

Training on Demand in the Context of the Ongoing Training of Teachers: An Original Design in an Inclusive School Setting

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Abstract

This research studies the specifications of the practices related to the conception of training *on demand* in the field of continuous training of teachers. Training *on demand*, has the particularity of adapting itself to the problems of professionals. The analysis of the demand faces the inherent complexity of the different contexts as well as the diversity of the relevant professionals. The concept of training, seeks to articulate the problematic provisions of teachers, in order to enable the development of skills. This oral communication emphasizes relevant elements based on a case study to show how the trainer who designs the concept takes into account factors present during the conception i.e. the various aspects of context, contents and students.

The method chosen for the research is qualitative and built related to a specific scholar context in which the teachers have questions and difficulties in their daily work specifically in the field of French language learning and reading. The design of the concept provides various modalities including conferences, discussion groups, and support in the classes in the presence of the pupils. Attendant measures to support the teachers in regular classes are provided by specialized professionals. As the schoolchildren come from a great number of cultures, speak diverse languages and attend the courses of regular schools near their homes, this layout takes place in an inclusive context. This layout aims at enabling the teachers to develop reflective practice.

Keywords

Adult education, demand analysis, conception, layouts, inclusive school context

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Introduction

This research examines the specific practices related to the design of training in the field of teacher's continuous training through six case studies.

All of them investigate ongoing training in an inclusive context. Different aspects were considered. The first case study examines the characteristics of school climate, for example concerning relations between pupils, between teachers and pupils, teachers with their colleagues, and relationships with the direction or institution. The second case study presents a project to reintegrate teenagers from specialized classes to ordinary schools. The third examines ongoing training about developmental reading disorder, i.e. dyslexia. The fourth focuses on the resources a school can have to progress in the direction of a more inclusive setting. The fifth examines how to support pupils experiencing difficulties and focuses on skills teachers have to develop in this aim.

The sixth case study analyses the practices of a professional named *designer trainer*, Fabian, as he conceives a training to support a school project about language difficulties. In this paper, we will develop this case study's analysis.

Inclusive context

In Switzerland, different bills of law indicate that handicapped people must not be discriminated against.

The politics order that most children have to go to ordinary schools instead of specialized schools. Therefore, skills to support all children with their differences must be developed in ordinary schools. For that reason, various professionals have to collaborate to receive very different pupils in ordinary classes and answer to their specific needs.

In the state of Vaud, a new law, introduced for the basic teaching to children, has consequences upon the teaching practices. School's teachers have a lot of questions and turn towards ongoing training to have support for reflective practice.

Research context

School directors, collaborators who are in charge of educational specific sectors and teacher teams request training to discuss their problems and questions related to their daily work. They address a written demand to the University of teacher education, sector of ongoing training, which proposes various courses and also « made-to-measure » trainings.

Enlart (2007) shows the importance of training conception.

« Organizations requirements consist of pushing to adapt offer towards « made-to-measure » and specific trainings. On the other hand, suitable and ready-made training sometimes simply does not exist. In all these cases, conception is at the heart of practice. » (P. 12)¹

Then professionals of ongoing training, designer trainers, analyse these requests in collaboration with the actors of the schools and create with them an original design to reflect their specific questions. During context and demand analysis, interactions and

¹ Les exigences des organisations consistent à pousser vers une adaptation de l'offre, du sur-mesure, du spécifique. D'autre part, la formation idoine, toute prête, n'existe parfois tout simplement pas. Dans tous ces cas, la conception est au cœur du métier. (P. 12)
(Translation by the author)

exchanges usually take place between these actors and the designer trainer. A partnership is often established and different tasks are shared out to create a training that will really take the specificity of teacher's needs in account.

Providing clues

For us, it is challenge to understand and follow the reasoning and thoughts of designer trainers during the analysis/conception phase and how they determine choices for their design concept.

We aim at showing how trainers who design the concept « prioritize » or « underestimate » one or more of the three parameters among those present during the conception (Enlart, 2007) i.e. the various aspects of *context*, *contents* and *learners*.

This reference is a real providing clue of our research and we will show this element in this paper.

We can also mention that this type of « made-to-measure » training have a strong issue i.e. to emphasize on the importance of taking into account problems and questions of the teaching field. It facilitates also training actions built in collaboration and participation. So, the students have the opportunity to contribute to the creation of their own ongoing training.

Elements of theoretical framework

a) Reflective practice

When designing the concept, there is no obvious solution. Consequently, the designer trainer has to make sure to use reflexivity in his or her design practice (Schön, 1983, 1996).

