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**CONFLICTING VIEWS ON
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.
CRITICAL DIALOGUE AS A
RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION
METHOD FOR A MASTER'S
COURSE IN PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS**

GABY JACOBS

ABSTRACT**Conflicting views on professional development. Critical dialogue as a research and intervention method for a Master's course in professional education for teachers**

Higher education professionals in the 21st century are facing the challenge of how to deliver good work in ever more complex circumstances. Good work is a moral issue; it refers to the higher goal of education in society. However, developments in the last decades have tended to push the moral dimension of professional work into the background. Higher education has increasingly become "instrumentalized", and the result is teaching staff that find it difficult to recognize, articulate, and deal with the moral questions and dilemmas that they face when working with students. In this contribution, we propose a dialogic approach to understanding the educational goals of professionals in higher education. Our method is based on Bohm's dialogic approach – to discover the tacit beliefs, values and attitudes of participants and reconstruct them through the process of collective storytelling – and Burbules' and Smaling's plea for a critical dialogue. We will discuss a dialogic research and development project within a teacher education department for special educational needs at a university of applied sciences in the Netherlands. The participants in the dialogue meetings shared their views on professional development and the dialogue helped to co-reveal and construct the tacit tensions between these views. We will describe the main tension, between the development of expertise based on a strong knowledge and skills base on the one hand, and the development of a critical inquiring attitude for which no specific knowledge is required, on the other hand. We will offer a notion of dialogic professionalism in order to integrate these views.

Keywords

Professional development, dialogue, higher education

SAMENVATTING**Conflicterende visies op professionele ontwikkeling. Kritische dialoog als onderzoeks- en interventiemethode in een masteropleiding voor onderwijsprofessionals**

Professionals die werkzaam zijn in het hoger onderwijs in de 21^e eeuw zien zich geplaagd voor de uitdaging hoe goed werk te verrichten in groeiende complexe omstandigheden. Goed werk is een morele kwestie, die verwijst naar het hogere doel van onderwijs in de samenleving. In de afgelopen decennia is de morele dimensie van dit werk echter naar de achtergrond geschoven.

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Het hoger onderwijs is in toenemende mate instrumenteel geworden, hetgeen resulteert in onderwijspersoneel dat nog nauwelijks in staat is om de morele vraagstukken en dilemma's die zij tegenkomen in het werken met studenten, te herkennen, te articuleren en ermee om te gaan. In deze bijdrage stellen we een dialogische benadering voor om inzicht te verkrijgen in de onderwijsdoelen van opleiders in het hoger onderwijs. Onze methode is gebaseerd op Bohm's dialogische benadering – waarin het gaat om het ontdekken van stilzwijgende opvattingen, waarden en attitudes van deelnemers en de reconstructie daarvan in een proces van verhalen delen – en het pleidooi van onder meer Burbules en Smaling voor een kritische dialoog. We gaan in op een dialogisch onderzoeks- en ontwikkelproject in een opleidingscentrum voor speciale onderwijszorg in Nederland. De deelnemers in de dialoogbijeenkomsten gingen met elkaar in gesprek over hun visies op professionele ontwikkeling en de dialoog hielp hen om onuitgesproken spanningen tussen deze visies op het spoor te komen en expliciet te maken. We gaan in op de belangrijkste spanning tussen de ontwikkeling van expertise die een sterke kennis- en vaardighedenbasis veronderstelt enerzijds, en de ontwikkeling van een kritisch onderzoekende houding en beoordelingsvermogen waarvoor geen specifieke inhoudelijke kennis is vereist, anderzijds. We stellen een concept van dialogische professionaliteit voor om deze twee noties te integreren.

Trefwoorden

Professionele ontwikkeling, dialoog, hoger beroepsonderwijs

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of professionalism has undergone a rapid transition in recent decades. This paper focuses on higher education as a professional practice, and more specifically a teacher education department at a University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands that offers a Master's course in Special Educational Needs (M SEN). Higher education has increasingly become "instrumentalized" (Walker, 2001), with the result that teaching staff have difficulty recognizing, articulating, and addressing the moral questions and dilemmas that they face in their work with students (Willemse,

Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2005). It raises the question of what views educators hold on professional development and how these are put into practice. The research group "Professional Values in Critical Dialogue" at this university conducted four dialogue group meetings with educators on the M SEN within the context of a collaborative action research project.

