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Beyond the Reflective Teacher Education Model: Challenges and Perspectives

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In the last four decades, scientific inquiry on teacher education has been profoundly influenced by the work of Donald Schön. This author criticized technical rationalism because it assumes a positivist conceptual perspective that stresses the centrality of knowledge obtained through objective scientific methods. In the sphere of teacher education and professional practice, this approach emphasizes the application of instructional methods based on theories and techniques derived from basic and applied science without taking into consideration the specificity and complexity of reallife situations. Inspired by John Dewey, he proposed the reflective model as an alternative, in which the knowledge of professionals, such as teachers, emerges from reflection on action and reflection in action. It is an expertise that is rooted in an epistemology of practice, akin to creative, artistic, and tacit dimensions that are not linked to rational processes. This type of competence can be difficult to articulate rationally and it is often mobilized in situations of unpredictability, uncertainty, and uniqueness for which there are no clear-cut theoretical solutions. The reflective model of teacher education has been challenged from several points of view. Some authors have argued that the distinction between technical rationality and reflective practice is a false dichotomy and that a more nuanced view is required. We will argue that using scientific knowledge to inform professional practices, namely in the sphere of teaching, should be seen as a process of appropriation, instead of application. This conceptual shift does not compromise the teacher's autonomy or demean knowledge obtained through reflection on the experience. More recently, there has been a growing body of knowledge in several scientific fields, such as neuroscience and cognitive psychology, which has the potential to be applied to educational settings. Understanding this information could inspire teachers to develop teaching methods adapted to the specific challenges they face in classrooms. We contend that this approach could potentially improve their repertoire of strategies and promote more meaningful learning by students. Furthermore, reflection on these educational procedures and their application can foster more basic and applied research rooted in the experience of practitioners in the field, to the mutual advantage of the scientific and educational domains.

Keywords: teacher education, reflective model, knowledge appropriation