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Field/ing Learning

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Abstract:

This study details how Pierre Bourdieu's notion of fields may be used to understand and explain current manifestations of ongoing teacher learning in schooling settings. This paper refers to the learning occurring during a specific cross-school ongoing teacher learning initiative in south-east Queensland. The paper argues that the learning which occurs in a specific context was the product of the cross-field effects of the policy field upon the schooling field. This paper draws upon a larger study into ongoing teacher learning¹. On the basis of empirical evidence presented, the paper concludes with a brief summary of the implications for ongoing teacher learning in the current era of educational reform.

Introduction

This study draws upon data collected on a case-study into a cross-school, ongoing teacher learning initiative in south-east Queensland to explain how the notion of fields, developed by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, may be applied to empirical evidence. As such, the paper seeks to add to current theorising around ongoing teacher learning, or "professional development" as it is more commonly known in schooling settings (McRae, Ainsworth, Groves, Rowland & Zbar 2001). The paper details how the concept of fields may be utilised to explain why ongoing teacher learning exhibits certain characteristics, at given sites of implementation.

1. This paper is drawn from doctoral research on a case-study of ongoing teacher learning in south-east Queensland, currently being completed through the University of Queensland.

The paper argues that ongoing teacher learning is conceptualised differently in policy, research and schooling settings and that each of these contexts or “fields” exerts influence upon the learning which occurs at specific sites. Each of these separate social spaces, or “fields” (Bourdieu, 1990a; 1990b; 1998a) has particular characteristics or “logics of practice” (Bourdieu, 1990a; 1990b; 1998a) which make it possible to discriminate one field from another. However, specific events may not be the manifestation of just one field but may be the result of what Lingard and Rawolle (2004) refer to as cross-field effects.

The Context: Current Theorising

While a considerable amount has been written concerning current modes of ongoing teacher learning, there have been limited attempts to theorise such learning in a detailed sociological manner. The current emphasis upon teacher professional learning communities, professional community, or teacher learning communities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2003) is an example of how there have been increased attempts to more systematically theorise the learning occurring within these communities, as recent modes of ongoing teacher learning. However, applications of Bourdieu’s sociological theory to the literature on ongoing teacher learning is scant.

Bourdieu’s theory has been applied in other areas of educational research, including educational policy, leadership and educational management. Gewirtz, Bowe and Ball (1995) and Ball, (2003) have applied Bourdieu to better understand the influence of neoliberalism in educational policy and its influence upon the marketisation of schooling and parental responses in a more marketised educational environment. Ladwig (1994) has applied the notion of fields to educational policy in the United States of America (USA). Lingard and Rawolle (2004) have applied his theory to better understand the relationship between media and policy, in relation to a recent Australian science policy, *The Chance to Change* (Batterham, 2000). Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie (2003) have applied Bourdieu to understand the work of principals and teacher leaders in schools. Gunter’s (2002; 2001) work provides an in-depth application of Bourdieu’s work in educational management and leadership, explicating the development of the current leadership field in Britain. Fitz (1999) and Thomson (2001; 2002) have outlined the manner in which principals have been constructed within discourses around new management, which tend to downplay the pedagogical aspects of such positions. While teacher learning is considered implicitly within these varying contexts in which his theory has been applied, there appear to be no explicit studies which focus upon the way in which ongoing teacher learning may be understood in terms of the relationality between the social spaces which exist within society.

Nevertheless, a number of studies have been undertaken which provide important insights into notions of ongoing teacher learning, on a more prescriptive level. For example, Ball and Cohen, (1999) suggest teachers in schools need to become “serious learners” (p. 4). McLaughlin and Oberman (1996) refer to the need to reconceptualise teachers’ learning, within an era of reform by moving from the “program” approach of “how-tos” and “shoulds”, delivered by experts, after school or on weekends to a new approach which encourages habits of critical inquiry and deeper understanding of

student issues (1996, p. x). Day (1999) points out how informal mechanisms for learning far outweigh formal mechanisms and are heavily weighted towards the goals of teachers' work (p. 3). Consequently, "a learner-focused perspective is much more important than a training-focused perspective in the successful planning and management of the continuing professional development of teachers" (Day, 1999, p. 3). Hawley and Valli (1999) refer to "a new consensus model for professional development" (p. 128) to describe some of the common understandings about how teachers learn best: to be most effective teacher learning needs to occur at the school site, be undertaken collaboratively, involve teachers in its design and implementation, be ongoing and focused upon student learning.

Recent critiques of teacher collaboration, or what is more frequently referred to in the literature as "teacher professional learning communities," "teacher learning communities" or "learning communities" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2003), have tended to be more theoretically and empirically informed and to have challenged the more prescriptive approach to teachers' learning. Such theorising has focused upon issues of race (Lipman, 1998), class/socio-economic status (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001) and broader liberal versus collective ideological positions (Westheimer, 1998).

This paper represents an addition to this existing theoretical literature and adopts a broader approach than previously reported studies. It postulates that the notion of fields makes a valid theoretical addition to existing descriptive studies and further problematises existing prescriptive studies.

Bourdieu's Approach

The principal intellectual tool drawn upon from Bourdieu's considerable repertoire is the notion of "fields." For Bourdieu, each field is characterised by particular practices or "logics of practice" which give definition to the field and which are themselves defined by fields, as homologous social spaces. In this study, and on the basis of empirical data collection, ongoing teacher learning has been identified as existing as three fields: ongoing teacher learning as policy; ongoing teacher learning as research; and, ongoing teacher learning within schooling settings. Existing bodies of literature into each of these separate social spaces or "fields," (Bourdieu, 1990a; 1990b; 1977; 1998a; 1998b), are utilised as the major analytical tools for understanding a specific example of ongoing teacher learning. However, firstly, it is necessary to consider the nature of fields in greater detail.

