Practice-Focused Research in Further Adult and Vocational Education

Shifting Horizons of Educational Practice, Theory and Research

Edited by
Margaret Gregson
Patricia Spedding

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For William Thomas Walker 21st June 2018

Preface

Practice Focused Research in Further, Adult and Vocational Education: Shifting Horizons of Educational Practice, Theory and Research is designed to offer professionals in the Further Adult and Vocational Education (FAVE) insights into how educational practice in the sector can be improved through practice-focused educational research. This book explores issues in breaking down boundaries between educational practice, theory and research. It also considers the socially constructed nature of boundaries between academic and vocational education and the consequences of this for education in general. Drawing upon practical examples, this book provides ready access to material which enables teachers across the sector to consider how they might begin to engage in educational research which focuses upon the improvement of educational practice in the contexts of their own work. This book will be of use to education, policy and research professionals charged with responsibility for the improvement of educational practice in FAVE and in other sectors of education in the UK and overseas.

The strength of this book is that, despite a growing body of literature concerning the improvement of educational practice in Further Adult and Vocational Education (FAVE), little of this has been written by teachers—the very people who are held directly responsible and accountable for educational improvement. Instead, educational research in FAVE is often characterized by researchers from higher education (HE)

presenting *their* accounts of the experiences of those who work in the sector, or by other external bodies such as the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in the form of evaluative reports which are then made publically available.

In addition, while the improvement of educational practice is a political and policy priority across all phases and fields of education, frontline teachers often regard the improvement of educational practice through research as foreign territory, open only to the activities of remote and privileged research specialists from institutions of higher education (HE). This view has tended to encourage teachers to see educational research as being far removed from educational practice—an elitist activity in which rigorous and robust research design can only be determined in advance by a prescient and favoured few, in situations where research always proceeds in expected and unproblematic ways. Not surprisingly, this view of educational research actively discourages most teachers from engaging in it! Of the few teachers in the FAVE sector who do engage in educational research, many do so with a great deal of trepidation and considerable lack of confidence. Often this means that they do not see their research through to completion, let alone to the publication stage. As a consequence, much practitioner-research does not have a discernible impact upon practice. Ironically, at the same time, a great deal of educational research conducted on the FAVE sector by researchers from HE is never read by a wider audience of practitioners and therefore does not have much impact upon practice either. In contrast, this edited collection of practice-focused research papers is produced *by* practitioners from across the FAVE sector *for* an audience of practitioner-researchers from across the sector. This book has been written by practising teachers from the sector who have recently engaged in systematic educational research funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) in England for an audience of their peers. A central purpose of this book is that educational research should be educative, in the sense that it should enable teachers to learn from research in ways which help them to improve educational practice.

This book offers unique examples and insights into improving educational practice through practice-focused research in a wide variety of contexts. This includes the realities of putting the findings of research into practice in real-life situations. Considerations include the (sometimes

competing) perspectives of sector policy professionals, education leaders and frontline teachers.

The realities of conducting research in educational practice and putting the findings of that research *into* practice in different contexts are taken seriously. The importance of context and local knowledge is valued and regarded as assets (and not, as seen from some research perspectives, liabilities) in the process of translating good ideas from educational research into good educational practice.

The overall aim of this book is to make educational research accessible, educative and useful to policy professionals and practitioners concerned with the improvement of educational practice.

This contribution to the debate surrounding policy implementation, educational evaluation and improvement, inherent in several chapters, provides a thought-provoking resource. It will be of interest to policy professionals, education leaders, teachers, researchers and postgraduate students in the field of Further Adult and Vocational Education (FAVE).

The chapters explore the following key issues in vocational education: the contested nature of, the separation of research from practice; the vocational-academic divide; the role and value of practitioner research in improving educational practice; management cultures in the sector; realizing standards of quality in vocational education; models of educational assessment; approaches to educational evaluation and improvement; access to vocational and higher education; and the formation and development of professional identity and continuing professional development.

This book reflects the above educational issues in a range of sector contexts. In particular, this book focuses upon the potential contribution of practitioner-research to alternative approaches to educational evaluation and improvement and the continuing professional development of teachers.

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                                                                              Patricia Spedding

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Autumn   Maggie Gregson and
2019   Trish Spedding

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Practice! Practice! Practice!

Margaret Gregson and Patricia Spedding

Introduction

Questions of the nature of research, who should conduct it and what counts as good research have to date generated heated debate across subjects, fields and disciplines, but not much light. Enduring stereotypes continue to populate the landscape of research and competing discourses regarding the above questions can at times become both strident and dismissive of each other. As we shall see however, stereotypes are often deep-rooted and compelling and can therefore be very difficult to shake off.

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> **Case Study: Enduring Stereotypes and Competing Discourses in Research**
>
> In the 1934 horror movie, *The Man They Could Not Hang,* (Columbia Pictures), directed by Nick Grinde, Boris Karloff plays Dr Henryk Savaard, a man obsessed with bringing the dead back to life. Dr Savaard's research into transplant heart and lung surgery involves 'arresting' the body's metabolism. He is interrupted in mid-experiment by police officers tipped off by Savaard's nursing assistant that his research is breaking the laws of God and man. On the operating table, the heart of his patient (a trusting student who has volunteered to participate in Dr Savaard's experiments) stays 'arrested'. Subsequently Dr Savaard is arrested, convicted and sentenced to hang for murder. Before his hanging, he vows revenge on the judge and the jury who convicted him. Luckily for Savaard his laboratory assistant has been paying attention. After Savaard's hanging he is able to resurrect him using Savaard's own techniques. Unluckily for those who sent him to the gallows Savaard returns with a chip on his shoulder. Looking for revenge and out to kill the ingrates who wronged him, he sets about murdering the jury that convicted him.
>
> In the movie, the image of Dr Savaard as a researcher, is of a wealthy, brilliant and well-intentioned man of science. He works hard in his laboratory (in his luxurious mansion home) to advance scientific knowledge. He carries out his research on his trusting, naïve and highly impressionable students who are clearly in awe of him. Their deference to Dr Savaard's 'first-class mind' is palpable. Dr Savaard ultimately finds us, ordinary human beings, beneath him and undeserving of his intellectual gifts. His genius is clearly beyond us. We scorned his science. We hanged him. Outraged, he comes back to punish those who derided his work.
>
> The imagery of the movie shows us that Dr Savaard is white, rich, knowledgeable, mild-mannered, well-read and well-intentioned. His daughter is beautiful and dutiful. Ordinary characters in the movie, reporters, police officers, members of the jury and the general public are depicted as being stupid, lazy, ignorant and callous. Incapable of understanding or engaging with research. Unworthy of the elitist and noble pursuit of advancing science. In the end, Dr Savaard is brought to justice. As he has been hanged once, in the eyes of the law he cannot be hanged again. In the closing scene, in a struggle to escape further justice, he is shot and dies for a second time.

The Power of Stereotypes

Stereotypes are evident everywhere in the movie and their messages are both powerful and disturbing. Scientific Research is seen as the legitimate province of a wealthy, white, male elite. Women may also serve science and research but only in subordinate roles. Those who engage in 'real' research and science

do so only under laboratory conditions and in laboratory coats. Research is seen to require highly specialized technical skills and expensive equipment. A clear message in the movie is that ordinary people cannot understand 'science' and therefore cannot and should not engage in research.

It would be wrong to think that these stereotypes of researchers and research are simply a fiction, a product of Hollywood in1930s. The origins of such stereotypes reach much further back in history. They also reach forward and can still be seen in the competing discourses surrounding research in general and in particular, research in the field of education today.

Competing debates concerning what research is and who should conduct it, tend to cluster around four main positions. The first, can be traced back to a notion advanced by Plato (429–347 BC) regarding the existence of absolutes or 'perfect forms'. This notion underpins much of what is regarded as 'scientific' approaches to research which seek to uncover invariable 'truths'. From this perspective, methods derived from positivist world views, pursue objectivity and certainty by employing research methods such as randomized Control Trials (RCTs), meta analyses, laboratory experiments etc. These are considered to be the only research methods that we can and should trust. From this position human experience is regarded as being unreliable and cannot be trusted. A second position is that research should be conducted by highly trained professionals in higher education who can be relied upon to produce good (rigorous and robust) research. From this perspective, practitioners are simply not equipped to conduct research on the grounds that, not only they do not have the knowledge and skills to conduct 'good' research, but also their closeness to practice clouds their judgment and their ability to see their practice in the world in an objective and scientific way. A third contribution to the discourse takes a more emancipatory and moral turn where knowledge gained from research (particularly research in the social sciences) is seen as a form of 'power'. From this standpoint, the role of research is to, 'stand up for the underdog' to redress imbalances and misuses of power, reduce inequality, bring about social justice and contribute to democracy. In educational and other fields of social science, this approach seeks to liberate those who are oppressed by powerful social and political forces in circumstances where knowledge gleaned from research and intellectual thinking is put to work to liberate and emancipate the oppressed from 'false consciousness.' The fourth position can be traced back to Aristotle's (384–322 BC) foregrounding of the

importance of human experience in all forms of practice, the role of experience in meaning-making and the development and improvement of practice in the interests of the common good. From this perspective, practice matters and practitioner research matters more, because that is the arena in which theory and research are put to the test. Without scrutiny in practice, theory and research may go unchallenged and experiences derived directly from practice cannot contribute to theory and research. From this standpoint, knowledge is developed through interpretations of experience. Theory is not godlike and 'up there' to be worshipped. Practice is not 'down here', in the cheap seats in the company of Grinde's mindless mob of practitioners. Research is not beyond practitioners, somewhere 'over there', located in exclusive territory inhabited by some kind of privileged, white elite. All three are at play and interplay in practice and in context. From this perspective, the work of educational practice, the work of research and the work of theorising develop hand in hand and eye to eye. Viewed from this position, the relationship between educational research and educational practice cannot be reduced to the simple application of knowledge, gained from research conducted by others. Far from teachers being passive consumers of educational knowledge produced by others (often in the form of 'recipes' for good practice) teachers are in fact, creators of new knowledge as well as (in some cases) generators of and contributors to educational theory. The new learning involved in putting an idea, concept or theory from educational research into educational practice is a process of inquiry and therefore an important and legitimate form of educational research (Kemmis, in Carr 1995).

These four positions described above in the discourse surrounding the nature of practice and relationships between theory, research and practice are themselves broad representations (even caricatures) which cannot address more nuanced and subtle positions in the discourse. It would also be a mistake to think of each of these positions as being mutually exclusive or indeed to think that any one of them holds the complete answer to questions of how good educational research should be conducted. The creation of 'silos' of research and heated defences of extremes of positions adopted in the waging of 'paradigm wars' have not been particularly helpful in the past nor are they likely to serve us well in the future. Indeed, it may be that in developing a better understanding of each of the above positions and the contributions they can make to the improvement of educational practice, new ways forward might be found.

Beginning with Ourselves

Hunt (1987) challenges the division of practice, theory and research and points to the importance of taking experience seriously by 'beginning with ourselves'. He argues that the quality of human experience is a neglected aspect of educational research and that the starting point in the change process is personal and practical knowledge rather than theoretical knowledge. With references to personal experience, using examples from the field of psychology, he illustrates how, when the those who theorize about a practice become removed from the sites and experiences of that practice, then it is the quality of theory and theorising in that field of practice which ultimately suffers.

What Is a Practice?

The work of Dunne (2005) provides a helpful overview of the nature of practice and how practice improves. Dunne's definition is particularly interesting in that it admits social and historical factors which influence how a practice develops and changes over time. For Dunne a practice is,

> *A coherent and invariably quite complex set of activities and tasks that has evolved cooperatively and cumulatively over time. It is alive in the community who are its insiders (i.e. its genuine practitioners) and it stays alive only so long as they sustain a commitment to creatively develop and extend it—sometimes by shifts which may at the time seem dramatic or even subversive. Central to any such practice are standards of excellence, themselves subject to development and redefinition, which demand responsiveness from those who are, or are trying to become practitioners.* (Dunne in Carr 2005, pp. 152–153)

What is interesting to note here, is the way in which Dunne brings to light the evolutionary, cooperative and temporal nature of practice and how it develops. He also points to the vibrant and dynamic nature of a practice, kept alive by its 'insiders' who are committed to creatively challenge, develop and extend it sometimes in small shifts which incrementally modify the practice, other times in more dramatic ways which may

radically change or even transform or transcend the practice altogether. These understandings of practice ultimately take us back to the work of Aristotle and to important distinctions in his notions of *techné*, making something in circumstances where ends are known (for example a shoe or a pot) and practical reasoning or practical wisdom (*phronesis*) which involves the development of good judgment through engagement in action in a particular *context*.

Through the work of Eagleton, Carr (1995) points out that while any practice involves some technical skills, practice can never be reduced to just techniques,

> *A practice is never just a set of technical skills … What is distinctive of a practice is in part the way in which conceptions of the relevant goods and ends which the technical skills serve—and every practice does involve the exercise of technical skills—are transformed and enriched by those extensions of human powers and by that regard for its own internal goods which are partially definitive of each particular practice.* (Eagleton 1990, pp. 26–27, cited in Carr 1995, p. 60)

Here Eagleton and Carr remind us that techniques or technical skills serve a wider purpose in relation to the relevant goods—the purpose(s) of the practice (what the practice is *for*) and ends of a practice (what we mean by good work). Note how they draw attention to how technical skills are dynamically enriched and transformed by the human beings who engage in and care about the practice (its insiders) enough to be committed to its continual improvement. The dangers of preoccupations with exhaustively prescribing the technical skills of a practice in the absence of considerations of the internal goods and ends of a practice lie in wait for those who subscribe to mechanical world views and those who seek to predict and control social practices including the practice of education from the 'outside'.

As Hunt (1987) observes (above) technical skills and practices theorized by those removed from the sites and day-to-day experiences of practice (its outsiders) ultimately suffer a disconnect from dynamic and direct experience in context.

Understanding the nature of practice is therefore central. If you want to change/improve a practice you have to understand what a practice is

and how it develops and improves. If not, as the above authors caution, you may find yourself caught up in a thin, technical understanding of practice which although initially intuitively appealing ultimately proves to be unhelpful.

The 'insider' nature of practice and its development described by the above authors is characterised by care for the internal goods of the practice (the individual and collective rewards that come from doing a job well—what we mean by good work in that field of practice) and the desired outcomes or purpose(s) of the practice (what it is *for*). From this perspective, practice cannot be explained without reference to the understanding of actors—who *realize* the practice in context. In contrast, Kemmis presents an critical account of his own training in behaviourist psychology in the 1960s in which he was encouraged to look at action 'from the outside',

> …*as if it were controlled by a mechanism, as hidden and a powerful as the mechanism that so harmoniously and so rigorously determines the movements of the planets and the stars … The image of the mechanism was so powerful that the very task of behavioural science was driven by it. We were convinced that we knew what the 'truths' we sought looked like—they would be mathematical formulae like those published in Newton's Principia of 1867 that described the secret mechanisms and springs of the material world.* (Kemmis, in Carr 1995, p. 3)

Viewing action 'from the outside' Kemmis suggests, implies that human beings at best poorly understand the meaning of their actions and assumes that people rationalize or deceive themselves about their actions most of the time. It is therefore left to the 'outsider' to interpret and explain the real meaning of actions in social life. This preference for a mechanical view of the social life of human beings, Kemmis argues, makes it possible to strip social life and the human beings who constitute it, of ambiguity and complexity. This invokes a certain kind of science 'able to 'see' beneath the surface of things to discover principles of order which account for the workings of the mechanism beneath' (Kemmis, in Carr, 1995, p. 4). According to this world view, human beings do not know what they are doing, let alone why and it takes the 'outsider' scientist to reveal the forces

by which our actions are determined these discoveries can then be made available so that in future human 'action can be more carefully controlled and directed' (ibid).

