

Using an NPDP experience to propose a changing conception of professional development

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Abstract:This paper proposes a conception of professional development based on the presenters' experience in and reflection on an NPDP-sponsored series of four workshops using nation-wide interactive television in 1994 and 1995. The focus of the workshops was school-based curriculum decision-making within the context of national agendas in school curriculum.

Three contextual phenomena for the workshops are outlined; reflection on the presenters' experience and on evaluative feedback is used to propose a conception of professional development which takes account of the interaction of these phenomena (national agendas in relation to

school curriculum, use of available technology and views of teacher curriculum decision-making); and issues which require further consideration and action are identified on the basis of a critical analysis using a systems-lifeworld framework.

The paper contends that what is required in moving from the "yesterday" and the "today" of professional development is a conception of professional development which is teacher-centred, dynamic and interactive, embedded in the professional practice of teachers, and oriented to the active construction of professional knowledge within the broader contextual realities of both the today and the tomorrow. Such a conception acknowledges the dilemmas which teachers face in their day to day work; it celebrates the centrality of teachers in curriculum decision-making; and it actively includes teachers in the ongoing development of their professional knowledge. In moving to the "tomorrow", the paper concludes by suggesting directions for further action which connect and communicate with teachers in their world.

In essence, the conception of professional development presented is one that focuses on the empowerment of teachers as curriculum leaders who transform curriculum practice.

Descriptors:Dilemmas in teachers' work
Teacher curriculum decision-making
curriculum leadership and professional development

INTRODUCTION

This paper outlines three contextual phenomena and the interactions among these as they impact upon changing conceptions of professional development. The three contextual phenomena are the national agendas in relation to school curriculum, technology and curriculum decision-making. It is argued that the confluence of these contextual phenomena allows for a conception of professional development which is teacher-centred, dynamic and interactive, embedded in the professional practice of teachers, and oriented to the active construction of professional knowledge within the broader contextual realities (including the policies of the day). Such a conception acknowledges the dilemmas which teachers face in their day to day work; it celebrates the centrality of teachers in curriculum decision-making; and it actively includes teachers in the ongoing development of their own professional knowledge.

This conception is reflected upon, using the experiences of the presenters and the evaluative feedback from participants. Critical analysis of experiences in the NPDP workshops on "School-based Curriculum Decision-making" in 1994 and 1995 is used to reflect further on the changing conception of professional development. The paper concludes with an identification of issues and ideas which require further consideration and action. These focus especially on making connections and communicating with teachers in their world.

In essence, this paper is about a conception of professional development that focuses on the empowerment of teachers as curriculum leaders who transform curriculum practice.

OUTLINING THE THREE CONTEXTUAL PHENOMENA

NATIONAL AGENDAS IN RELATION TO SCHOOL CURRICULUM

National agendas in relation to school curriculum have focussed in recent years on the contribution that schools and education systems can and should make to all facets of Australian society, not the least of which has been the economic one. Educational commentators (Pring, 1989; Lingard, 1991; Ball, Bowe and Gold, 1992; Bartlett, 1992; Henry, 1993; Porter, 1993; Knight, Bartlett and McWilliam, 1993; Bartlett, Knight, Lingard and Porter, 1994) argue that educational agendas are driven by such forces as economic rationalism. Much of the documentation, and certainly the practical response desired by policy personnel, has a strong vocational emphasis and focuses on the development of competencies which appear to have a very distinct orientation towards the workplace. This trend is seen in the heavy concentration on the post-compulsory sector, the forging of links between school and TAFE sectors and the general tightening of the curriculum via an emphasis on competency-based outcomes, reporting (e.g. statements and profiles), quality and accountability.

While this tightening of the curriculum has been developing, teachers see a growing centralisation of curriculum control on the one hand, and conflicting restructurings of systems in which devolution of responsibility for decision-making is promoted on the other hand (Smyth, 1992). Such dilemmas about the national agendas lead teachers to feelings of being devalued and deskilled; a decided view that their work has intensified and diversified; and that central support for local action has largely been removed.

