Teacher development matters:
stories, practices and theory

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Core message

1. Studying teacher development as situated in space and time: dealing with the tension between the local and the global in educational research

2. The narrative-biographical perspective
   1. Conceptually
   2. Methodologically

3. Illustration of contributions

4. What does this have to do with "comparative education"?

1. An educational interest in teacher development

- = Teachers' professional learning throughout their career
- Practice –based:
  o "enacted professionalism": teacher 'appears' in practice
  o Practice = meaningful (sense-making as core process)
- Teacher professionalism = expertise + commitment
  o Not only technical-instrumental
  o Also ethical $\rightarrow$ + emotionally non-indifferent
  o One's "self" as a teacher is at stake

- Educational interest = different from policy or managerial interests: teacher attrition/retention; teacher induction…

2 Narrative-biographical perspective

- Narrative speech = spontaneous genre for teachers to talk (and think) about their professional experiences
  - Metaphors, anecdotes, images, vignettes …

- Narrative is human way to give meaning to experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988)

- More fundamental theoretical issue in background: agency-structure debate!

Stories do more!:

- Always situated in time-space context: something happens somewhere and somewhen

  - Context in TIME: human historicity
    - Individual: Past-Future-Present
    - Social: Socio-historical

  - Context = SPACE: structural and cultural working conditions
    - Organisational structures, roles, positions
    - Rules: explicit en implicit
    - "culture": shared meanings, often normative and justifying in nature

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- Describe and appreciate (evaluate)

- Biographical: experiences from the past and expectations for the future determine actions and thoughts in the present

- Always implying an audience: narrator, narrating (storytelling), audience

- Stories are constructions: can be told and re-told (anti-essentialistic)

3. Studying teacher development

- Collecting career stories (narrative accounts of former experiences) to reconstruct the professional development

- Indications for 'development':

  - Changes in action (behaviours, skills, enacted competences…)

  - Changes in "thinking" → "personal interpretative framework"