Fields

Bourdieu postulates that broader "society" is actually made up of a number of different "societies," social spaces, or "fields," each of which differs from one another. More recent theorising has extended Bourdieu's work to consider cross-field effects and emphasised how fields exert influence over other fields (see Marliere, 1998; Lingard & Rawolle, 2004), to differing degrees, upon those within their respective domains of influence. The consequence of such an approach is that all social phenomena are in reality, the result of competition between the individuals and their practices within individual social spaces and that both the individuals and groups involved, and the spaces in which they exist, are dynamic entities (Bourdieu, 1990b). Society is essentially a conflictual amalgam of social spaces, each of which exerts

influence at the same time as influence is exerted upon it. According to Bourdieu, these interactions may be described as “violent” events, altering both the individual/group and the social space within which this interaction occurs (1990b). The propensity to be limited by particular frames may lead to a desire to alter practices within the field and the logics of practice which characterise it. Regardless of the outcome of this interaction, the field will have been altered. Similarly, an alignment, a disposition to accept the particular practices within a field (an “illusion” or “double truth” (Bourdieu, 1998b, p. 95)) between the individual agent and any given social space does not necessarily mean that the field in question remains unaltered.

Consequently, for Bourdieu, fields are groupings of homologous but not static practices. A field constitutes a particular set of “interests” which define it and delineate it from other fields (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 87/88). Bourdieu describes these interests (and the fields within which they operate) as “historically constituted areas of activity with their own specific institutions and their own laws of functioning” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 87). It is this history, the playing out of particular sets of practices through time which give fields their peculiar characteristics. There is an invariant characteristic about fields which enables them to be distinguished from one another. However, at the same time, they are never static. The features, or logics of practice which constitute any given field, are always in a state of flux. The agents within and beyond them ensure this is the case. This is primarily because of the influence of the “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990b) or particular sets of dispositions which guide practice. This “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990b) is inscribed with particular capitals (Bourdieu, 1986), or qualities which are of more or less value in given situations/particular fields. Ultimately this means that what occurs in broader social spaces is always dynamic.

The Interplay of Fields

Consequently, a field may be understood as:

a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies (Bourdieu, 1998a, p.40-41).

Bourdieu’s articulation of a strategising habitus, inscribed with specific capitals, which are more or less attuned to particular fields, means that the individual habitus may have influence across various sites. Bourdieu uses the analogy of a system of power lines (1971) to explain the way in which forces influence the features specifically of the intellectual field; a different set of forces operate within (and between) different fields. Just as the individual habitus may exert influence within any given field, so to do some fields appear to influence practices in other fields or, indeed, may appear to influence whole fields themselves. Such perceptions of influence are variable and contingent upon activities within any given field.

Marliere's (1998) critique of Bourdieu's work, on the journalistic field, is a useful study to refer to, to explicate this point. Bourdieu's study (1998a) of the journalistic field concentrated upon the impact of the media, represented by the journalistic field, upon other fields, such as the political and academic fields in France. Bourdieu argued that the journalistic field exerted too much influence over the political and academic fields, in particular. In "On Television and Journalism," Bourdieu (1998a) provided a trenchant critique of the media which he claimed exerted undue influence upon the political process and upon legitimate, principally orthodox, academic pursuits. Bourdieu claimed a particular type of "market journalism," captured by the medium of television, has had a deleterious impact upon other fields, such as the academic and political fields (Bourdieu, 1998a). Excessive influence of the media, in Bourdieu's mind, resulted in a threat to the democratic process (Bourdieu, 1998a). Marliere (1998) responds to Bourdieu's analysis by both applauding Bourdieu's analysis of the "overlapping of the political, academic and journalist fields" (p. 219), as well as arguing that Bourdieu does not sufficiently account for the manner in which the journalistic field is also influenced by the academic and particularly the political field. Consequently, in critiquing Bourdieu's work, Marliere provides a clear example of the influence of one field upon another/others and the intricacies of the relationship.

In a very recent publication in the *Journal of Education Policy*, Lingard and Rawolle (2004) provide another example of the interplay of fields and the influence of cross-field effects. They cite changes between earlier and later iterations of the Australian science policy, *The Chance to Change* (Batterham, 2000) as an example of the way in which the media exert influence upon contemporary policy and the policy development process. The authors claim the media's penchant for aphorisms crossed over into the subheadings of the final report of *The Chance to Change* and that these aphorisms increased progressively during the development of this particular policy document (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004). This was in response to increased media attention given to the report, during its life. Lingard and Rawolle's (2004) analysis also highlights how educational policy was influenced by this science policy, so indicating the cross-field effects of certain policies and policy products.

The result of this approach is an articulation of fields and interactions between and across fields which is considerably more complicated than a set of single entities existing in isolation from one another. This has ramifications for different conceptions of ongoing teacher learning.

'Fielding' Teachers' Ongoing Learning

Consequently, following on from the notion of the interplay of fields more broadly, the interplay between and among the fields of ongoing teacher learning as policy, research and schooling is considered a valuable addition to current theorising around ongoing teacher learning. Involvement in ongoing teacher learning implies exposure to different conceptions of such learning as policy, research and schooling. This, in turn, leads to a better understanding about why decisions may be made which may at times appear illogical or at odds with what may be understood as "best practice." This paper attempts to draw attention to these interrelationships as a means of explaining current practices in ongoing teacher learning more generally and in terms of a specific case study in south-east Queensland, Australia. The three fields of

policy, research and schooling have been generated from data collected on a specific example of ongoing teacher learning.

