

Transversal skills : a relevant referent for training ?

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In light of expectations and transformations which today affect the fields of education (weakening of disciplinary logic) of training (transition from one logic of training, which is complete and methodical, to more individualised training courses) and of work (evolution of professions and forms of work, rise of a logic of employability), interdisciplinary skills are presented as points of reference allowing different players to cope. Yet, the mobilisation of interdisciplinary skills in these different fields contrasts with the difficulty in conceiving them scientifically. How can a skill that is always linked to a context, a situation or a class of situation be transversal to the latter ? What does the diversity of elaborations available, which attempt to define them, signify : we thus refer to skills that are transversal, transferable, generic, key, basic, hard and even soft skills ? How can skills be considered simultaneously general and transferable and linked to individual characteristics ? The different contributions assembled in this thematic issue provide critical perspectives regarding the significance of « interdisciplinary skills » by exploring different contexts (academic teaching, university and professional training, the field of integration) in accordance with approaches which prioritise a conceptual, bibliographic or empirical analysis.

Summary of articles

■ SYLVAIN STARCK

What are the relationships between “daily” and scientific conceptions of soft skills?

The important mobilisation of transversal skills in the fields of education, adult education and work contrasts with the critical position adopted in the scientific field with regard to the notion. In order to highlight the relationships between these two perspectives, we propose to follow the work of “everyday” and “scientific” conceptualization in the direction of transversal skills. To do this, we mobilize the contributions of John Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy. In this way, we consider the conceptualization work as an investigation motivated by the encounter of an indetermined situation and aimed at solving it. The analysis of the conceptualizations carried out, according to the “everyday” and “scientific” perspectives, in the school field and in the framework of the training-employment relationship, highlights different logics. While in the field of school questions seem to be encountered, the situation appears to be more split in the context of the training-employment relationship.

■ LOUIS DURRIVE

An ergological viewpoint on generic competencies

How must we consider generic competencies in training, and especially in vocational training? To answer this important question in our view, one must take into account the subjectivity - and therefore the activity - of the person developing his (or her) skills: how does he (or she) commits to his (or her) own action in order to carry it out? Various competency-based approaches have disregarded this subjective dimension of action, or on the contrary they have substantiated it as something existing apart from actions - in other words: as something one could call for artificially in some predefined actions. In this paper we contend that, to legitimately speak of generic competencies in the area of vocational training, it is necessary to refer them each time to various specific concrete actions they are engaged into.

■ JEAN-CLAUDE COULET

Transversal competencies: some suggestions to be free from a myth

Starting from the reasons explaining the interest in transversal competencies, we will show that the difficulties encountered in their use, above all, stem from the lack of reference to a theoretical model of individual and collective competencies. With reference to the theories of activity, we will

try therefore to present the contributions of such a model. That will be illustrated through some examples of the operationalization of this theoretical framework in the field of education and training as well as within organizations and territories.

■ **MARIE-NOËLLE HINDRYCKX & MAGGY SCHNEIDER**

Is reflexivity a cross-curricular competence in teachers training ?

In French-speaking Belgium, a decree on the training of teachers specifies a set of objectives and of attitudes that must be aimed by any didactic device designed to prepare them for their future job. This set is largely dictated by the model of the "reflective practitioner" able to "have reflective regards to his practice" in order to adapt the way he teaches to the classroom circumstances by a "back and forth" between theory and practice. Two didactic analyzes at the upper secondary level, concerning the biological sciences and the mathematics, allow us to point out knowledge related to the epistemology of the concerned knowledge, whose lack of control, by the students-teachers in initial formation, prevents them to be reflexive in choosing a teaching method and especially feeding it appropriately. Looking at reflexivity, we examine here the concept of cross-curricular competence and its "sensitivity" to more strictly disciplinary knowledge, hoping to add elements into the current debate on this subject whether it is about disciplinary learning or teachers training.

■ **SABRINA LABBÉ, NAÏMA MARENGO, LOÏC GOJARD & SYLVIE BOURLLOT-RANTY**

Between institutional demands and professional realities, the difficult recognition of transferable skills : the paradoxical case of the DHEPS

The notion of transferable skills appears as a major issue in the safeguarding of curricula and is key to adaptability on the labour market. We can therefore imagine why they are particularly valued in professional certifications. Our study explores this notion by investigating students in a university program built around the development of transferable skills that was, paradoxically, recently suppressed from the french National Register of Professional Certifications (RNCP). In such a context, what are the students' representations of the skills acquired in their course? And how do they express and share them? We examine the difficulty of the process of enunciating university trainings in terms of skills, the identity function of skills oscillating between being a knowledge tool and a recognition tool, and the necessary taking into account of the contexts in which skills are made explicit and, finally, we look at how hermetic the barrier between transferable and specific skills is.