    - Professional self-understanding
    - Subjective educational theory

- = Simultaneously ongoing process and (always temporary) product

- Preliminary conceptual framework: sensitizing concepts

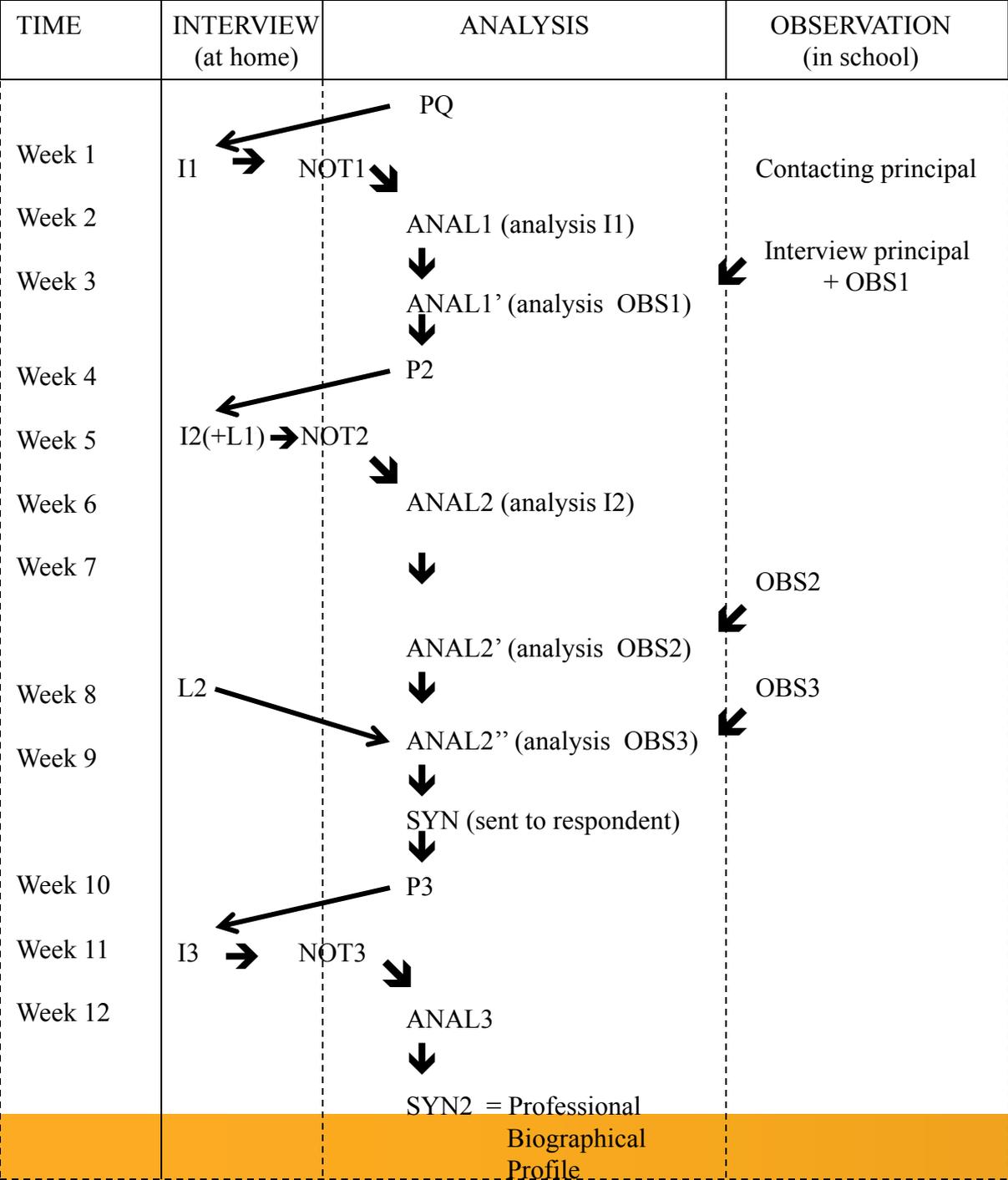**INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS**
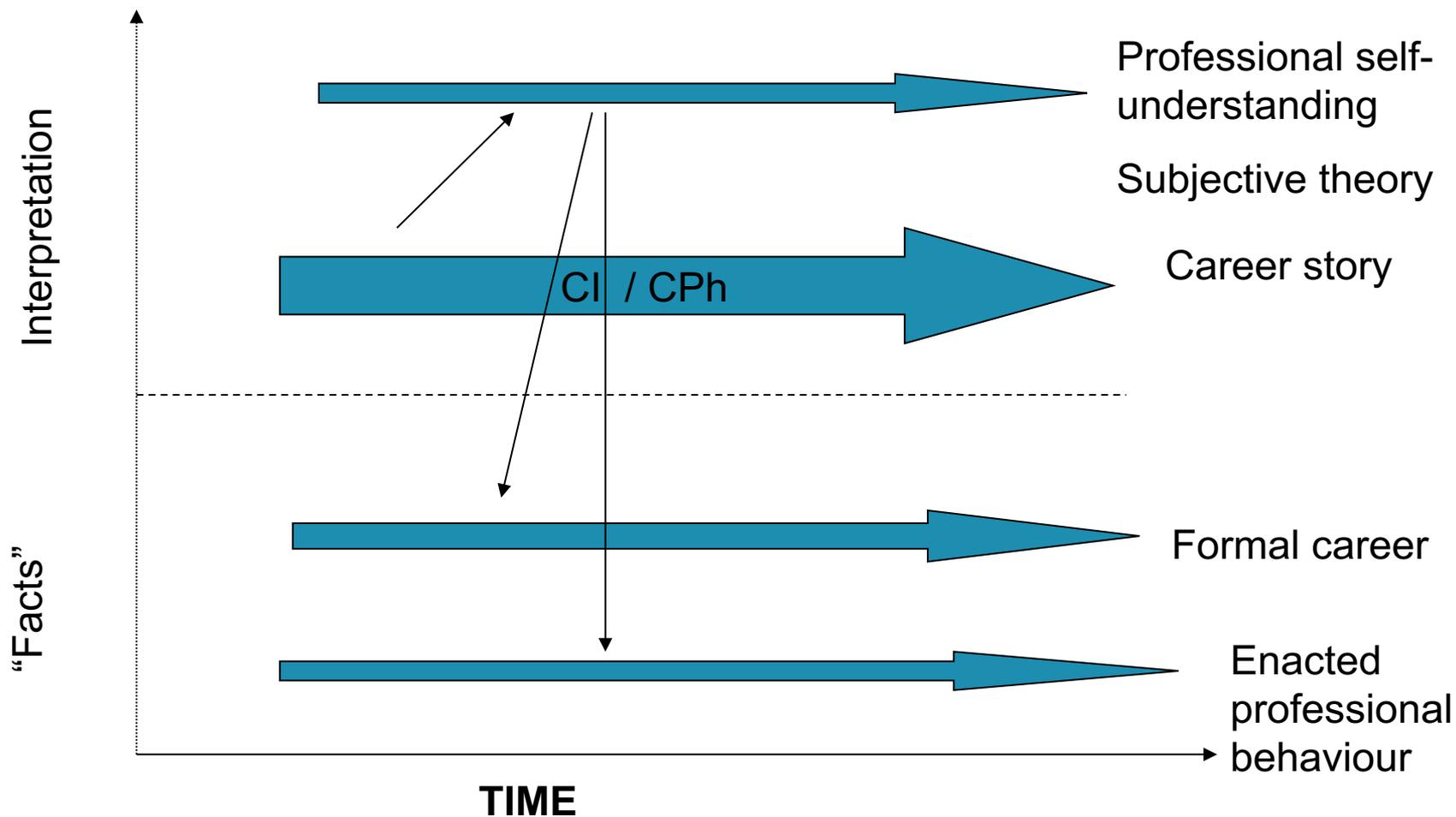
Overview preliminary conceptual framework/
Sensitizing concepts

