

Work Embedded Professional Development; closing the generation gap  
Dr Monique Osborn  
Monash University Australia

Evidently nurturing effective learning and teaching is an ongoing concern for Australian primary, secondary and tertiary teachers and therefore a focus on pedagogical issues often underpins professional development. Ensuring that evolving learning and teaching practices are appropriately supported, teachers have become extremely critical of the professional development on offer. Consequently the primary and secondary sectors have experienced evolving generations of professional development models to meet teachers' individual needs. However the tertiary sector has not been as fortunate since Higher Education Units formed to support the pedagogical needs of academics have often created feelings of confusion and resentment amongst the participants. This paper questions the appropriateness of the outdated professional development approaches offered by Higher Education Units particularly for those academics with no formal teaching qualifications. It also questions the credibility of those implementing the workshops. A more effective approach, trialled during a longitudinal study (Osborn 2001) is introduced. This professional development model is work embedded and provides the academics with a much needed contextual and individualised approach.

In a competitive world, universities seek to address the needs of a culturally, socially and economically diverse clientele. Consequently the quality of learning and teaching in a tertiary environment continues to remain at the forefront of Australian universities' policies. Commonly, academics with no formal teaching qualifications are encouraged to undertake pedagogically focussed professional development ranging from short intensive courses to extensive graduate certificate programs. For some universities this has even become a compulsory induction component for newly appointed academics. However a question arises as to the effectiveness of these programs as a growing resentment and a feeling of loss of control by academics is progressively evident (Prawat 1996). Why does Ramsden (1998:179) implore "Don't leave the task of improvement in teaching and learning to an educational development unit"? In response a review of the literature concurs with the concerns of Prawat (1996) and Ramsden (1998) indicating that the problem arises from the use of out dated professional development approaches that are not effectively meeting individual needs. This paper seeks to identify and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of typical professional development approaches and as a result offers an effective alternative based on the findings of a longitudinal study (Osborn 2001).

The then Minister of Education, John Dawkins, introduced formal academic appraisal in 1988 which placed responsibility on individual tertiary institutions to ensure their accountability to quality learning and teaching. Arguably the Dawkins Policy (1988) influenced the adoption of a business like Total Quality Management (TQM) approach by universities to address issues of quality learning and teaching. It is argued here, that this TQM application has not adequately addressed the issues of developing effective learning and teaching but rather contributed to a growing negativity towards professional development as a performance management activity. Clearly 'top/down' and 'outside/in' decisions have caused an obsession for institution management to inappropriately focus on the "measurement and monitoring of quality" (Marshall 1998:321), rather than

managing quality for use as a strategy to promote professional renewal and change. In other words quality has been confused with accountability, since “accountability is not the same thing as quality...[it] is the process of reporting” (Poole, Harman & Deden, 1998). Therefore it is the purpose of this paper to examine how quality professional development significantly contributes to the effective teaching and learning.

The literature frequently proposes links with the quality of student learning to an understanding of teaching (Cranton 1996, Ramsden 1998 & Lester 1999), and in actuality managers are keen to reward academic staff for enhancing teaching practices and content knowledge. Ironically, a significant factor has been overlooked in relation to quality professional development. Many academics do not possess a formal teaching qualification and consequently this severely limits the pedagogical knowledge on which to build. The voluntary learning and teaching based professional development offered has not always adequately satisfied the individual needs of academics due to the wide representation of disciplines and varying teaching experiences (Osborn 2001, Ramsden 1998, Cranton 1996, Webb 1996). Primarily quantitative investigations have been relied upon to generate “instrumental knowledge” (Cranton 1996:17) as a generic means for understanding educator effectiveness. As a result the implementation of ad hoc, generic adjunct professional development offered by higher education units has been viewed as counter productive by overloading the academic with knowledge that cannot be readily integrated into the workplace (Osborn 2001, Johnson 1996). Academics have demonstrated their disapproval of professional development courses by voicing their concerns about a failure to indicate the purpose of the presented teaching skills and their diminishing confidence in those conducting workshops, courses and seminars (Foster & Roe 1979). The results of a case study conducted by Cranton (1996:31) revealed that “sometimes a belief in the expert’s advice may even lead us to a sense of insecurity, as we try to implement the expert’s sure fire formula and see that it does not turn out”. Perhaps the formal teaching qualifications of those conducting the professional development should also be questioned.