Viewing action from the 'outside' involves what Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics* (2014) describes as technical reasoning. Technical (instrumental means-ends) reasoning— the kind of reasoning you engage in when you know what the given ends are/should be and where you are following known rules to arrive at those ends. Other examples of this 'making' action include, tying a necktie, baking a cake, making a cup of coffee, or writing a lesson plan.

Aristotle distinguishes between technical reasoning (*techné*) and practical reasoning (*phronesis*) noting that practical reasoning does not assume known ends of given means and does not follow imposed rules of method. Viewing action from the 'inside' involves the form of reasoning which is appropriate in social, political and workplace situations in which people draw upon experience and reason about how to act truly and rightly in situations and contexts where both means and ends are problematic and where it is not always clear what to do for the best. In this kind of 'doing' action, people have to work out what to do as they go along—as they are 'in' the action, faced with evidence of the consequences of previous and current actions.

Finally, Aristotle describes 'scientific reasoning'(*theoria*) in the pursuit of intellectual questions—a kind of 'pure' analytic or logical reasoning of the kind that we might use in mathematics or analytic philosophy.

To argue for approaches to understanding practice from the 'inside' is not to say that theories derived in contexts removed and disconnected from practice have no value or contribution to make to the development and improvement of practice. Theory has much to offer not only from having the benefit of being able to stand back from the practice but also for the considerable resources that theory can provide not only in uncovering the relays of power and pursuits of vested interests at work in wider contemporary society. However theories in themselves do not deserve deference and uncritical acceptance. Theory needs and deserves to be tested out in the arena of practice.

The Practice of Education

In relation to the practice of education, Kemmis foregrounds the unique, moral and democratic position of teachers in developing educational practice as a force for continuity or change in society.

> *Educational practice is a form of power—a dynamic force for social continuity and for social change which, though shared with and constrained by others, rests largely in the hands of teachers. Through the power of educational practice, teachers play a vital role in changing the world we live in.* (Kemmis, in Carr 1995, p. 1)

Following Carr (1995), Kemmis (1995) also notes the historical and social construction of concepts of practice. Educational practice he reminds us, is something made by people. The meaning of any practice he contends, including educational practice, is not self-evident. Carr (1995, p. 73) argues that our concept of educational theory *and* our concept of educational practice are end products of an historical process through which an older, more comprehensive and more a coherent concept of practice (described above) has been, 'rendered marginal and now faces something approaching total effacement'. Carr observes that our contemporary common sense understanding of educational practice is radically ambiguous and incoherent. For Carr, defects in our current concept of educational practice operate to limit our grasp of the nature of practice in education and the processes through which it develops. Kemmis (1995) also challenges contemporary understandings of the nature of educational practice. He questions in particular the existence of a gap between theory and practice in education and the nature of reasoning, in, about and through practice practical reasoning (*phronesis*).

Carr invites us to consider why 'attempts to analyse the concept of 'practice' which focus on its relationship to 'theory' fail to furnish us with a satisfactory understanding of what an educational practice is' (Carr 1995, p. 61). He points out that one of the common ways to think about the relationship between theory and practice is to think about them in oppositional terms—'practice' is everything that 'theory' is not. From this perspective, 'theory' is concerned with universal, context free

generalisations free from pressures and time and 'practice' is concerned with concrete realities and responsive to the demands of everyday life. 'Solutions to practical problems are found in knowing something, practical problems can only be solved by doing something … when applied to the field of education this view of practice is always unsatisfactory' Carr 1995, p. 62). The fundamental weakness here he argues is that the 'oppositional' view generates criteria for 'practice' which when applied to the notion of *educational* practice exclude too much.

> *By making the twin assumptions that all practice is non-theoretical and that all theory is non-practical, this approach always underestimates the extent to which those who engage in educational practices have to reflect upon and hence theorize about, what in general they are trying to do… Practice is not opposed to theory but is itself governed by an implicit theoretical framework which structures and guides the activities of those engaged in practical pursuits.* (Carr 1995, p. 62–63)

Through the work of Ryle (1949), Carr (1995) argues that while educational practice cannot be reduced to a form of theorizing, educational theorizing *can* be reduced to a form of practice. Practice is not the stepchild of theory, Ryle argues efficient practice precedes the theory of it and therefore theorizing itself is a form of practice. He points out that although the meaning of the Greek word *praxis* broadly corresponds to the term 'practice' in English, the conceptual structures within the original Greek term refer to a distinctive way of life—the *bios praktikos*— a life devoted to right living through the pursuit of the human good. This was distinguishable from a life devoted to *theoria (bios theoretikos)*—the contemplative way of life of the philosopher or the scientist. Each was distinctive in terms of both its end and its means of pursuing this end. Carr points out that that the Greek distinction between theory and practice has little to do with the way in which the distinction is now drawn. He shows how that for the Greeks, the distinction between the two is, 'not a distinction between knowledge and action, thinking and doing, 'knowing that' and 'knowing how. Rather, it is a way of articulating two different forms of socially embedded human activities, each with its own intellectual commitments and its own moral demands' (Carr 1995,

p. 67). He notes how for the Greeks, the modern philosophical problem whether theory and practice are or are not independent from each other would have made little sense as each would have been seen as two forms of human action *poiesis* and *praxis*—a distinction which can only be rendered in English as the difference between 'making something' when ends are known and 'doing something' (realizing some morally worthwhile 'good'. The 'good' for the sake of which a practice is pursued cannot be 'made' it can only be 'done' in circumstances—where the ends are not always known, and action is guided by a form of knowledge which Aristotle called *phronesis* (or practical wisdom). Practice is therefore a form of 'doing' action precisely because its end can only be realized through action and can only exist in the action itself' (Carr 1995, p. 68). This is very different from 'making action' (bringing some specific artefact or product into existence). The 'good' for the sake of which *poiesis* is pursued is 'made' in circumstances where ends are known, guided by a form of knowledge which Aristotle called *techné*).

We need to be careful here however not to assume that *techné, poiesis, phronesis* and *praxis* are mutually exclusive. Indeed Aristotle was careful not to sanction their separation. For example, even highly technical blueprints (*techné*) need to be interpreted in context (*poiesis*) and practitioners sometimes have to find the courage to challenge taken-for-granted techniques in a public space in order to move a practice forward (*phronesis* and *praxis*). As discussed above through the work of Eagleton (1990), every practice involves the exercise of technical skills (*techné*). However, technical skills are enriched, modified, extended and transformed by the human powers of its practitioners who have a regard for the internal goods which are partially definitive and also capable of transforming each particular practice.

Sennett (2009) shows us that *techné* is embodied (Hyland 2017, 2018) and at work in the 'eye' and the hands of the glassblower when the glass material being blown does not behave in a predicted way; in the eyes, hands and feet of the apprentice engineer in the engineering workshop on day 28 of the Fitting Module moving from cross-filing to flat filing, in the feet and knees of the dancer when he does not land as expected, in the hands of the baker when the dough does not rise, in the nose of the sommelier choosing award winning wine, in the hands eyes

and ears of the stonemason as she carves, in the eyes, ears and hands of the cellist and other members of the orchestra as they rehearse. While the epistemic status of the end is not uncertain or ambiguous and the means by which the end is to be achieved is clear, *techné* pursues and progresses towards a known end as noted above but not always in predictable and straightforward ways. That is why the human powers of practitioners who care deeply about the internal goods of *poiesis*, continue to make artefacts of higher and higher standards. It is therefore possible and desirable to produce a theoretical specification of what the ends of *poiesis* should be for example in following a recipe to bake a cake but there are some limitations which are worth bearing in mind here. These are discussed in some detail in Chap. 11.

As we have seen, *techné* cannot be reduced to some mindless, mechanical or instrumental pursuit of known ends, as *poiesis* also involves making judgments in complex and unfolding situations. However the object of *poiesis* is known prior to action and this makes the judgments of *poiesis* very to different kinds of judgments of those required in *praxis.*

Carr draws attention to how *praxis* can never be understood solely as a form of technical expertise designed to achieve some externally related end which can be pre-specified in advance of engaging in a practice. Dunne (1997) describes *Praxis* as conduct in a public space with others in which a person acts, not out of self interest, but for the common good. This is different from *poiesis* because the judgment of the 'good' which constitutes its end is inseparable from the action and the context in which it occurs, including the question of doing the right thing, at the right time, in that particular situation.

Practice in this sense can be seen as morally informed or morally committed action. Carr points out that within the Aristotelian tradition all ethical and political activities were regarded as forms of practice including education.

To practise *poiesis* or *praxis* is to act within a tradition derived from the practical knowledge made available to us by those who have gone before. However, the authoritative nature of tradition does not and should not make tradition immune to criticism. As we have seen above, through the work of Dunne (2005), traditions and practical knowledge evolve cooperatively and cumulatively over time through practitioners and their commitment to creatively develop and extend practical knowledge in the

light of direct experience. In doing so, practitioners move the practice forward sometimes through incremental adaptation and modification sometimes in more dramatic ways which transform and even transcend the practice itself. While it is only by submitting to the authority of tradition, that practitioners can begin to acquire the practical knowledge and standards of excellence by means of which their own practical competence can be judged, that tradition is constantly being reinterpreted and revised through critical dialogue and discussion about how to produce the practical goods which constitute the tradition (Carr 1995; Sennett 2009). Carr notes that 'it is precisely because it embodies this process of critical reconstruction that a tradition evolves and changes or remains static or fixed' (Carr 1995, p. 69).

Here the works of Carr, Sennett and Dunne help us to see that, while the early stages of any practice is likely to involve the acquisition of some basic practical and technical skills, the acquisition of any practice cannot be reduced to technique.

From this, it could be argued that many (if not all) forms of practice (including *poiesis*) involve not only *techné* but also elements of *phronesis* and *praxis* in that in acquiring the techniques and practical knowledge and engagement in critical reconstruction of practice take place in a public and social space with an educational purpose, where we act not only in the interests of others but also in the ethical interests of the pursuit of the internal goods of the development of traditions of the particular practice in question. Understanding and applying the ethical principles involved in taking a practice forward for the common 'good' involves promoting the good of a practice through morally right action.

> Rational discussion about how the ethical ends of a practice were to be interpreted and pursued was what Aristotle took practical philosophy to be all about. It is the science which seeks to raise the practical knowledge embedded in tradition to the level of reflective awareness and through critical argument to correct and transcend the limitations of what within this tradition has hitherto been thought said and done. (Carr 1995, p. 69)

The continuing presence of the different philosophical viewpoints regarding the nature of a practice (in this case education) and how practice improves (represented in the competing discourses set out at the

beginning of this chapter provide the oppositional tension necessary for critical thinking to perform its transforming role in moving our understanding of the nature of practice in general and the nature of educational practice in particular, forward. 'Understanding and applying ethical principles are thus not two separate processes but mutually constitutive elements in the continuous dialectical construction between knowledge and action' (ibid).

Since the ends of educational practice are always indeterminate, a form of reasoning is always required in which choice, deliberation and practical judgement play a central role. This is very different from purely technical reasoning. The overall purpose of practical reasoning is to decide what to do when it is not clear what to do for the best when faced with the dilemma of competing and conflicting moral ideals, in situations where it may only be possible to respect one value at the expense of another. For Aristotle, this involves proceeding in an incremental and deliberative way. Dewey (1933) illustrates how in the process of deliberative reasoning, means and ends are open to question. For Dewey, deliberative thinking begins with a 'disturbance' in routine thinking which then leads to thinking about alternative understandings of the 'problem" and its alternative potential 'solutions'. These happen in transaction and involve imagining the potential consequences of alternative courses of action, taking the action reasoned and judged most likely to achieve the desired goal and continuing or abandon/adapt the action in the light of the evidence of the consequences of actions taken.

The quality of deliberative reasoning is influenced by individual experience and the potential of individuals and groups to imagine potential solutions and the consequences of potential actions. Aristotle recognises this and insists that collective deliberation is always preferable to the isolated deliberation of the individual. In the context of this chapter, this underscores the importance of opening up spaces for collaborative and cooperative deliberation for teachers, where they can conduct research into and discuss problems and issues encountered in practice.

For Aristotle, good deliberation depends upon what he calls *phronesis* or practical wisdom—the virtue of knowing which general ethical principles to apply in a particular context or situation. He regards this as the supreme intellectual virtue and the engine of good practice. For Sennett

(2009) the motor of good judgment and the engine of good practice require a willingness to engage in individual and collective critique. This involves not only having knowledge of what is required in a particular moral situation but also having the willingness and the courage to act so that this knowledge can take a concrete form, involving the linking of deliberation and practical wisdom with action to arrive at a good judgment (in this case) in educational contexts with a view to moving practice forward.

Summary and Conclusion

The works of the above authors help us to see that thinking and theorising about action and indeed action itself are embedded in all forms of life. Education cannot and does not just take place away from the 'action', it takes place 'in' the action itself. Dewey (1933) reminds us that thought and action are not separate or temporal, the thinking is in the action and the action is in the thinking. Thinking, inquiring and theorizing therefore take place in the action itself. MacIntyre (1981) suggests that,

> *Theory is just a practice forced into a new form of self-reflectiveness…Theory is just a human activity bending back upon itself, constrained into a new kind of self-reflexivity. And, in absorbing this self-reflexivity, the activity itself will be transformed.* (McIntyre, 1981, p. 180 cited in Carr 1995, p. 40)

Here McIntyre is also reminding us that theory research and practice in education are not separate but part of the activity and practice of education.

Kemmis (1995) rebuts claims that enduring questions of theory and practice have long been resolved. The nature of educational practice and the relationship between educational theory, research and practice Kemmis contends, are not well understood, particularly in relation to how we think about, in and through practice. Through the work of Carr (1995), Kemmis reveals significant flaws and misconceptions in what now passes and educational research including the notion of the existence of a gap between theory and practice which he points out is still widely reinforced and reproduced 'through conventional courses on educational

theory, research methodology and educational practice' (Kemmis, in Carr 1995, p. 2). Kemmis reserves his strongest criticism for theorists and researchers who view practitioners as mindless foot-soldiers performing in accordance with the theories of others; those who deny that that practice and theory develop reflexively and together; and those who appear to believe that the insights that they have gained in the intellectual tussles of post-graduate seminars and research conferences will produce changes in the educational practices of teachers who attend neither. Kemmis challenges the false separation of theory and practice and the creation of arbitrary divisions between research and practice. He calls for the development of new relationships between those conventionally regarded as theorists, those conventionally regarded as researchers and those conventionally regarded as practitioners. For Kemmis, this involves nothing less than the development of new collaborative forms of science which challenge the existing demarcations of function and divisions of labour embedded in the history and social practices of educational theorising for over a century.

