

Pedagogical professionalisation through Higher Education – Theoretical perspectives on (reflective) student learning.

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The discussion paper argues that reflective learning processes in Higher Education play a central role in (academic) professionalisation by drawing together German concepts of (pedagogical) professionalisation and predominantly international concepts of (reflective) learning in Higher Education.

With regard to overarching learning objectives, Higher Education should foster “academic professionalism”, as the German Higher Education Qualifications Framework states for instance (KMK, 2017, p. 4). Considering the growing number of professionally experienced students (thus adult learners), Higher Education then has the specific mission to enhance the professionalism of practitioners through learning in an academic setting.

In the pedagogic discourse, professionalisation is an ongoing hot topic, often focussing on knowledge development and professional training. However, the evolving core question What do we actually learn when studying educational science?, given the practical pedagogical experience, cannot yet be answered satisfactorily.

The paper brings forward some theoretical insights that shall stimulate a deeper discussion and further investigation on the role of Higher Education in the context of pedagogical professionalisation.

Taking as starting point the German debate on the academisation of pedagogical training, the paper presents different theoretical concepts of (pedagogical) professionalism (Dewe, Ferchoff & Radtke, 1992; Helpsper, 2021) and forms of pedagogical knowledge (Horn, 1999; Vogel, 2016). Drawing on forms of knowledge and associated desired skills, these concepts, however, lack a deeper understanding of the underlying learning processes. Therefore, predominantly international concepts of learning in Higher Education are consulted, focussing on the role of reflection and reflective learning in the context of adult learning (Barnett, 1997; Reis, 2009; Moon, 2014; Cendon, 2016). In summary, it will be pointed out that the role and characteristics of reflection in Higher Education are worth to be (re)considered in the context of professionalisation, while empirical proof is yet pending.

Topic: Professionalisation in Adult and Lifelong Learning