It would appear, however, that national agendas in curriculum are not being interpreted in purely economic rationalist terms. It is interesting to note, for example, that the Mayer Report, in its draft form, referred to employment-related key competencies whereas the Report itself focuses more on generic competencies. At the State level, in Queensland, for instance, the competencies remain an entity in their own right, but many schools are interpreting them through the effective learning and teaching principles which are far more generic and related to the whole of life rather than to employment alone. It is also interesting to note that the DEET-funded Competencies projects in Queensland using case study/action research approaches, are quite clearly demonstrating that the competencies are already present in what teachers do! (yet at the same time, giving teachers a common language with which to focus what they are doing). The centralised policies, therefore, although shaped by economic rationalist thinking, may not be as teacher-proof as the centralised policy makers would like to think! It is really up to teachers at the local level to show that the "best" policy emerges out of practice - it is NOT something which is imposed on practice. Economic rationalism as a force, then, may not be as potent in shaping teachers' curriculum practice, and their perspectives cannot be overlooked.

In a study completed during 1994 (Aspland, Macpherson, Proudford and Whitmore, 1994) teachers across three differing contexts argued that the systems they had in place at their local sites were fruitful in filtering through the extensive number of policy documents that were presented to schools in recent years. The filtering mechanisms (which varied in forms, including curriculum forums as well as smaller decision-making committees) ensured a systematic and deliberative approach to assessing whether incoming policies and initiatives would be adopted, adapted or rejected. In this sense, policy development remained firmly in the hands of those who should control it.

In a strange yet wonderful way, then, the centralised national agendas as teacher-proof and imposed from above may well be on a path of self-destruct! It is not that teachers wish to oppose the centralised policies; rather they wish to be recognised for what they have done and are already doing in their professional work that is consistent with these policies. In order for this to occur, teachers must challenge

all policies and examine them within the contexts both of their own experience and practice, and of the theories/philosophies/positions which influence and guide their professional work. The reality is an interactive and reflexive process whereby policy informs practice and vice versa. It would be ridiculous for teachers to work outside a framework of accountability and quality. By the same token, it is ridiculous for policy-makers to assume that agendas based on outcomes (expressed as competencies) will be played out in classrooms exactly as they envisage. The rich diversity and complexity of human interactions puts "paid" to that notion!

The centralised national agendas run the very real "risk", therefore, of empowering teachers at the school and classroom level to be curriculum leaders - to shape the curriculum experiences and outcomes of learners in ways that are unique to each set of learners and to each local context yet broadly consistent with such phenomena as quality standards and competencies.

This paper takes a "challenged" and "(re)constructive" view of national agendas in relation to school curriculum. Such a view places teachers very much at centre stage in terms of curriculum decision-making, whether it relates to policy-making at the broadest national level or to decisions about what and how learners learn in school and classroom settings. Teachers within this view, are not characterised as unthinking and technocratic instruments of a bigger system over which they have little or no control; rather as reflective and transformative professionals whose decisions are critical in meeting desired learning goals.

Within such a view, it is absolutely imperative that teachers have an informed data base relating to the national agendas; that they have the opportunity to reflect upon this data base; that they see the opportunities for empowerment and transformation within a context that at first glance may appear to be restrictive, inflexible, and disempowering; and that they have the opportunity to explore and develop ways of operating as curriculum leaders in all stages of the curriculum process - planning, implementation, and evaluation (including assessment and reporting as well as review and reconstruction).

USE OF AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY

The second phenomenon opens up a whole new world for the professional development of teachers. While technological growth can be seen as an end in its own right, the position here is that technology provides a set of tools for creating new professional possibilities. There is no sense of being interested in or seduced by the novelty of technology so that our efforts are little more than 'edutainment' (See Halliwell, Perry, Macpherson and Grieshaber, 1994; Bigum, Fitzclarence and Kenway, 1993). The question uppermost in our minds is how can the technology best serve the ideas resident within a "challenged" and

"(re)constructive" view of national agendas. The available technology for the NPDP program described in this paper was interactive television transmission via satellite. The interactive nature of television transmission via satellite has the potential to be pervasive (making contact with large numbers of teachers across the country at the same time); powerful (giving teachers the opportunity to share their

concerns, to find out that these concerns are very similar, and to explore ways of being a concerted voice which will impact upon the thinking and actions of centralised policy makers); and proactive (providing efficient and effective ways of communicating and developing a shared professional knowledge about issues which are current and relevant to teachers' professional work).

