Hidden Curriculum in Teacher Education

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In the pedagogical classic Emile, Rousseau (1962) warns against providing children with access to globes and maps. Rousseau considers children to be incapable of navigating using maps. He is skeptical about this technology and argues that education and upbringing should take place in what he considered to be natural surroundings. Maps are good examples of compressed representations of our surroundings that have been developed over many thousands of years. Maps are cognitive prostheses, which we can learn to use in order to navigate. Today’s teacher training in Norway is still characterized by the attitude that it is pedagogically correct for children to learn to write using a pencil rather than using a keyboard and word processing or digital media. The basis for established pedagogical theory and practice is still anchored in oral and written culture. At the same time, the Internet could be considered a part of children’s and young people’s upbringing.

In parts of teacher education, culture and technology are kept separate. In teacher education’s hidden curriculum, culture is defined as the sum of all the functions and values which oppose technology. Technology becomes a factor that estranges and dehumanizes, while the classroom, the book and the curriculum are the neutral representatives of cultural inheritance. Educational institutions base their arguments upon the close connection that exists between the philosophy of enlightenment and printing technology. By, for example, seeing a book’s text as natural – something which has lost its technical character – education has forgotten how technology and culture are interwoven. The book was the first teaching machine and the first mass-produced commodity.

Norway already has a “national framework” in place to integrate ICT in initial teacher training. As an effect of the recent reform in education, the Knowledge Promotion reform, ICT or digital competence is now seen as one of the five basic skills (along with ability to express oneself orally, reading, writing and mathematics). This has generally generated a stronger focus at teacher training institutions on preparing student teachers to be able to make use of ICT in their teaching, and this is expressed through intentions in strategic documents and plans at teacher training institutions.

Norwegian teacher education recently underwent reforms (St.meld. nr. 11 (2008–2009), 2009), in which a major aim was to train teachers to prepare children for the future and an information society (National Regulations for Differentiated Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education Programmes for
According to experts in the report Technology Outlook for Norwegian Schools 2013–2018, the number one challenge in Norway is the current approaches to initial teacher training and in-service training in digital tools and pedagogies are insufficient for the need. According to the NIFU’s ‘ICT in Teacher Education’ report, teacher training at all levels in Norway may not be fully meeting its responsibility of producing teachers who are sufficiently digitally literate to help learners make the most of the tools at their disposal. While formal requirements for the use of ICT are mandated within the national curriculum for students, similar expectations for teacher training programs are missing at both the national and institutional level.

Several institutions meet the new requirements for teaching digital competences. It does not seem, however, as if the students perceive it that way.

The extent to which teacher trainers actually utilize ICT in their teaching varies a lot from person to person. Regional and local differences emerge between and within the different teacher education institutions, affecting student teachers’ digital competence. There are also discrepancies in how ICT is integrated at different institutions, and also within different fields of study. It seems as if the integration of ICT in teacher training to some extent is up to the individual teacher trainer, and as a result of this, students attending the same institutions can receive divergent levels of ICT training, depending on the teacher they have and the courses they take. Hence, students from different teacher training institutions are differently educated when it comes to ICT skills and competences.

The current situation in teacher education calls for action. The Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy and the Norwegian Centre for ICT in Education have initiated a network of teacher educators with the ambition of publishing a broad selection of experiences and data from different types of Norwegian teacher education. Norwegian teacher education institutions have been criticized for not preparing their students on how to teach with and on technology. The response that the Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy received from a call for abstracts on digital competence in teacher education proves that there are many initiatives, and many teacher educators who do teach with, on and through technology.

This special issue on digital competence in teacher education is the first in a series showcasing experiences, the potentials fulfilled and the challenges faced when contemporary teacher education meets increasingly technology-rich schools and classrooms.

REFERENCES