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Habermas and Teacher Leadership through Reflection

Abstract

This paper discusses how teachers should be encouraged to lead in educational change through reflection based on Habermas's theory of communicative action and discourse ethics. Habermas's theory has much potential to help teachers to be leaders by contributing to the success of educational change and reform projects through reflection. By identifying the nature, scope, object and tradition of reflection and reflective practice, this paper explains the conception of reflection for teachers. It argues that teachers can be leaders in educational change through teacher reflection which promotes democratic interactions and communications among stakeholders of education.

Keywords: *educational change; Habermas; teacher leadership; reflection*

Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action and Discourse Ethics

Drawing on Jürgen Habermas's (1929–) theory of communicative action and discourse ethics, this paper discusses how teachers should be encouraged to lead in educational change through reflection. Habermas essentially conceptualises society as constituted at two levels – the lifeworld and the system. The lifeworld is described as the preconscious and taken-for-granted presuppositions, understandings and perceptual filters that determine how people experience reality. It forms a blurred and shadowy backdrop to all we think, speak and do. The lifeworld forms the indirect context of what is said, discussed, addressed in a situation... the intuitively present, in this case familiar and transparent, and at the same time vast and incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful, that is valid, or invalid (Habermas, 1987, p. 131).