We will first outline the debate on professionalism and present the notion of critical dialogue, which serves as the theoretical framework for our project. Then we will discuss the nature of the dialogue project and its main results: the tension between the idea of professionalism based on expertise and critical, inquiring professionalism. Finally we will relate this to theoretical views on professionalism and propose a notion of dialogic professionalism as a way forward.

VIEWS OF A NEW MORAL PROFESSIONALISM

Traditionally, professionalism has been characterized by a number of external attributes, such as the presence of a professional code and language (jargon), a form of academic or vocational training that grants entry into the profession, and social recognition based on commitment to higher social values such as justice, safety or health. Another important component of professionalism is the presence of a systematic theoretical foundation consisting of scientific research, which serves to underpin professional practice (Freidson, 2001). This is called *autonomous* or *classical professionalism* because control rests with the profession and is based on a large and complex body of knowledge. Law and medicine are examples of these classical professions.

In recent decades, however, three major changes have taken place. First of all, in the face of demand-led public services and privatization, the expectation has grown that professionals should be more publicly accountable for their decisions, which undermines the classical ideal of autonomy (WRR, 2004). Secondly, we have seen the emergence of the so-called semi-professions (which are on the way to becoming a "full" profession) such as social work and teaching. In such cases, it is only in the last two decades that a body of knowledge has begun to grow, vocational associations established and professional codes of conduct put in place. But while they have sought to build a strong professional identity, a third change has been taking place: an increase in bureaucratization and technical problem-solving, which Freidson (2001) has described as the "moral erosion" of the professions. Even the best-established professions, such as medicine and law, are feeling the demands of New Public Management. Doctors and lawyers are increasingly becoming executors of externally defined tasks and goals (Kremer & Tonkens, 2006). The upshot

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of all these developments is that the classical model has become outdated, but a new conception of professionalism has yet to emerge (Nixon, Marks, Rowland & Walker, 2001).

Various authors have pointed out the uncertainty in professional practice which is associated with conflicts of identity and values (Dall'Alba, 2009; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Moore, 2004), and the moral issues and dilemmas that arise in professional practice (Jacobs, 2010a). It is argued that in the face of this uncertainty, classical or autonomous professionalism is outdated and should be replaced by a form of professionalism that is more inclusive, participative and oriented towards learning (Dzur, 2004; Jacobs, Meij, Tenwolde & Zomer, 2008; Kremer & Tonkens, 2006; Nixon *et al.*, 2001; Sachs, 2003). Schön's notion of reflective professionalism (1983) is based on the assumption that professionals work in an imperfect and chaotic world of professional practice that raises many questions and that requires both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, and this new conception of professionalism has laid the ground for new ways of thinking. Sachs (2003) proposes a "new" professionalism that she terms active, transformative and democratic, in which the professional is an agent of change, striving to promote democratic values such as participation in society. Nixon *et al.* (2001) present their concept of "emerging professionalism", which centres on the moral purpose of professional practice and in which professional identity relies on the ability to listen to and learn from stakeholders:

Why I do what I do is of the utmost significance, as are the deliberative processes whereby I address that "why". Without this emphasis on the moral purposefulness of practice, there would be no claim to professionalism. (Nixon *et al.*, 2001, p. 234)

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) view social capital (the quantity and quality of interactions and social relationships among people) as the cement that helps to build professional capital. Individual talent and passion, knowledge and skills (human capital) as well as the ability to make discretionary judgments under circumstances where there is no fixed rule or evidence to guide the professional (decisional capital), rely on the availability of social capital. While these authors stress the importance of relationships with colleagues for professional development (for example by developing professional learning communities), other stakeholders such as students, do not seem to play a major role in professional work.