Carr (1995) shows that when attention is focused on the *connection* between the practice of educational theorising and the educational policy to which theorising is addressed, it becomes clear that educational theory not only identifies educational practice but also defines and shapes practice as well. Questions about the nature of educational theory and the nature of educational practice become logically linked. Questions about how educational theory changes educational practice are therefore not independent of questions of how theory is to be understood. Carr urges active engagement in a rigorous critique of the preconceptions which constitute our present understanding of theory and practice relations so that we can be confident that what we say about the practice of education is 'neither contaminated by ideological distortion nor corroded by intellectual complacency' (Carr 1995, p. 51).

Conclusion

The works of the above authors show us how an awareness of the roots of the concept of practice helps us to understand why current attempts to analyse the relationship between theory, research and practice run into

the sort of difficulties they do. The same body of work illustrates these difficulties are the product of ahistorical assumptions about the nature of all three which have more to do with nineteenth Century mechanical world view which makes arbitrary and binary distinctions between theory and practice; knowledge and action; 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. Instead, this chapter argues that these are distinctions between different kinds of action (*techné, poiesis, phronesis* and *praxis*). As Carr (1995) reminds us, failure to recognise the importance of these distinctions has not only left our conception of practice confused, but also made it difficult for us to talk about why education is construed as a practice at all. He goes on to point out that acknowledging the importance of regarding these distinctions as different forms of action we can begin to see how characterizations of educational practice which focus on theory always break down, because, as educational practice is always guided by some theory about the ethical good internal to that practice, then it cannot be made intelligible in terms of positioning it in opposition to theory. At the same time he cautions us against assuming, that educational practice can be sufficiently characterized as a theory guided pursuit. For Carr, what is distinctive about an educational practice is that it is guided not by just some general practical theory but also by the demands of the practical situation in which the theory is to be applied. The guidance given by theory therefore always has to be moderated by the guidance given by *phronesis*—wise and prudent practical reasoning and judgment in context concerning if, and to what extent, this theory ought to be invoked and enhanced in a concrete case. Carr cautions that the fact that educational practice cannot be characterized as 'theory-dependent' or 'theory-guided' does not mean that it should be regarded as some kind of theory free, home-spun 'know-how. What is distinctive about *praxis,* Carr (1995, p. 73) contends, is that it is a form of reflexive action which 'can itself transform the theory which guides it …where theory is as subject to change and is practice itself … each is continuously being, modified and revised by the other'.

In sum, the relationship of theory to practice cannot be explained as simply a cognitive function where teachers are mere technicians mechanically and mindlessly putting theories derived from research conducted by others into practice. Nor is the relationship between research, theory and practice simply one of a division of labour or the arbitrary allocation of social roles and relationships.

This chapter begins by pointing to the dangers of stereotypes and the risks of polarised discourses about the nature of theory, the nature of research, the nature of practice in general and the nature of educational practice in particular. It concludes that, theorising, research and scholarship are public processes and social practices. They are practical forms of social life in which people cooperate towards shared ends, the achievement of which helps to form our characters. These practical forms of social life carry with them traditions that help to make us who we are. They are also open to challenge, change and transformaton by their 'insiders' (practitioners) in the present. This is what carries practical forms of social life forward into the future. That is why *everyone* in the educational community needs to be able to contribute to a discourse in which the nature of educational practice can be articulated and defended so that in turn they can cooperate towards achieving the shared ends of education through engaging in the improvement of educational practice together. To give the last word to Kemmis,

> Who participates in this public process, this social practice is crucial not only in whose interests are served by educational theorizing, but also in terms of what the substance of educational theorizing will be—what educational theorizing will be about. (Kemmis, in Carr 1995, p. 17)

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2

Vocational Education Matters: Other People's Children…Not Seen and Not Heard

Paul Kessell-Holland

Introduction…Empowerment of the Other, Reclamation of Practice, and a History of Accidental System Neglect

In Chaps. 2 and 11, through the work of Hyland (2017, 2018) the marginalisation of vocational education and its subordination to academic education are traced back to the socio-economic and political stratifications of Ancient Greek society. Hyland points out that this marginalisation is both misguided and regrettable (Hyland 2018). Building on the work of Keep (2006), and Pring (1999), Hyland argues that,

> The perennial problems of vocational education…consisting in the subordinate and inferior status of vocational studies as against academic pursuits—has led to a wide range of difficulties and anomalies which have bedevilled progress in the field for a century or more. These have included,

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inter alia, a lack of investment in VET by employers and states, difficulties of attracting suitably qualified students and a general and universal lack of esteem for vocational qualifications compared with their academic counterparts. (Hyland 2017, p. 306)

Unintended Consequences and Accidental Spirals of Neglect

Cycles of government policy initiatives in the FAVE sector in England have brought with them unintended consequences far-removed from the intentions of politicians and policy professionals. As Hyland points out above, a lack of investment in vocational education by employers and states and the subtle but systematic 'downgrading' of any education for young people that does not focus on the acquisition of 'an academic education', epitomised by English A-Levels begins to make the political rhetoric surrounding the importance of vocational education to industry and the economy sound rather hollow.

This accidental spiral of neglect can be in part attributed to changes in the English economy, and the need for a rebalancing away from manufacturing towards service delivery. However things have now reached the point that industries and government alike are aware of looming skills shortages and productivity gaps in a range of occupations traditionally supplied by technical and vocational education sectors. The added wider social realization of these issues in an era of Brexit and its related often strident discourses have served to sharpen focus upon the underdevelopment and underfunding of vocational education in England. System-wide attempts to address policy shortcomings in the field of vocational education in England are already underway in the form of New Apprenticeships and T-Levels. However, with this renewed focus comes the challenge that an 'underperforming' or 'undervalued' corner of the educational landscape can also find itself distanced from the very sources of support it may need to improve itself. These may of course revolve around funding regimes (schools are a politically popular sector to fund, colleges not so much). However, in the context of understanding how best to mediate for system-wide and long-term neglect, bringing the FAVE sector staff up to speed

with trends and developments in education practice and research, is a key component and driver of change. Unfortunately, set alongside a history of reduced funding and sometimes quite severe funding cuts, sits a narrative of a reduction of interest in researching FAVE practices and systems. This has led to a situation in which most academic enquiry in England targets the schools sector and most research activity is located in Higher Education (HE).

Research in FAVE

Allied to the above challenge is a lack of *comparable* research into educational practice in the FAVE sector in relation to research conducted in schools and university systems. A growing awareness has been developing over some time now that 'FE is under researched,

> One thing to note is that the research reviewed here is in large part drawn from that done in schools and early years settings, rather than in further education and skills (FE&S) providers. This is largely due to the relative paucity of research in FE&S compared with the other sectors, and it may mean that not all of the research reviewed applies equally to FE&S. (Ofsted 2019a, p. 3)

This stands in contradiction to there being vibrant traditions of technical and further education research in many university settings, and an increasing drive by practitioners themselves to undertake research into their practice. The comparability (or not) of these activities to research practices into schools education, characterised in recent years by large scale statistically driven randomised trials (or equivalent) can further increase a wider perception of a sector that is not only underfunded but also 'not based on evidence', and therefore not best placed to take part in a debate about its own future. This is well illustrated in an Ofsted blog, bemoaning dearth of FE based research which prompted a considerable public backlash from teachers and academics alike resulting in Ofsted's Ofsted (2019b) publication of a review of research in the Further Education and Skills sector.

There also exists a compelling argument that many teachers in FAVE may be better placed engaging in subject specific research appropriate to their industrial knowledge, as they are required to be cognizant of not only pedagogic change but the continuous cycles of improvement of many of our technical sectors (see Chaps. 1 and 11). A culture of engagement in research in the FAVE sector may not necessarily generate pedagogic, or even subject specific pedagogic outputs, and the subject specificity of the sector is so diverse that engagement with industrially relevant knowledge and research may not produce a visible groundswell of activity. It could be argued that FAVE is not so much 'under researched' as it is (comparatively speaking) 'under evidenced'.

It is also important to note how views of education research differ considerably, and research practitioners from outside education view these various types of activity in noticeably different ways. The absolutist view of education practice which at times can prevail in both policy makers and some education researchers overlooks the variability of interactions with human beings and the importance of context. For some, therefore there will always be a dichotomy at the heart of some education research where those who seek to establish absolute truths, to pass on to others about 'what works' have to respond to others who to point to the importance of experience and judgement who counter, that we are only ever likely to know *what worked here, on this day, at this time with these people*. We may be able to extrapolate from these polarized positions if/when there is an overwhelming body of evidence and it is fair we can make some general statements about what we mean by good teaching practice which we may broadly defend as being 'usually true'. However, in the face of policy drivers seeking to make change or improvement on a national scale this dichotomy has historically tended either not been recognised, or left aside as an inconvenience.

Breadth of the Sector

The breadth of settings, in which learners and teachers in the sector learn and work is well documented (see for example, Gregson et al. 2015a, b). This heterogeneity may be one of its great strengths, meeting the needs of any learner of any age who is not served by any other means of learning. However with this breadth comes an inherent challenge. Attempts to homogenise a

teacher or learner experience, even in the context of one subject across one age-band (for example teaching of GCSE resit cohorts) consistently require mitigation for the differences found across the system. If a researcher is seeking answers to 'key questions' and enduring educational issues then they need first to try to work these out in the context in which they are sited. While this may mean that they may only be able to speak with credibility and be able to justify what they have discovered with reference to a relatively small group of similar learners, teachers and organisations, it is nonetheless a pragmatic and realistic place to start. There are of course issues that unite and divide us all, such as supporting young people with the acquisition of literacy skills, but even here, the nature of national strategies for the implementation of a national policy change often create unintended and unhelpful localised diversity. This may be the inevitable outcome of a deregulated and independent sector, but it is also a major consideration when exploring the validity, scope and scale of research work being undertaken in the FAVE sector in England. When compared to a relatively monolithic and highly regulated schools system with one main qualification output at age 16 (GCSE) and one overriding educational 'aim', it is small wonder that the FAVE sector can bewilder those not used to such varied approaches and settings. It also raises the question of proportionality of research in different sectors of education and how these differences should be addressed. The scope and scale of research activity in any sector of education is of course hard to quantify. However, if it might be interesting to try to establish the *percentage* of teachers or providers who have a record of research engagement in the FAVE sector and compare it to similar statistics for schools (were they available) and to consider what this might mean in relation to perceptions of the sector and the status of research conducted within it.

The Importance of Context

The 'context dependency' of FAVE is also related to its role as possibly the 'most liminal space' (Sennett 2009) in the English system of education. It is the bridge between general education and employment, as well as increasingly between general education and specialised higher education. It is also the space of transformation for adults who have under achieved during their time in compulsory education, and those seeking to move into new

employment as well as (historically at least) a space of personal development for adults seeking to develop skills for personal fulfillment. The FAVE sector educates offenders, those with Special Educational Needs (SEND) (both in specialist and mainstream contexts and settings). It also works as a space of educational remediation for some whilst being a driver of huge occupational and professional progression for others. At a systemic level perhaps a useful model for FAVE is one of an ecosystem of interdependency—between government and local need, between learner and educator, between apprentice and employer and between economic and personal drivers. Every balance and counterbalance in this web of related actions becomes context-dependent, and is simpler to express in small-scale local terms than it is in larger homogenous constructs.

For any policy official or government minister this staggering complexity and lack of logical cohesion (in comparison to the regimented order of the schools sector) can be bewildering and understandably lead to challenges. The nature of FAVE is predicated ultimately on responding to the needs of a constituency of learners, and may be seen as the interface between education and employment. While there is a long-standing track record of technical and vocational learners progressing to higher level study at university, and a proud history of learning for pleasure (particularly among adult learners), this education- workplace interface and interplay of a wide range of factors means that subject areas and curriculum content are more fluid, and more prone to sudden shifts in demand. For example, the digital revolution may require the school curriculum to make subtle alterations in the teaching of (for example) geography, but in FAVE the same societal changes are driving new course offerings, closing defunct programmes, creating deep divides between sectors of communities (that adult education in particular needs to address) and generating some fundamental shifts in both the content and nature of education offered across the sector.

The Teaching Workforce

Finally, the teaching workforce itself must be considered in any exploration of the status of the FAVE sector in England. The relative stability of the period between 2014 and 2019 in terms of national policy and support (one improvement agency, one set of Professional Standards), should

be contrasted with a number of prior initiatives. However even in this recent period there has been a consistently high rate of change and staff turnover among teaching professionals. The regulation / deregulation of teaching qualifications and consistent changes to modes and models of delivery, increasing pressures of work and a range of other factors should be considered. The often part time nature of teaching, whether as part of a portfolio career incorporating the profession you are teaching, or whether as a 'serial part timer' has implications for the diversity mentioned above. Changes to management structures, reporting methods and all manner of shifts in ways of working will also have an impact. For teachers presenting themselves individually or collectively as part of a profession, finding an identity as an educator, becomes progressively more challenging with each layer of complexity or bureaucracy.

A sense of identity may be a particularly important factor in the otherness and marginalisation of the FE teaching workforce. An external view of 'teaching' is much closer aligned to the world of *school* teaching which is hallmarked by a degree level educated profession with a national curriculum subject specialism, taking pupils through a general education process. In the schools sector, teachers are seen as career professionals, and expected to have been trained prior to entering the classroom.

All of these statements *may be* true in the case of those in FAVE. They also may be wildly inaccurate. Many FAVE teachers strongly identify themselves as *not* school teachers. They are often proud of their time spent in industry, have had (or still have) successful careers outside the classroom. They may work in specialist areas, such as offender learning, may be volunteers, or specialise in extremely narrow fields of work—both scientific or societal. They may be training as teachers whilst already teaching. Burning questions facing policy professionals and teachers in the sector today include; What is the driving narrative that they identify with in their teaching career?; Is it that of a classroom practitioner, one of an 'expert', a master craftworker / artisan?; Do they see their teaching as passing on hard won skills and practice to a new generation, rather than 'education'?; In these contexts, should they be engaging in professional development which increases their identity as a teacher, a dual professional or should they seek to carve out a new identity altogether?

It is not that we should necessarily celebrate educators in FAVE not identifying themselves as teachers so much as to ask why. If asked the

question 'would you consult an amateur dentist' or 'would you use an unqualified gas fitter?' it is easy enough to understand why we need our education workforce to have a strong sense of their professional identity and an understanding of the discipline of education and the essentially moral nature of educational practice including extensive knowledge of the techniques and methods of teaching. The deeper point is just that they may need a great deal more than this.

