

Editor's introduction

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Teachers' learning has never been so centre stage in educational policy and practice. Internationally and nationally, politicians, practitioners and researchers are emphasising the importance of teachers and their professional development. An example from the UK is the Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*:

All the evidence from different education systems around the world shows that the most important factor in determining how well children do is the quality of teachers and teaching. The best education systems in the world draw their teachers from among the top graduates and train them rigorously and effectively, focusing on classroom practice. They then make sure that teachers receive effective professional development throughout their career, with opportunities to observe and work with other teachers, and appropriate training for leadership positions. (DfE 2010: 9)

Another example comes from the report of the second international Teacher Summit, held in the USA in May 2012, published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

The kind of education needed today requires teachers to be high-level knowledge workers who constantly advance their own professional knowledge as well as that of their profession. Teachers need to be agents of innovation not least because innovation is critically important for generating new sources of growth through improved efficiency and productivity. (Schleicher 2012: 36)

The language and emphasis are subtly different in these quotations, which is interesting in itself, but there is a consensus that teachers' learning is necessary for the development of educational practice. This has not always been so. The new – and welcome – policy focus on teachers' professional development appears to be driven by international comparisons; much of the language used demonstrates a concern with efficiency and performance. There are different understandings of what is meant by professional development in the reports cited above, with an emphasis in the British policy document on

teaching rather than learning, and vice versa in the OECD document. These differences reflect continuing current debates about the nature and processes of teacher learning, and the contexts in which it is most worthwhile – debates that are the substantive themes of the chapters that follow.

The book arises from the longstanding concern and tradition in what is now the Faculty of Education in the University of Cambridge for involvement in high-quality, innovative, initial teacher education and continuing professional development. The focus on initial teacher education is the substance of a companion volume edited by Michael Evans (Evans 2013), whereas the present book focuses on the lifelong, professional learning of teachers. In this chapter some alternative models of teacher learning are examined, as is the history of professional development in the UK, with a particular emphasis on Cambridge and East Anglia.

Changing thinking about teachers' learning

In the 1970s the need for teachers to continue learning beyond their initial preparatory period was not widely accepted or highly valued. There were opportunities for full-time secondments to institutions of higher education, where teachers went, usually for a year, to study for a diploma or master's degree, chosen to meet their individual interests. When the teachers returned to their schools, they were rarely invited to disseminate their learning beyond their own classrooms, but were simply acknowledged to have benefitted as individuals. In the late 1970s the thinking behind this approach began to change (Morley 1994). In 1978 teacher development programmes began to be seen as meeting needs identified by schools and headteachers, as well as benefitting individual teachers. New forms and structures were established to meet these needs in a time of rapid change in educational policy. New acronyms and structures emerged, such as GRIST (Grant Related In-Service Training), INSET (In-Service Training) and LEATAGS (Local Education Authority Training Grant Schemes). This approach to professional development was often led by local authorities and based in local teachers' centres.

At the same time Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) was developing and articulating a model of school-based curriculum development and 'extended professionalism' that had lifelong teacher learning and research at its heart.

Two people who were part of this tradition at the University of East Anglia, John Elliott and Nigel Norris, explain the thinking thus in their scholarly evaluation of Stenhouse's important contribution to this field:

[B]ecause it was the teacher who held the keys to the laboratory, it was the teacher who could mount educational experiments in the classroom, it was the teacher who would, maybe with the help of others, marshal and interpret the evidence and it was the teacher who had to learn from the experience of classroom action research if genuine and sustainable educational improvement were to be possible. (Elliott and Norris 2012: 3)

In this then radical reconceptualisation, professional development was not an occasional event driven by an individual teacher's enthusiasm but an essential element of all teachers' practice, focused on understanding learning and teaching in the classroom through a process of systematic, critical inquiry made public (Stenhouse 1981). Stenhouse argued that 'we are concerned with the development of a sensitive and self-critical subjective perspective and not with the aspiration to unattainable objectivity' (1975: 157). He saw teachers researching their practice as fundamental to educational change; he placed the locus of change in the classroom, not at the periphery of the educational system nor with policy-makers. This is of course the antithesis of the top-down policy drives we have seen in education in the last decade. He argued that 'the best means of development is not by clarifying ends but by analysing practice' (Stenhouse 1975: 72).