Under the notion of democratic professionalism, the critical dialogue with other stakeholders is central. This concept is characterized by the struggle to demystify professional practice and find answers to difficult questions and moral dilemmas through dialogue with those directly involved,

such as students, patients, colleagues, management, policy makers and other stakeholders. Interdisciplinary cooperation is a part of this, proceeding from a shared commitment to the creation of a good and just society (Whitty & Wisby, 2006). This does not, however, detract from the expertise, experience and discretionary judgment of professionals, i.e. – their competence to form judgments within their own area of expertise. What it does mean is that this is seen as part of a process of dialogue in which clients' experience-based knowledge and expertise, as well as expertise from other disciplines than one's own, have a place. This demands a self-critical attitude from professionals and an openness to other perspectives:

Though they retain the authority and at least somewhat privileged voice of people with experience and specialized training, they recognize that they may know only part of what is important in taking a decision about a treatment plan, a service, a public policy that relates to their domain. Above all, they seek to open up their professional domain to other voices, other experiences. (Dzur, 2004, p. 25)

When applied to the field of higher education, this means that educators are the authority in their own field, but they work with other disciplines, students and supporting staff in order to deliver the best quality service, based on a commitment to the moral and social purposes of education and its value (Goodson, 2003). However, teachers have not learned how to reflect on and discuss normative issues and they frequently lack support from the department or institute (Willemse *et al.*, 2005). This may also be true of teachers in higher education. In addition, Biesta (2012) argues that education is dominated by a discourse of learning. Since learning is about the process and not the outcomes of education, it easily strips the issue of purpose from the practice of education, thus also masking the task of education to help students develop their ability to make moral judgements:

What we are after in the formation of the person is educational wisdom, the ability to make wise educational judgements. (Biesta, 2012, p.19)

Although Biesta does not use the notion of democratic professionalism explicitly, his work stresses the necessity of keeping the conversation open about the purpose of education in order to prevent the dominance of one discourse that then becomes “common sense, repeated, promoted and multiplied” (Biesta, p. 10). This hints at an important role for critical dialogue as an integral part of professional practice. Dialogue provides a forum for making tacit values, motives and interests explicit, thereby helping educators in their search for ways of dealing with the moral difficulties they face.

DIALOGUE AND CRITICAL DIALOGUE

The concept of “dialogue” is widely used in many different contexts, but often in the sense of little more than a good conversation or discussion. In the research group we use the term explicitly in the sense of designing a critical dialogue, which adds some extra to the everyday meaning of dialogue.

“Dia” literally means “through” and “logue” means “word”: “through words” then. Dialogue is defined as a stream of meaning flowing between and through us which generates new meanings. This stream has its origins in our openness and sensitivity to others and to things that are alien to us, and our awareness of our own ideas, feelings and embodied responses, while also suspending judgments and suppressing impulsive reactions (Bohm, 1996). The outcome is a social space in which experiences and knowledge are articulated, differences explored, new meanings constructed and joint action taken.

The term “critical” is important here, since dialogue is never freed from power relationships and differences in values and goals (Burbules, 2000). In a context of diversity, who decides on the ground rules for the dialogue? Who decides which language will be spoken? Can all differences be bridged through dialogue and what happens in the attempts to bridge them? A dialogue based on the assumption that complete mutual understanding is possible, implies the exclusion of the uncertainty, disagreements and rifts that typify human relationships.

Smaling (2008) emphasizes that the difference between dialogue and critical dialogue is that the latter is not burdened by the pursuit of unanimity, consensus or universalism, and that the participants bring their feelings, emotions and embodied experiences to the process. An important aspect of critical dialogue is its evaluative nature: “evaluating the quality of the dialogue [...] the good, neutral or bad role of all kinds of power relations between the participants” (p. 24). A critical dialogue, then, can only take place through a willingness to meet with others in their state of being different which involves an “uprooting” by breaking loose from one’s own certainties and presuppositions (Smaling, 2008). In addition, the importance is stressed of reflecting on the conditions under which the dialogue takes place and the assumptions that underpin it (Burbules, 2000).

CRITICAL DIALOGUE AS RESEARCH METHOD

In 2009, the research group in “Professional Values in Critical Dialogue” was established at the Department of Special and Inclusive Education of Fontys University of Applied Sciences, with

the wider goal of encouraging the moral and professional development of those working in the domain of education, using critical dialogue as the main medium (Jacobs, 2010a). As part of its research programme, the research group started a collaborative action research project with educators¹ working on the M SEN. This is a Master's course for professionals working within primary or secondary education, intended to strengthen their professional development in areas such as teaching and counselling students with special learning and behavioural needs. Most of those enrolled in the study programme are over 25 and have at least five years of experience.