The Policy Field

As a policy field, contemporary ongoing teacher learning in Australia has been partially influenced by earlier policies and specific policy effects which were characterised by much more collaborative, social democratic logics of practice, as well as later, neoliberal logics. Current practices in the field are indicative of an uneasy settlement between these competing emphases and a tendency for government to exert influences, but “from a distance” (Kickert, 1991). Most recently, there has been considerable emphasis upon neoliberal principles to the exclusion of more social democratic practices.

At the national level, the history of teacher learning policies reveals something of the complexity inherent within current manifestations. Social democratic conceptions have had a reasonably long history and are perhaps most readily associated with the 1973 *Schools in Australia* or “Karmel Report” as it was more commonly known. This report constructed ongoing teacher learning as being of most value when instigated by individual teachers themselves, as well as being provided by/within the individual school communities of which teachers were members; Karmel endorsed both individual and collaborative learning and budgeted for teachers’ ongoing teacher learning (ICASC, 1973). Theirs was to be a substantive contribution to ongoing teacher learning.

This earlier foregrounding of ongoing teacher learning did not flow through to the policies of subsequent federal governments, within very different times. During the 1980s, all public sector arena had been altered substantially by a public sector increasingly enamoured by private enterprise management models (Yeatman, 1990; Pusey, 1991). The tenets of private enterprise, as embodied within the “new managerialism,” exerted influence upon all elements of the public sector (Yeatman, 1990) including education. This resulted in a vacuum in support for ongoing teacher learning as expenditure on teachers’ learning was no longer seen as a priority.

This general trend was partially challenged by the late 1980s when some effort was made to secure increased funding for teacher learning. The importance of ongoing teacher learning in Australia was enunciated in the prominent report, the Commonwealth Schools Commission’s *In-Service Teacher Education Project* (ITEPC, 1988). Nevertheless, even in this report, there were explicit links between ongoing teacher learning and economic improvement. Ongoing teacher learning was constructed in instrumentalist terms as being of value for improving the flexibility of the workforce, to educate a more diverse student population, to utilise new technologies and media, to accommodate the constant changes within the world of work, to address ongoing curriculum change and to improve teachers’ knowledge base (ITEPC, 1988). Such factors continue to be recognisable today (McRae et al., 2001), however, the current moment is also characterised by heightened concerns relating to increased competition among educational systems, states, and countries, increasing demands for greater quality of service and increasing demands from the community to be accountable for expenditure in teacher learning and for ensuring that it delivers desired results (McRae et al., 2001, p. 2). In other words, there has been a

considerable increase in concerns about resources and resourcing in the broader context in which ongoing teacher learning is undertaken, but usually in terms of accountability. This has influenced what is considered worthwhile ongoing teacher learning.

In the mid-1990s, the development of the National Schools Network, as a particular policy effect (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992) also challenged these more economistic logics. The Network consisted of a substantial professional development component, involving teachers across systems, state and private, primary and secondary schools, as well as academics (Ladwig & White, 1996). The emphasis was upon teachers engaging in action research as a means of determining the factors inhibiting schools from implementing their own renewal and reform (Sachs, 2003).

The abolition of this programme and the direct funding to government and non-government schooling sectors, via such programmes as the Commonwealth-supported *Quality Teacher Programme*, (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000; Commonwealth of Australia, 2003) with its emphasis on greater regulation and accountability and workplace learning, is indicative of more recent trends towards workplace-based learning. The ongoing teacher learning encouraged is characterised by broader neoliberal trends which deem that the responsibility of the state rests at providing the circumstances for individuals and groups to be able to satisfy their own needs (Rose, 1999), rather than the state adopting a more proactive stance, more typical of an earlier Keynesian, social democratic era. While the state has indicated that it is serious about providing money for at least some articulations of ongoing teacher learning, as part of the macro-policy statement, *Backing Australia's Ability* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001), there are significant restrictions and regulations attached to this funding. The recently released Commonwealth policy, *Teachers for the 21st Century: Making the Difference* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002) is supported by \$80 million over three years but it is dependent upon certain criteria. In particular, it emphasises learning undertaken within teachers' school communities:

On balance the research evidence confirms the value of ongoing investment in teacher professional development. This investment is maximised when teachers work together within their school communities to identify goals, define standards and expectations, review and refine teaching practices and prioritise areas for action and improvement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. 11).

Clearly, the dispositions being advocated within such communities are limited to the learning which these communities can provide for themselves. While such logics encourage the use of external experts, the development of a coherent programme is left up to the teachers themselves to develop in their schools.

The restrictions attached to this federal money, distributed through the states via the Quality Teacher Programme, mean that it does not necessarily encourage the sorts of learning necessary to assist teachers in specific circumstances. Literacy, numeracy, scientific and technological skills are isolated as being particularly important for students as future citizens (CRTTE, 2003a; CRTTE 2003b). Not surprisingly, funding has been allocated to these areas, particularly where such funding can be seen

to be tied with broader school reform initiatives, involving teachers being active in their own learning needs.

Consequently, at the national level, the educational policy field has a chequered history but is currently geared towards producing a particular type of neoliberal habitus. The capitals most valued, at least within the current climate, are those which are deemed to be able to contribute to the economic productivity of the country as a whole; efficiency, effectiveness, and economic logics have pervaded teachers' learning (Sachs, 2003). The individuals influenced by these capitals and habitus are, in short, "innovative." Such is the significance of notions of flexibility intrinsic within constructions of the habitus that the subtitle of the macro-policy guiding the principal policies pertaining to teacher learning is "An Innovation Action Plan for the Future."