VIEWS OF TEACHERS' CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING

School-based curriculum decision-making is not a new phenomenon. Decisions about curriculum have been and always will be made at the school level. The professional work of teachers is essentially an ongoing cycle of curriculum decisions and curriculum actions. The School-based curriculum development movement of the 1970's and 1980's encouraged a participatory and democratic form of curriculum decision-making which included decisions about broad school curriculum policy and more specific classroom curriculum practice. In the 1990's, school-based curriculum decision-making could be interpreted by policy makers as the purely technocratic instrument by which national agendas are implemented, assessed and reported. However, it is possible to consider an alternative position - one with a "challenged" and "(re)constructive" view of national agendas in relation to school curriculum. If teachers are to be professionally empowered to transform curriculum practice, a participatory view of school-based curriculum decision-making must be taken. It is the operation of this view that facilitates a process whereby teachers can challenge the contextual factors which impinge upon curriculum and to (re)construct their curriculum practice accordingly.

A review of the teaching of curriculum studies in higher education programs (QUT, 1993) identified three themes which are considered significant in the domain of curriculum studies. The third of these themes is particularly relevant with reference to a "challenged" and "(re)constructive" view of national agendas in relation to school curriculum. The theme has to do with self-understanding with a transformative perspective.

It acknowledges that once an educator has become a well-established member of the profession, he or she as a knowing subject develops more complex understandings about professional life. As such, the study of curriculum in the phase of later practice encourages the educator to engage in a process of critique at the systems and structural levels as well as the local level.

Educators who are entering these later phases of practice are most appropriately positioned to generate new knowledge in this field by pursuing the curriculum understandings and capacities listed below:

- `an understanding of contemporary educational policy developments and initiatives at national, state and local levels;
- `a capacity to analyse critically policy;
- `a capacity to interpret broad educational policy in terms of the problems and priorities of particular educational settings and to develop appropriate curriculum responses;
- `an understanding of factors contributing to curriculum change;
- `an understanding of personal, social and organisational skills which facilitate curriculum change;
- `a capacity to develop, implement and evaluate a range of approaches

and strategies to bring about curriculum change.

(QUT, 1993:4-5)

PROPOSING A CONCEPTION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BACKGROUND

The three contextual phenomena and the interactions among them raise the question about appropriate ways of facilitating professional development for teachers. The position taken in this paper is that the conditions created by the current confluence of the three contextual phenomena discussed above give rise to the possibility of a new conception of professional development - one which is based on the dilemmas faced by teachers and the issues surrounding these.

For quite some time now it has been argued that teachers' professional work is characterised by a range of dilemmas that permeate its ambiguous nature (Shulman,1984), one that is becoming fraught with contestation and contradictory aims and means (Lortie, 1975) as the discourse of the National agendas is juxtaposed with the already complex phenomenon of curriculum decision-making at the school and classroom level. A number of authors (Lampert, 1985, 1986; Berlak and Berlak, 1981) articulated dilemmas as part of the everyday world of teaching some years ago and more recently Hargreaves (1995) has identified them as paradoxes.

In these terms, teachers face a number of dilemmas as they seek to reconcile centralising forces in the area of curriculum and

decentralising forms of systemic structures. They report an intensification and a diversification of their work with little or no accompanying recognition for the central role they play in real curriculum decision-making (real in the sense of having an impact on what actually happens in the learning contexts of schools and classrooms). Teachers appear to see their role as becoming increasingly onerous in terms of both time commitment and the complexity of factors which affect their work, yet they see a reduction in the amount of professional support provided by governments, systems and other funding agencies. They are expected to work more and more within collaborative frameworks involving colleagues and community personnel, but their professional development to date has focussed largely on their being expert in their area or subject at the classroom.

Klich (1990) has noted that the vast amounts of resources that have been expended on supporting the professional development of teachers have largely been ineffective particularly in the Australian context. He has argued that:

from the teacher's perspective, inservice training is seen as a system-driven cafeteria of short, insular offerings singularly lacking in on-site nutrition for teachers who often liken the experience to being spray painted in the colours of the latest Departmental priority. (Klich,1990 as quoted in O'Donoghue, Brooker and Aspland,1993:14).