4. Designing a methodology

4.1. Data collection

- Preparatory questionnaire
- Cycle of three biographical interviews
  - Cumulative
  - Semi-structured
    - Respondent-specific
    - Respondent-non-specific
- Observations
- Multiple respondents from same school (context)
- Additional information: interview principal

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TIME	INTERVIEW (at home)	ANALYSIS	OBSERVATION (in school)
		PQ	
Week 1	I1 → NOT1		Contacting principal
Week 2		ANAL1 (analysis I1)	
Week 3		ANAL1' (analysis OBS1)	Interview principal + OBS1
Week 4		P2	
Week 5	I2(+L1) → NOT2		
Week 6		ANAL2 (analysis I2)	
Week 7			OBS2
		ANAL2' (analysis OBS2)	
Week 8	L2		OBS3
Week 9		ANAL2'' (analysis OBS3)	
		SYN (sent to respondent)	
Week 10		P3	
Week 11	I3 → NOT3		
Week 12		ANAL3	
		SYN2 = Professional Biographical Profile	

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4.2. Data analysis

- Individual respondent → within-case or vertical analysis
- All respondents → across-case or horizontal analysis
  - Systematic comparison for = or ≠

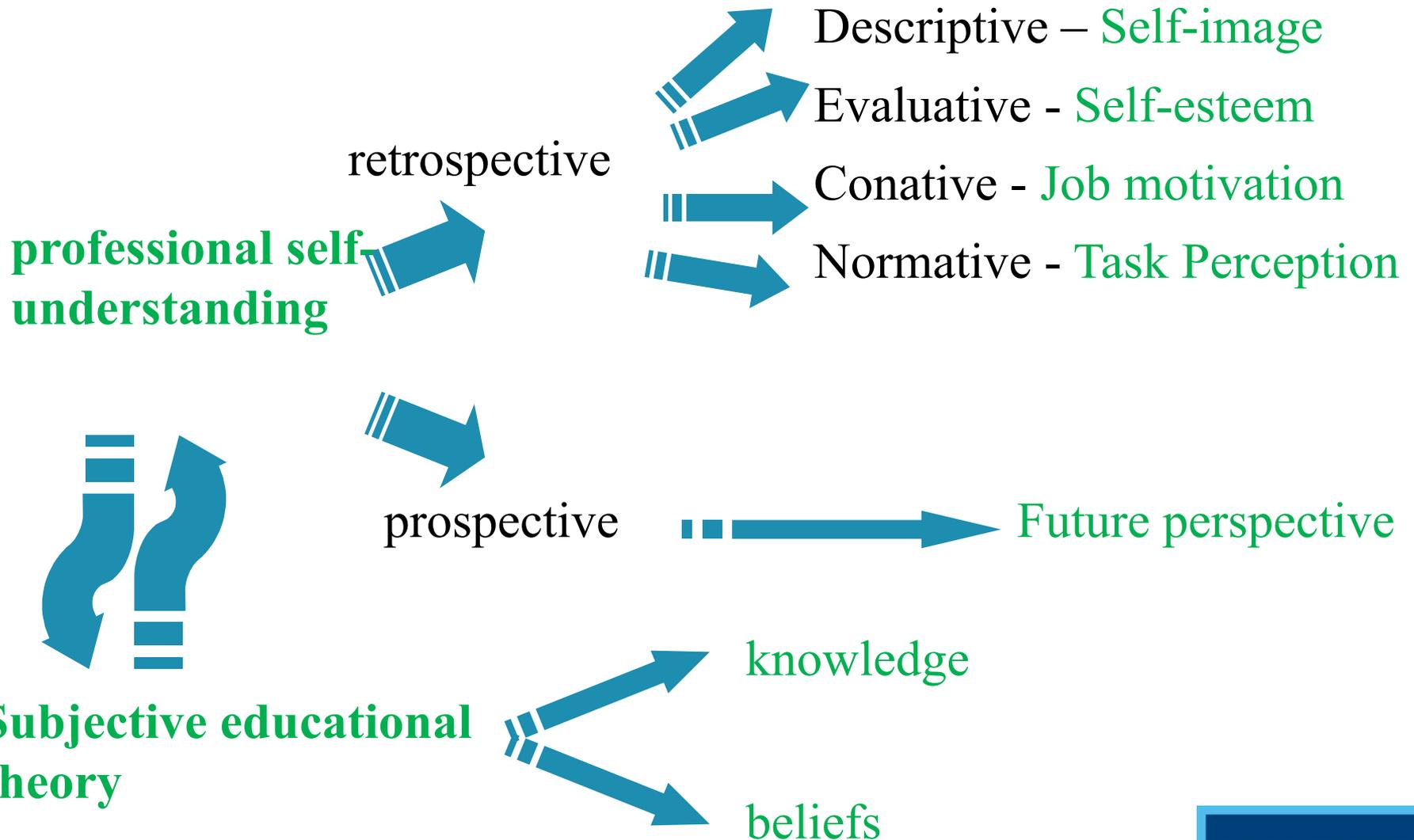- Eventually: theorizing/conceptualising → = "generalisation" → moving beyond particularities of the studied cases

5. Findings/theory contributions: examples

- Kelchtermans, G. (1993). Getting the story, understanding the lives. From career stories to teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 9*, 443-456.

- Kelchtermans, G., & Ballet, K. (2002). The micropolitics of teacher induction. A narrative-biographical study on teacher socialisation. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*, 105-120.

- Lanas, M. & Kelchtermans, G. (2015). "This has more to do with who I am than with my skills" – Student teacher subjectification in Finnish teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 47*, 22-29.

- Vanassche, E. & Kelchtermans, G. (2014).Teacher educators' professionalism in practice: Positioning theory and personal interpretative framework. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 44,* 117-127.

- März, V., Kelchtermans, G. & Dumay, X. (2016). Stability and Change of Mentoring Practices in a Capricious Policy Environment: Opening the "Black Box of Institutionalization". *American Journal of Education, 122,* 303-336.

- Vermeir, K., Kelchtermans, G. & März, V. (2017). Implementing artifacts. An interactive frame analysis of innovative educational practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 63,* 116-125.