Some elements from John Dewey (2004) are relevant relating to design practices. In fact, during design practice, a real « inquiry » attitude is necessary. So, designer trainer has to doubt, avoid anticipated conclusions and pursue systematically the research. Therefore, essential elements of reflexivity are doubt, problem definition and emphasis upon a first provisional hypothesis that will be tested and modified according to new elements.

Also Bourgeois (2013) says that Dewey emphasizes upon the importance of coming and going between thoughts and actions. There is a whole interdependence during inquiry between thoughts and concrete operations.

These are in fact very important elements of reflexivity relating to our research subject.

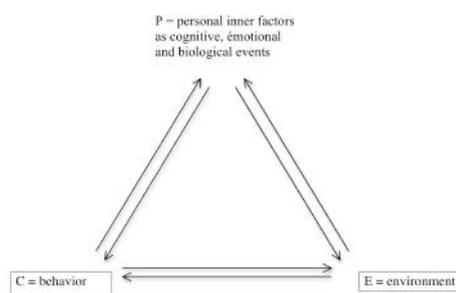
b) A singular situation and different interactions

The meeting between a designer trainer and school actors is always a singular situation. Barbier & Galatanu (2000) identify three elements in a singular action i.e. *active person*, *environment* and *types of actions*.

In sociocognitivist theory, Bandura (2003) proposes a triangle characterized by interactions between *personal factors*, *behaviors* and *environment* (p. 17).

His point of view aims at showing how human behavior should be characterized by interactions between *personal factors*, *behaviors* and *environment*. These three factors should permanently influence each other.

Figure 1. Triadic reciprocal causality (Bandura, 2003)



What we can retain of this model are the interrelations between three poles. Individual is indeed characterized by personal capacities inciting him to make a commitment more or less in the action, by previous behaviors and experiments.

This person is going to interact with his or her environment by showing a behavior, which seems appropriate. The environment is going to influence such behavior and individual will reciprocally influence his or her environment. According to Bandura (2003), there is thus reciprocity, but it « does not mean that these three groups of factors have the same impact. Their relative influence can vary according to activities and circumstances. » (P. 17) A temporal factor is important too.

This model applies to all the human activities.

Consequently, we think that these interactions are available also concerning design practices.

c) Conception of training design, a particular case

Enlart (2007) proposes a triangle, which places conception in the center and associates three parameters: *context*, *contents*, *learners*. (p. 51)

Figure 2. Conception of training design: a specific activity



In the center is conception. We would say that the designer trainer is placed in the center and interacts with the three poles. In the best case, it seems that these poles could balance each other or in a less favorable case, they could shade mutually according to the importance the designer trainer would attribute to them. But it seems that in the case of this triangle, the main interrelations take place rather between the center and the poles. Indeed, the designer trainer is going to build himself a representation in relation to the singular situation. These elements are fundamental according to conception choices.

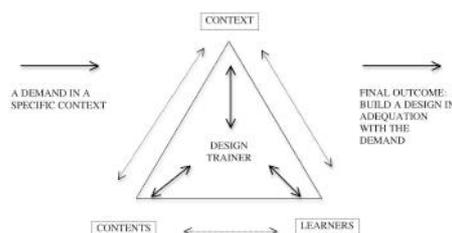
Clottu (2013) proposes to add to Enlart's figure elements showing interrelations between the parameters as well as time necessary to create a design. The time

necessary to create a design is long for example several weeks or even several months.

Fabian expresses² this fact like that:

As we are on a school project, it is necessarily long. I want to say, it is like a ship which we have to make turn, to change course. A big ship needs space and time. There is a lot of people to be coordinated.

Figure 3. Conception of training design: interrelations and time



Therefore, the designer trainer examines successively and in interaction with the school actors which elements are relevant in the situation he or she has to analyse relating to context, contents or learners. Are there some substantial difficult problems, some characteristics that he or she *has* to treat during analysis? Which of these elements will be relevant during the phase of creating the design?

d) Critical factors

In design conception, the three parameters are taken into account with diverse ways. In fact, some critical factors related to these parameters appear as *problematic* or *essential*.

« If "something" is particularly relevant, then, the other things lose their relative importance, and the design will be created relating to the critical factor. » (Enlart, 2007, p. 53).³