Teacher learning is also affected by the emphasis upon innovation and neoliberalism has extended to the ways in which principalling is currently conceptualised. Teacher learning has been influenced by changes in traditional leadership practices; principals are much more likely to be self-capitalising in a way which encourages teachers to become engaged in satisfying broader systemic requirements. This may manifest itself in the appropriation of collaborative arrangements to satisfy narrow administrative concerns (Grundy & Bonser, 2000). This provides further evidence of specific policy effects as a result of the pervasiveness of neoliberal principles.

This neoliberal emphasis has been enhanced by broader global trends which have fostered its adoption. Henry, Lingard, Taylor & Rizvi (2001) point towards the development of global policy fields which are characterised by policy borrowing across institutions such as the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank, which then have an impact across particular fields at local sites of reception. This is further complicated by the context generative and context productive tendencies which see a complex playing out of the global across the local, at local sites, usually in unpredictable ways (Appadurai, 1996). National policies, such as Australia's innovation statement are heavily influenced by the broader context in which they are developed.

Such a trajectory of logics is also evident at the level of individual states, including Queensland. However, Queensland also provides some evidence of a challenge to the broader neoliberal ethos. In Queensland, a more socially democratic articulation of neoliberalism has been in place which has attempted to challenge more economic logics of practice (Lingard, 2001; Education Queensland, 2000). This was evident in the macro-policy, QSE2010 (Education Queensland, 2001) which advocated both individual and collective professional development and which promoted teachers addressing their own learning needs, as well as being supported by the state to address their needs, as well.

The Research Field

In some ways, practices in the research field have conflicted against these broader practices in the policy field. The research field has been characterised by an emphasis upon inquiry approaches to teachers' learning, typically in conjunction with others. Sometimes, such associations may be related to students' outcomes, a focus upon

particular subjects or disciplinary areas (QCPDE, 2002) or both students' outcomes and the disciplines themselves (Zeichner, 2003). Recently, there has been an emphasis upon collaborative teacher arrangements or what are described as "teacher professional learning communities," "teacher learning communities" and its variants. This literature is also informed by trenchant critiques of these entities.

In an article recently published in the *Encyclopedia of Education* (2nd ed.), Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2003) adopted a broad definition of teacher professional learning communities. They referred to teacher learning communities as:

... social groupings of new and/or experienced educators who come together over time for the purpose of gaining new information, reconsidering previous knowledge and beliefs, and building on their own and others' ideas and experiences in order to work on a specific agenda intended to improve practice and enhance students' learning in K-12 schools and other educational settings. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2003, p. 2462)

Such an entity is described as providing an "intellectual space" to enable teachers' professional growth. This is achieved by organising time in particular ways, structuring talk and text and having a shared purpose (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2003). Amongst the different types of teacher communities are those developed to improve "knowledge for practice," "knowledge in practice" and "knowledge of practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2003). Such an approach tends to fare better than earlier articulations of teachers' learning in community. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2003) claim that such terms were not mentioned in the educational literature before the 1980s. Thus, the literature around the notion of teacher professional learning communities is relatively recent.

An important initial study advocating this approach was provided by Louis, Kruse and Associates' (1995) work into such communities. Summarised in the work of Newmann and Associates (1996), these authors claimed teacher professional learning communities were effective because they emphasised shared norms and values, focused on student learning, were characterised by reflective dialogue, deprivatization of classroom practice and collaboration between teachers (Louis, Kruse & Marks, 1996). These features would automatically lead to improvements in student learning.

Since this study and similar studies, the research field has also been characterised by a more critical orientation to such communities of teacher learners. Fullan and Hargreaves (1998) refer to the "balkanisation", "comfortable collaboration" or "contrived collegiality" which can characterise such communities. Balkanised teachers may associate with particular groups of colleagues only. Often, these groups may be based on subject departmental affiliations (particularly in secondary schools) or particular year levels (as may be the case in many primary schools). "Comfortable collaborators" may interact with one another, beyond their immediate subject department or year level affiliations but not in a substantive manner, preferring to ignore issues of how to further improve their practice (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998). Their associations may be more social than professional and their interactions tend to result in little of substance because of their propensity to maintain the status quo. Such groups are not open to the disagreements and difficulties of accommodating difference which should characterise such groups. Contrived collegiality is typified

by the implementation of bureaucratic processes to encourage further interaction between staff members, but without any real substance (Hargreaves, 1994). The communities which result from contrived interactions are typically short-lived and considered by members to be relatively ineffectual entities.

The development of purposeful communities of teacher learners may also be inhibited by structural impediments, as well as cultural impediments. Schlechty (1997) indicates the importance of addressing both cultural and structural factors because "...structural change that is not supported by cultural change will eventually be overwhelmed by the culture, for it is in the culture that any organisation finds meaning and stability" (p. 136). Of particular concern in schooling practices is the tendency towards teachers working in isolation: "God didn't create self-contained classrooms, fifty minute periods, and subjects taught in isolation. We did – because we find working alone safer than and preferable to working together" (Barth, 1991, p. 128). Aberrant practices developed in isolation may simply be transferred across in practices involving engagement with others, such as collaborative learning relations.

More specific recent critiques of teacher professional learning communities have been undertaken by McLaughlin & Talbert (2001), Lipman (1998), Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth (2001) and Westheimer (1998, 1999). These studies are important because they involved in-depth empirical analyses of a small number of professional learning communities. They did not attempt to develop an overall "model" of what such communities could or should look like; rather, they provided insights into the practices which characterised such communities.

McLaughlin & Talbert's (2001) study focused upon sixteen secondary schools and the teachers within these schools in various localities in California and Michigan. In their work on the context of secondary school teachers' work, McLaughlin & Talbert (2001) found that strong communities did not necessarily lead to the sorts of classroom practices which are inclusive of the needs of all students but effectively disenfranchised minority students, in particular. Instead of advocating inclusive practices, several of the communities within their study effectively disenfranchised many of the students they were supposed to be assisting.