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Example 1: Kelchtermans (1993): **Personal interpretative framework**

- o Concept, grounded in data
- o Analytical and contextualised conceptualisation of teachers' (developing) sense of self
- o Not: identity!

Personal interpretative framework

professional self understanding → retrospective
- Descriptive – Self-image
- Evaluative - Self-esteem
- Conative - Job motivation
- Normative - Task Perception

→ prospective → Future perspective

Subjective educational theory
- knowledge
- beliefs

Kelchtermans, 2009

Components Professional self-understanding

- **SELFIMAGE** (descriptive): *how do I describe myself?*
- **SELFESTEEM** (evaluative): *how well do I think I am doing my job?*
- **JOB MOTIVATION** (conative): *what is motivating me in the job, to chose it, to stay or to quit?*
- **TASK PERCEPTION** (normative): *what do I consider to be my professional duties (tasks) in order to feel like a proper teacher? (my personal professional agenda)*
- **FUTURE PERSPECTIVE** (prospective): *how do I look at the future in my job and how does that make me feel?*

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Example 2. Kelchtermans & Ballet (2002): narrative-biographical + micropolitical perspective in study beginning teachers

- Teacher socialisation as negotiation

- Micropolitics (Hoyle, Ball, Blase…): organisational actors behaviour needs analysis in terms of interests (use of formal/informal power

- Desirable working conditions → professional interests → action seeking to establish/safeguard/restore

  - 5 categories → corroborated in international research: Material, Organisational, Social-professional, Cultural-ideological and Self-interests

- Concept "micropolitical literacy" as dimension in professional development

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Example 3 Vanassche & Kelchtermans (2014): teacher educators' professionalism as enacted practice

- Personal interpretative framework → teacher educators

- Positioning theory → self-understanding positions one-self as well as students
  - o Teacher educator of pedagogues
  - o Teacher educator of reflective teachers
  - o Teacher educator of subject teachers

Example 4: März, Kelchtermans & Dumay (2016): PIF +neo-institutional theory

- Agency versus structure

- Personal interpretative framework

- Neo-institutional logics and pressure

- complex relationship between central policy (macro) and its implementation in schools (meso) and classrooms (micro)
  - Interactions central policy, school policy, professional relationships, practices…

- Case = Capricious policy context on support teacher induction ('mentoring hours' as additional funding)

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Example 5: Lanas & Kelchtermans (2015): PIF, micropolitics and post-structural approaches

- Student-teachers' development of sense of self
- Agency versus structure
  - Individual story-telling and sense-making
  - Post-structural theory: (implicit) normative meaning systems in society impacting "subjectification"
- Interviews Finnish student-teachers: why was I accepted in the program?
  - Personal characteristics
  - Efforts
  - Personal values
  - …

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Example 6: Vermeir, Kelchtermans & März (2017): materiality, PIF, frame analysis

- Artefact-analysis: TraPS-file (Transition Primary Secondary school):
  - Reducing gap in transition for pupils
  - Guaranteeing 'continuity of appropriate care' → information transfer
- → identifying the normative "frame" in the artifact

- → identifying and explaining configurations of implementation (faithful use, reduced use, extended use)
- Collective sense-making = situated negotiations of normative frames incarnated in artefact (bureaucratic tool)

6. Issues in relation to "comparative education"

1. From the depth of the contextualised local to the de-contextualised conceptualisation → **generalization through theorization**

2. Core issues in comparative education:
   - unit of analysis: individual, organisational, (sub)system, nation?
   - **level of comparative analysis**: empirical or conceptual? → qualitative approaches allow for theory-development-in-context but with relevance beyond that context

3. **Language issues** in international research (collaboration)

- Sense-making happens through language
  - Discursive creation of the "world" (what can be meaningfully thought/said"
  - English as lingua franca → "education" doesn't distinguish "unterricht" (didactisch, onderwijskundig) and "erziehung" (pedagogisch) → implicit "production"-metaphor in schooling becomes hegemonic

- Epistemological and methodological challenges of "translation": can we ever know what it means?
- The (im)possibility of understanding?
- Research collaboration in non-mother tongue language?

THANK YOU

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