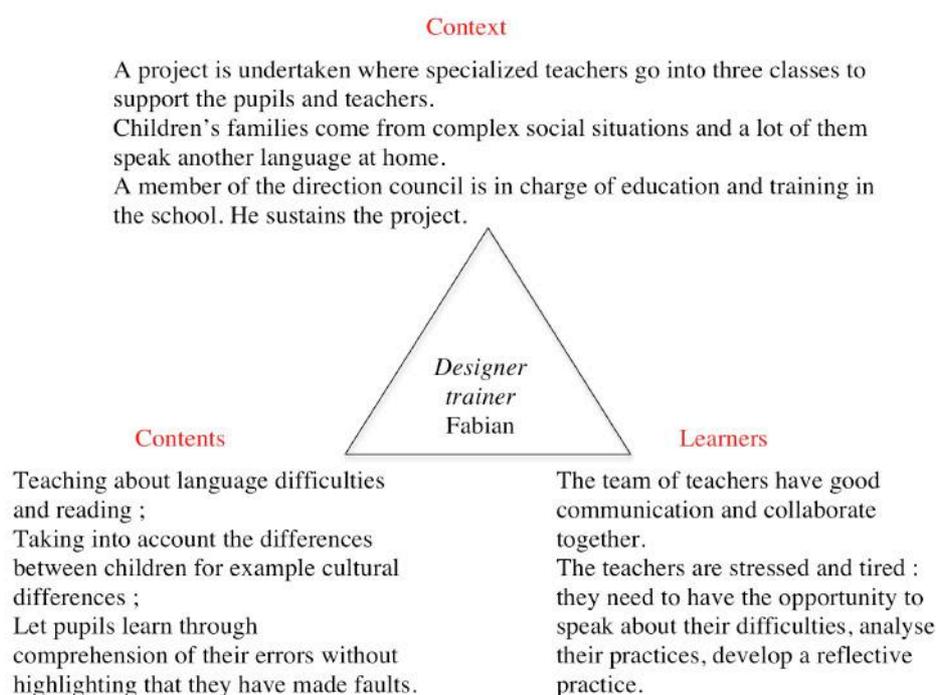
The author states that the way designer trainers articulate these parameters have an impact upon conception choices.

² Fabian's words are translated by the author.

³ « Si "quelque chose" est particulièrement marquant, alors le reste perd de son importance relative et c'est autour du facteur critique que l'on va penser le dispositif. » (Enlart, 2007, p. 53) (Translation by the author)

Some examples from the case study illustrate how Fabian perceives these critical factors related to the situation of the teachers who have requested ongoing training. These are not described always as problems but also as essential positive factors.

Figure 4. Critical factors identified by Fabian



A qualitative approach

a) Case studies

To precise the methodology of our research, we refer to Cresswell (2007), who distinguishes five qualitative research types.

1. *Narrative research* : « Studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering [...] the meaning of those experiences » (p. 54).
2. *Phenomenological research*: « A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. » (P. 57)
3. *Grounded theory* according to Strauss & Corbin (1998) : « A key idea is that this theory development does not come "off the shelf", but rather is generated or "grounded" in data from participants who have experienced the process. » (P. 63)
4. *Ethnographic research* which focuses on a whole cultural group : « The researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns and values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group. » (P. 68)
5. *Case study* : « The investigator explores a bounded system (a case), or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through details, in-depth data collections involving *multiple sources of informations*. » (P. 73)

We have chosen to realize case studies i.e. to observe a designer trainer as he or she analyses a request from a school. In fact, the approach « case study » seems the most nearby of our research. Indeed, each situation of our six case studies, constitute a

limited system. The beginning and the end are clearly defined. This approach gives the opportunity to observe every trainer in connection with a very precise request. Fabian is a teacher who is specialized in the field of adult education. The school concerned is located in a small town where everyday life is not easy when considering economic, cultural and social points of views.

b) Data collection

During the case study, written documents, which show, how Fabian designed the concept, are collected, for example, the e-mails exchanged with a member of the direction council.

An explication interview (Vermersch, 1994, 2000) emphasizes the conception choices and the originality of the design.

After the training, some outcomes are described in specific documents.

c) Analysis

Enlart triangle (2007) has been used to establish categories according to Miles & Hubermann (2003), who indicate that « codes are labels, which appoint signification units for descriptive and inferential information compiled during a study. » (p. 112)⁴ So, we have taken in account as starting points Enlart's three parameters, refining them.

According to *context*, we have considered *large* elements as Swiss and state of Vaud legal aspects. Then, we have considered *middle* elements as school characteristics, (organization, pupil's populations...) and school direction (leadership type).

Here are two references from Fabian in relation to school characteristics:

At the beginning, there were only two or three classes. The simple fact that we transform these practices into training, it affected the whole school. Thus it made a lot of people.

The situation was difficult before the beginning of the training, even before they made the request. The situation was this one: pupils' strong proportion of other cultures, and destabilization of the teachers; pupils who had behavior or learning difficulties.

Here is a reference from Fabian in relation to school direction (leadership type):

There are direction councils, where they say what they are doing, thus the director knew, and by delegation, the dean had practically directorial mandate, and then that worked well.

According to *contents* we have considered general elements (large thematic) and specific elements (after demand analysis, contents taught during the training).

Here is a reference from Fabian in relation to training specific contents:

At the very beginning, we had realized that it was necessary to work on certain field, for example the co-teaching between special and ordinary education.