Stenhouse's ideas travelled between the University of East Anglia and the Institute of Education (which later became incorporated into the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education). John Elliott, who was responsible for developing the tools with which to implement Stenhouse's ideas, and other key thinkers worked in both places. The core principles of research as part of teacher learning, focusing on teachers' own problems and concerns and discussing ideas in groups which would critically examine them became the cornerstones of provision for teachers both within the Faculty and in its outposts. Richard Byers and David Frost weave these principles through their chapters in this book, although clearly the original ideas have since been developed.

In the 1980s there was another major shift in policy: the 1988 Education Reform Act. As a result of this highly controversial and contested Act, school-based in-service training days for teachers became a legal requirement for maintained schools; these days were known as 'Baker days' after

Kenneth Baker, the then Secretary of State for Education. This new requirement was the beginning of a statutory model of professional development for teachers, which has since become acceptable and institutionalised. It was a long way from the model proposed by Stenhouse, and the language often used to describe it very far from his intentions, but it did introduce a notion that teachers should continue to learn about learning and teaching. It challenged the long-held notion that professional development was something for the young, the novice or the boffin. This emphasis on teachers' continuing professional development has continued, as can be seen in the quotations at the beginning of this chapter. Now the rhetoric of much educational policy is that teacher professional development is central to high-quality education. The debate about what is meant by that and what form it should take is central to this book. What views are there of teacher development in recent years?

In a review for the Scottish government, Menter *et al.* (2010) identified four 'influential paradigms' of teacher professionalism: 'the *effective* teacher, the *reflective* teacher, the *enquiring* teacher and the *transformative* teacher'. The *effective teacher* model fits well with a nationally prescribed curriculum and a national assessment system. In this model the teacher's skills, knowledge and competences are tightly prescribed: 'The emphases are on technical accomplishment and on measurement. It is the model for an age of accountability and performativity' (p. 21). It can perhaps be seen as close to the current state of education in the UK, particularly in England, where, over the last 30 years, what should be taught to students and teachers, and how, have both been increasingly prescribed by central government.

The *reflective teacher* model exemplifies a less restricted view of teacher professionalism. It emerged in the UK in the last part of the twentieth century and was based on the work of John Dewey (1897), with his view of teachers as active decision-makers, and more recently Donald Schon (1983). It has also been taken up by Andrew Pollard (2008) in his writing on the reflective teacher. This model has a cycle of learning at its centre, 'planning, making provision, acting, collecting data, analysing the data, evaluating and reflecting and then planning the next step' (Menter *et al.* 2010: 22). A study by Furlong *et al.* (2000) found that 70 per cent of teacher education programmes based in or led by universities and colleges were informed by some version of this model. The third model, the *enquiring teacher*, is not dissimilar to the reflective teacher but Menter *et al.* note that 'Reflective teaching does not in itself imply a research orientation on the part of the teacher, although the model may be strongly influenced by a set of ideas that do promote just that

conception' (Menter *et al.* 2010: 23). The ideas of Stenhouse (1975) underpin this model, which involves teachers in systematic enquiry into their classroom practice as a form of professional and curriculum development. Menter *et al.* (2010) describe how these ideas have been taken up by universities working in partnerships with schools and colleges and by government initiatives. Teacher research features in initial teacher education programmes as well as in approaches to professional development.

The final model is the *transformative teacher*, which builds on the previous two but has an 'activist' element most recently exemplified in the writings of Sachs (2003), who argues that teachers' responsibilities go beyond pedagogy; they should be contributing to social change and preparing their pupils to contribute to change in society. Those who see teaching as a transformative activity, such as Zeichner (2009) and Cochran-Smith (2004) suggest that challenge to the status quo is not only to be expected but is a necessary part of bringing about a more equitable education system, where inequalities in society begin to be addressed and where progressive social change can be stimulated. It is worth noting that the work of those promoting the enquiring or reflective or researching teacher also shares this emphasis on social justice. Elliott (1991), for example, has argued that research by teachers should be informed by concerns for increasing democracy and social justice. So there are different emphases and views of what is meant by the two terms 'professional' and 'development'. These different conceptions are mirrored in the chapters that follow.