As the concept of learning for students and their teachers has gradually moved in meaning associated with transition towards that of constructivism, the emancipation of the child and adolescent learner has occurred predominantly in the primary and secondary sectors of schooling (Clarke&Peter, 1993; Guskey 1985). Learning has become identified with intrinsic motivation through personal meaning and control, encouraging critical self reflection to shape desired changes in personal knowledge, values and beliefs. Since knowledge “is not something someone can give you, it is something you arrive at yourself” (Francis 1995:239) learning should only be seen as a personal and individualised process. The ability to construct and reconstruct knowledge is complex in nature involving psychological and environmental factors and even though this notion is acceptable in relation to young and adolescent learners, it is perplexing that it is not readily applied to adult learners including the academic involved in a professional development course. Many tertiary institutions continue to be driven by a long standing tradition that segregates adult learning from that of children and adolescents. In the tertiary setting, “knowledge continues to be sacred and can only be transmitted on a one way basis” (Hargreaves & Ternel, 1997:101). Such an instrumental and mechanical

approach implies that there is a narrow, single view of learning that is “controlled”, “objective” and “efficient” (Cranton, 1996:23). Often tertiary educators continue to seek this mythical “one best way” (Kozma, Belle & Williams, 1974) or methodology to maximize student learning. Such a traditional mindset underlies the pedagogically of most forms of professional development (Ramsden 1998, Webb 1996). Historically the underlying need for instrumental knowledge was purely “a product of the pervasiveness of scientific ideology” (Cranton, 1996:24). Recently however, there has been a focus to parallel university teaching practice with those of their primary and secondary counterparts. It would therefore seem logical to extend this teaching practice as a means to professionally further develop academics. The major short coming of the limited pedagogical professional development for most academics is the dominant use of an antiquated transmission approach. Not only does this provide an inadequate learning and teaching model for academics, it also steadily diminishes the significance of the professional development. The challenge therefore is to determine an effective approach to scaffold academic s in the workplace to feel confident to contribute significantly to the quality of learning and teaching in tertiary education.

To determine the future direction of effective professional development, the strengths and weaknesses of past approaches need to be considered. An overview of the professional development evolution for the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors focussing on pedagogical issues appear to be categorised into two distinct but integrated “generations” with a evolution of a third (Osborn 2001). (The term generation implies the lengthy ascent involving distinct paradigm shifts). Table 1 demonstrates how these three generations of professional development have simultaneously accommodated the growth of learning and teaching practices in the primary and secondary sectors. It also suggests that the outdated professional development strategies described in the First Generation are an inappropriate as a model for further academic teaching practices in order to accommodate emerging current and preferred tertiary learning and teaching practices insisted upon by TQM. It is this notion which underpins the purpose of a work embedded approach for tertiary educators.

**Table 1. An Overview of Professional Development Models.**

Stereotypic Characteristics	First Generation Work- ignored	Second Generation Work-perceived	Third Generation Work-embedded
Purpose	To formally ‘dump’ predetermined information onto the individual regardless of personal or organisational needs.	To instigate and direct professional growth with the intention of transforming or reforming the performance of individuals and their organisation.	To encourage and support the self directed transformation or reforming of individual and organisational performance in relation to personal needs and the mission of the organisation