The fragility of effective professional learning communities and the tendency for many communities to replicate inequality was particularly pertinent in Lipman's (1998) research into a school district in the American south. Lipman's (1998) study of schooling practices in two schools in the city of "Riverton," was influenced by the entrenched racial discrimination and institutionalised prejudice. The professional communities established in its schools reflected many of these broader prejudices and served to exacerbate these difficulties. In one of the school communities, students were constructed as being responsible for their results and the pervasive view amongst their teachers was that there was relatively little which teachers could do to alter this situation.

Westheimer's (1998; 1999) study of two teacher professional communities provided insights into the difficulties of establishing sustainable and effective communities. Westheimer (1998; 1999) highlighted the importance of the ideological underpinnings guiding the work of communities of teachers. Westheimer (1998; 1999) indicated the different communities that result from a "liberal" or a "collective" approach to

learning community development. In one school, the community which was established was based upon a liberal ethos which emphasised the importance of the individual and of teachers' rights to conduct themselves in the manner in which they saw fit. This effectively isolated teachers from one another and encouraged them to work in isolation from one another. The consequence of this was a community which was adamant that the individualistic philosophy to which the school had become beholden was worthy of being defended.

Grossman, Wineburg and Woolworth (2001) reported on a two and a half year project involving the development of a community of teachers across the English and Social Studies departments in an urban high school in the North-West of the USA. Members of the community in their study had to contend with problems of both establishing and sustaining a group of individuals who were brought together by an external party. The tensions which arose in this particular study led these authors to propose that what was required was the development of a model designed to move "toward" (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001) a theory of teacher community, rather than one which supposedly encapsulated the essence of all effective professional learning communities. To this end, these authors emphasised the importance of identifying and establishing norms for engaging with members. One of the key characteristics of a functional community was that members viewed themselves as members of a larger collective, rather than as members of a subgroup, which is how the participants in Grossman, Wineburg and Woolworth's (2001) study viewed themselves at the inception of the group. Secondly, effective communities were those in which differences of opinion were appreciated and utilised to cultivate understanding, in order to generate a more informed and consequently, productive exchange of perspectives. A third dimension of teacher community revolved around conflict about spending time working with teachers, as opposed to students. There was a general belief amongst the teachers in Grossman, Wineburg and Woolworth's (2001) study that all in-service activities should be explicitly directed towards student learning. Learning which was not geared exclusively towards improvement in student outcomes was inadequate. The final dimension of teacher community related to the extent to which members were prepared to accept responsibility for one another's continued growth and professional development. Mature communities consisted of members who readily accepted that their work with students was fundamentally affected by the actions of their colleagues (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001).

Finally, the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study highlighted the importance of considering teachers' individual and collective learning needs (QSRLS, 2001). While the QSRLS advocated teachers engaging in individual learning to supplement their existing capitals, the provision of support for teachers was also considered crucial to improving students' learning (QSRLS, 2001). The QSRLS was also responsible for developing the Productive Pedagogies which was originally used as a tool for determining the nature of classroom practices but which had been rearticulated into a checklist to assist teachers in assessing their own classroom practices, as a precursor to satisfying their learning needs. The study highlighted the need for teachers to engage in individual ongoing learning as well as the establishment of teacher professional learning communities, within schools, together with more structured support for teacher learning, as a means of improving teacher learning for improved student social and academic outcomes (QSRLS, 2001).

The Schooling Field

Within schools and schooling processes, ongoing teacher learning has come to be associated with certain practices. Until relatively recently, teacher learning was conceived of almost exclusively as something which was undertaken in short-term, employer instigated activities of usually very short duration - typically one or two days at the beginning of a school year or semester (McRae et al., 2001). This usually involved “asking teachers to leave their classrooms so that they can travel to distant locations in order to get general advice from people who have never seen them teach.” (Eisner, 1992, p. 614). Teachers were not involved, other than as passive spectators, and their perspectives were typically ignored during such sessions.

In spite of the increased prevalence of action research projects, the maintenance of professional portfolios and the application of professional standards, recent Australian studies (see McRae et al., 2001) have shown that teachers’ learning within schooling contexts is still dominated by short term “fixes” to teachers’ daily work, which tend to influence what teachers consider valid and valuable learning. The unrelenting, interactive nature of teaching means that teachers are most interested in learning experiences which can be applied to their own classroom practices (McRae et al., 2001). Consequently, there is a general disregard for policy, research, and research findings which are seen as being irrelevant. Instead, there is a respect for those processes which have been tried and found to be useful in the classroom and for any programmes or initiatives which seem to be obviously applicable in a classroom context (McRae et al., 2001).

This emphasis upon short-term, classroom-oriented approaches to ongoing teacher learning persists for a number of reasons. Teacher learning jostles for attention, competing against a myriad of other responsibilities which require considerable amounts of teachers’ time (Connell, 1985). Frequently, teachers provide instruction to large numbers of students (in a secondary context) or have minimal structured time, what Little (1999) describes as “...the crowded interstices of the day and week,” (p. 234) to devote to formal planning (in a primary context) or experience both of these limitations. Given the increasing intensification of their work (Easthope & Easthope, 2000), teachers are always seeking ways to manage this work in the most effective manner, particularly given that so much of their work and learning is undertaken on their own – the “lone wolf scenario” (Huberman, 1995). Apart from formal teaching duties, teachers are typically engaged in a host of extra-curricular duties, ranging from such daily or weekly duties as play-ground duty, bus supervision, sports coaching and training, and staff meetings for all manner of matters to more intermittent, yet still ongoing commitments throughout the year (Connell, 1985). These may include parent-teacher interviews, attendance at official functions, school plays, recitals, debating events, and public speaking events (Connell, 1985). Consequently, they may have relatively little time to plan the most effective lessons possible and almost no time to spend on the individual needs of students (depending upon the sector taught and the nature of responsibilities). Their learning needs compete against considerable demands.

