

Development Planning as Teacher Professional Development

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Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education
Annual Conference, Hobart, November 1995.

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Traditionally teachers have had limited opportunities to work with their peers in collaborative and cooperative ways. There is little tradition in the teaching profession of learning from each other and

developing expertise collectively in either written or oral form. It has neither a common language nor a technology for documenting its practice. The teaching profession has not developed a technology for documenting and discussing their practice and its outcomes. This is partly due to the pragmatic nature of teaching itself, the conditions under which teachers work, the precedents set by past practice, the intangibility of its consequences and the intensity and immediacy of the work of teaching. Collectively these factors reinforce a professional dialogue in which spoken rather than written language is the more highly valued mode of communication, and which more often than not is comprised of immediate responses rather than considered reflection on practice. Conventional wisdom would see that teaching is more an oral than a written discipline.

Written language is used principally within the profession for externally set purposes such as accreditation and accountability and for personal record keeping and daily planning. The accreditation and accountability tend to serve managerial purposes. Personal planning and recording keeping as more likely to serve professional ends by focusing on intended practices and outcomes within specific time frames and contexts.

We assert that planning has the potential to stand at the core of teachers' continuing professional development. It provides for teachers individually and collectively a unique record of the way they respond to the needs of their pupils and the exigencies of their work situations both for individual and collective reflection and analysis. As such it is a record of teacher thinking and action grounded in classroom and school practice.

The following insights on planning as professional development are based on research into primary school development planning by Logan, Sachs and Dempster (1994). Their Primary School Planning Project (PSPP) was a national study carried out in Australian states and territories during 1992 and 1993.

We begin by discussing teacher talk and schools as learning organisations before looking on planning as a process of narrative inquiry and action research. Basically we conclude that planning as a primary mode of job embedded professional development in primary schools. Currently its professional development potential however, is being limited by the emphasis on planning as a management technology.

Talking as Professional Development

Principally, teacher talk revolves around descriptions, explanations and commentaries on events, actions and intentions of their daily experiences and contexts. The transactions of these verbal accounts

provides the major opportunities for teachers to reflect upon and understand their thinking and activities in relation to those of their colleagues. Generally these discussions are framed by the rules of social interaction rather than by the procedures of academic debate. One exception are activities within the domain of planning, whether this be development planning, strategic planning, curriculum planning or lesson planning .

School Development Planning (SDP) is an externally imposed procedure nested within a set of management strategies used by successive governments to restructure Australian school systems. We argue that SDP offers the potential to combine two powerful forms of professional development, namely, narrative inquiry and action research. Narrative inquiry structures the social interaction of planning. Action research provides a process for reflecting on and recording planning and its outcomes. Together, we maintain, these two forms of professional development provide the means for individual and collective creation and validation of professional knowledge, and in so doing contributes to the dialogical development of teachers' learning.

Elsewhere we (Logan and Sachs 1994) have argued that the processes of declaration, discussion, application and reflection are the primary means by which teachers individually and collectively, come to understand and control their practice and knowledge base. These processes constitute effective planning. They extend teachers by making them recontextualise and reconceptualise their everyday language, situation, processes and relationships. Planning seen from a learning

perspective recognises that teachers set hypotheses for testing, through personal reflection and discussion which they modify through further reflection and technique before testing in their practice. In this way they intellectualise their practice and they generate the professional practical knowledge which then forms the basis of their daily activity.

Together these three levels of planning provide a framework for teachers to analyse and theorise their thinking and practice within the contexts of the broader society, the school and the classroom. Such analysis during the process of planning offers the opportunity for teachers to reinvent themselves and the teaching profession through disciplined thinking about their practice and conditions of work. It involves critically thinking and talking about practice, within practice and for practice. That is, planning provides the teachers the opportunity to work collectively and individually to make public their intentions and practices so that they can be challenged, affirmed and renegotiated. The resulting plans capture and distil the oral discussion in a written form, thereby preserving it for considered analysis by themselves and others at a later time which might be immediate or after a considerable period.