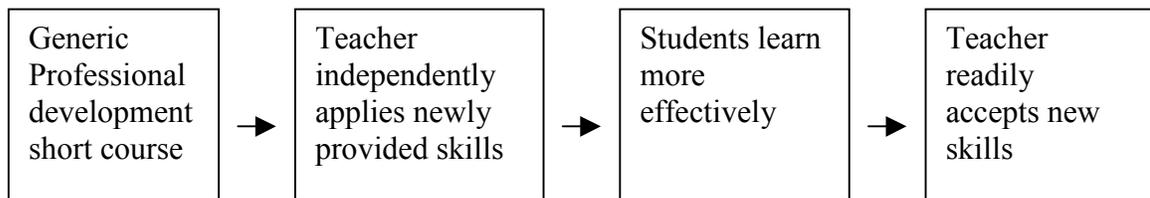
<p>Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linear</li> <li>• Isolated/one off</li>   <li>• Instrumental</li> <li>• Uncontrolled</li> <li>• Generic</li> <li>• Authoritative</li>   <li>• Rigid</li> <li>• No consultation</li> <li>• Top/down instigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyclical</li> <li>• Spasmodic</li>   <li>• Organic</li> <li>• Confusing</li> <li>• Adjunct</li> <li>• Cooperative</li>   <li>• Manipulative</li> <li>• Some consultation</li> <li>• Top/down,bottom/up outside/in investigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spiral</li> <li>• Consistently ongoing</li> <li>• Intrinsic</li> <li>• Empowering</li> <li>• Embedded</li> <li>• Collaborative/inter-collegial</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Dialectic</li> <li>• Top/down,bottom/up,inside/out,outside instigation</li> </ul>
<p>Delivery approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External provision</li>   <li>• Set time line</li> <li>• Formal approach adhering to a pre set agenda</li>   <li>• Passive participation towards the PD agenda</li> <li>• Set range of providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External &amp; limited internal provision</li>   <li>• Timeline set with some negotiation</li> <li>• Formal approach with a quasi flexible agenda</li> <li>• Some emphasis on active participation</li>   <li>• Limited range of providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated external and internal provision</li> <li>• Mutually negotiated timeline</li> <li>• Integration of a formal &amp; informal approach</li> <li>• Focus on active participation</li>   <li>• Increased range of providers</li> </ul>
<p>Concept of learning and the learner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transmission</li> <li>• Generic learning practices</li> <li>• Acquisition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructivist view emerging</li> <li>• Experimentation</li> <li>• Personal</li> <li>• Reflective</li> <li>• Acquisition and participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructivist view</li>   <li>• Experimentation</li> <li>• Personal</li> <li>• Reflective</li> <li>• Acquisition and participation</li> </ul>
<p>Concept of improvement and renewal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transmission view of learning underpinning change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transmission view and introduction of a constructivist view of learning underpinning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructivist view underpinning learning</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of the 'new'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual adaption change</li> </ul>	Sustain and build the incorporating the 'new'
--	---	--	---

### The First Generation

Isolation and authoritarianism are distinct features of earlier first generation approaches to professional development. Guskey (1995) describes this model as “linear” and “prescriptive” whereby participants are injected with preconceived generic short courses. It is a short sighted and tunnelled view of professional development, as Figure 1 demonstrates whereby transmission of instrumental knowledge underpins the required learning for this style of professional development.

**Figure 1 Linear Approach to Professional Development (Guskey 1995)**



These generic courses are prepared and implemented in isolation and seldom consider the individual needs of the participants (Zuber-Skerritt 1991) or the mission of the participants’ organisations. Neither the timing of implementation nor follow up support are taken into consideration. Consequently a linear approach such as this has been referred to as “a splintered array of activities designated to increase knowledge and understanding in disconnected fields” (Cranton 1996:6). This also suggests that the First Generation professional development is a rigid and prescriptive curriculum that does not encourage flexibility for the construction of personal meaning. It was a paradigmatic shift from instrumental to a constructivist learning process that created dissatisfaction with the First Generation professional development model for primary and secondary educators. The need to contextualise learning, to accommodate its complexities and uniqueness, began to influence professional development practices (Clarke&Peter, 1993; Little, 1990). Educational Research began to “move from simple questions with no answers, to complex questions with tentative answers’ (Kozma et al. 1974). The need to contextualise learning for students, to accommodate its complexities and uniqueness, began to extend to professional development practices for educators (Clarke & Peter 1993, Little 1990). Hence the emergence of the Second Generation professional development model for the primary and second sectors (which will be discussed later). However for the tertiary educator, this linear professional development approach remained, as it appeared to suit the consensus to identify “the best practice” or methodology to maximise student learning focussing on technique and media (Kozma et al., 1974:8).

