culture of communication is not at all enhancing to write (or read).
- Experience in specific writing: Inservice people usually have to write for advertising and legitimation purposes. Their state or financial agencies need a certain kind of clearcut texts which argues how excellent the coursework is; to utter any doubt or experimental interest in pursuing something in question may lead to cutting off the financial support. Referring to institutional policies there could be built up a personal interest of not to be too open, too reflective. The same attitude could be developed by producing texts for the clients: to advertise a course, to collect interested persons for enrolment means not to be too open or too critical towards one's own work. This attitude is not promoting publications.

There are several assumptions and reasons of why inservice educators are not very fond of publicising their work: Lack of time, lack of theoretical structure, lack of a professional culture and audience, lack of research-attitudes are subjective and objective barriers. These barriers support a vicious circle in the professional development. Efforts in promoting and support of application research in the field of inservice education are not successful if there is no change in the professional self concepts and attitudes of inservice educators.

2. Different kinds of inservice texts

When you look at the outcomes of written materials from the bigger state inservice institutions you will find different kinds of texts produced by and for inservice people:

- A wide arrange of written material is prepared for **methods** in coursework and group-work: for example interaction methods, communication skills, training material for project management, discussion in large or small groups etc. Process-oriented competencies seem to belong to the core abilities of a skilled inservice educator. Sometimes this matter is misunderstood as if the content of what is processed by certain interaction methods is of minor importance.
- Collected **reports on school experience** within a certain subject matter are a common work of inservice institutions. They somehow serve as a demonstration of the results having emerged from an inservice programme. They are considered as examples of implementation to be transferred into different

pedagogical situations. Inservice educators are the editors. Collected reports deal with e.g. computer in primary schools, project work in secondary schools, gender education, the use of pictures in different subjects etc.

- Another kind of written material are **textbooks** serving schoolbased teachers work, such as school-programme work, evaluation, quality assessment, or conflict management. What teachers can learn in inservice coursework is summarised in a booklet. Some institutes started to editing CD-ROMs to current topics.

- The most wide spread type of written material from the inservice business is the **documentation of conferences**. Keynote speakers' lectures, proceedings and results of workshops and group discussions are documented. Very often the documentation is the most important coherent information about the conference to the participants themselves, because each of them could take part only in a small section of the parallel meetings.

Mostly the documentation is a kind of representative and book-keeping document looking backwards to what has already happened. When I am in charge of the documentation work I try to enhance the writers to make use of what they have learnt in the conference: to sum up, to focus upon selected topics, to decide about what they feel to be an important message. The conference discussions should be transferred into written language which differs from spoken language. The text should catch the interest of people who have not attended the conference.

- Sometimes – very seldom – inservice educators from different institutes come together to discuss **selected questions**, like the narrative-biographical approach to adult learning, evaluation procedures in course work and similar issues. The contributions to a joint publication are discussed in the group so that the writers can refer to a specified and critical feedback to their work. They may feel more encouraged to do their writing work.

- Most of the state inservice institution have recently started a **journal** and a **homepage** in addition to keep teachers informed about policies of inservice, about new initiatives and projects of school development.

- In Germany we have only had an **inservice journal** to be published irregularly once or twice a year, edited by the national inservice-educators' organisation "Deutscher Verein zur Förderung der Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerfortbildung". It was not at all easy to collect contributions.

In 2001 the first German-language **journal on teacher education** "Journal für Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung" has started, edited by a group of Austrian, Swiss and German teacher educators including the inservice matters.

3. Support to publication of professional work

In my institutional work I found some personal strategies to give support to other peoples writing. I experienced different ways when I edited a volume of a journal, a reader to a certain subject or a collected sample of articles in a book. The strategies are personally addressed ways of the editing work.

- If I know someone to have a real interesting practice and she/ he refuses to write about it, then I sometimes offer a **ghost-writer co-operation**: I ask for an in-depth narrative interview which I “translate” into a written draft. The author can handle the draft as he/she wants, correct it or not. Most people feel lucky to rely on this kind of co-operation.
- To **present a short lecture** within a workshop with respect to one’s own work keeps people close to their experience and makes them feel safe.
- To **present a poster** about inservice work is another way of setting up structure in publication without overwhelming someone.
- Sometimes I give definite **leading questions** to the person whom I want to write or a **structured frame** to the chapters of the article.
- Good experiences come from a **corresponding interaction** by e-mail and letters. My questions and comments on my partner’s letters give her impulses for in-depth reflections on her own experience to be explained to me. The final paper can be a letter or an article.