Issues like this one create a context for teachers' work - a context characterised by dilemmas. Issues and dilemmas have to be addressed in the ongoing professional development of teachers. Professional development must be contextualised in the realities of teachers' work. This means it must begin at the roots of those issues which concern teachers, and not be satisfied with a superficial attempt to ameliorate the symptoms. Cosmetic "quick fixes" to symptoms like stress and burnout get nowhere near the root causes. We need curriculum policies

and practices which are well-informed; which are built on conceptually-strong foundations; and which place teachers at centre stage in their development and implementation.

Ben-Peretz and Kremer-Haydon (1990) have argued that all teachers experience a range of "general" dilemmas as they work across contexts, while more "idiosyncratic" dilemmas are peculiar to specific educational settings. Berlak and Berlak (1981) categorised such idiosyncratic dilemmas into three main types: control dilemmas, social dilemmas and curriculum dilemmas.

The confluence of the three contextual phenomena noted above not only permits professional development for teachers to focus on such concerns; but it also permits the broader educational community to

examine the complex range of dilemmas that are central to teachers' conceptualisation of what is happening to their work as a result of major socio-political developments shaping Australian education at the present time (O'Donoghue, Brooker and Aspland, 1993). Advocates of professional development, in particular, need to build on this work with a view to reconceptualising existing models of professional development, instigating a change in direction and focus that is more responsive to the contestations, contradictions and dilemmas that permeate teachers curriculum decision making on a daily basis.

In such a reconceptualisation, there is a need to capture (as an integral part of the learning process) the contestations and contradictions implicit in daily struggles of curriculum decision-making. For too long, professional development has been removed from this context, and teachers have been left alone to ascertain the meaningfulness of inservice programs presented in isolated contexts that fail to capture the essence of what is problematic in teachers work. A better approach, fraught with risk taking by the developers, values the unique, subjective experiences of each teacher and is responsive to these experiences in collaborative and dialogical ways, rejecting essentialist solutions to what are perceived to be common problems experienced by teaching cohorts. In this sense a singular model of professional development can not be determined. In contrast, a "principled approach" (Day, 1994) offers insights into pathways to professional development that may be instructive. He says:

It is clear that effective professional development must be based upon planning models which themselves are founded upon educational principles which recognise the need to encourage lifelong learning which is both private and public, individual and collective, and in the interests of the individual and the school (sometimes more than the other). They must be based upon leadership which encourages openness and trust, notions of human fallibility, collaboration rather than competition, participation and ownership rather than passivity and compliance. They will be practical but will define practicality in ways which broaden rather than narrow teachers' visions of teaching. They will embrace teachers' subject knowledge, pedagogical skills and their intellectual, spiritual and emotional health needs. Above all, they will be part of a school culture which is clearly and explicitly committed to the education of the whole child through the service of educators who are themselves whole people. (Page 126)

A local example, Possible Pathways to Professional Development (Elliott, Macpherson and Aspland, 1994), offers the following emerging principles for consideration:

* Professional development occurs through processes which

recognise that teachers work collaboratively AND by themselves;

* Professional development requires a process of reflection AND confrontation;

* Professional development requires support AND challenge from others particularly curriculum leaders;

* Professional development needs to recognise the stages of individuals in their careers;

* Professional development generally requires guidance AND intervention by leaders;

* The beginning point and point of revisiting of/for professional development can be found in the state of perplexity that often characterises teachers' work;

* The different types of perplexities can be recognised as dilemmas (in their differing forms (Winter, 1982 and 1989) or ironies or paradoxes (Hargreaves, 1995), all of which can be managed as a central component of professional development;

* The central focus of professional development should be the teacher who as a person lives and works within an educational, social and political context in differing ways and engages in curriculum decision making in unique ways that must be respected and celebrated;

* Professional development must recognise the complex interplay of factors that are central to and impact upon the uniqueness of teachers' work;

* Professional development must actively involve teachers in the ongoing generation of professional knowledge.

A CONCEPTION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What is required is a move from a conception of professional development which is systemically-driven, static, top-down, and policy-oriented to one which is teacher-centred, dynamic and interactive, embedded in the professional practice of teachers, and oriented to the active construction of professional knowledge within the broader contextual realities (including the policies of the day). Such a move acknowledges the dilemmas which teachers face in their day to day work; it celebrates the centrality of teachers in curriculum decision-making; and it actively includes teachers in the ongoing development of their own professional knowledge.