Planning structures teacher talk at three levels. At the macro or system level documents, such as curriculum guidelines and policy statements, provide both the boundaries of and an official language for professional dialogue. At the meso level of the school, it facilitates teacher conversation about common intentions, collaborative actions, shared responsibilities and recognised achievements. At the micro level of the classroom, planning enables the teacher to state their intentions, document their processes and record their pupils' outcomes for comparison for system and school level intentions.

The professional development potential for teachers is enhanced when the deliberations and outcomes of planning are the subject of analysis through strategies such as narrative inquiry and action research. Through these strategies workplace learning is facilitated and a learning organisation is created.

Schools as Places for Teachers' Learning

Traditionally schools have been seen as places where student learning has occurred. It has been generally understood that teacher learning and development occurs outside of schools through the provision of external inservice activities. The role of teachers in schools was to teach and the role of the student was to learn. Recently there has been a move to encourage teacher workplace learning and to conceptualise schools as learning organisations (Fullan 1992) where it is the endeavour of both teachers and students to learn.

Conceptualising schools as learning organisations has transformed the social relations of staff and students within schools. Both are seen to be involved in learning and in creating knowledge and sharing it. Peter Senge (1990) who has written extensively about learning organisations, describes them as places where "people continually expand their capacities to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3)

A learning organisation is concerned with change and transformation of structures and processes at all levels. According to Watkins and Marsik (1993) such an organisation empowers people, creates free space for learning, encourages collaboration and sharing for gains, promotes

inquiry and creates continuous learning opportunities. A learning school then may be seen as primarily a matter of how well the students and teachers succeed in creating conditions in which all its people, including parents take responsibility for the whole business of learning.

A learning school then has a variety of characteristics. First,

everyone must have a shared view of the vision, the schools goals and its direction for future initiatives; second, there must be clear lines of communication and access to information; and third, people must have the opportunity to learn from each other and to develop collective strategies that will facilitate the improvement of practice. Within such organizations a climate for individual and group learning is facilitated and supported by the policies and practices of the school managers. In short we assert that learning schools are dynamic, encompass change, strive for continuous improvement and reflect a culture of collaboration in all of their practices.

We suggest that many schools reflect such characteristics of learning organisations. It is clear that in such schools that the potential offered by activities such as planning provide teachers with opportunities to work together with the purpose of individual and institutional learning. Importantly, to achieve this end SDP provides teachers with opportunities to discuss, think about, try out and hone new practices with each other (Lieberman 1995). This means that teachers are involved in learning about and developing new ideas collaboratively. Through their own learning they are concerned with the continual improvement of their own and others' practice. On the basis of our evidence (Logan, Sachs and Dempster, 1994) the collaborative cultures supported through SDP enabled teachers to build new roles for themselves and develop new skills. It facilitated the creation of new structures within schools such as committees, decision making teams, planning teams and enabled teachers to work on new tasks such as proposal writing, talking about and learning about their practices collaboratively. We would assert that SDP also provides the conditions for the establishment of a culture of inquiry where teacher learning and professional talk becomes an integral part of teachers professional and school life. In such contexts, learning and development become as varied and engaging for teachers as they are supposed to be for students (Lieberman 1995).

SDP enables teachers to extend the nature of their understanding of their workplace through expanding their skills of cooperative work practices and problem solving and by giving voice to the expertise they have as it relates to student learning and conditions which will facilitate that learning. At the level of structure it is seen as a legitimate activity for teachers to plan together, on a whole school basis or on a grade basis, and to engage in professional conversations to extend their own knowledge as it relates to matters of professional interest and concern.

The learning afforded through SDP has significant currency among teachers because it facilitates learning in context. The case study evidence from our project indicates that teachers are responding to and providing solutions to issues and problems that are context specific. Through processes and interactions facilitated by SDP teachers are responding to the problems that characterise their everyday work

situation. The conversations they have, the processes of deliberation, disputation and resolution which characterise planning processes all contribute to teachers' learning. However, these processes and outcomes are in the main oral and consequently the learning gained from these oral deliberations and processes are often short-lived and limited to

group involved at the time. Beattie (1995) makes the point that collaboration, collegiality and conversation provide teachers with a means for professional learning and development within the context of self and community. We take this idea further and argue that there is a need to make these learnings and the outcomes of such learning public, so that they are available to an extensive audience and more intensive critique. We suggest that narrative inquiry can structure professional dialogue and action research can provide the process for this to occur.