Important themes

The chapters in this book focus on two main themes: first, those describing and interrogating developments in the Cambridge 'tradition', as David Frost labels it, in the Scottish context (Moirra Hulme's chapter) and in the global context (John MacBeath's chapter). The second major theme in this book is research into teacher learning and development. This is a field that has grown a great deal in the last three decades, with a noticeable increase in empirical research. Philippa Cordingley, Darleen Opfer and Dave Pedder report on major reviews of the state of the field, showing how many of these studies have challenged conventional thinking about teachers' learning; they illustrate a growing sophistication in theorising about how teachers learn. There is also some interesting evidence in these chapters on the most beneficial locations for teachers' learning and the forms it should take.

The chapters raise questions about the relationship between teachers, their learning and the following:

- the conception of the teacher's role and profession;
- knowledge and knowledge creation;
- other organisations in the educational landscape;
- colleagues and the school;
- issues of power, status and development.

The conception of the teacher's role and profession

In her chapter outlining developments in Scotland, Moira Hulme focuses on what an emphasis on teachers' learning has meant in that country. The developments and dilemmas found there echo similar ones in many other countries around the world. One of these is whether preparation for teaching is seen as a process of training or apprenticeship, or as the development of the 'extended professional' that Hoyle (1975) and Stenhouse (1975) proposed. The authors of the studies in this book argue for the latter, a view of teacher development as a scholarly, lifelong study of both theory and practice. This view is only slowly gaining general acceptance, as global competition and international comparisons reinforce the value of teachers undertaking in-depth professional study post-initial qualification. John MacBeath shows that this extended professionalism is also essential for effective pupil learning.

Knowledge and knowledge creation

Another theme running through several chapters is that teacher learning is most worthwhile when teachers are supported in generating knowledge about their own practice, which they share both locally and more widely. Research and inquiry are embedded in Moira Hulme's account of Scottish standards and are central to John MacBeath's and David Frost's chapters. The Stenhouseian notion of the teacher as researcher, generating knowledge through critical and public examination of classroom and school practice, seems to have become accepted. Donald McIntyre (2008), David Hargreaves (1999) and others argue, as does David Frost, that the generation of knowledge by teachers is an important future goal in our educational systems. McIntyre and Hargreaves both challenged the nature and use of educational research and argued that instead of treating teachers as passive recipients of others' research and knowledge, 'one alternative is to treat practitioners themselves as the main (but not only) source for the creation of professional

knowledge' (Hargreaves 1999: 125). The task of professional knowledge creation is not a simple one; although it has been pursued in many contexts since Hargreaves first wrote about 'the knowledge-creating school', many problems remain. The conditions that support the task are examined and discussed by Darleen Opfer, Dave Pedder and Philippa Cordingley in their chapters. Indeed, the status of teacher-generated knowledge is still the subject of a very necessary debate. Necessary because the integration of knowledge about practice and theoretical knowledge is complex and the warrant for that research needs to be established. This debate will be very important in the future, especially in a context where rather simplistic notions of transferring practice, and knowledge about practice, abound. It will require that we develop our thinking about the relationship between research and practice and the status we give to it. What we see in Richard Byers's, Philippa Cordingley's, David Frost's and John MacBeath's accounts is the tremendous value for practice and theory of teacher involvement in creating knowledge about teaching and learning.