If the practice of any craft can be seen as tradition (Dunne 1997; Carr 1995), then it is certainly true that one part of this tradition has always been the development of skill and craft through cooperation and sharing (Sennett 2009). Guild knowledge, tacit understanding, mastery and transcendence of practical or cerebral activity have been passed from generation to generation for centuries. A key question here is, did these master craftsmen and women of the past identify as teachers? It may seem an irrelevance to a modern educational system, but perhaps to the teacher themselves this identity challenge is very real. Do they, ultimately, occupy a space alongside classroom practitioners in primary and secondary schools? Do they 'belong' more in university spaces? In an employer's training suites? Who are modern FAVE teaching staff, and what role do they truly play in meeting the vocational education needs of our nation? Do they occupy a purely transactional space, or drive personal transformation for their students and society whilst imparting skills for work and life?

In this complex identity landscape, there has been a further exponential change in the past decade which cannot be ignored. There has always been change to the roles required of individuals in their workplace—whether through new tools, experiments in practice or through the demise of an industry, but the digital revolution through which we are living has increased this change in almost all spheres. As a minimum it has added expectations of fluency and literacy in a new realm to practices which have remained largely unchanged for some time, but in other professions the digital world has created a sense of 'hyper evolution' for some roles and raises questions of the extent to which young people in school or college today are being trained for jobs that no longer exist or do not yet exist. While this has happened to our society and culture before, it is certainly a massively destabilising force for a teacher. Can teachers identify still as being from a profession or craft which they no longer recognise? Have digital or technological expectations of teaching created yet

another barrier they have to overcome before identifying as part of their new profession? Once again, the question arises, does this require a new way of thinking for these practitioners?

A historical perspective allows us to remember that learning in the past was predicated on a longer term relationship between learner and educator. Whether in the cloister or the workshop, knowledge transfer and skills acquisition took place in ways that possibly are still mirrored in some places of employment, but rarely in formal education practices in this country. Notwithstanding the impossibility of measuring the educational effectiveness of a learning method long consigned to history, and the likely poor experience of many young people in indentured apprenticeship, the necessary long-term co-operation between more and less experienced practitioners inherent in this approach to learning has a long lasting societal legacy. The factory system perpetuated similar models for decades if not centuries, and we consistently seek to recreate forms of this co-operative, shared learning for the young person of today. But the extent to which continue to allow the teacher, the master craftsperson, the same opportunity to continue to develop theory and transcend their own capabilities in their craft is questionable (see Chaps. 1 and 11). Through practice over many years, *whilst sharing their knowledge* the greatest practitioners were able to explore their own practice through teaching, theory development and inquiry—a model we have retained in many Universities, in many artforms, but perhaps lost in the FAVE sector?

Practitioner Led Research in FAVE

There are different kinds of research in education and they all have strengths and limitations. Practitioner research is particularly good at dealing with matters of context; taking the experience of teacher/learners as the starting point for enquiry and research and for making a difference in practice. Practitioner research can even contribute to theory, by testing theory out in the arena of practice. Practitioner research is most open to criticism when it is not conducted in a systematic way, when it is not informed by peer-reviewed research and published literature and where the evidence generated by the research does not support the claims made.

Most teachers and trainers want to get better at what they do. Borrowing from the work of the sociologist Richard Sennett in *The Craftsman* (published by Penguin in 2009), most of us don't just want to 'get by' we want to get better…and better…and better! If you accept the argument that putting any idea into educational practice *is* a process of inquiry and therefore a form of research (Kemmis 1995; Carr 1995) (see Chap. 1) then every teacher and trainer could be considered to be a researcher. Training in the techniques of research however is not enough. Teachers and trainers need to know how to make sure that their research is systematic, credible, informed by peer-reviewed research conducted by others and is evidence-based. Good educational practice comes from good research into educational practice *in context*. Educational theory is strengthened or weakened by being tested out in the arena of practice. Systematic enquiry into practice in context matters. That is why practitioner-research matters so much.

It is in this context that the practitioner-led research programmes funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) reside. In a policy system which values 'large scale' research based on the homogeneity of a large schools sector and a context of reduced funding and (by association) planning time for teachers, the programme attempts to give teachers in the FAVE sector the capacity to develop systematic, practice-focused research in context in situations where practitioners are reminded to keep an open mind throughout the research process and to be prepared to admit when things have not gone as well as expected and to be prepared to readily acknowledge that not every piece of research can be an immediate and runaway success!

By supporting a programme which directly targets the concerns of practitioners and local context *first*, whilst helping individuals find a method or argument which may over time expand their proposals to a wider group of practitioners, the programme aims to benefit organisations and individuals alike, by empowering and encouraging them to conduct research into practice and explorations in theory testing and theory development that is shared with their peers. The programme does not seek to create professional researchers, although this may be one outcome. It rather seeks to help teachers to reconnect with understandings and forms of knowledge that find their origins in the works of Aristotle. The programme aims to stimulate wider research into the sector at all levels, and to build a critical mass of research-literate and research-active teachers and leaders who are capable of taking educational practice

forward in the future. The programme is no longer the only way in which practitioners are able to begin this journey, but part of a range of movements that seek to empower teachers to become research-literate, evidence- informed—its insiders-practitioners who care enough about educational practice in the sector to take it forward, sometimes in small incremental ways and sometimes is ways which may be considered dramatic and even subversive (Dunne 2005).

A Changing Landscape, or a Difficult Climate?

It seems hard to make this point during such accelerated political times (for any historical reader, the UK at the time of writing, is currently in the midst of the Brexit challenges and the pressures of dealing with COVID-19 pandemic which are creating ever greater turmoil within government and policy for every department). However the levels of system-wide instability across the FAVE landscape over the past few decades are hard to over-state. Whilst many lobbying groups will point immediately to the funding shortfalls in Further Education (Wolf 2015) there exists beneath this a potentially deeper challenge for the sector to overcome.

According to the Institute for Government, between 1980 and February 2018 there were 28 major pieces of legislation introduced affecting FAVE, 49 Secretaries of State with responsibility for skills, and no national organisations supporting aspects of FAVE (Government departments included) that have survived longer than a decade. There have additionally been changes to funding rules and resultant changes to teaching delivery in *every* academic cycle for the past decade.

By comparison, there have been 5 Secretaries of State with responsibility for Education, with a continuous leadership role over School provision, with only one major restructure of educational practice in secondary schools. This discontinuity in the technical education arena manages to both reinforce a sense of calm 'tradition' in the theoretical world of 'learning', and also to create a moving target for parents and employers alike to try and understand when looking to advise or employ young people. Change on this scale is unlikely to create many constants with which to work, and long-serving FAVE professionals have become inured to the shifting sands upon which they must often work.

The recent shift under a new administration to place Further Education and Skills directly with the Secretary of State may signal a welcome shift in rhetoric and positioning for the sector, but it also creates a policy weakness. Any brief run directly by a Secretary of State will by definition receive less time than one managed by a minister of state, simply because the more senior the politician the greater the demands on their time (e.g. Cabinet meetings). As such whilst this may lead to macro announcements on funding for FAVE learners or organisations, it may stymie further any change of direction or approach.

This is not meant to criticise either ministers or officials. On a systemic level, the vast majority of ministers appointed to any brief are educated via an A Level and University Route. Ignoring any bias towards independent or state education, which may account for certain education policy expectations (such as a relentless focus on the socio-economic background of students entering 'elite' universities), it is interesting to note an intriguing data 'gap'. In the Sutton Trust 2010 report on the educational background of MPs, intended to highlight the gulf between parliamentarians and the educational background of the electorate they serve *does not even refer to the college system*. So few MPs might have attended an education sector which serves approximately half of our young people that it was not even a valid statistical field in the data. There has been a lot of political positioning made of the current Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sajid Javid) having attended a Further Education College, but this is in the context of taking his three A Levels and being able to 'escape' to University and his ultimately high flying career. The number of politicians who have experienced true vocational or technical learning is not representative of the constituents they serve.

Data for civil servants is not available, but personal experience suggests that whilst an increasing number of policy officials are well versed in the FAVE sector, it is extremely rare to find one who attended or taught at a vocational or technical college. With this in mind, faced with an education sector which has little public visibility, less regulation (at many points in the past few decades) and which serves an employer community which until recently has been happy to pick up graduating learners with little fuss, it is easy to see how it can become a place for more experimental or reactive policy and funding decisions. If experience is the basis of

practice and craft, or the understanding of it in others, a lack of this experience at the heart of the decision-making machine is not a reflection on those who have done their best to support the sector. There has been no time dedicated to mastery of the subject at a policy level, but perhaps this is not as a deliberate action by government, and it should be acknowledged that there are genuine attempts currently being made to address this.

On a macro level, for the past three decades, until a landmark speech from prime minister Theresa May in February 2018, Government policy has relentlessly promoted Higher Education via a University route as the only possible aspirational option for young people seeking to complete their education and achieve gainful employment. Irrespective of political leaning, this has been the 'north star' of educational policy: get young people to University, and all will be well—quite possibly based in part on the success criteria necessary for ministers and civil servants, and those professions which have a consistent voice within the parliamentary democracy. During a period of industrial decline and manufacturing slowdown, any balancing narrative from large manufacturing or technical industries has been muted at best, and in a time of reducing numbers required within the technically skilled labour market and (from the EU) uncontrolled cross border movement there is no reason for such a narrative to be listened to as attentively.

On a micro level, this same tension has played out for learners who aspire to success through a consistent message of 'University or failure' that has left individuals struggling to achieve qualifications they did not seek for employment they did not aspire to let alone enter. Their personal perception (self-identity) of secure employment prospects and a financially successful life has been altered by national perception to the potential detriment of local employers seeking young people to employ, as well as the young people themselves. Emergent evidence in the from the independent panel's report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, (Augar 2019) demonstrates the growing gap between outcomes from different university courses, and the challenge in justifying this investment on a nationwide basis.

The rhetoric to support this relentless drive for higher education has been consistent, powerful, and credible. Only very recently, faced with productivity shortfalls, Brexit and a rapidly ageing technical workforce

with no younger generation replacements, we must ask has any thought been given to the corrosive nature of messaging that focuses squarely on one part of an educational system and gives it preference to another. Even the issues facing our economy post the 2008 crash did not move national discourse away from graduate level education, in the face of near crisis levels of unemployment amongst millennial graduates in the UK.

There are policies in train at the time of writing which are attempting, not for the first time, to address some of these issues, and a growing momentum to balance this narrative (perhaps in part driven by increasingly visible skills shortages in the face of Brexit). However the deeper perceptions of education 'streams' (academic and technical) are profoundly entrenched and may take many years to overcome, if ever. It is important to understand the gaps that exist between rhetoric and practice to better understand the most effective policy decisions that could be made now to address these challenges.

Learners in the FAVE Sector

Over the past five years for which data exist (2012–2016) numbers of learners age 16–18 in the English system have remained broadly static, at around 1.4 million. If numbers are grouped to divide these learners into simple categories of 'school' and 'non school', the data shows that if Sixth form colleges are considered 'school' then the balance of learners between these two constituent groups of almost precisely 50/50 in each of these years. If (as many sixth forms would attest) the construct of a sixth form college is that of an independent place of study which includes an increasing amount of 'non school' teaching, such as vocational learning and a range of specialist qualifications, and we count these colleges as being 'outside' of the school sector, then the balance of learners is closer to 36% in school, 64% in colleges.

The rhetoric and political positioning of FAVE however is somewhat different. School based education is a consistent narrative in the media and with politicians alike, with FAVE lagging a long way behind. Perhaps the most visible of these positioning issues can be seen in the 'results day'

mentality which prevails as the sole measure of success for young people across the country.

GCSE results are forensically analyzes and compared year by year. A Level results have the same treatment, with the added excitement of discussion of clearing, social mobility for disadvantaged learners to selective Universities (principally Oxbridge). In the background, for the large number of Level three vocational learners these results are irrelevant and often by the time of A Level results day many of these students have already accepted University places or moved into employment. The entry statistics for HE are published, the A Level results statistics and Level 3 vocational statistics are published, but there is precious little public discourse for those learners who have taken technical and vocational courses.

It is interesting to note that government *and opposition* speakers discuss school based learning and A Levels in the public arena much more frequently than discussions which include Further or Vocational education.

This is the rhetoric, or more precisely the 'rhetoric gap'—an absence of public discourse and visibility that has led (perhaps correctly) to the perception in society that a college education is undervalued and that a college education is not an important driver to society or the economy, when neither could be further from the truth. As has been wryly observed, FE is a really great place…for other people's children. I would contend that things are possibly worse than that, in that these 'other people's children', rather than being seen and not heard, are mostly *not seen*, as well as *not heard*—only those with the gravitas and credibility of A Level learning seem to exist in the national consciousness.

The picture is improving—in part due to the pressing need to upskill a workforce due to be depleted of (some) easily imported technical labour over the coming years via Brexit, and possibly in part due to the growing pressure on treasury and personal finances from university student debt. It would have been unheard of prior to the outcome of the Brexit referendum for a serving Prime Minister to speak of the need for greater parity between 'theoretical and 'vocational' learning, and for more young people to aspire to technical skill. Placing FE and Skills in the brief of the Secretary of State for Education—however briefly this may last- is an unprecedented and powerful signal of change.

This does not begin however, to address the underlying problem that much of the decades of rhetoric has created—an otherness for parts of the education system. This divorce between, 'academic and vocational' and 'practice and theory', is perhaps the most corrosive approach to older understandings of practice (see Chap. 1) and more realistic and holistic understandings and contextualised learning possible. Those subjects which seamlessly weave together practical and theoretical skills and which we use as the poster children of why this is important (most notably medicine, but also music, engineering and others) seem to be rather inconvenient truths that public discourse cannot quite manage to fit into a model where success is to achieve an academic qualification, and everyone else does 'something different'. It also does not take into account the context of why an individual has the drive and motivation to succeed in their area of study, at their level of maturity, in view of prior experience and their expectations of what success might look like.

Vocational Practice and Skill Development

One particular area of concern is the impact that this consistent landscape of change has had on curriculum and how we understand the learning of practice and skill. Progressive legislation has variously relied on the skills of those within a given industry to pass a person as 'competent' in a skill, expected delivery of highly detailed atomised outcomes from a wide range of possible learning activities, put learning in the hands of employers with 'no qualification outcome'. There are innumerable wider historical examples, of these approaches prevailing and being delivered concurrently in the FAVE sector in 2020, sometimes by the same staff.

There has been no consistent underlying philosophy in education practice particularly in vocational education, and as such there is very little institutional memory or knowledge upon which to draw, or a long term approach that can guide providers or their workforce. The identity debate discussed previously is brought to the fore in this context. The rise of NVQ approaches also saw a commensurate rise in Assessors within FAVE—staff who did not teach but 'checked learning', a role which has persisted in much Apprenticeship delivery. Staff variously may see themselves as Assessors or Trainers and use

both terms interchangeably but avoid the idea of being a 'teacher', quite rightly in some cases. For teachers there existed an identity for a long time beforehand—the identity of a 'lecturer'. For others there are 'instructors', and recently a further fracturing of this landscape to create 'subject coaches' 'learning mentors' and a range of other roles which variously and confusingly both do and do not denote having a role in which learners are educated by that member of staff. In this deregulated and complex education environment it is hard to see how best to reclaim a space in which the development of skill, craft and acquisition of educational practice are best understood in circumstances where learning and assessment can be both contextualised and consistent.