A changing conception of professional development in these terms addresses the features of a "challenged" and "(re)constructive" view of

national agendas in relation to school curriculum; it exploits the use of available technology to achieve professional goals pervasively, powerfully and proactively; and it contextualises professional growth within the realities of teachers' professional work.

USING THIS CHANGING CONCEPTION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO REFLECT ON THE 1994 AND 1995 NPDP WORKSHOPS

The Workshops under discussion were a part of the Australian Teachers Curriculum Renewal Project through Open Learning and focussed on school-based curriculum decision-making. The program in 1994 consisted of a series of four professional development workshops, conducted Australia-wide, using interactive television via satellite

transmission. The program aimed to provide participants with an understanding of national curriculum development issues; with skills and techniques for school improvement within a context of school-based curriculum decision-making; with the opportunity to share and network with colleagues, locally and nationally; and a growing sense of empowerment to sustain change efforts at the local level, using action research-based approaches. Program booklets with associated readings were provided in advance of the workshops. The booklets emphasised the interactive nature of the workshops; offered starting points which included both national curriculum agendas and teachers' experiences at the local level; and elicited frameworks from the readings for the purposes of critical reflection and transformative action.

A similar program was presented in 1995. The focus remained on school-based curriculum decision-making; the context continued to be the impact of national agendas at the local level; and the intent was a more conscious use of emerging principles of professional development and curriculum leadership as a means of creating environments, opportunities and possibilities for teachers to feel empowered to transform their curriculum practice at the school and classroom level and to reshape policies and agendas at broader systemic and national levels. Aspects of the national agendas in relation to school curriculum particularly addressed were assessment and reporting.

Materials pertaining to the workshops in 1994 and 1995 will be available for perusal at the conference presentation.

Experience of the presenters and their perceptions of the workshops as well as feedback from participants would appear to indicate that a "challenged" and "(re)constructive view of national agendas in relation to school curriculum was not necessarily being incorporated to a large degree; that the interactive television technology was not always used as appropriately as we would have expected; and the form of professional development conceptualised by the presenters was not universally seen by participants as empowering and transforming. Such information suggests that we ask: how teacher-centred, dynamic and

interactive were the workshops as an example of professional development for teachers?

This does not mean to say that in any sense the four workshops in the programs were unsuccessful. Ratings re expectations of each workshop overall and of each phase within each workshop show a very definite positive skew. Individual comments (some of which are replicated by several participants), however, convey messages which cannot be ignored.

In addressing the above question, we need to focus on the following more specific questions:

Were the dilemmas which teachers face acknowledged, and was the centrality of teachers in curriculum decision-making celebrated?

Some comments indicated that teachers thought the workshops were too jargonistic, offered too many views, raised dilemmas that were manufactured and negative, and did not offer authentic solutions for their practice. There was a sense that studio presenters were making motherhood statements and that there was not enough emphasis on the practical.

On the other hand, some comments indicated that the issues being addressed were relevant.

These comments reflect the difficulty of preparing and presenting workshops for teachers in diverse contexts. Further, they reflect the pragmatic orientation of the teachers, many of whom were mainly interested in problems they faced in their own classrooms.

There appeared to be little concern on the part of teachers for issues which confronted the profession. This is not surprising, given the historical context of isolation in the profession. There were, however, some teachers who saw the process as enabling them to make links outside their context and address the wider issues. For example, one teacher commented that it was a "wonderful opportunity" for teachers from all over Australia to have professional contact". Another commented "I thought it was magnificent that a teacher sitting alone in Forbes, could interact/enjoy professional development at this level.

Were there elements of critiquing present realities and constructing future possibilities?

The workshops adopted a pedagogy grounded in a "critique and construct" framework. Feedback from participating teachers indicates that some, at least, adopted this framework in thinking about and acting upon their professional work. The following comments serve to illustrate:

"A very informative workshop - presented many thought-provoking ideas"

"We covered quite a lot of the requirements in the first instance."

"(The workshop) addressed the issues in a clear and fair manner - recognising the nature of the debate that is currently taking place in our schools."