In spite of the trend towards workplace learning since the 1980s (Grundy & Robison, 2004) , earlier “in-service” patterns are reflected in current teacher learning events in

schooling situations; when it does occur, much learning is sporadic and disconnected from the daily work and learning of teachers (McRae et al., 2001). The learning occurring within the school site typically involves isolated, individual workshops, aimed at assisting teachers to incorporate new strategies into their existing repertoires (Scott Nelson & Hammerman, 1996). In a large scale Australian study involving responses from more than 5800 teachers, 67% of respondents indicated that they had attended workshops involving an external speaker, 60.7% had attended workshop discussions with colleagues from their schools, 53.7% had attended workshop discussions with colleagues from a range of schools (McRae et al., 2001, p. 147). Many of these workshops revolve around particular state-endorsed programmes or mandates, which bear no specific relevance to teachers' individual workplaces (McRae, 2001).

The Context: The Case of the Curriculum Board

The interaction of these fields was apparent in the learning opportunities associated with a group of teachers known as the "Curriculum Board," which involved teachers from six educational sites in a regional area of south-east Queensland. The Curriculum Board consisted of ten to twelve teachers and administrators from four primary schools, one secondary school and an environmental education centre.

One of the biggest challenges confronting members of the Board (as they were known) was a broad educational reform agenda with which it was expected to engage. Part of this agenda involved the implementation of an alternative curriculum framework, The New Basics, which was being trialled throughout Queensland at the time of this study, including in one of the member schools. The New Basics constituted one element of this agenda, which was influenced by the findings of a major study into classroom practices in classrooms across public schools in Queensland. Known as the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS), this study described 20 key elements of classroom practice, or what were termed "Productive Pedagogies," which were deemed to be present in classrooms associated with the development of worthwhile student social and academic outcomes. From a research tool designed to produce quantitative data about the nature of classroom practices throughout the state, the Productive Pedagogies were rearticulated into a set of principles for professional development purposes. They were being systematically promoted in workshops throughout the state to help teachers focus upon and improve the quality of their classroom practices.

Analysis and Discussion

The Curriculum Board

All teachers in the schools in this region, including the six schools in this study, were expected to be familiar with these reforms, as well as a host of other initiatives. The administrators were under pressure to ensure that teachers were exposed to the findings of the latest research into educational reform, amongst a raft of other, often global (Henry, Lingard, Taylor & Rizvi, 2001) though locally-inflected (Appadurai, 1996) policy effects. Consequently, the decision of the principals to establish the Curriculum Board was indicative of the influence of policy upon schooling practices. The Board was to be a mechanism to prove that these principals were indeed serious

about trying to ensure that teachers in their respective schools were engaged in and understood the reform agenda. Furthermore, by appropriating members' energies to satisfy their own needs of ensuring teachers were familiar with educational reforms being undertaken (Grundy & Bonser, 2000), the principals displayed further evidence of concerns about accountability and the pervasiveness of neoliberalism. This was evident in the way in which teachers who were Board members were encouraged to take a lead in deciding on the nature of the learning activities which would be instigated across members' schools. As a group of teachers taking responsibility for their own and their colleagues' learning, the Curriculum Board epitomised the self-capitalising (Rose, 1999) innovative individual who was being advocated within broader policy documents and policy effects, particularly at the national level. Consequently, the pervasiveness of concerns for teachers and administrators to take care of their own learning needs were evident in the decision to establish the Board and the nature of the learning advocated within the Board.

At the same time, the Curriculum Board was also a manifestation of the research field, which had pervaded policy documents, particularly at the Queensland level. Within the principal policy document guiding education in Queensland, QSE2010, both collective and individual teacher learning opportunities were endorsed. The Curriculum Board was an example of the collective teacher learning endorsed (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Louis, Kruse & Marks, 1996; Louis, Kruse & Associates, 1995). The Curriculum Board was established as a long-term body which was responsible for inquiring into the needs of teachers across the school sites and fostering teacher learning for improved student learning, in those sites.

The Networks – Fielding Learning

Ostensibly, the principal role of the Curriculum Board was actually to instigate and help sustain viable learning communities across the six educational sites. These were ascribed the label of "networks," by members. From its inception, the Curriculum Board struggled to establish three networks across the school sites, within Years P-3, Years 4-6 and Years 7-9. In part, the promotion of these networks exemplified the influence of the more acritical elements within research field which constructed such communities as being beneficial if enacted in particular ways (Louis, Kruse & Marks, 1995; 1996). Also, such groups conformed to a broader definition of teacher learning communities adopted by Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2003) and others, which went beyond those established within schools.

At the same time, these networks were also indicative of a broader neoliberal policy movement which emphasised the individual satisfying his/her own learning needs (Rose, 1999). This was to be achieved through collaboration with others. The networks were evidence of the state fostering learning in a cost effective manner. Teachers were to be actively involved with one another in workplace based learning, which would be of relatively minimal cost to the state. At face value, the networks represented a convergence of interests between the research and policy fields. However, the way the individual P-3, 4-6 and 7-9 networks manifest themselves was considerably different from how the policies constructed them or how acritical models in the research field described them and more typical of more aberrant practices

associated with actual communities of teachers (see McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Lipman, 1998; Westheimer, 1998;1999; Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001).