The moral and professional development of students was included in the competence profile developed for this study programme (Claasen, De Bruine, Schuman, Siemons & Van Velthooven, 2009). However, we did not know whether the educators that worked on a daily basis with students, actually support and implement this dimension of the competence profile, and if so, how. Dialogue group meetings² were organized within the department with educators and coordinators on the M SEN. This was based on the assumption that critical dialogue could be used as a research and intervention method to enhance reflection on and the articulation of professional values and pedagogical goals of educators. Our main research questions were:

- What do educators on the M SEN see as the goals of this education programme?
- How does the course contribute to these goals, according to these educators?

An e-mail was sent to all teaching and coordinating staff in the department containing information on the project, including the requirements for participation, the time involved and related ethical issues (such as limited anonymity). Within a time period of six months, four dialogue group meetings were held with 24 participants in total (20 females and four males, in the age range 40–61).

The goal of these meetings was to enable a dialogue on the moral purposes of educators on the M SEN course and the means by which they could achieve these moral purposes. First we asked the participants to complete two sentences on a sheet of paper: 1. What I want to achieve with my students is... 2. And I do this by.... . After some time for individual reflection, we started the dialogue, by asking the participants to share their responses to the first sentence on paper. This dialogue was based on five ground rules (see Table 1), constructed from the work of Bohm (1996) and Smaling (2008) on dialogic inquiry. These ground rules were handed out to the participants, clarified and discussed. In addition, we asked the participants to be aware of their own position within the dialogue and how this influenced the process.

Table 1: The ground rules of dialogue

1.	To listen without judging
2.	To ask open questions
3.	To suspend immediate reactions
4.	To share experiences, thoughts and feelings
5.	To explore (hidden) beliefs and presuppositions

At the end of the session, we asked the participants whether, during the dialogue, anything else had come to mind regarding the topic of this meeting that they considered important. Also, in line with the view on critical dialogue, we evaluated the meaning of the dialogue for each of the participants, and the process and conditions of dialoguing. We looked at difficult moments and the “flow of meaning” in this process.

The dialogue was facilitated by the research group leader and a research group member. The task of the facilitators was to encourage dialogical narrative interventions in accordance with the ground rules for critical dialogue. At the same time, the facilitators took part in the dialogue themselves, by bringing in experiences and knowledge they had from the course and their own teaching, and to search for differences when unanimity seemed to dominate and vice versa.

The dialogue meetings were taped on a digital voice recorder and fully transcribed. A narrative thematic analysis was conducted by reconstructing “storylines” and “troubles” in the dialogues (Kohler Riessman, 2008; Marková, Linell, Grossen & Orvig, 2007). “Storylines” referred to the themes that recurred throughout the dialogue and the co-construction of meanings around these themes. Our main interest was in the higher goals that the lecturers attributed to the course, and the means of achieving these goals. “Troubles” referred to the tensions between these goals and means, or between the different meanings given to similar goals or means. Troubles also included barriers to achieving the intended goals or employ the desired means.

The narrative analysis was first conducted separately by the two researchers and then brought into a critical dialogue to enhance our reflexivity in the research project. We also devoted one research group meeting to a panel analysis of the material, in which the thematic framework was developed further.

RESULTS

The results of the dialogue group meetings were twofold. On the one hand, they included insights into the pedagogical goals of the participants and teaching methods and approaches used for professional development within the M SEN. They also showed the troubles and challenges involved. On the other hand, results were presented regarding the dialogical method through which these insights were (co)constructed.

Educational goals and means

Participants were unanimous in their view that the M SEN should achieve more than the transfer of knowledge and learning skills or attitudes. For them, a Master's course should result in professional development. In explaining their view on professional development, specific themes (storylines) dominated, such as educational goals. These included the development of: 1) a critical inquiring attitude and critical judgment; 2) expertise, i.e. the development of knowledge and skills and a sense of salience; 3) authenticity, defined as feeling autonomous, present and congruent; 4) awareness of self (personal values, meaning, behaviour) within the social and professional environment, including one's contribution to the development of children and the school or institution; 5) multiple professional frames for thinking and action; and 6) belief in the strengths of children and in the possibilities for change, both personally and socially. To achieve these goals with students, diverse teaching methods were mentioned, including dialogic forms of education, practice-oriented research, the solution-focused approach, role modelling, supervision and using video and stories to enhance reflection.