The new T Level programme may manage to align some of these challenges over time, and hopes to become the 'gold standard' of technical education, but to do so it will need to either put the sector through a considerable period of rapid change, or erode a substantial legacy of prior (and generally successful) qualifications that are known and understood, despite some lingering questions over their validity or purpose.

It appears that this is nowhere better exemplified than in Apprenticeship policy. The history of apprenticeship is long and there are many evolutions of this most vocational of learning forms. However, it is an induction to practice that has in the main rested with employers (or previously Guilds) to be the arbiters of necessary standard. It was also, perhaps crucially in this context, a training ground that was built on the supremacy of decision making by the profession, and also the investment of a profession in its own legacy over time.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty lies within measurement. A government seeking to fund any system will also by its nature seek to measure what has been achieved. An employer likewise will seek to measure what return an employee brings to their business. How long does a good education take? Who gets to decide? What forms the curriculum? In what order? Measuring skills that may be hard to define or take years to master to be able to apportion grading, funding and management can challenge even the most engaged policy maker. The employer landscape now is also so varied even in one industry that a qualification that is ideal and 'fit for purpose' for some companies may be the exact opposite for others. Should government continue to step in and legislate content that is 90%

acceptable to all parties, or allow employers to plan this learning with the commensurate risks that some will be totally dis-satisfied with the outcome? Who in this model is able to make recommendations of most logical sequencing of learning, or input knowledge of the underpinning skills an Apprentice may need to be successful *outside* the domains immediately referenced by their employers?

The 'industry standard' measurement of education practice has evolved to be Guided Learning Hours (GLH)—but how does a practice that is learnt by being part of an industry over a long period of time respond to being measured in such a granular way? Conversely, if a 'trainee' has a value to a business in part *because* they are the junior member of a developing group of skilled workers, how does an employer measure their worth? Does investing in their future justify time spent or finance committed in the name of their future workforce? If true apprenticeship is a relationship built over time between a multi layered group of individuals and masters of their craft, then breaking this down into a collection of individual skills and acts may have a value in a time and motion study, but it does not track the value of the whole—the unconscious skill, the indefinable learned behaviours of time spent within the workshop, studio or factory.

There exists in FAVE divisions of purpose, policy and approach, that will take the collective practical wisdom of all of us to resolve. Practitioners, providers, policy-makers and employers all have their part to play. There are green shoots of change all around at the time of writing, and many positive steps being taken. The learning we take from practice, from those who are directly engaged in resolving these deeper challenges must not be ignored, but instead placed at the heart of this discourse as we plot a new course, and try (again) to work out how to not have an 'unwelcome cousin' at the educational table, and instead celebrate the exceptional talents skills and practices of those who work simultaneously with hand, heart and head.

Conclusion

Around 10 and 20 years ago research in FAVE used to be conducted *upon* the sector by 'outsider' researchers often from HE. There is now a growing and critical mass of research-active 'insider' practitioner-researchers across the sector who not only understand what 'good' practitioner research looks like but also have direct and personal experience of conducting research *by* the sector *in* the sector *for* the sector. Theirs has not been an isolated journey but one in which they have they have shared experiences and cooperated not only with the other sector practitioners but also with policy professionals and research active staff from HE working in genuine partnership.

ETF has consistently invested in supporting practitioner research across the sector. Through the Practitioner Research Programme, the Foundation has established new policy-practice-research relations. These are beginning to improve how we go about policy development, implementation and evaluation. It has also developed a new model of educational change by illustrating how educational practice and the quality of practitioner-research can be improved through a practice-focused model of CPD for teachers and trainers.

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3

The Internal Goods of Educational Leadership: Alternative Approaches to Quality Improvement

Robin Webber-Jones

Introduction: Early Memories

This chapter employs a number of critical incidents from my own professional practice as an education leader to 'bring to life' the day-to-day dilemmas and changes that education leaders and managers have to face as well as the tensions and contradictions these can create in relation to the protection and development of their own educational values.

When I undertook my teacher training a range of guest speakers were invited to present and discuss their practice and the pedagogy that related to their subject of expertise. One of the guest speakers talked about her desire to come to work to do the best job she could. She could not understand why anyone would come to work to be anything less than 'outstanding'. The language of inspection had been drawn into her vocabulary and infiltrated her aspirations but the sentiment was clear we should expect the best of our students and, consequently we should expect the best of ourselves. Likewise my experiences of education leadership in colleges has generally been one

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where colleagues from within institutions, or from other institutions (competitors or otherwise) are proud of the work that they do and the impact they have upon individuals and communities. Yet, I have frequently met people who have become jaded by their experiences of working in the sector. Teachers have felt overwhelmed with paperwork and the pressures of justifying 'performance' across the board against a range of measures decided at national, regional or local levels. I have met managers scarred by decisions they have had to make because of the imperatives of inspection regimes or other quality assurance measures that demanded by a range of other external bodies. That is not to say that in the quasi-public sector there should not be accountability or scrutiny of work undertaken to establish value for money. However, such measures need to be balanced with an appreciation of the burden of costs that such regimes add to the workloads of those striving to do their best in an under-funded sector alongside the pressures of accountability that education and leaders have for the decisions that they make in relation to the distribution of limited resources. Over the years I have become interested in how these dynamics and tensions operate. It is also worth considering how new approaches to education leadership might encourage more collaboration and provide an alternative to technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement (discussed elsewhere in this book see for example Chaps. 1 and 11). This chapter argues that technical-rational preoccupations with educational outcomes and the practices of micro-management do little to improve educational practice in the sector. Instead, they operate to restrict people achieving the excellence that was so openly discussed as I was training. This is a goal which most sector practitioners continue to pursue, sometimes against the odds.

In sum, this chapter argues that external inspection regimes have a wide impact on any organisation and the process of preparing for and participating in 'doing' inspection is both costly and time-consuming.

Critical Incident 1

My wife and I both have the same text message template. She is a primary school teacher and I am a senior manager in an college of Further Education (FE). Our one word message simply reads 'Ofsted—I repeat—Ofsted'. It is never an easy message to send or to receive. However, when one of us become subject of an inspection 'visit', it is the message that alerts each of us that we are about to face some challenges times. Over the years this Ofsted alert has been sent many times. Then the 'fun' starts as family arrangements get

re-planned before the inspectorate descends onto one of our institutions. For me it generally means a cancelled weekend while things are checked, checked and triple checked. Even in inspections that we knew would go 'well' caused fear when the call came. All inspections cost organisations considerably in terms of lost time during inspection week, in preparing additional information, including printing and other activity. These preparations include training for the institutional nominee who will be the first point of contact with the inspectors, preparation meetings involving countless hours of discussion as organisations move towards inspection. In the most recent Ofsted Framework a twelve week consultation period led Ofsted to say, weeks before the framework was due to be launched, that it might not work well for FE. Nevertheless the same framework was then implemented across the FE and Skills sector with many inspections taking place in the first two weeks of its launch. The framework maintained the same overall grading structure which reduces the full complexity of education provision in complex organisations down to a single grade, with all the repercussions that the blunt measurement of complex practice brings. While it should be acknowledged that inspectors are, in my experience, passionate about education, and the recent model of inspection has made an attempt to be grounded in literature, as well as a rigorous recruitment and training regime for inspectors, sometimes I have felt that the structures and discourses of inspection do not allow space for a critique of practice beyond those permitted in the confines of any framework. While it may not be intentional, a consequence of the current inspection framework is that for the 'inspected', the experience of inspection can be stressful.

Contrast this with some of the approaches that had been taken in Higher Education (HE), which is also an area of activity in which colleges are also involved.

Critical Incident 2

My own professional practice has involved in work undertaken as part of a pilot for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which is a measure of teaching quality in England that HE has moved towards (its introduction has also been a controversial development that came in as part of the Higher Education Research Act (HERA) (2017). Therefore, to test it in the spirit of peer review a two-year programme of around 150 people from the Higher Education world got together to test and critique various approaches. Over two years a range of considered evaluations took place, as well as a further external evaluation. This was supported by a team of officers who helped to establish elements of

review methodology that were to be tested. Every three months review teams would come together to talk through how they felt about the enactment of the methodology and many spoke freely about the flaws they found that it had. Throughout the process, there was a sense of camaraderie and rigour. At every moment I felt able to express my opinion and debate was positively encouraged. The rigour of the process, which to a large extent was confidential as ideas were being tested, anticipated the impact of these different TEF approaches to educational inspection, evaluation and improvement including what these might mean for different 'types' of institution (colleges, universities, 'challenger' providers). Decisions derived from these discussions then informed the wider roll-out of the TEF programme.

There is much discourse in the literature to support the claim that funding for education in the FAVE sector is insufficient to support the needs and multiple purposes of the sector. However, such claims lend further support to arguments which call for the establishment of an inspection regime which actively enhances not diminishes FAVE curricula and those who attempt to make curricula in the FAVE sector good in practice.

In staff rooms, offices and corridors education leaders and teachers regularly and privately remark that they are weary of compliance measures and of working in the shadow of Ofsted inspections. Critics of Ofsted go as far to suggest that institutions should stop putting banners outside their schools and colleges announcing their Ofsted ratings, but instead should post information about what they do well. Over time, the same has become true of the TEF ratings which was never meant to be a marketing tool, however, as soon as 'gold' ratings were awarded many organisations covered nearby bus stops and train stations with posters publicly proclaiming their TEF award. This could be at least in part because the HERA Act itself promotes neoliberal technical-rational approaches to the evaluation and improvement of practice in HE. As students numbers became uncapped, the survival of institutions was dependent upon either recruiting more undergraduates or shifting focus of activity around research or international activity. It is interesting to note that FE colleges have not had a range of sources from which they could claim funding. What the TEF pilot did, however, was to show that educational values need not be diminished when reaching conclusions about the quality of teaching and learning. For example, as Critical

Incident 2 describes above, as well as reporting on the processes and findings of the TEF pilot, an independent review on the approach was also built in to the development of the TEF Framework. This was all before any of it 'went live'. Contrast this with Critical Incident 1 above where the three month consultation that Ofsted had for its new Education Inspection Framework was implemented in FE in July 2019 (before it was due to 'go live' in September of 2019 was subsequently found 'not to work' for FE because the combined elements of Teaching, Learning Assessment (TLA) and outcomes could not be operationalized.

The reality is that the new Ofsted Framework was meant to focus on curriculum design and the implementation of that design. However, the terms 'curriculum' and 'curriculum design' are not well defined in the Framework. In addition, in my experience, in much the same way that curriculum design, theory and practice are not well-understood by FAVE practitioners. Furthermore, the day to day realities of practice in FE are arguably equally not well understood by members of the inspectorate (which has an alleged turnover rate of around 25% each year).

From personal and professional experience, I have seen many examples of the kind of practice in education leadership I would like my own leadership approach to follow. Generally, this is marked by the ethos of trying to help and encourage the people that I work with and for, to do their job as well as they can. To be the best teacher, education manager or leader they can be. I do not want my practice to limit people through harsh uncompromising approaches which do not enhance other human beings or build their confidence. I want to be an educational leader who understands and accepts that my judgement may be flawed and to be open to admitting my mistakes and learning from them in situations where all involved can accept that wisdom comes slowly and often on foot. I want to develop in myself a desire to stand up where there is injustice, while at the same time ensuring everyone strives to do better. Just as Sennett (2009, p. 85) alludes, the idea of quality improvement is an 'internal good' of a practice and is not served well by external enforcement. He puts this most succinctly where he points out that few human beings want to settle for mediocrity, 'most people don't just want to get by, most people want to get better'. Indeed, even former Prime Minister Tony Blair acknowledged in his memoirs that the moment he understood what

he needed to do to be Prime Minister was the moment when he finished in the role as he had undertaken everything that he needed to acquire the wisdom to do the role.

This chapter argues that courage, challenge and incremental reflection are difficult to realize in practice because controlling, top-down, technical-rational, micro-managed, approaches to educational evaluation and improvement which focus almost exclusively on outcomes, such as those adopted by inspection and funding bodies in England (who are implementing, often incoherent, education policies) get in the way and close down the spaces in which the freedom to make good judgment in context can operate (Sennett 2009; Gregson and Todd 2019).

Technical-rational philosophy and epistemology which surrounds the evaluation and improvement of educational practice in FE tend to dominate the actions of FE leaders. It is assumed that the technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement uncover 'the truth' about what is really going on in the sector. For example, on Wednesday the 3rd of April 2019 the government issued a 'one-stop' document to 'strengthen college oversight'. In reality the document detailed a whole (new) range of interventions, and the new ways in which interventions from the FE Commissioner can be triggered. These interventions, focused mainly on insolvency, and interventions could be triggered if there was a sense that an institution could become insolvent within two years. Funding information continued to be issued annually, based on lagged learner numbers. In the case of adult learning and apprenticeships, this information was provided on a monthly basis. It is worth noting that in the previous five years in the sector, there had been 60 FE Commissioner interventions and 39 Area Review Visits. This combined with the fact that there were four FE colleges awarded 'outstanding' grades at the time, and between January 2017 and May 2018 no FE College received an Ofsted 'outstanding' rating. It is striking that this imbalance in outcome and performance in the sector has never been commented on by any agency of senior sector leader. In April 2019 the Association of Colleges and Department for Education put together an hour-long online seminar to describe the changes to the 2016 performance tables for qualifications. The webinar revealed that the changes had resulted in a minority of non-Academic qualifications contributing

to performance tables. Therefore, it was announced that the DfE were launching a two-part review into qualifications post-16 to ensure that many would make the league tables. This happened at the same time that Ofsted was consulting on a new inspection regime which aimed to put 'less emphasis on outcomes'. However, the key trigger for inspection and any other type of intervention remains outcomes. Alex Ferguson, in one of his talks to MBA students at the Harvard Business School, put the emphasis on being able to watch and listen as key strengths of leadership, to make change and to understand how to get the best out of people. This approach does not always exist in the space allowed to 'insider practitioners' in the technical-rational world of inspection in FAVE in which the experiences and accounts of teachers, managers and education leaders are considered to be unreal, unreliable and not to be trusted. Herein lies the problem. Raven (2019) and others have given specific examples of the ongoing challenges with policy implementation that leads to little change. Raven argues that while there has been significant continual changes to policy its interpretation and enactment has done little to change leadership practice. For example, since at least 1997 studies have (including Sainsbury 2016) evidenced a strong causal link between localities where individuals participation and progression to higher levels of learning is low and those places and populations where social mobility has largely stagnated. In response, the last two or more decades a range of initiatives and policy imperatives designed to address these disparities have been introduced. These include, Education Action Zones, Aimhigher, lifelong learning networks and, most recently, Opportunity Area programmes. Despite their progressive intentions, these initiatives have never been fully embedded and have been subject to continual change. Those leading the sector have encountered a number of challenges in enabling such initiatives to gain traction and an securing the enduring, transformational impact policymakers intended. Notable among these challenges are the lack of

- a coordinated, joined-up approach and supported approach to policy implementation;
- engagement with community groups in order to co-develop solutions that are sensitive to the challenges faced by particular localities; and

- recognition and support for practitioners (including community leaders, teachers, tutors, family members, employers and others) who can support and guide policy implementation is not in place and so change is not embedded.