Pressures to satisfy funding accountabilities saw the group struggling to effectively utilise funds to satisfy the accountability requirements of the federal government's Quality Teacher Programme (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). Board members had access to \$27 000, which was to be used over an 18 month period, specifically for the development of a sustainable community of teachers across the schools, in relation to the middle years. Members planned to use this pool of funds to foster the development of the other networks, as well as the middle school network. However, there were significant restrictions imposed upon the use of the funding, including stringent limits upon the amount of funding which could be used for teacher release. This was seen as a critical limitation on the development of this particular network. Instead of orchestrating the involvement of external experts, who could build upon a cohesive focus on student learning and as a coherent complement to the development of more sustainable networks of teacher learners, the Curriculum Board advocated a much more piece-meal approach which saw members endorsing a variety of perspectives and external experts, few of whom engaged in work related to one another and none of whom appeared to be aware of those individuals who had gone before or would come after them.

Consequently, in spite of efforts to establish various teacher professional learning communities (Louis, Kruse & Marks, 1996), the way in which actual learning events developed was indicative of more resilient schooling practices. The actual learning events organised by the Curriculum Board were mostly very traditional workshops, typical of the schooling field (Scott Nelson & Hammerman, 1996). Consequently, the learning communities which had the potential to develop – indicative of the influence of the research field (Louis, Kruse & Associates, 1995; Louis, Kruse & Marks, 1996; Newmann & Associates) gradually became fora for individual one-off workshops. Members' frequent comments about previous experiences of this form of learning reinforced that this was not only the dominant mode of teacher learning in schooling contexts in general (McRae et al., 2001), but for members of the Board, as well. Teachers' reservations about their capacity as members of the Curriculum Board was further evidence of the pervasiveness of traditional approaches and indicative of the lack of teacher involvement in organising their own learning (Eisner, 1992) prior to the development of the Board. This situation was further complicated by the busyness of these teachers' lives (Connell, 1985) and their tendency to engage in ongoing teacher learning in an individual capacity (Huberman, 1995).

The workshops were also seen as a way in which those in schools could satisfy the central authority that they were providing tangible learning opportunities for teachers; this was in keeping with the accountability concerns characterising the policy field (Yeatman, 1990; Pusey, 1991). State-wide workshops around the New Basics, Productive Pedagogies, the P-10 Curriculum Framework, literacy plans, Rich Tasks, using Information Technology within the context of the classroom were all indicative of the influence of and responses to particular policies situated within broader, often economic, contexts of influence, which were strongly endorsed by the federal government (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002; Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; CRTTE, 2003a; CRTTE, 2003b). The adoption of the workshop approach meant it was possible to point to concrete activities to prove teachers had exposure to ideas and

perspectives deemed important within the broader state apparatus. Whether they were beneficial in terms of student learning seemed less consequential.

An example of how the policy field encouraged a reliance upon the workshop approach and mitigated against the development of sustainable networks of teachers arose in relation to the issue of ICT, which was being promoted within the schools during the study. While the QTP funding was available to the group to enable them to employ an external Information and Communications Technology expert to address teachers across the school sites, in response to a state directive to ensure that issues around technology and schooling were addressed, members were unable to use the funding to engage in an alternative activity, such as exploring the effects of ICT in their respective schools over the long-term. ICT was also one of the targeted curriculum areas outlined in the guidelines for use of Quality Teacher Programme funding (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003) and any form of sanctioned learning associated with this area was considered sufficient. A more coherent approach, so necessary to the work of reform within schools (Schlechty, 1997) was lacking. Instead, accountability logics reinforced stereotypical practices, such as one-off workshops, and reduced the likelihood of alternative practices. There was little evidence of communities of teachers striving to develop the sorts of shared norms, developed over time and sometimes with considerable difficulty, which typified actual communities, (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001). Members of the Board seemed most concerned to ensure that the area of ICT was addressed, because of its favoured position within the broader political context and that it was undertaken according to the strictures of the QTP requirements, rather than its long-term implications.

Efforts to appropriate the emphasis upon the Productive Pedagogies to focus upon fostering the middle years network also provided evidence of the influence of the policy field upon schooling practices. Within the Curriculum Board, the Productive Pedagogies were considered a useful vehicle to establish and promote the development of the networks. Members appropriated the emphasis upon the Productive Pedagogies to ensure a dialogue between teachers across the primary/secondary divide:

Lisa: We were probably quite subtle in using Productive Pedagogies [workshops] as the driving force, still trying to achieve our aim of getting people talking across the sector. 'Cause I think until the primary school and the high school talk to each other, we're not going to achieve that middle schooling approach anywhere. (Lisa, 2003, p. 8).

This dialogue served as a means of ensuring that the middle years network was actually functioning, and consequently, proof that the Curriculum Board was being successful. The Curriculum Board played an important role in utilising the need for teachers to be familiar with the Productive Pedagogies as a lever to foster the development of the middle years network. While Board members believed they had cleverly constructed a way to engage teachers in more substantive forms of learning, they had actually been subtly orchestrated themselves into the position of problem solvers when it came to trying to satisfy teachers' learning needs during a period of intense educational reform.

The influence of the policy field was also evident in support for the networks by the administrators from the individual schools. They viewed these networks as integral to implementing the reform agenda. The administrators' support extended to allocating professional development days to Board members to utilise as they saw fit. Indeed, they were eager to be seen to be advocating the activities of the Board:

Terry: The fact that basically for the last – well, at least the last 12 months, and even prior to that, every student free day has been handed over to the Board and so it's been: "What does the Board want to do for professional development in this block?" and not: "Look, you can have this time ; what are you going to do?" It's been, "How much time do you want and tell us what you're going to do and we'll push that with our staff" (Terry, 2003, p. 12).