Troubles and challenges

The critical reflection that took place during the dialogue group meetings showed that the educational goals and means are not without "troubles and challenges". These included how to deal with one's values as educators in the light of the increasing consumerism of students; the paradox of autonomy and interdependence in professional work; and the question of the educators' professional frames and how they interact with colleagues that have different frames. The main trouble presented in the four dialogue meetings involved developing a critical attitude and judgement on the one hand and the development of expertise on the other hand (goals 1 and 2). We will discuss this trouble in more depth since it was an important but hidden line of incongruence within the department and, more generally, in higher education in the Netherlands.

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In 2006, the existing professional development programme for teachers became a government-accredited Master's course, including the requirement that students should conduct practice-oriented research as part of the programme. This meant a change towards a view of the student as not only a critical user but also a constructor of knowledge. In recent years, the development of a reflective inquiring attitude has become a key didactical concept of the M SEN course, with reflection at different levels being the prerequisite to developing this (Admiraal, Swet, Huijgevoort & Souisa, 2010). In the dialogue group meetings, participants used different constellations of words to indicate this reflective inquiring attitude but in their explanation they always used the term "critical". This indicates the importance of critical reflection for professional development, which corresponds with the dominant focus in higher education (see e.g. Klabbers & Boosten, 2013) and is illustrated by a participant in the dialogue group meeting:

What I want to achieve is that my students become professionals. By professionals, I mean adopting a self-conscious, critical, researching and ethical attitude. I want them to reflect on the things they do and the beliefs, goals and values that underlie them. (female educator M SEN, research project supervisor)

This quote shows clearly that a critical inquiring attitude is connected to moral reflexivity; it is important to reflect (also) on the "underlying beliefs, goals and values", according to this educator, which echoes the goal of moral professional development as defined in the competence profile of the M SEN. Another participant stresses the same goal by focusing on the ability to make complex choices, such as professional judgements:

Our students live in a complex world – we all do – in which they have to make choices. I want to raise their awareness of the choices they make within this complex field of forces and help them develop the capacity to explain and ground these choices and cooperate with others in this. (female coordinator M SEN)

Dialogue with others as well as doing research "as a conversation with their own practice" are seen as key methods by which to develop a questioning attitude which remains over the long term:

Helping my students to develop on all levels: thinking, feeling, acting. This can be done by encouraging a conversation with their environment, their colleagues or fellow students, the lecturers and with themselves. This conversation will open up new perspectives on their

professional practice, and new possibilities, also regarding themselves as teachers or school counsellors. And I also hope to inspire the will to develop themselves and their professional skills, that they feel good about it and that this open and questioning attitude will last. (male educator M SEN)

These quotes show that educators on the course feel that cultivating a critical inquiring attitude and judgement among students is an important part of becoming a “good professional”. However, there was some ambivalence too. Although the participants generally agreed that professional development could not be limited to knowledge and learning skills, some felt that the focus on an inquiring attitude has taken priority over the practical skills of professionals, resulting in reflective professionals that lack adequate knowledge and skills in working with children with special educational needs. The following quote illustrates this view:

I also want my students to learn a craft and the instrumental and ideological knowledge that belongs with it. This means that there should be a balance between a knowledge base that is essential to learning the craft, and knowledge construction based on critical reflection which is seen as central in a Master's degree programme. Because the latter alone does not contribute to strengthening the teaching profession. This also means that practice-oriented research needs to be complemented with sufficient training in skills. (female educator M SEN, research supervisor)

Some of the educators, who had previously worked in the specialist routes of the educational programme (before the programme became a Master's course) expressed concern that future professionals would not acquire the specific knowledge and the skills to do a good job:

I am a bit worried that the specific skills required for teaching or counselling are being pushed to the background due to the focus on practice oriented research and the development of a reflexive research attitude. Specialist requirements such as working with pupils with dyslexia or autism, are not sufficiently taught and trained any more. (female educator M SEN)

These educators do not object to the idea of a critical inquiring attitude, but at the same time they do not think this is enough to deal with the complexity of educational practice. According to this view, professionals need a strong (tacit and codified) knowledge base; they should learn skills by doing practical exercises, the key to the development of craftsmanship.