According to *learners*, we have considered collective dimension and individual dimension.

⁴ « Les *codes* sont des étiquettes qui désignent des unités de signification pour l'information descriptive ou inférentielle compilée au cours d'une étude. (Translation by the author)

Here is a reference from Fabien in relation to students in a collective dimension:

It was really the project of people who were there. They had long-lived questions relating to their situation, they explained the problems, how they saw them.

d) Conception choices

The way Fabien has identified critical factors (cf. figure 4) is directly related to the choices he will operate. So, we remind these critical factors and put in evidence in *italic characters* the conception choices.

1. Context

A project was created with specialized teachers going into three classes to support the pupils and teachers.

The design favors recognized training - not only punctual support - with implication to all classes in the school.

The children's families are from difficult social situations and a lot of them speak another language at home.

As this context is similar for all teachers, the design plans that all teachers would engage themselves in the training.

2. Contents

Teach about language difficulties and reading.

Theoretical elements will be taught at first to teachers speaking about general professional situations.

Take into account the differences between children, for example cultural differences.

Practice analysis will take place every six weeks to fully understand pupils' situations in their classes.

Let pupils learn through comprehension of their errors without highlighting their mistakes.

Contents have to integrate a transversal dimension not only a didactical dimension, for example, errors analysis, observation, learning strategies.

3. Learners

The teams of teachers have a good communication and collaborate together.

The design will give regular formal time for exchanges about professional situations.

The teachers are stressed and tired: they need to have the opportunity to speak about their difficulties, analyse their practices, develop their reflective practice.

Reflective practice has to be developed in the whole design by a lot of exchanges in little groups.

Accompaniment before and during the training is absolutely necessary.

The learners will be in reflective situations at every moment and have the possibility to analyse their difficulties with pupils in interaction with specialized colleague.

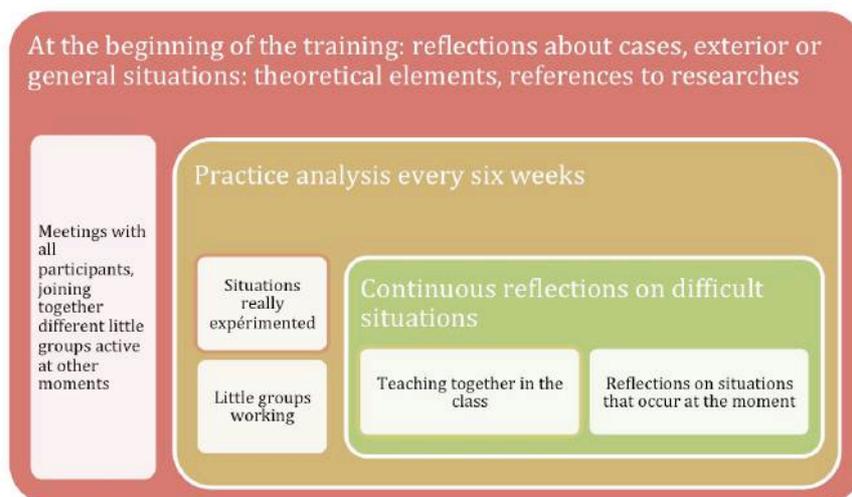
An original design like a Russian doll

Fabien qualifies the design as fitting just like « Russian dolls».

There was co-teaching in the classes, there were small groups, and at times, these small groups had meetings all together. Thus it makes a rather rich structure. [...] Yes, Russian dolls, there is a Russian dolls effect.

This fitting allows that the teachers are practically permanently immersed into the treatment of difficulties, rather than facing them daily. There is an idea of continuity of the reflection and the accompaniment.

Figure 5. An original design



The big doll, of red colour, concerns meetings with all participants. The second doll, of brown colour, concerns practice analysis. The little doll, of green colour, concerns situations that occur in the class at the moment.

Conclusion

This training design was conducted for one year and a half. It has stimulated reflective practice and experimentation. It has provided a framework to integrate new approaches.

For Fabian, the one element he thought to be the most essential in relation to all training designs was the accompaniment at all times. He expresses this element in these words:

I believe in the training by accompaniment. This is the way I do the main part of my work of trainer. [...] I propose accompaniment because for me it seems a model, which works very well.

Fabian really develops a posture of « reflective companion », who inducts reflexivity guiding a practitioner to see situations under other angles and walking together around common projects. (Donnay & Charlier, 2008)

Reboul (2005) says that in every domain a value is something that merits efforts, care and personal implication.

So accompaniment for Fabian is a real professional value.

This has an impact on all the designs he creates. In fact, he has been conceiving designs, answering to professional's requests for more than sixteen years.

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