SDP and the Potential of Narrative Inquiry

As we have suggested earlier teaching is predominantly an oral discipline. Teacher talk is often dismissed as predominantly descriptive chit chat or it can be seen to serve at least three significant professional development functions. One is that it is a means of professional socialisation and identification. Another is the opportunities it provides for teachers to inquire into, reflect upon, and critique their own and others' thinking and practice. Finally, it is the most public means by which teachers, through integrating theory and practice, develop their unique professional practical knowledge.

Narrative inquiry is a strategy used by teachers and researchers for understanding the ways teachers experience their worlds inside and outside of classrooms and the meanings they make of these experiences. Beattie (1995) suggests that narrative approaches enable teachers to raise questions of their practices, pose and choose from multiple possibilities and to co-create new meaning as they bring about growth, change and reform in those practices and in their own lives (p.54). Narrative inquiry when applied to planning is concerned with understanding the social and professional cultures within schools as they emerge during the development of school and classroom plans. It involves gaining an insider's perspective of the intricacies and subtleties of the learnings as those involved talk through ambiguities, contradictions and alternatives. It can accurately produce teacher professional voice.

The strength of narratives lies in their capacity to teach us what it means to be knowing creatures, what it means to know ourselves as selves and ourselves as professionals. According to Pagano (1990) "They teach us about the relationships between cognition and emotion, between reason and passion, between mind and body, between epistemology and politics. Finally they help us to negotiate the tension between the individual and community, a tension never resolved or resolvable

because of the fact of difference, a tension which is indeed the subtext of all educational narratives" (pp. 11-12)

We argue that narrative inquiry offers a way to enhance the contribution of teacher talk to professional growth and that planning provides a major opportunity for teachers to talk and to construct stories about their practice. Importantly it provides a structure so that this talk is focussed, while at the same time it provides the means for inquiry and explanation as well as a record of the outcomes of the talk.

Narrative inquiry requires that teachers as story tellers make explicit their thinking and action, the ways they have come to hold such positions and to talk through how they came to them. The knowledge and insights gained from these stories provides the basis for new forms of teacher professional development. As Beattie (1995 p. 66) argues "to learn about professional practice and to develop as professional educators requires that we engage in the making of new forms , new relations and connections and by continually transforming what we

know".

It follows then that a narrative approach complements and extends the tenets of a learning organisation. This is achieved in three ways; first, it enables the production, circulation and consumption of new and different kinds of knowledge and promotes alternative ways of representing this knowledge. Second, it is a process of collaboration involving mutual story telling and restorying (Connelly and Clandinin 1991) requiring teachers to document the content of their conversations and stories as they relate to their professional and social lives and practices within schools. Finally, the making public of these stories provides a medium to exercise the improvement not only of their own practices but also in their spill over to the activities of their peers. It demands that teachers ask what the meaning of the event is for them and how they might create a new story of self which changes the meaning of the event, its description, and its significance for the larger life story the person might be trying to live" (Connelly and Clandinin 1991 p. 144).

By linking SDP and narrative inquiry we begin to indicate an alternative conceptualisation of models of teachers' learning and development. As Goodson and Walker (1991) argue we move from teacher as practice to the teacher as person as our starting point for development. The lives and stories of teachers, in both oral and written form, provide a strong basis from which teachers can learn from and about each others practice. The teacher as person, the dilemmas they confront and the strategies they develop in response to them provide the basis for establishing new forms of knowledge and different kinds of social relations between teachers and teachers, teachers and

students and teachers and administrators within schools as well as new relations between teachers and their work. They provide a basis for extending teacher development opportunities within schools and present professional learning as a process that occurs both individually and collectively. Its realisation is the responsibility of both the individual teacher and the organisation in which the teacher works.