Raven and his colleagues have started to conduct research into how community groups engage with the theme of social mobility. They have also begun to produce ways of working which seek to challenge and change the technical-rational status quo in approaches to educational evaluation and improvement.

Fielding (2003) argues that the 'existential texture of a concept affects how we see the world, how we understand it, how we engage with it, and how we conduct our daily work within it' (2003, p. 292). That is why our concepts of the evaluation and improvement are so important, because they influence how we understand educational practice and what makes it 'good'.

This is essential to improve the practice of education—beyond producing things which have a known end (*poesis*), for example, a lesson plan, a handout, a budget profile) to exercising good judgement based on wisdom and from a position of being disposed to do the right thing, at the right time for everyone involved (*phronesis*). Fielding (2003) emphasizes how the language we use to describe educational policy and its aspirations, matters a great deal because it influences how and how well we can identify and distinguish between levels of change in education and most importantly because the same language signifies the relays of power and control at work in the framing of notions of 'social justice' and a 'better' society. Fielding challenges current approaches to assessing the 'impact' of education in England and traces their deeper ontological and epistemological roots in the nineteenth century mechanical world view. Fielding (2003) also notes how the technical-rational approach to education reform, coupled with afatuous and hectoring form of language, the language of 'performance, has come to pervade the discourse of educational policy in England, through notions of 'impact' and its outcomes.

Although identifying the impact of any social policy upon practice is never a straightforward matter (see Chap. 12), it is relatively easy to identify some of the negative impacts of the policies of inspection regimes on

current practices in FAVE. This raises questions about who is best placed to make judgements about the practice of further education and its improvement. In the traditional sense technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement employ a range of data that is then laid before sector practitioners in ways which makes solutions to problems seem simple and obvious. However, this assumes that the data gathered are most relevant and that the questions being considered cover the full complexity of educational practices. Sarason (1990) argues that what we choose to notice and what we choose to ignore in the highly charged political contexts and power relations of educational reform, are of enormous importance. He notes the of ensuring that context and complexity are acknowledged when judgements are being made. Sarason highlights how education reform can become effectively locked into a cycle of failure where, 'the more things change the more they remain the same, or (even get) worse' (1990, p. 8) in such circumstances and situations the illusion of change, in the form of activity and hyper-activity, masquerades as change itself.

The challenge of the technical-rational approach to educational evaluation and improvement is that it assumes that the impact of policy can be identified as an event or outcome. This fails to take into account not only that impact can be part of a process but also, that there can be outcomes which are not intended (see Chap. 12). Furthermore, practices are complex processes, and the context that they operate in can be highly influential. In the context of FAVE, it is difficult to see how research (which has generally been conducted by individuals not working within the sector) can be used to inform policy in meaningful and appropriate ways. It is evident that wider groups (Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and others) have influenced policy. However there is little to suggest that the actual impact of policy on practitioners charged with the responsibility of making these policies 'good' in practice can be solely informed by contributions from 'outsiders' (see Chap. 1). An example of underdeveloped policy/policy not fully engaging with educational research can be found in the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 'Making Good Progress' (2007) which mistook Assessment for Learning (AfL)' (Wiliam 2009) as a 'type' (not a process) of assessment that can be levelled. Of course, not

all policy decisions will necessarily be 'researched' but the suggestion here is that more should be.

There are some standard routes of engagement in and dissemination of research are opening up to practitioners in FAVE. These offer some redress to the issues raised by under-developed and under-supported policy formulation and implementation. They also provide a way of responding in a collegial and informed way from a more considered research base (as in the case of the TEF Critical Incident 2 described above). These dissemination strategies include education research conference presentations, papers, seminars, workshops and others. This increase in research activity in the sector not only signals how the FAVE sector is becoming increasingly interesting for outside researchers but also how 'insider' sector practitioners are becoming increasingly interested and confident in engaging in educational research into the improvement of their own practice. In this respect The Education Training Foundation (ETF) have been far-sighted in consistently funding practitioner-research programmes such as those offered through the Practitioner Research Programme (PRP).

The PRP adopts Dewey's (1933) pragmatic epistemology to frame an approach to practice-focused research from the, 'bottom-up' and 'inside-out', as a counterbalance to discourses of 'excellence', 'best practice' and the use of a single adjective such as 'outstanding' or a number from 1–3 to describe all of the richness, complexities and challenges of educational practice. The practice-focused approach to education developed by ETF and SUNCETT in the PRP stands in stark contrast to traditional top-down, outside-in approach to educational evaluation improvement currently adopted by Ofsted. A critical element of the ETF-SUNCETT PRP which aims to ensure that the voices of FAVE leaders are heard by policymakers and that policymakers are able to use this information to inform, influence and improve policy decisions.

This chapter argues that FAVE leaders need to be able to find a voice and have the confidence to exercise it if they are to explain the difficulties experienced by senior managers for example in implementing a highly complex policy which demands the publication of performance tables in very short timeframes. For example, in an Association of Colleges Webinar in 2019 the basics of such a policy took 58 minutes to explain.

Education leaders in the sector also need to be able to explain how such imperatives do not necessarily improve educational experiences or raise standards. The cost of technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement are evident and expensive. As yet these have not been examined or costed by stakeholders the sector.

In twelve years of managing in FE colleges I have seen over 20 leaders take time off with stress and 25 made redundant. Personally, I have taken on additional leadership responsibilities every year. All of this has happened without a national support strategy or an agreed training programme. Therefore, it has not been possible to capture the true cost of the policy imperatives that education leaders are expected to enact, from financial, human or student education experience perspectives.

Politics and current approaches to educational evaluation and improvement in Further Education however, are of course not going to change immediately. Policy makers cannot know all the issues of the problems that practitioners are trying to solve or ensure that they have sound solutions to those problems if they only consider hard, outcomes based measures of impact. It is clear that the financial overheads and human costs of the current system are high. It is also obvious that change takes time. Indeed, as Coffield (2010), notes, it took 200 years for reflective, research-informed approaches to hand-washing to become commonplace in the field of medicine. In the same publication Coffield, also draws attention to significant and sometimes tragic consequences for people who challenge the received wisdom of the 'Establishment' and to those who question practices that have been unchallenged for so long that they are now taken for granted.

It is important to note however that technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement cannot and should not be pitted against pragmatic epistemological approaches as one side against the other. If improvement to educational practice in FAVE is to be made, then leaders need to seek opportunities within technical-rational approaches to find pragmatic ways to improve the quality of education. Silver (2003) acknowledges difficulties in the concept and contemporary technical-rational usage of measures of 'impact' in education in England. He also registers reservations about the often-short timescales made available for the collection of 'hard' evidence of impact. Realistic and

authentic impact evaluation, Silver claims, must look for evidence of outcomes which attempt to 'consider how a programme or project or other activity is proceeding, and the manner or extent to which it is attempting to carry out intentions' (Silver 2003, p. 2). From this perspective, the evaluation of impact needs to be interested as much in educational processes as their outcomes.

Dewey's pragmatic epistemology is helpful in extending the above discussion of the role and importance of 'transaction' and of paying attention to the processes of impact in educational evaluation. Biesta and Burbules (2003) and Biesta (2007) show how Dewey offers a different way to think about knowledge and the real, one based on experience, which is very different from the technical-rational world view. Through an accessible and vivid account of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, Biesta and Burbules (2003) illustrate how Dewey's work provides a way of approaching educational research which is not only human and humane but also manages to avoid the polarising pitfalls of positivism, postpositivism and postmodernism. If we are to change the nature of approaches to educational evaluation and improvement, then the language between these two world views needs to at least acknowledge the legitimate existence of the other. As Fielding points out our concepts of what counts as impact are important,

> Impact names the new hegemony: its presumptions and pretensions need to be examined more closely than seems to have been the case thus far. (Fielding 2003, p. 294).

The epistemological and practical analysis of technical-rational approaches to the evaluation of education reform and the improvement of educational practice suggest that a technical-rational world view, while intuitively appealing, does not serve FE leaders well. Any system for evaluating policy and practice in education that forces people into positions where they have to act as if they know what they do not and cannot yet know is bound to be ineffective and inefficient (Gregson and Nixon 2009). The same authors point out that this because transactions between problems and their potential solutions in educational practice are conducted as if inquiry were no longer required, as if the problem and its solution

were already known and as if what would count as relevant evidence could be predetermined.

This raises questions of how 'soft' indicators be developed that work within a reasonable cost and timeframe? How might leaders within FE develop the skills put importance on soft indicators and trying to achieve them while at the same time maintaining the requirements of external evaluation methods? Given that soft indicators, by their very nature, are subjective, anecdotal, and impressionistic, how can leaders find ways of communicating their importance in ways which satisfy external bodies, while creating cultures which include and encourage enhancement and growth of all within it? How can education leaders conduct research into new approaches which can influence policy and policy implementation? Indeed, how can we ensure that policy is informed by a broad range of research from the 'inside' as well as from the 'outside'?

Standard technical-rational evaluative measures in education—identify the objectives and measure outcomes—and remain at large in education contexts across the sector. This measures are longstanding and widely accepted and as such are unlikely to disappear. Eisner (2002) adds his voice to those who reject simplistic outcomes-based models of change and improvement on the grounds that they tend to ignore the impact of unpredicted and/or complex problems.

Working with education leaders to explore how experience can also inform research and improve practice seems a sensible way of moving from purely responding to technical-rational approaches and providing opportunities to apply more pragmatic world views to the development of leadership. If spaces can be opened up in which education leaders and practitioners in the sector can give voice to experiences in circumstances where they can work together to identify and address problems in policy implementation in context, then this may provide new ways of responding to and reforming and moving beyond technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement.

As Stenhouse (1975), notes the danger of evaluators creating their own establishment and glamorize it as an elite. He advises us to keep hold of the idea that educational evaluation is mostly a matter of common sense and learning from experience. While he notes that this is not entirely true, it keeps the discourses of educational evaluation from going

technical and theological. A little modest oversimplification he argues, is better than a lapse into jargon or pretentiousness.

As a counter-narrative to the positivist, technical-rational dominant discourse in conducting education evaluation and improvement emerges, there is a real opportunity for leaders of further education colleges to begin to contribute to the discourse surrounding sector regulation and improvement. While the FE sector may be some distance from the approach of large scale longitudinal pilots that HE have routinely under-taken as that described in Critical Incident 2, spaces and places where prac-titioners can share their experiences of practice and for their voices to be heard and listened to by inspectors and decision-makers. This could posi-tion practice-focused research at the forefront interpretive-pragmatic approaches to educational evaluation and improvement. The adoption and development of such democratic-interpretive-pragmatic approaches may be able to operate as a corrective to some of the shortcomings of top-down, inside-out, neoliberal, and positivist metanarratives in the field of education (Gregson et al. 2019).

Conclusion

The University of Sunderland, ETF and a growing number of others in the sector support the view that the practice-focused research conducted from the inside can and should be given equal weight to 'big' research (such as that of Randomised Controlled Trials which appear to be pre-ferred by policy professionals the Department for Education). Gregson et al. (2019) regard democratic-interpretive-pragmatic approaches to pol-icy implementation, educational evaluation and improvement as being uniquely capable of taking context and knowledge seriously. They argue that practice is the arena where ideas from research and theory can and should be tested and challenged (See Chap. 1). If managers education leaders and teachers can start to build more democratic-interpretive-pragmatic approaches into the improvement of their everyday practice, then they may be able to generate research-informed evidence capable of challenging the hegemony of 'top-down' and 'outside-in' assumptions about the nature of practice how practice improves. Such approaches may

even be able to start to pioneer new approaches to educational evaluation and improvement which actually and sustainably improve teaching, learning, assessment, and curriculum design across the FAVE sector in new and more cost-effective ways.

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4

Non-traditional Students and Practical Wisdom: A Perspective from a Practitioner-Researcher

Samantha Broadhead

Introduction

The investigation into the experiences of 'non-traditional' students in art and design began with an initial pilot study that was supported by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and the University of Sunderland's Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (SUNCETT). Subsequently, Leeds Arts University supported the development of the research that underpins this chapter.

The issues related to the experiences of non-traditional students have been investigated and analysed from a practitioner's point of view. I worked as an Access to HE tutor and course leader and wanted to use the insight gained from many years of experience to inform the research. Colucci-Gray et al. (2013) argue that there has been an increased impact of research on educational policy but this has been unsatisfactory. This is because it has been carried out by universities on teachers in schools (and

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colleges) rather than with them. This has led to research that is not engaged with by practitioners presenting a gulf between research findings and practices in the classroom (or in this case the studio). As an Access to HE educator I aimed to prepare students for undergraduate study, but I also wanted to understand how these students experience higher education when they transitioned from further to higher education. This understanding enables Access to HE teachers and those working in higher education to better understand the needs of this group of students and hopefully lead to changes in practice. I appreciated the life experience, wisdom and other capacities or capitals these students had (O'Shea 2014) and aimed to discover if these were beneficial to the Access to HE students' undergraduate education.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how practitioners can value and develop the capacity of students to draw upon their own practical wisdom. Phronesis or practical wisdom is an intellectual virtue of deliberation based on the desire to act in the best interests of the self and other people.

The stories told by 'non-traditional' students, are analysed through narrative inquiry revealing the ways in which they deliberate about their education. This approach uses narrative as a means of capturing experience and argues that the ability to narrate our own experience is integral to phronesis. The conclusions drawn from this study are not easily turned into generalisations or 'truths' as they are contingent on the contexts in which the narratives are produced. Narrative is a representation of experience which is mediated by the social and cultural positions of the narrators and their audiences. This study found that some students were adept at using their practical wisdom; making courageous decisions to leave their careers and re-enter education in order to improve their lives for themselves and their families.

The implications for those of us who work with 'non-traditional' students are that we should think about the strategies that encourage them to deliberate well for themselves and others; where instances of phronesis are celebrated rather than curtailed. The value of this approach is that it aims to promote the capacity of deliberation in students and educators, so they become wise and active agents in helping construct positive educational experiences.

Problem and Context: Non-traditional Students as Marginal Within Some Art and Design Courses

In the UK the majority of art and design students in higher education have previously studied 'A' Levels and many have undertaken a foundation course which prepares them for a specialist subject area in the arts (Hudson 2009). These students tend to have come from a school or college and to be 18 to 19 years old. The participants of this particular study were different, they were in their 40s and 50s, and did not have the typical qualifications required to study a degree in art and design. Instead they had previously undertaken an Access to HE course which was designed to enable mature students to learn the skills and knowledge that would allow them to progress onto an undergraduate degree (Parry 1996; Wakeford 1993; Broadhead and Gregson 2018). Part of the student's learning is evidenced in a portfolio of art and design work. The portfolio is assessed but it is also used by the students in an interview which is part of the admission process to gain a place on an art and design degree (Bhagat and O'Neill 2011).

Due to the entry qualifications to higher education held by these students they are sometimes perceived by their higher education institutions as being 'non-traditional' (Hudson 2009; Penketh and Goddard 2008; Burke 2002; Broadhead et al. 2019). This group of students come into education with a variety of social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and also bring the benefits of diverse life experiences (Broadhead 2014; Busher and James 2018).