While there appeared to be agreement in the comments that there should be some debate (even heated), there was still a sense of impatience that the debate was not practical enough. The focus on critiquing the national agendas did not seem to be appropriate for many teachers who thought we were where they were 2 to 4 years ago! There was a call for more practical information. One teacher wanted less jargon, no references to articles or educationalists, plain speaking answers. Another teacher told us to find out what our participants think is important first, while another advised that we should use a reference group in order to recognise the diversity of our audience.

Were the overall approach and the use of technology facilitating the active involvement of teachers in the ongoing development of their own professional knowledge?

The "critique and construct" framework was linked with interactive television via satellite technology.

The very low rate of evaluative feedback, as well as the relatively low number of people responding during phase 4 of each of the workshops would suggest that many sites were taping the interactive phases for later use. This, along with the sentiments summarised above, suggests that in theory the overall approach (some teachers did express appreciation for the 5 phase structure of each workshop) and the technology (some teachers were very positive, especially in rural areas) for this sort of professional development opportunity) were appropriate, but in

practice, they were not making the widespread connections to a diverse audience for which we had hoped.

Comments which highlighted the usefulness of the technology were as follows:

"(Many) people were allowed to speak honestly about issues that impact on us all."

"It is great to hear people like [David Smith, Colin Marsh, Patrick Griffin and Stephen Kemmis] who gave a broader perspective."

"Listening to real life practitioners is great."

One disadvantage of the technology that has been gleaned from telephone conversations is that the provision of satellite dishes for individual schools throughout many parts of the country has worked against local area networking. It is ironic that some schools are now focussing on more global networking through the use of this technology at the expense of local groups. On the other hand, where the teacher is isolated, either physically or psychologically, the more global networking becomes important. One teacher indicated that "the other people in my team couldn't make it. I missed that dynamic. Still, being able to talk to the studio people was great. It reduced my sense of isolation."

What opportunities were there for teachers to engage in the active construction of professional knowledge within the broader contextual realities of both the today and the tomorrow?

The presenters obviously believed that opportunities existed, and certainly those teachers who consistently contributed to interactive phases and generated discussion, ideas and actions in phases 1, 3 and 5 of each workshop were involved in the active construction of professional knowledge. The question remains, however, whether or not teachers overall had sufficient time and support to follow up the many thought provoking ideas which the workshops generated.

Based on these perceptions, we believe that the conception of professional development outlined earlier in this paper and used to shape the NPDP workshops over the last two years must now be reflected upon and critically analysed. It is important to note that we do not intend to dilute the conception of professional development; rather to search for ways which will better connect and communicate with teachers and their world. It almost seems that we have the challenging task of better articulating and advocating our conception of professional development in a teachers' world which undervalues the critical and the theoretical and dismisses these perspectives as jargon and divorced from reality.

USING THE SYSTEMS-LIFEWORLD FRAMEWORK TO CRITICALLY ANALYSE THE 1994 AND 1995 WORKSHOPS

The systems - lifeworld framework (Habermas, 1987) may assist us to better understand the tensions that emerged for some participants in this program (including ourselves). The relationship between the teachers and their practices and the systems initiatives (the national

agendas) that form the focus of the program can be understood through as articulation of the relationship between the lifeworld and system components of teachers' work that is presently undergoing "chronic

revision" (Giddens,1991).

The system refers here to the formal and institutional constructs in which teachers' work is set while the lifeworlds of teachers incorporate the various interpersonal and social relations that are central to teachers' daily experiences. The system perspective is commonly characterised by rational-purposive action and functional reasoning (Habermas) that directs the like of institutional bureaucrats, policy makers and system managers to generate instrumental demands and requirements of teachers that are predominantly outcomes focussed. Usually, such outcomes are directly linked to system goals (corporate plans). From a systems perspective, teachers' work is actively construed in terms of the system's functioning rather than of interpersonal relationships. The lifeworld perspective, however, focuses specifically on such relationships and is characterised by communicative action (Habermas, 1987) - a process of communication that reflects mutual understanding, intersubjective agreement and unforced consensus (Kemmis, 1995).

