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1. EDUSEMIOTICS OF EDUCATIONAL GESTURES

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is broadly thought of as depending on the recruitment of good teachers, seen as professionals capable of acting along the lines of the “best practices” they have been taught. In this context, one may wonder why teachers sometimes have a hard time abandoning their “bad habits” for supposedly good ones whose relevance seems obvious to public policy makers, specialists of comparative research in education or teachers’ educators.

My aim in this chapter is to investigate the so-called “good” and “bad” habits behind teachers’ practices, and the kind of cognition such habits imply. I propose to analyze the way meanings and more broadly narratives underlie the establishment, enactment and transformation of “habitual practices” in teachers. I will then consider the way habits of belief, habits of conduct and habits of practical action interplay in the implementation of such habitual practices. With regard to the twofold dimension of habits (at the same time natural and necessary to any human being and dangerous when they make us “jump to conclusions” in an unreflective way), I will eventually propose to consider the making and use of “educational gestures” as alternatives to forms of habitual practices that would have become inefficient.

HABITS AND THE MYSTERY OF TEACHERS’ COMPETENCE

Habitual versus best practices and the “good teacher”

Habits and habitual practices

Habitual practices, reflex and reflexivity

Another form of cognition?

HABITS IN CONTEXT: MEANINGFUL GESTURES IN MEANINGFUL CONTEXTS

How same may two gestures be?

Meaning, intention and affordances: habits and motility in meaningful contexts

From meaning to narratives: underlying meanings in “habitual actions”

EDUCATIONAL GESTURES AS REMEDIES TO THE HABIT ISSUE

Habitual practices and past semiotic processes

Habitual practices and the mediation of signs in immediate interpretation

The threefold dimension of habit

Educational gestures as a remedy for habit issues

CONCLUSION

An educational gesture is, to that extent, and above all, a significant gesture: understood by all the actors involved as a meaningful answer to meaningful situations; built reflexively by a group (and not inherited, lived passively or to which people are subjected); constituted of habits of beliefs that have been made explicit by and for all the actors (in other words whose underlying meanings and narratives are known by everyone). Resorting to educational gestures may allow teachers to embody, in educational settings, an old idea, a quite simple one in fact, that public policies, school leaders and teachers tend to forget: students do not behave. As intelligent beings they act. And as such they deserve their very existence and daily activity to be welcome in meaningful contexts where their semiotic activity is thought of as something worthy.