Dialogue as a research and intervention method

We can draw a number of conclusions from the evaluation of the dialogue group meetings with the participants. First of all, it became clear that educational goals and practices were not openly and widely discussed within the department:

We don't share our ideals and practices that often, because there is never time. (Male educator M SEN, research supervisor)

Secondly, and following on from this, all participants explicitly mentioned the importance of having dialogue meetings with colleagues. The reasons given were that the dialogue made them aware of tacit views on and interpretations of professional development among colleagues:

Now I'm finally getting to know my colleagues' views and ways of teaching. (female educator M SEN)

Also, the dialogue group meetings were occasions to explore differences in more depth and to make tensions between viewpoints explicit. This turned out to be very valuable, since views on professional development became stronger, broadened or transformed:

I have started to question my own professional frame what is it? Do we have one professional frame within the department or many different ones? (female educator M SEN)

It has changed my view, talking in this free space with colleagues about our Master's programme. (female coordinator M SEN)

Thirdly, we found that at some points the dialogue stopped but that meta-reflection at these difficult moments made it possible to take it up again. For example, two seemingly contrasting views of students were presented – on the one hand as uncritical and unreflective consumers on the one hand versus curious and idealistic human beings, that are keen to learn and to develop on the other hand. Statements became rigid, stances became entrenched and positions were taken and defended by giving examples from the participants' own practice. Only the intervention of one of the facilitators ("can we explain consumerist behaviour by what is happening in society and education nowadays?")³ helped to open up the discussion to other viewpoints again.

Finally, the evaluation showed that the dialogue had spurred educators to start up research projects in their own teaching practice (and develop their own reflective researching attitude). For example, one educator wanted to do research into the contribution of her supervision practice to the professional development of students. Another educator developed ideas for following up on her Master's research into the difficult boundary between self-reliance and care for students in higher education. So the dialogue meetings were not only useful as a method of collecting data, but also as an intervention method within the department and curriculum.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this last section we will first discuss the main challenge reconstructed in the results section and then highlight some methodological issues regarding the dialogue as an intervention and research method.

Paradigm clashes?

The dialogue group meetings highlighted the tension between two main educational goals that the educators brought forward: the development of expertise versus the development of a critical inquiring attitude and judgement. A possible explanation for the tension that was felt may have been the different epistemological paradigms underlying these two positions and the dominance of the discourse of "critical inquiry and judgement" at the beginning of the 21st century .

The discourse of expertise

The notion of expertise is based on a positivist tradition in which professional practice should rely on evidence-based knowledge of effective methods and approaches that can be learned by practitioners. Expertise presumes a traditional or classical form of professionalism (Freidson, 2001), referring to knowledge- and skills-based professions such as doctors and advocates. To become an expert means to learn how to apply knowledge to practice, and become more skilful and knowledgeable in this process. Biesta (2012) would call this the qualification purpose of higher education. Within the theoretical framework of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), expertise belongs to the human capital of professionals, combined with individual talents, values and passions. However, learning knowledge and skills has been criticized for being unsustainable in a changing society and professional work environment. Becoming an expert is often seen as more than the application of knowledge and skills: it is a process of embodying, of being a professional

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(Dall'Alba, 2009). Biesta stresses the importance of "subjectification" as an educational goal next to others, which refers to the development of "virtue" or "character", defined as the "ability to make wise educational judgements" (Biesta, 2012, p.19). He also argues that it is important to keep the conversation about the goals of education open and alive. Schön (1983) has already proposed the idea of the reflective practitioner to indicate the importance of professional judgement in unique and "messy" situations. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) have called this professional wisdom the "decisional capital" of professionals and stress the importance of social relationships and dialogue with colleagues and other stakeholders to develop this ability.

The discourse of critical inquiry and judgement

The development of a critical inquiring attitude and judgement is based on a poststructuralist paradigm in which knowledge is situated and temporary, co-constructed in practice and questioned. According to this view, knowledge and learning are not goals in themselves, but means for the personal and professional development of the student, and the process of development is seen as more important than achieving specific outcomes. Practice-oriented research is viewed as an important means for achieving a critical inquiring attitude. Students cannot be "consumers" on the course; they have to relate themselves to the subject and critically reflect on it. In the M SEN, both discourses are present, but in recent years the ideal of expertise has lost ground to the ideal of critical inquiry. This is linked to developments within the broader field of education in recent decades. Reflective professionalism has grown in importance (see e.g. Brockbank & McGill, 1998; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Moon, 2000) and the focus on expertise has been pushed further into the background. However, the discourse on reflective professionalism has also been met with criticism since it is seen as being too uncritical by only looking inward or at the micro context of the professional relationship, thereby perpetuating the status quo (Barnett, 1997; Brookfield, 1987). In addition, reflective professionalism may become relativist, not offering ways of thinking about what is "good" work in a moral sense. A critical inquiring attitude and judgement counters this relativist position, by stressing the moral dimension of professional development. However, it seems to struggle when it comes to positioning knowledge and skills as part of professional capital. Is there a way to integrate expertise with a critical inquiring attitude in rethinking professionalism?