Narrative inquiry then in conjunction with action research within the process of planning provides opportunities for teacher professional development. SDP with its strategic or general plan, and operational or action steps, is an application of the plan, act, observe, reflect cycle of action research. We now turn our attention to action research and planning as teacher professional development. We see that the central issue here is on the reflection process and in particular on planning as reflection for action. That is, we view planning as the considered and deliberate statement of intention based on reflection on action. The distinction of reflection on action and reflection for action differentiates the temporal dimension of the acts of planning. Through reflecting on their past actions, with a view to making public their intentions for future actions teachers theorise their future practice in the light of their past practice and thereby form and reform their practical wisdom.

Action Research, Narrative and Planning

Research undertaken by teachers in their own schools and classrooms has variously come under the banner of action research, reflective practice, teacher inquiry or critical praxis. It has been based on the assumption that issues teachers investigate generally emerge from problems they experience as they relate to their practice and that the practitioner's practical wisdom is a central source of knowledge guiding their teaching and management. (Hollingsworth and Sockett 1994). The primary aim of school-based teacher inquiry then is twofold.

First it is concerned with understanding and improving practice, and second, it is a way for teachers to come to know their own professional knowledge (Lytle and Cochran-Smith 1994 and its worth). In effect action research provides a methodology for teachers to investigate and improve their practice in classrooms and to make public assumptions about student learning as well as conditions which will promote teacher and student learning.

Because action research is carried out by people directly concerned with an issue and its consequence on practice the impetus for its use comes from those who have direct application of its findings. At the core of the practice of action research is the desire to investigate and respond to practical questions and immediate issues arising from everyday educational work. As Altricher, Posch and Somekh (1993) claim, action research gives teachers practical methods to develop knowledge

from their experience and to make a contribution to the shared knowledge of the profession. The learnings that emerge from the experience and process of refining plans provide a valuable source for teachers to learn about and to improve their practice.

SDP when undertaken as an action research activity provides the basis for teachers to make public what it is that they hold to be important in terms of student learning opportunities, what should be taught and the negotiation of conditions that will facilitate student learning. The artefact of the plan itself provides evidence of the outcomes of the deliberations but not of the deliberations themselves. By seizing the opportunity provided by SDP for teachers to talk about their practice the processes of action research ensure that a wider audience of teachers can be reached.

For teachers, the value of action research resides in a) how the ideas test out in practice and can be refined or modified through practice; and b) the resonance between their experimentation and what other teachers report of their experience. The kind of inquiry fostered by action research recognises that teachers investigate their work in systematic and intentional ways and pose questions which will have direct impact not only on their practice but, on occasion, the whole school community.

Conclusion

We claim therefore that for teachers the experience of participating in SDP can be used in one of two ways. Either, it can be seen as a purely instrumental activity, one of responding to the managerial and accountability demands of external agencies, such as the Department of Education. Alternatively, the process of SDP can be seen as a way of giving teaching back to teachers, by focussing on understanding and improving their practice. The school development plan is created and teachers more or less take ownership of the plan and implement its intentions into their classrooms in this case.

As SDP is now a key component of teachers' work the opportunity exists for them to tell their stories about their work in written form. Narrative inquiry and action research linked together in school and personal planning provide a systematic process of reflecting, planning, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning etc on the activity of planning itself. It provokes participants to make explicit taken-for-granted elements of their practice. It provides other teachers with opportunities to reflect on their own practice in the light of their colleagues practice, while at the same time creating conditions where teachers can confront and defend each other's practice in a safe and collegial environment.

On the basis of the data gained from our project in Australian primary schools in the PSPP the potential of planning as a vehicle for professional development was not realised. This was largely due to planning being viewed as a technology of management rather than as a technology for teachers' professional development and learning. The emphasis was on meeting the external requirements of accountability and accreditation to the detriment of seizing the opportunity it creates for teachers' workplace learning.

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