■ **FRÉDÉRIQUE BROS, MARIE-CHRISTINE VERMELLE & IOANA BOANCĂ**

Transferable skills, the new « key » to integration ? Issues and effects for actors

The object of this contribution is to report on how the stakeholders involved in employment access programmes - professionals and young adults - take possession of and give meaning to the concept of transferable skills. After defining the aim of this paper, by presenting the research (Ludo Ergo Sum) and its object i.e. the sociotechnical videogaming training programme (Skillpass) experimented in different social and professional integration programmes in the Hauts-de-France region, the authors develop the design's main impacts identified on the support practices implemented, the practitioners' representations, and their educational and professional uses of this notion. The authors then focus on the view taken on transferable skills by poorly qualified/educated young adults, whom the training programme addresses : what meaning do they give to the work accomplished ? What benefits do they gain in terms of reflexivity and integration ? All the elements presented in this paper, resulting from the enquiry carried out as part of this research, aim at shedding light on how the stakeholders take possession of, resist or make the best of the requirement for transferable skills, prerequisites to employment access.

Varia

■ **LUCIE GOMES**

The objectivity of the document in history class: an obstacle to overcome.

To study documents in history class is a common practice. However, the skills to be able to study them in history are general. We identified a skill to build a problem from classroom documents. Our experiments have led us to observe an important obstacle to the acquisition of this skill: students wonder if the document is objective. We will see what this remote out of the epistemology of historians implies.

■ **XAVIER MASSART & MARC ROMAINVILLE**

Students' attribution to their success at university

Since higher education has developed many success-promoting schemes for first-year students, it is often regretted that these schemes are underused and that the students "who need them the least" are those who participate the most. This is particularly the case with the formative and early evaluation system introduced in this paper, which enables students to identify and fix their shortcomings as regards prerequisites. Though a significant correlation between mastery of these prerequisites and success at the end of the year has been established, too few students, from teachers' point of view, decide to take part in activities dedicated to prerequisites consolidation after having taken the tests. It is therefore essential to better understand the mechanisms that lead students to take advantage of these success-promoting schemes or not. This paper analyzes this question with respect to attributional theory: what do students feel spontaneously about the importance of prerequisites for success? What are the factors (real level of mastery of prerequisites, gender...) that are related to these attributions? The article ends with possible educational solutions that the results suggest.

■ **STÉPHANE TALÉRIEN, SÉBASTIEN CHALIÈS & STEFANO BERTONE**

Professional development of experienced teachers through the explicit transmission of ordinary practices between peers

This case study is part of an anthropocultural research program in which the main theoretical assumptions are borrowed from the philosophy of ordinary language (Wittgenstein, 2004). The research aims to study the effects on professional development of a training program that is part of a continuous training format called "adaptive". This system attempts to create the formal conditions for the effective transmission of ordinary practices between two experienced teachers (one acting as a "peer trainer" and the other as a "trained peer") and thus produce professional development. To this end, it proposes three adjustments to the traditional training format: (i) prior access by the peer trainer to a synoptic vision of the rules governing his practice to be transmitted (ii) ostensibly taught by the peer trainer to the trained peer and (iii) two implemented by the trained peer followed in each case by a mentoring activity in the form of peer trainer control. The results obtained show (a) effective learning of the rules by the trained peer following the access of the peer trainer to a clearer vision of the rules underlying his practice and following his support activity, as well as (b) the development of the professional activity of the trained peer through the monitoring and interpretation of the rules learned under new circumstances.

■ **VALÉRIE THÉRIC, HÉLÈNE CHENEVAL-ARMAND & ALICE DELSERIEYS**

Vocational teaching and inquiry based teaching : the case of industrial textile engineering

In a context of gradual evolution of the objectives of vocational teaching in France, inquiry based teaching strategies are more widely prescribed. This article focuses on the links between implicit prescriptions of inquiry based teaching and which activities are described by vocational teachers of industrial textile engineering. In particular, we want to identify if these declared activities fall into the description of pragmatic and/or explicative inquiry based teaching. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six vocational teachers from different backgrounds and profiles. The interviews were conducted using a guide based on the characteristics of teacher's activity and inquiry based teaching. The analyses of these interviews have highlighted that, despite a certain lack of clarity in the prescriptions, interviewed teachers describe practices that fall into a pragmatic inquiry based teaching activity, and give a predominant place to practical activities.