It is possible that the transmission approach remained prominent for tertiary educators, as the majority of academics not being comprehensively familiar with current pedagogical

theories, may not be challenging their thoughts on learning and teaching practices. Moreover “ a significant problem that occurs when introducing these approaches in higher education is that they become accepted at a surface level, but fail to become deeply embedded” (Lester,1999:100). It is also problematic that attendance at tertiary pedagogically focussed short courses often remains compulsory, driven by the ‘top down’ TQM practices. In this scenario the mission of the institution may be taken into consideration but specific professional needs of individuals at the classroom level are not necessarily met, especially when participant backgrounds are wide and varied. “Outside – in” decisions also featured in first generation professional development whereby industrial contribution ensured that graduates met employment criteria. Again the individual needs of educators responsible for the implementation of ‘set’ curriculum, were overlooked.

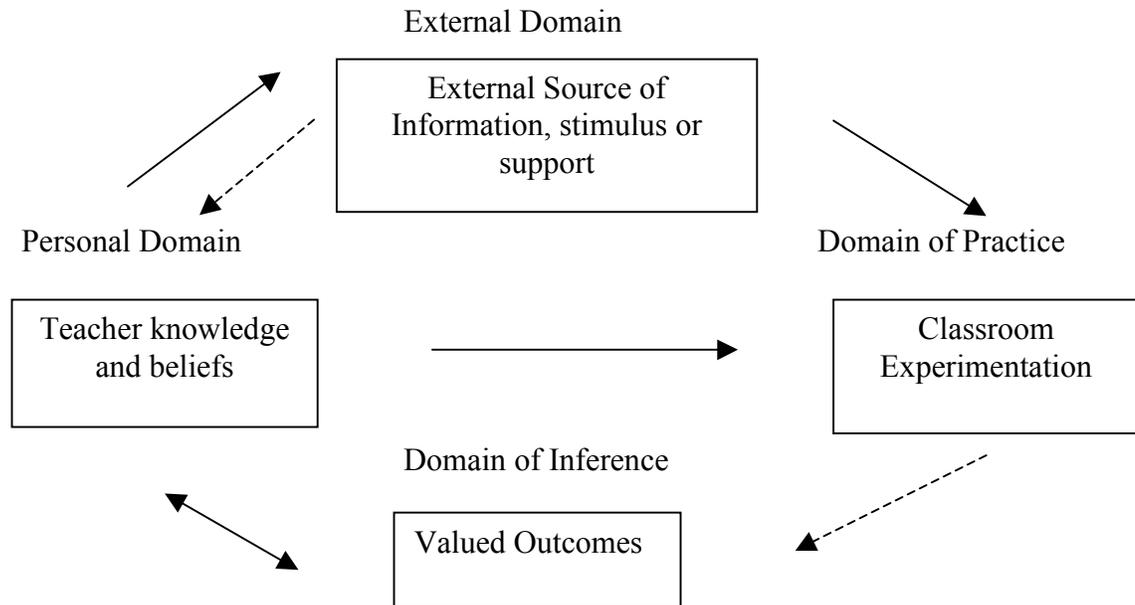
Understandably the results of a qualitative study involving 1500 Australian academics and effective strategies for improving the quality of teaching concluded that a First Generation approach does not foster “intrinsic satisfaction which staff can gain from teaching students” (Ramsden 1998:63). In particular for those academics with no formal teaching qualifications, adjunct and generic seminars and short courses utilising unfamiliar pedagogical jargon often generated feelings of alienation and frustration. Added to this was the narrow focus on detached, specific teaching techniques (Zuber-Skerritt 1991) which were developed with no prior consultation with prospective participants.

### **The Second Generation**

For the primary and secondary sectors, once the nature of teaching had commenced to transform from a direct ‘technical business’ to an integral ‘moral craft’ (Hargreaves,1991; Johnson,1993) with an appreciation of the complexities of learning and the recognition of teachers as ‘critical self-reflective learners’ (Schon,1983; Guskey 1986; Hargreaves 1993; Canton, 1996), there was a need to reform First Generation professional development. In effect reflective practitioners interested in contextual action research demanded a less restrictive and prescriptive professional development approach. Hence the ‘cyclical’ models (Clarke & Peter, 1993) emerged to incorporate the multiplicity of formal and informal avenues for professional learning to act as a catalyst for teacher growth.