The proportion of mature students (over the age of 21 upon entry) has fallen since 2003–2004. Of concern is that mature students studying at undergraduate level have higher rates of leaving without qualifying, receiving a degree class lower than a 2:1, and lower rates of progressing onwards to further study when compared with students aged 21 or under upon entry (Equality Challenge Unit 2017).

This study was important because less and less mature students are studying in higher education, this was deemed to be because of the introduction of expensive degree course fees (Independent Commission on

Fees 2013). Thus mature or 'non-traditional' students were often study-ing in cohorts where the vast majority of learners were of a younger age range. The impact of this on the experiences of mature students needed to be examined.

In 2011–2012 there were 42,150 students studying on Access to HE courses and 6% of UCAS applicants accepted onto a higher education course held an Access qualification (QAA 2013, p. 12). There was a 22% drop in numbers of these programmes specialising in art and design from the previous year (QAA 2013, p. 3). Worryingly, reports have shown that, since 2010 the introduction of the £9000 fees regime in higher education has had a serious and damaging impact on 'second chance' students. There has been a 15.4% drop in applications to HE from peo-ple over 25 (Independent Commission on Fees 2013). Mature and non-traditional students have responsibilities, which means that part-time study would enable them to further their education. However,

> Part-time undergraduate study has an important role both in widening participation and in developing skills. Since 2010, the number of part-time undergraduate entrants living in England attending UK universities and English further education colleges has fallen annually. By 2015, the num-bers nationally had decreased by 51%, by 63% at the Open University, and by 45% at other UK universities and FE colleges. These numbers continue to fall. (Callender and Thompson 2018, p. 3)

When considering mature students within higher education generally, it is not useful to make assumptions about the class, gender, race or age of these students, as non-traditional, mature students are not a homoge-nous group (Osborne et al. 2004). Mature students, especially those with an Access to HE Diploma, tended to be a diverse group of people (Busher and James 2018; Broadhead and Garland 2012). James (1995) has shown how mature students in higher education have been described in terms of what they have in common as a group in how they differ from traditional age-at-entrance students. But James and Beck (2016) have pointed out that the term 'mature student' is not a very precise or useful term as it potentially refers to anyone over 24 years old. Differences in life stages between people in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s and so on should be also

taken into account when thinking about their experiences as students. The ability of these students to draw upon their life experiences in order to overcome any barriers they may face is the focus of this chapter. Using the wisdom gained by living a good life is called phronesis or practical wisdom.

Literature Relating to Practical Wisdom

Book six of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* offers a model of deliberation known as phronesis, practical wisdom or prudence where the person who practices it is known as the phronimos (Ricœur 1994, p. 174). According to Aristotle:

A sagacious man is supposed be characterised by his ability to reach sound conclusions in his deliberations about what is good for himself and of advantage to him, and this not in one department of life—in what concerns his health, for example, or his physical strength—but what conduces to the good life as a whole. (Aristotle 1953, p. 176)

The phronimos firstly recognises the singularity of a particular situation and is able to determine a best course of action. They understand what it means to act well with justice and courage (Wall 2005, p. 315). Phronesis is about being able to make good decisions that allow people to act well for themselves and others in order to live a good life together. It is an intellectual virtue where acting well is not done through habit or conditioning, but through thought and deliberation. It sits with the other forms of intellect *sophia* (purely theoretical intelligence) and *techne* (technical expertise) (Skilleås 2006, p. 267).

Practical wisdom is closely interconnected with the cardinal virtues such as temperance, fortitude and justice. The phronimos is guided by these virtues in determining the correct course of action (Nussbaum 2001, p. 306). For example, the person of practical wisdom can distinguish a situation in which courage is needed from another where moderation is required. Nussbaum (2001, p.306) described how there should not be a fixed way of understanding a situation; generalities and principles should be modified in light of a particular context or situation. Nor does particular judgement required for a goodness of character exist

without a core of commitment to a general conception—albeit one that is continually evolving, ready for surprise and not rigid. Being able to judge and act well is seen as intrinsic to being a human who lives a good life. How someone lives a 'good life' is dependent on the contexts and the particularities of the situations thrown up by living. For Ricoeur (1994) the word 'life' designates the person as a whole rather than a series of practices. He writes that to live a life well is the standard of excellence, which he calls the life plan. The 'good life' is a collection of ideals and dreams, of achievements in regard to a life being fulfilled or unfulfilled (Ricœur 1994). The good life is where all actions are directed by these ideals and dreams. Phronesis appears to be a very pertinent concept that can be applied to the stories of those mature students who have chosen to make difficult decisions in order to pursue the good life, by achieving a degree to become an artist or designer.

Phronesis and Friendship

Aristotle (1953) talks about how acting with practical wisdom is based on a good or fellow-feeling towards others; this could also be seen as an important aspect of inclusion. Within an educational context, for example, students and teachers have empathy for others whether they are similar or different to themselves. Ricoeur (1994) extends this idea of good feeling towards others as a mutual responsibility, where an individual, in order to be an individual, must be part of a social relationship. For Aristotle too, living a good life entails acting well for and with others; friendship can be seen as an important aspect of this (Aristotle 1953). Including others and being responsible for people who are not always like us involves thinking with practical wisdom, whether one is a student, a teacher or a manager. The risks associated with being open to newness and difference may be experienced as fear but at the same time they can be an opportunity for creativity and innovation in conduct. The importance of friendship in relation to how it can help students belong within an educational context is discussed by Thomas (2012) where friendship is integral to creating a sense of belonging within a course or institution that encourages the student to stay and achieve their learning goals.

Phronesis, Teachers and Students

There have been calls for practical wisdom to be recognised as integral to the construction of professional knowledge (MacIntyre 2007). For example, educational practitioners see their work as a moral practice rather than a technological one because they do not simply employ any means to get a result; they deliberate on the quality and value of the education they seek to produce (Biesta 2010). Curren (2010) describes how notions of phronesis can be relevant to teacher autonomy and professionalism in the face of increased managerialism and instrumentalism.

However, practical wisdom is also relevant to mature students who are likely to have experienced life changes before deciding to re-enter education. These experiences alongside other factors and capacities can contribute towards a student's practical wisdom which can aid them to act well through future life changes. The concept of phronesis or prudence is potentially useful when applied in situations of abrupt life changes and transition to unfamiliar settings. This is because mature students can draw upon previous instances of change and apply that knowledge to new situations. Previous experiences were always recontextualised in new situations.

Potentially, mature students have gained practical wisdom from previous experiences of perceiving, assessing situations, choosing courses of action and evaluating the consequences of action (Korthagen et al. 2001). Practical wisdom is not only about learning from previous experiences in a mechanistic, simplistic way; it is also concerned with recognising situations where wisdom is needed whilst using universal laws or conceptual principles as a guide to inform deliberations about future actions.

Thus phronesis enables people to not only act well in situations familiar to them but also those situations which are unfamiliar, such as returning to study. Phronesis allows people to modify their previous actions in relation to the new situations they were in. Experience is not simply repeated without reference to the unique contexts in which events occur; knowledge based on previous experience is adapted and recontextualised. Memories of previous situations of change can contribute to good judgements and actions but they are not the only guide. The experiences of

other people, abstract knowledge and good character are all ameliorated in the deliberative process.

The mature student who can make good decisions that are seen to benefit themselves and others would be able to navigate the surprises thrown up by entering new learning situations. Being able to judge and act well is intrinsic to being human and living a good life. Again, how someone lives a 'good life' is dependent on the contexts and the particularities of the situations thrown up by life.

Method

The motivation for the research on the experiences of post-Access students was partly because I had taught and managed an Access to HE programme in art and design within an FE college. I initially wanted to know if the Access to HE course was effective in its core purpose, which was preparing people for higher education, and what the long-term impact of the course was on the student's educational journey. Other reasons for carrying out the research were: to improve the pedagogical practices in the Access to HE studio/classroom; raise the awareness of mature students' capacities within the institution and perhaps influence the wider educational policy contexts so that students could have better educational experiences (Colucci-Gray et al. 2013).

This is a qualitative study that sought to collect data that was text-based rather than numerical. At least forty eight narratives were collected over a period of 3 years (2011–2014); nine post-Access students were revisited periodically to document how their educational experiences changed over time.

The project entailed the participants/students meeting with me (the researcher) twice a year throughout the duration of their art and design undergraduate courses. The students had control over what elements of their education they thought were important to share with me. The approach used was based on narrative inquiry, rather than prescribed interview questions (Clandinin and Connelly 2004; Butler-Kisber 2010).

Art and design students who had achieved their Access to Higher Education (HE) diplomas in 2011 were e-mailed using their college

accounts and asked if they wanted to take part in the study. They were told about the time commitment needed to take part as well as the reasons why the research was important and that it would follow the ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (2011; 2018). Nine participants gave their informed consent to be participants in the project. Of the nine, one student dropped out of her course in millinery after the first interview. Of the remaining sample, five participants had chosen to study at a college full time; these were two women and three men. Their ages ranged from late-20s to mid-50s. Three students had chosen to study at a local higher education institution (HEI); these were all women in their late 40s to early 50s. Of the participants who studied at the HEI, two had decided to study part-time and one full-time.

The students' stories were recorded and transcribed. Over the duration of 3 years I met with each participant, on an individual basis, six times. The students decided on the significant stories they thought were worth recounting. I then identified similar or re-occurring critical incidents across the stories, which were fed back to the participants as part of a focus group for exploration and authentication at the end of the project.

As I was at the time an Access to HE teacher and manager I needed to fit the research around my role. I also thought it was important to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the participants, who were also busy balancing work and caring responsibilities with their education. So often the stories were collected in the early evening in libraries, coffee shops and empty seminar rooms. I believed these were important stories that needed to be told and this helped my motivation and resilience throughout the project as well as the generosity of the participants.

Findings

The narratives were analysed by looking for critical incidents where there seemed to be a narration of deliberation and judgement by the student about their education and other instances where there was an absence of phronesis. Examples of narratives from Chad, Bob, Eliza and Jane are used to show the types of deliberation the participants were engaged with.

The first narrative comes from Chad, a post-Access student in her 40s, who had taken a year out from her studies because she had just had a baby. Her words show how she was managing many tasks and still wanting to engage with her studies.

> Researcher: Good, so, last time I saw you, you said you were going to spend time sorting out files and everything, did you do that?
> C: No, I have got them—they are continuous—they are not something that I've put on the side-line. The files are there but he[the baby] has to go to nursery, as soon as we get Christmas over and done with I'm doing them on an evening as soon as he's going to nursery. He goes in June for the odd day, till he gets to full-time in September—then I'll get back on to PPP [Personal Professional Planning] and all the rest but I've got loads of stuff in the pipeline especially with my friends. Still I got lots of friends off this course that have just left and they're keeping me up to date with what's going on and what's needed for the next year, which is lovely and it gives me… I won't feel so bad about going back—I won't feel as rusty because I've already got a couple of projects in mind for things like we have to do for the Priceless and Worthless competition, I've already got something in mind for that. You know, I kind of like getting my head round going back already. I have to do that though, otherwise I … I can't leave it to the last minute, my files are all part of that, get them once Christmas cards are written. (Researcher & Chad, December 2012)

It was of note that Chad drew upon the experience of others in order to plan for her future projects. It was the stories her friends told her about their own experiences during their second year on the degree course that allowed Chad to imagine what would be expected from her when she began her education again. By staying connected with her friends Chad continued her sense of belonging and they provided her with a vicarious learning experience. Her planning in the short term involved continued planning with her friends who had kept her in the loop about what was going on at college. The person of practical wisdom is able to draw upon the stories of others based on their actual experiences because they can empathise with people, gaining an insight into their motivations (Skilleås 2006). Chad's friends were very supportive and this was an indication of how well she had established herself on the degree during her first year. In

Chad's previous careers (Merchant Navy and commercial airways) she had been part of a team, working closely together in highly regulated situations. These past experiences may have given her good social skills. Inherent in her deliberations was the importance of being well-prepared when she returned to study with two young children.

Another example of deliberation came from Bob, who was a post-Access to HE student in his 50s. Towards the end of his degree in art and design Bob wanted to use his own experience to help another student.

Bob recounted a critical incident where he persuaded a younger student (Luke) not to throw away his sketchbooks. He understood that they were an important record of his development and Luke may regret losing his sketchbook later on in life.

> B: Yeah because Luke was going to throw that [Luke's sketchbooks] away, "I'm going to throw this away!" Now I'm saying to him, "Don't do that—you don't do that—save those because later on when you get to be my age you'll look back at those and say I wish I'd saved them." I'm glad I saved those now, it's the nostalgia thing plus you can see a natural progression, sketchbooks are much better than any blog. But I think people like myself who struggle with writing things and when they keep blogs it's beneficial, the tick box, the tick boxes can be accessed—"Has he referenced this? Has he looked at that? Bing! Bing! Boom! Boom! That gets me through my exam and my assessment. It gives the tutors the ability to assess that I've understood and looked at things. However, I think that if you're a real artist whose day-to-day sketch book is really important and you can see the person, you see them in the book. In a WordPress blog, it's cold and it's dead. But yes it gives evidence in understanding certain things but I don't think other things come across in the blogs. (Bob, June 2014)

Bob reflected on the contradictions and tensions that existed in his art and design education. He had come to realise that he was making work to be assessed rather than to be presented as art work. Bob remembered activities he had learned on his Access course in connection with the degree he had just completed in an attempt to weave his educational journey into a coherent whole. His own feelings and experiences motivated Bob to intervene when Luke was about to throw away his sketchbooks.

These were artefacts that Bob clearly valued; they had a materiality and immediacy that a blog did not have. A blog could be edited and re-edited to some extent and it was always written with a view to being seen by others and as such could potentially be designed to be easily assessed. A sketchbook contained more contingent and risky content and sometimes it was made for the artist themselves rather than an audience (although as they were often also assessed they too could become edited or self-conscious).

Bob aimed to save Luke from a feeling of regret that he could feel later on in his life if he threw away his work; regret was a feeling that Bob was very aware of. He drew on his own past experiences that allowed him to imagine or empathise with Luke's feelings in the future. Bob's discussion with this younger student showed his care for Luke's future well-being and was an example of practical wisdom in action. Bob demonstrated friendship and generosity as important aspects of phronesis where he was acting well for himself and others.

Another example where phronesis can play an important role is when a student tries to decide whether it is best to leave or to stay on their course. Eliza, a black student in her 50s, had not been happy on her textiles course for a couple of years. She was part-time and did not feel that part-time students were adequately supported in the studio and through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

> I got my last lot of work back which was not too bad you know. I did talk to the tutor and basically said, "You know I'm not sure if this is for me and you know really I'm not enjoying it and if I'm spending two days of my life for the next three years, it's not a good use of my time really." And she was a bit shocked and bit surprised and basically said to me, if I could get through the next year (which is this coming year), things will be a lot easier in the final two years because it's much more bio-self-directed stuff. (Eliza, February 2015)

Eliza had thought about her time commitment and was making a rational decision as to whether to stay or leave. She was asking the tutor about it and so she seemed to be taking into account the opinion of others. The tutor was surprised that Eliza had considered dropping out so it

could be assumed that she had not noticed how frustrated Eliza had been. Eliza had been encouraged to stay, to 'get through' the second year as if it would be a trial with the promise that the final 2 years at level six would be easier because they were more self-directed. There was no suggestion that the course would change to address some of the problems Eliza had been having. Why would level six be easier than level five? Was Eliza ready for level six now? Was that why she had been frustrated at levels four and five? Although the tutor had been encouraging, the underlying problems were not really thought about in depth or addressed. The tutor had not listened to what Eliza was unhappy about and assumed it was do with finding the course difficult when actually the issues had been to do with communication, misunderstanding and exclusion. Eliza decided to stay for another year and was attempting to accept that she would have to keep being pro-active in getting the support she needed as a part-time student.