Integral to the lifeworld perspective is a process of critical reason - a process that calls on teachers to identify what is problematic about their work and to engage in a long term process of transformational learning to reconstruct their work in positive and meaningful ways. It was within this latter logic that the NPDP workshops were designed to implement a process of review (and critique) and reconstruction with and on behalf of the teaching profession. For a number of the participants in the workshops, this was a meaningful exercise involving a professional cohort of teachers, administrators and university personnel worked together in this challenge.

However, for other participants, this was not the case. It is argued here that such teachers perceived the NPDP workshops as simply another system imperative, dividing the cohort into the traditional roles of "them" (the presenters) and "us" (the teachers). Once again, the "us" quickly become the victims of the system, while the "them" were perceived as oppressors of sorts, further constraining and making more complex, the lives of teachers (for example, by offering them more dilemmas to consider, rather than providing them with solutions to their individual problems). In this sense, this particular group of teachers failed to see the significance of the broad-based issues that were revisited throughout the workshops. In fact, in the interests of functional reasoning that permeated their system perspective, they failed to see the purpose of critical debate, looking instead for resolutions and instructions that allowed them to "get on with the job".

The purpose of the workshops was far more complex than this, and in fact questioned (or critiqued) exactly what the nature of "the job" was (Kemmis,1995). As such, solutions or rather tricks of the trade were not forthcoming. Solutions, (if that is the purpose of professional development programs such as these workshops), were not presented as answers to teachers' problems; rather they were to be found through reviewing, critiquing and reconstructing one's own work through communicative action at the local level. They were to be generated collaboratively, not given by the "them" to the "us".

The technical or instrumental reasoning that seemed to underpin the systems framework adopted by the dissatisfied group, presupposes a particular relationship amongst members of the profession (and this learning community in particular)- a relationship that differentiates between those engaging in practice and those who talk about practice - different elements within the same system. Such a conceptualisation manifests itself in attitudes of regulation and control (Kemmis, 1995)

whereby the teacher actively allows and expects systems personnel (the presenters in this case) to dictate professional practices in generalised, abstract and artificial ways which further endorse hierarchical structures within the system.

Such thinking was contradictory to the purposes of these workshops - where the team valued and respected all the participants as contributors to a shared lifeworld - that of teachers' curriculum work.

University personnel, guest presenters, parents, and participating teachers were considered colleagues within a professional learning community, who were drawn together particularly to engage in critical reasoning and investigation about existing practices from both a system perspective as well as that of the lifeworld. (in the ways outlined earlier in the paper). This required of all participants:

"critical - emancipatory reasoning (that) manifests itself in collaborative reflection, theorising and political action directed towards emancipatory reconstruction of the setting (understood more dialectically as both constituting and constituted by the personal as well as the political, the local as well as the global, and from the interrelated aspects of both system and lifeworld" (Kemmis,1995:30).

LOOKING AHEAD

The analysis above suggests that teachers' work has been reshaped in such ways that the emerging socio-historical context demands of teachers a way of thinking about their work that is manifested through a systems perspective. As noted by the number of positive evaluations in this project, the notion of considering national agendas in school curriculum through an educational forum using interactive technologies has the potential to challenge teachers to make links between the dynamics of systems and lifeworld perspectives. However, another set of

evaluation responses suggest that some teachers have not made such connections. The reasons for this are complex but amongst them would be:

intransigent images of professional development held by some teachers which focus on a transmission view of knowledge;

the pedagogical model adopted in the program assumed that teachers would continue to investigate curriculum issues beyond the program context; and

the nature of curriculum and curriculum leadership.

There are a number of issues embedded in these reasons and they represent a challenge for those who facilitate professional development. The challenge stimulates further thinking and action in such areas as:

the communication with teachers re the value of the "critique and construct" framework to professional work and development;

the integration of professional work and professional development at the local level via structures that will support and sustain the momentum generated by large-scale programs using interactive technologies; and

the connections between teachers' views of curriculum and their role as curriculum leaders.

Current work in relation to the latter (and reported elsewhere at this

conference - Aspland, Elliott, Macpherson et al) suggests that curriculum leadership in schools is central in assisting teachers to bridge the gap between the realities of their curriculum work and system initiatives.

The further development of our conception of professional development and of approaches to facilitating it will need to take account of these reasons and issues. We do not intend to discard the conception of professional development presented in this paper; rather our challenge is to search for more effective ways of elaborating it, advocating for it and articulating it with teachers in their world.

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