The introduction of the enactive and reflecting mediating process to stimulate growth from one domain to another is seen as a positive step towards addressing the short comings of the First Generation Linear approach. The cyclical approach promotes flexibility and values personal experience as a means for professional growth. It encourages the teacher to take a degree of control and direction as is particularly suited for those with a formal teaching qualification as demonstrated in Figure 2

**Figure 2- Cyclical approach to professional development  
(The Clarke & Peter Model of Professional Growth 1993)**



Even though this model encouraged research within the classrooms, the tendency for the 'external' domain to be influential regarding the planning and implementation of formal professional development remained its major limitation. Unlike the First Generation of professional development, the 'top-down' (Prowat, 1996) and 'outside in' conditions of this generation considered some personal and organisational needs. Similarly as for the previous generation, quantitative measurement of student performance was predominantly used to assist with the structure of the professional development agenda. The marketing of professional development packages/programs became a feature of the Second Generation as an attempt to meet in a generic way some needs of individuals and their organisations. On a positive note this generation nurtured an emerging constructivist view of learning and therefore provided participants with limited opportunities to personalise the agenda, determine the timeline of implementation with the option of post course support. This generation also promoted personal experience as a valid means for professional growth and was particularly suited to those with a formal teaching qualification.

### **The Third Generation.**

As educators from the primary and secondary sectors continued to investigate more appropriate methods of pedagogical professional development to accommodate individual needs, the literature suggests that the tertiary sector has remained stagnant.

“ There is a tendency to view the development of practice as the improvement of a technique or skill...[tertiary educators] are familiar with and respect instrumental knowledge as true and valid and will naturally apply these methods to understanding teaching” (Cranton 1996:21).

Therefore a Third Generation of professional development, a work embedded approach, is proposed. Its main feature is that it is spiral and intrinsic in nature, in recognition of the current teaching practices of academics. This Third Generation builds upon the perceived strengths and addresses the identified weakness of the previous generations as outlined in Table 1 especially to support those with no formal teaching qualifications. Arguably academics' professional needs cannot always be met effectively on a collective or generic basis. To promote professional growth, academics need to be encouraged to construct and reconstruct personal meaning within their workplace, rather than in an isolated context. Consequently a work embedded approach was trialed in a longitudinal study (Osborn 2001) which provided engineering academics with an increased opportunity to 'transform their perspectives' (Mezirow, 1991) and 'reconstruct their experiences' (Tennant & Pogson, 1995). Historically in tertiary sectors seeking assistance from colleagues to deal with teaching dilemmas has been interpreted as "a cry for help" (Little 1990) rather than a challenge for personal growth and therefore frustrated academics often remained silent.

The potential of 'intercollegial' (Little 1990) support to assist professional development is a strength further extended by the Third Generation model. During the longitudinal study (Osborn 2001) participants worked collaboratively to develop effective teaching practices with the employment of formal and informal discussions and observations. Unlike the previous generation models this generation provides a greater intellectual credibility for critical self reflection as a crucial aspect of professional growth assisting with the reconstruction and deep understanding of personal theory building (Francis 1995).

*"The only time I reflect on these things [teaching practices] is when we talk...at least you stimulate me to think where it is difficult to stimulate myself..." (Leon 17/9/98)*

The participants involved in Third Generation Professional Development had the opportunity to pursue a pathway suited to individual needs. The degree of control is placed in the hands of the participant who can negotiate collaboratively with the coordinator. This flexibility and ownership of the embedded professional development model, resulted in the involvement of local secondary teachers. Evidently this was advantageous for all as remarked by a secondary teacher participant;

*"The meetings with Monash staff have been relaxed, friendly, focussed and cordial. The frankness with which they have spoken regarding concerns about student academic performance has been refreshing and an incentive for me to question my own teaching learning practices."*

Conclusively, a work embedded approach maybe considered "demanding and unsettling, requiring considerable effort by the teacher, adequate time in which to take place, guidance and above all support" (Baird 1991:110). In order to sustain and renew teaching practices it is necessary to build upon the strengths of the learner, in their typical workplace in the form of a mutually negotiated project. "The traditional approach to helping educators has been to develop the skills of individuals to do their work better [rather than ] enhancing the collective capacity of people to create and pursue overall

visions”(Senge 1995:20). It is imperative that educational institutions bypass the “fragmented” and “highly individualistic” (Senge 1995:20) approach to learning, for cooperative and collaborative approach as demonstrated by Third Generation Professional Development.