Other organisations in the educational landscape

The relationship between teachers' learning and other actors in the educational system is another key factor discussed by several contributors. In the past the context for teacher learning was often outside the school, and driven by a variety of external agencies. Early professional development opportunities were often located in teachers' centres or universities. Inquiry activities were often led by those based in universities or higher education institutes, although they were often ex-teachers. Philippa Cordingley concludes, as did Stenhouse (1975), that promoting professional learning within the school and leading that process are fundamental to effective professional development. The school is the most suitable location for professional learning, and work on the agenda of teachers as well as on the agenda of schools and policy-makers is also important. The conclusion that Philippa Cordingley reaches about the need for both internal and external specialists is supported by Richard Byers. They argue for teachers' learning to be located in partnerships between those involved; in the cases described in their chapters these are universities and local authorities. The fast-changing landscape of the educational system and the demise of local authorities mean that schools and networks of schools are going to be the key actors. The valuable contributions of networks and communities of enquiry are discussed by Richard Byers, David Frost and John MacBeath. All characterise them as central to the development of teachers'

learning. The role of universities has been key to such work in the past and there are signs that universities are struggling to stay involved in teachers' professional development, other than master's courses in the UK. What universities can bring in the best of partnerships is an expertise in research; a natural tendency to critically appraise and question; an ability to locate a question in a wider field of knowledge; and a position outside of the policy or school system. Having a model of teacher learning that consists mainly of a focus on what works and that is led only by government organisations would be an unfortunate reduction of professional development. The recent developments in the arena of professional development in England may be the unintended outcomes of a more 'managerialist' approach to both school and higher education planning, rather than a conscious decision to separate two partners who have lived well together for a good many years and whose union has been very productive.

The current emphasis in English policy tends towards seeing all professional development as necessarily being school-based and school-led. Effective professional learning needs to meet and address the needs of the school and its teachers – this is self-evident. However, this should not be a reductionist argument. It would be a mistake to ignore the outsider and not listen to the research evidence presented in this book about the necessity of having an external view which is wider than that of a single school. Dave Pedder and Darleen Opfer show how the orientations and value placed on partners and external conditions, as well as learning, are key factors in whether teachers engage in professional learning. They also show the positive power of criticality and creating dissonance in helping teachers to see their classrooms and their practices differently.

Colleagues and the school

Collaboration between colleagues in schools is another arena for scrutiny and discussion identified in the chapters that follow. Dave Pedder and Darleen Opfer identify this as a key orientation and argue that the values teachers hold influence their learning greatly. The relationship between school-based inquiry or teachers' learning and the rest of the school practice is a key theme, too. However, there is still a need to examine further and in more depth the optimum within-school conditions for teachers' learning. Schools as presently constituted do not make collaboration or wide-ranging open-ended enquiry easy. Stenhouse argued that 'the major barriers to teachers

assuming the role of researchers studying their own teaching in order to improve are psychological and social' (1975: 175). This is a fruitful area for further research.

Issues of power, status and development

David Frost argues in his chapter for teacher leadership of research and the agenda for research in schools. He makes this argument on the grounds of impact, democracy and the location of the locus of change with teachers. These are essential, he writes, if teachers are to be treated as extended professionals. The relationship between school improvement, teacher development work and control is not a simple one.

The challenges ahead

There are many challenges ahead if teachers' learning is to continue to be rich, purposeful and effective, at classroom, school and network level, but the insights presented in this book suggest some firm foundations for the future. One such challenge is to understand more about how conditions in schools and classrooms can best support teachers' learning and communities of critical enquiry. There are obvious tensions between the discourses of 'performativity' and 'managerialism', which characterise current education policy, and the openness that is necessary for teachers to learn, but there are also opportunities in the new emphasis on teaching schools and increasing collaboration between schools. The tradition of democratic and emancipatory conceptualisations of professional development needs to be guarded and continued.

Another challenge is to remind ourselves of the psychological challenge that results from questioning one's own practice, and, sometimes, finding it wanting. In 1994 Mary Jane Drummond and I wrote about the fourth dimension of teachers' learning: the emotional dimension. 'What happens', asked one of the teachers we worked with in the 1990s, 'when you wish you'd never started learning?' (Drummond and McLaughlin 1994: 43). Her question is still relevant for teachers today. The dissonance and disturbance that accompany real learning can be especially painful in a climate of inspection, target-setting, performance management and high-stakes assessment. There is an argument for taking this emotional dimension even more seriously than

in 1994. The tradition of supporting teachers' learning at Cambridge was a stimulus for this book and I write in the hope that the tradition will develop and grow so that one day, as Stenhouse predicted: 'It is teachers who in the end will change the world of the school by understanding it' (Stenhouse 1981).

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