Members of the Board were provided with the formal professional development days to enable them to orchestrate the development of the networks. This represented the total amount of time allocated for professional development by the state. On the one hand this may be construed as an example of the principals' trust in the Board members and an opportunity for Board members to take a lead in fostering the professional development of their colleagues, in a supportive context, somewhat reminiscent of the earlier more substantive support provided during the Karmel era (ICASC, 1973), as well as the late 1980s (ITEPC, 1988) and later, though less substantive support in the Queensland context via the QSE2010 policy (Education Queensland, 2001; Lingard, 2001). However, it was also indicative of just how extensively teachers could be "encouraged" to satisfy their own learning needs and how readily principals embraced the possibility of teachers addressing all of their learning needs.

In spite of the dominance of policy and schooling practices, within the networks, there was also evidence of the influence of the research field. This was apparent in a push by Board members to extend the amount of time for teachers' learning experiences during formal school hours. This was an attempt to move beyond teachers' learning occurring in the interstices of a busy working week, typical of teachers' learning in schooling contexts (Little, 1999). There was an understanding that teacher learning needed to occur both beyond and within formal school hours. This was in keeping with the research field's emphasis upon longer term and more sustainable practices which were seen as an integral component of teachers' working lives (Hawley & Valli, 1999). This was a challenge to the practice of downplaying the importance of ongoing teacher learning in schooling contexts because of teachers' already considerable responsibilities (Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Connell, 1985):

Louise: You've got to release teachers to be able to do it. I mean, yes, they should be doing so much outside of their work and I think they do a fair bit really ... I am normally at work to five o'clock. And then I take my work home and I know a lot of people who are like that (Louise, 2003, p. 8).

Such comments were indicative of members' efforts to encourage alternative approaches, such as collaborative inquiry as an integral part of teachers' formal hours of duty, rather than an add-on. It represented a challenge to the intransigence of the practice of allocating teacher learning opportunities to specific days which inhibited

the more active inquiry learning advocated by the Board. Both structurally and culturally, such practices worked to limit the development of effective networks.

This was not the only instance when the research field sought to exert influence. On one occasion, over a two hour period on a Wednesday afternoon, during 2002, the middle years of schooling cohort met together, as a recognisable entity, across the six educational sites. On this occasion, and in keeping with the increasingly popular trend towards “looking at students work” as a form of ongoing teacher learning (Little, 2004), members from the Years 7 – 9 network discussed students’ projects. To avoid balkanisation or comfortable collaboration (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998) and the isolation associated with teaching (Barth, 1991; Schlechty, 1997), at least one teacher from each of the member schools was present and their explicit purpose was to discuss the outcomes of Year 7 students’ project work with one another. Secondary teachers from relevant discipline areas from the high school attended and engaged in inquiry into the nature of the learning which these upper primary students had experienced. Each of the primary teachers was required to bring a sample of a student’s work with them, to which they were to speak, as they sought to uncover the nature of the teaching and learning responsible for these particular outcomes, and as a mechanism for encouraging collaborative teacher learning for school reform (Little, 2004). In turn, the secondary teachers were expected to indicate how the work undertaken by the primary students would link with the work they were developing for Year 8 students and a dialogue about how each group could work together to alter the learning activities provided for students to improve the coherence of learning experiences ensued. In keeping with some practices within the research field, there was a strong focus upon students’ outcomes and the individual subjects which contributed to the development of the projects (Zeichner, 2003; QCPDE, 2002). Teachers were able to devote time to a single learning initiative as they shared their experiences of teaching a variety of units of work within Years 7, 8 or 9, with one another.

In terms of the establishment of the Curriculum Board and its attempts to develop the networks across the school sites, and this particular afternoon, the research field could be construed as having had considerable influence over teachers’ learning. Unfortunately, after this event, such was the dominance of the one-off workshop that members believed it was no longer necessary to meet to discuss the work of students in the same manner again. In keeping with the tendency for teacher learning as schooling to be characterised by one-off events (McRae et al., 2001), they believed that there was nothing more to be gained from such an exercise and spent much of their time considering alternative topics for upcoming network meetings (which never eventuated during the course of the study). Consequently, they exhibited characteristics of an under-developed community of teacher learners which failed to consider the validity of continuing to pursue such activities (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001). However, by the end of the study (six months after this event occurred) members were discussing a similar event for another network of teachers, making strong references to the successes of this initial meeting. Whether they were able to extend beyond these initial efforts is perhaps questionable, but one can assume, at least possible.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the manner in which Bourdieu's notion of fields may be applied to studies of ongoing teacher learning. It indicates that by considering how fields exert influence at a particular site, the concept is a robust means of explaining why and how ongoing teacher learning is characterised by certain features. The application of Bourdieu's theory in this study highlights that the learning which occurs at specific sites is heavily influenced by conceptions of ongoing teacher learning as policy, research, and practice and that these interact with one another in complex ways. These interactions have sometimes unexpected and seemingly anomalous effects upon the learning which actually results. This suggests that teachers and administrators need to be aware of the myriad of pressures impacting upon their work, to ensure that they are clear about their goals, and that they prioritise their learning needs as a matter of urgency. The study suggests that schooling practices are particularly intransigent and difficult to challenge. While there is evidence of the influence of the research field upon schooling practices, there is also evidence of the difficulty of sustaining more substantive and critically informed modes of learning typical of the research field. At a systemic level, the examples provided suggest a need to emphasise ongoing teacher learning much more comprehensively and to provide adequate and sustained funding. In part, it also suggests the need to challenge the dominance of current neoliberal approaches to ongoing teacher learning which make it difficult for individuals and groups involved in schooling processes to provide the best possible opportunities for effective ongoing teacher learning and ultimately, student learning.

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