“Experience to date suggests, however that we are not yet confident that we can design and deliver professional training [as a formal degree in tertiary teaching] that will do justice to our aspirations” (Poole, Harman & Deden, 1998:282), the following is suggested.

- Effective professional development is necessary to support the accountability and appraisal process for all tertiary academics
- Work embedded professional development, even on a small scale such as ongoing incidental internal mentoring can be highly effective as it is the least intimidating
- A project team approach within the faculty or department will contribute to the sustainability of work embedded professional development
- A greater integrated approach of higher education facilities and a work embedded approach is required.

Work embedded professional development does have its limitations. Primarily it is uneconomical, as an intense collaborative approach requires an infrastructure that is reliant on carefully selected staff as well as effective time management. However this paper suggests that a work embedded approach is considered less confronting and more supportive than the First and Second Generation approaches offered to date by removed Higher Education Development Units.

## References

- Baird,J. (1991) “Individual and Group Reflection as a basis for Teacher Development” in Hughs,P. (ed) *Teachers’ Professional Development* ACER Victoria
- Clarke,D.& Peter,A. (1993) “A Model of Teacher Professional Growth”,Mathematics Teaching and Learning Centre, Australian Catholic University Victoria
- Cranton,P. (1996)*Professional Development as transformative learning;new perspectives for teachers of adults*.Jossey –Bass, San Fransisco
- Dawkins,J.S. (1988) Higher Education. A Policy Statement. AGPS Canberra
- Foster,G.& Roe,E.(1979) “Australia:in service,lip service and unobtrusive pragmatism” in *Staff Development in Higher Education*,Teather,D.(ed) Kogan Page London
- Francis,D. (1995) “The Reflective Journal: A window to preservice teachers’practical knowledge”, Teaching and Teacher Education, 11:3.pp229-241
- Guskey,T.(1985) “Staff Development and Teacher Change” Educational Leadership Vol.42 No.7 pp57-60

Hargreaves & Ternel (1997) "The Changing Role of the Engineering Educator", 9<sup>th</sup> Annual AAEE Convention and Conference, Ballarat, Australia, 14-17 December 1997

Kozma,R.,Belle,L. & Williams, G (1974) *Instructional Techniques in Higher Education*. Educational Technology Publications Inc. New Jersey

Little, J.W. (1990) "The Persistence of Privacy: Autonomy and Initiative in Teachers' Professional Relations",Teachers College Record,91(4)

Marshall, S. (1998) "Professional development and quality in higher education institutions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Australian Journal of Education, Vol.42 No.3, pp321-334

Mezirow, J. (1991) "Transformation Dimensions of Adult Learning." in *Defense of the Lifeworld Critical Perspectives on Adult Learning*. Welton, M. (ed) SUNY,USA

Osborn, M. (2001) "Helping academics to help themselves: Investigating appropriate professional development support strategies for academics with no formal teaching qualifications" unpublished Doctorate Education thesis Melbourne University Victoria

Lester, S. (1999) "Assessing the self-managing learner:a contradiction in terms?" in *Developing the Capable Practitioner-Professional Capability through Higher Education*. O'Reilly, Cunningham, L., Lester, S. Kogan Page London

Poole,M., Harman,E., & Deden. (1998) "Managing the quality of teaching in higher education institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". Australian Journal of Education,Vol.42, No.3, pp271-284

Prawat, R.S. (1996) "Learning community, commitment and school reform",Journal of Curriculum Studies,28;1pp.91-110

Ramsden, P. (1998) *Learning to lead in higher education*. Routledge London

Schon, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*.Basic Books, New York

Senge, P. (1995) in O'Neil,J. "On Schools as Learning Organisations: A conversation with Peter Senge" Education Leadership Vol.52 No.7

Webb, G. (1996) *Understanding Staff Development*. Society for Research into Higher Education, Open University Press London