Dialogic professionalism as a way forward?

We would like to propose a dialogic professionalism that is based on the concept of democratic professionalism, as outlined already, and the notion of craftsmanship as developed by Sennett (2008).

Experience and discretionary judgement are the two key components of Sennett's work and are also the central pillars of our notion of dialogic professionalism. Learning a craft is based on practising that craft (experience) and viewing a more experienced person practising the craft, such that the craft becomes ingrained in one's body (Sennett, 2008). The dialogue with the "material" (e.g. wood for the carpenter, or the student for the educator) is central to learning the craft. Reflection on this dialogical practice is an important part of making wise judgements within the specifics of the context and the material. Also, craftsmanship is an ethical practice: the craftsman does not (only) want "to get the job done" but to "do a good job", and asks questions about the higher goals of his work and his judgement in difficult situations. This requires critical reflexivity and at the same time a high level of knowledge and skills.

From the notion of democratic professionalism, we take the inclusion of different voices – multivocality – as a third pillar. Democratic professionals do not work on their own or make individual judgements, but cooperate with other stakeholders to strive for "good work" within the complex realities they find themselves in. This is not the same as working from a secure and privileged moral position, as in classical professionalism (Freidson, 2001). Rather it offers a perspective on moral professional development that is needed to work in the messiness of the "swampy lowlands" where "the problems of the greatest human concern" can be found (Schön, 1983, p. 42).

These three pillars of dialogic professionalism – experience, wise judgement and multivocality – lead to the development of both knowledge and skills and a critical inquiring attitude and judgement. In future, more research is needed to provide evidence on how dialogic professionalism can be created in a higher education setting and the reform of teacher education training in this respect.

Instructive friction

The dialogue group meetings have proved useful as a research and intervention method. As an intervention method, the dialogical process triggered a learning and questioning attitude among the educators, resulting in the development of small (action) research projects within the curriculum. The friction that occurred during the dialogue group meetings relating to different opinions on the goals of education was instructive, according to the participants, since it helped them to become aware of different viewpoints and to analyse critically and broaden their own

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professional frames. However, at some points it was not easy to explore this friction through dialogue. Dialogue has become a buzzword that is easier to advocate than to put into practice (Smaling, 2008). Also, dialogue can easily become blocked, and turn into either a disagreement or an apparent but shallow consensus, if no meta-reflection takes place on the process of dialogue itself (Jacobs, 2010b).

In this project, we used the dialogue group meetings as a data collection method. For data analysis, we used a thematic narrative analysis, by which (tacit) educational goals and means, as well as the tensions and challenges between and within them, were reconstructed as storylines. Although this method of analysis highlighted important themes within the department and the M SEN course, it is limited in that it does not throw light on the dialogical process itself and the context of the conversations and specific utterances. To develop more insight into the process of co-constructing moral viewpoints and reflecting on important issues and dilemmas in education, a dialogical analysis (Kohler Riessman, 2008; Marková *et al.*, 2007) is recommended. In addition, the dialogue transcripts could be analysed by a panel of participants. In this way, the dialogue continues and can further strengthen the critical inquiring attitude and judgement of the participants, in this case professionals working in higher education.

NOTES

- 1 By "educators" we refer to lecturers, coordinators and research supervisors on the course. Most participants in the project combined two or more roles.
- 2 The dialogue group meetings were part of the first stage, the Reconnaissance phase, of the collaborative action research project. In the second stage, the Action stage, high-potential methods, approaches and processes regarding the moral professional development of students within the M SEN were identified for small-scale action research projects. In the third stage the insights from these projects would be collated to see what evidence could be gathered on the kind of professional development of the Master students. However, because of financial cuts within the department, we only could finish part of the projects of the second stage and could not enter the third stage.
- 3 The consumerist behaviour of students can be seen as a consequence of the "learnification" of education and the increasing influence of capitalism in Western society (Biesta, 2012).

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