Jane, a white woman in her 50s, appeared to enjoy the support from friends, family and tutors. She was already thinking about the next year, level six when she would be writing her dissertation and undertaking her final major project:

Yes so I think we're going to be hitting the ground running. I'm happy to get into my work now. I'm going to do some research for my dissertation before we go back and also start preparation for my studio work and start my sketchbook with all the bits of research that I've got so far. Then Karen, who is another post-Access student and we still work closely together; she's doing fine art and I'm doing art and design. We are very keen to make our final exhibition as good as we can so we're trying to work out ways of …There was the sort of booklet thing/flyer thing, for this year's final end of year show which we weren't terribly impressed by. I'm afraid we have to raise the money. You have to raise money to produce things like this so it maybe we find we can't do anything different. But we're sort of thinking about it and looking into it as soon as we can really and try to work out a fair way of people to raise their part of the money. And not rely on just a small group of people which is what quite often happens so we're thinking ahead. (Jane, August 2013)

Jane had again demonstrated foresight in recognising some of the problems with marketing the cohort's end of year show. The phrase, 'hit the ground running' was interesting, where she hoped to try to get ahead of the workload. It was as if she was reluctant to waste time. She was also promoting a fair way that people could contribute to the end of year show. Rather than leaving this to someone else; she recognised the importance of the end of year show and planned to participate in organising it so everyone had good publicity for their work. Jane was deliberating how to make the end of year better for her and her fellow students. This also enabled her to draw upon her practical wisdom in order to plan with others the best means of financing the exhibition.

Discussion

In all four case studies there were examples of students deliberating and acting well for themselves and others. Chad had gained friends from her cohort of surface design students and this seemed to enhance her sense of belonging, being on the right course in the right institution (Thomas 2012; Vallerand 1997). The impact of this on Chad's education was very important because it meant she still felt connected to her course even when she had to take a year out to have her baby. Her friends shared their experiences of their second year with her so she could begin to prepare work for when she returned. They showed the virtues of generosity and kindness.

The post-Access students were not only receivers of help; they often used their own experience to advise their fellow students. For example, Bob advised Luke to keep his sketchbooks because they were a valuable resource and Bob did not want Luke to feel regret at losing them at a later date. Bob's age seemed to give a particular viewpoint on it where he said, "Don't do that—you don't do that—save those because later on when you get to be my age you'll look back at those and say I wish I'd saved them." (Bob, June 2014).

Eliza also deliberated about leaving her degree. She was uncertain about her ability to improve her work. Often she felt the channels of communication were difficult, so she could not find out how she would

be assessed. Although she decided to stay on the course and complete, she may have been poorly advised by her tutor who did not fully explore the issue with Eliza. Leaving may have been the best course of action but this was not considered as an option by the tutor.

Jane was able to not only act well in terms of friendship, but participated on a political level to improve the quality and dissemination of her end of year show. This was done not just for her own benefit but for the good of the other students. Jane pointed out that, "We are very keen to make our final exhibition as good as we can …But we're sort of thinking about it and looking into it as soon as we can really and try to work out a fair way of people to raise their part of the money—and not rely on just a small group of people which is what quite often happens so we're thinking ahead." (Jane, June 2014).

This appeared to be an example of where Jane was confident enough to act for herself and others with the aim of doing something well. She was motivated by the virtue of justice; to do something that she perceived as fair and wanted to deliberate and plan ahead. She was engaging in a moment of democratic education and was steered by her practical wisdom. Jane was the phronimos guided by the virtue of friendship and justice in determining the correct course of action (Nussbaum 2001).

Conclusion

The practitioner perspective brought with it an understanding of the barriers non-traditional students face when taking part in further or higher education. But there was also an acknowledgement of the benefits the students themselves bring to the educational process. The years of experience working in Access education had enabled me to recognise an appropriate research question and value the analysis that came from collecting and studying the post-Access to HE students' stories. I needed to know if my own practice was successful in preparing my students for future study, and I could only answer this question by finding out what happened to them in higher education.

I did not teach the students who agreed to be the project's participants. However, because we shared some common understandings and

experiences around Access education I was able to gain their trust and openness when listening to their stories.

Through the research narratives, thought processes that are often invisible were made apparent through the recording of descriptions of events and the internal dialogue the participants had with themselves.

The findings suggested that the ability to act with phronesis was linked to being included. Chad and Jane were able to deliberate about their course of action because they felt included and accepted by friends on their courses.

Virtuous actions springing from deliberation could be seen by the students who acted well for their peers. However, the tutors were often absent from the stories. The only example described in this account was when the tutor persuaded Eliza to stay on her course without exploring the reasons why she wanted to leave. Students learn to practise phronesis by being in the presence of others who judge wisely. However, there was little evidence of tutors doing this; although in fairness this could be a flaw in the methodology. Stories from tutors may give a different picture.

As a tutor myself, the research project developed my own practical wisdom and made me more thoughtful about issues such as ethics and unconscious bias. I felt more able to test my own assumptions and to be more cautious about the claims I made.

Recommendations

Educationalists who work in Access education and in higher education should recognise and celebrate instances where their students deliberate well and act in the best interests of themselves and others.

Students learn deliberation from their peers and educators, so it would be helpful for students if tutors could reflect on their own decision-making processes and talk about them openly.

Wise deliberation is linked to politics (Aristotle 1953), so students should be encouraged to take part in decision-making structures within the institution and outside of it. When students see practical wisdom in action they are more likely to recognise the potential of it in themselves.

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5

Adaptive Comparative Judgement

Michael Smith

The Problem and Context

This research addresses the question of how assessment practices in FE colleges might be improved. It is situated as a form of practitioner research. As McNiff and Lomax (2004) observe, practitioner research allows teachers to "investigate what is happening in their particular situation and try to improve it. They not only observe and describe what is happening; they also take action." (2004, p. 14). This opening section will present the problem on which this study is based, and provide details of the context in which the research has been conducted. It will then explore theoretical and practical ideas and concepts that underpin the root issues that are of interest here.

The starting point for this research is grounded in the subjectivity inherent in creative writing as a field of study in the discipline of English Language. At present, creative writing comprises twenty five per cent of

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the assessed component of GCSE English Language. The challenges that teachers of this subject face are pronounced, and notably include how creative writing can be assessed accurately, and how assessment judgements might be standardised, in view of this subjectivity. Creative writing is a pursuit which is hard to define solely through descriptors and standards. In capturing what creative writing entails, Morley (2007) notes, 'think of an empty page open space. It possesses no dimension; human time makes no claim. Everything is possible...Anything can grow in it... there is no constraint, except the honesty of the writer and the scope of imagination.' (2007, p. 1). In view of this, questions might arise asking what makes for 'good' evidence in creative writing?

The place to begin for such considerations is the GCSE English Language creative writing assessment standards. These standards are not without their difficulties. Knight (2007) notes that many learning outcomes not only defy measurement but are extraordinarily difficult to judge. Ambiguity found in the language of learning outcomes leaves them open to interpretation by teachers who are required to negotiate this subjectivity often in relative isolation from one another. To exemplify this point, the image below (Table 5.1) is an excerpt taken from a portion of an AQA GCSE English mock exam paper mark scheme, relating to the creative writing response students complete. The image features descriptors relating to the candidate's proficiency in their use of content and organisational features at an approximate grade 4 level (a grade 'C' in pre-reform equivalency).

In this excerpt we see six standards, three relating to content and three to organisation, that the student needs to have demonstrated proficiency in if they are to be considered to be working at this level. There is also a variable range of marks available for the candidate if they have shown proficiency in some but not all of the standards. The language present is highly interpretative (*some sustained attempt…, some use of..., increasing variety...*), and we can perhaps attribute the subjective nature of the assessment as being responsible for the ambiguity in language evident in this example; it would be near impossible for any mark scheme to specifically prescribe what form a creative writing piece that demonstrates *some success* should resemble. Nevertheless, it is on the interpretation of these descriptors that a teacher's assessment judgement hinges.

Table 5.1 Excerpt: AQA GCSE English language paper 1 mark scheme

Level 2	Upper level 2	**Content**	At the top of the range, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors for Content and Organisation
		• Some sustained attempt to match register to audience	
7–12 marks			
	10–12 marks	• Some sustained attempt to match purpose	
Some success		• Conscious use of vocabulary with some use of linguistic devices	
		Organisation	At the bottom of the range, a student will have the lower range of Level 2 and at least one of the skills descriptors for Content and Organisation from the upper range of Level 2
		• Some use of structural features	
		• Increasing variety of linked and relevant ideas	
		• Some use of paragraphs and some use of discourse markers	

Practical matters must also be considered: GCSE English teachers in the Further, Adult and Vocational Education (FAVE) sector have only one year in which to teach the subject to meet qualification requirements, rather than the two that schools have. Moreover, experience in teaching and assessing this qualification in FAVE settings is again not comparable with that seen in secondary schools, resulting from the still relatively recent mandation of GCSE English resits for those that have not yet received a 'good' pass, first introduced in the 2014–2015 academic year. The resulting impact of these conditions on teachers of GCSE English in the sector, is that of a truncated timeframe for delivery and relative teacher inexperience in teaching and assessing this qualification. This compares starkly with how GCSE English has been taught in secondary schools for over three decades. As such, the limited timeframe and 'newness' of the qualification means the challenge of subjectivity is even more pronounced.

It is on these challenges, of interpreting subjective descriptors to form the basis of assessment judgements in view of wider contextual factors, that subsequent inquiries that form this research are based. Questions of interest here are: How are summative assessment decisions being arrived at? What of the teachers' judgements that are forming the basis for such assessment decisions? Are there shortcomings in teacher judgement and expertise that lead to disparities in results? A first step in exploring these questions further is to consider the practice of assessment (any form of assessment) as involving a judgement, and what teachers call on in the process of forming a judgement.

Literature Review

Tacit Knowledge and Professional Learning

For a teacher to arrive at an accurate assessment judgement when assessing student work their decision is reliant on experience, skills and knowledge. Boud and Falchikov (2007) suggests that teachers need 'the capacity to evaluate evidence, appraise situations and circumstances astutely, to draw sound conclusions and act in accordance with this analysis' (2007, p. 1). This capacity is not solely formed through the ability to understand and negotiate codified assessment standards in forming judgements; when assessing, teachers may talk of 'getting impressions' and 'gut feelings' when assessing student work that defy articulation through written outcomes and standards (Bell and Cowie 2006). This would seem to suggest that judgement is a tacit process. Accordingly, we begin here with an exploration of what is understood by the term tacit knowledge.

Polanyi (1966) first conceptualised tacit knowledge as relating to both perception and scientific thinking, proposing that 'we know more than we can tell' (1966, p. 4). The nature of tacit knowledge it is stressed, is largely experiential, through which it can be passed on by demonstration, example and practice (Elliot et al. 2011). Prominent schools of thought have conceptualised it according to three main features: firstly, that it is acquired without a high degree of direct input of others, but rather from

an individual's experience of operating a specific context; secondly, that it is procedural in nature and concerns how best to undertake specific tasks in certain situations; thirdly, that how an individual uses tacit knowledge is intrinsically bound to their own circumstances, disposition and personality and may lead them to take actions that are effective in serving their own personal goals and agendas (Sternberg and Horvath 1995; Sternberg 1997; Sternberg and Hedlund 2002; Grigorenko et al. 2006; Elliot et al. 2011).

In a study exploring the differences between experienced teachers that have tacit knowledge and novice teachers that do not, Elliot et al. (2011) identify that:

> experienced teachers and novices do not differ significantly in terms of the capacity to identify good solutions to situational problems, but rather, they differ significantly in their skills at identifying poor solutions to these same problems [...] This suggests that tacit knowledge in this particular domain is not such much a matter of learning how best to approach a problem so much as it is about learning how to avoid making a really bad decision. (2011, p. 98)

This matter of knowing what to do when you do not have all the required information or expertise available to you is a pertinent one for this study, as the conclusion reached here by Elliot and colleagues suggests that a deficit of tacit knowledge can negatively impact on teachers' judgements and decision making. In scenarios where teachers might be unsure of a judgement decision they are required to make, tacit knowledge can provide insight into what a favourable course of action might be in view of the circumstances, on account of drawing from experience and prior encounters where similar, but not identical, challenges were resolved.

However tacit knowledge is more than just having experience in a specific domain. It is what is developed and honed as a result of this experience. While explicit knowledge can be codified, in forms similar to those seen in assessment mark schemes, tacit knowledge remains impossible to define in written form. Despite this, it does exist in internal cognitive forms, procedures and logic as would be found in explicit knowledge, but through individualistic interpretation and cognitive mediation these are

synthesised both consciously and subconsciously to form meaning. For now we can conclude that tacit knowledge and experience plays a significant role in the act of forming a judgement and that considering how such knowledge can be developed in professional settings is important.

Professional Learning and Opportunities for GCSE English Teachers in the FAVE Sector

It is with this in mind that we can turn our attention to research and activities centred on continuing professional development (CPD) as a means of fostering common understanding across teachers. Broad (2015, 2016) observes that CPD activities can enable teachers to 'network with, collect and transport tacit knowledge that has already been semi-codified for other purposes [...] within the specialist area.' The role that collaboration with colleagues plays in this process is acknowledged here: 'It is not, as with codified knowledge, found in textbooks and curricula documentation, and is not produced for the consumption of students' (2015, p. 9). Broad (2016) proposes that this 'semi-codified' knowledge lies between explicit and tacit knowledge in forms such as artefacts, processes and mechanisms that are used to capture workplace knowledge but that are not organised specifically for curricula purposes. Zolla and Winter (2002), in their study of Japanese corporations conceptualise semi-codified knowledge in a similar manner, describing it as diffused, fuzzy, institutionally based knowledge that is only available to trustworthy insiders. As we will see, this conception of semi-codified tacit knowledge conforms with, and does not configure to, ideas of CPD, depending on its scale, form and context.

In this first instance, we will consider the role of national CPD initiatives that have impacted on GCSE English teachers based in the FAVE sector. In recognising the national need for opportunities to upskill English teachers, following the *Maths and English provision in post-16 education (*DfE 2014*)* report, the Education and Training Foundation developed an 'English Pipeline' comprising a series of workshops, webinars and comprehensive Level 5 subject specialist modules tailored to the teaching of GCSE English in FAVE settings. By the start of the 2015–2016

academic year, 4000 Further Education English teachers had participated in at least one of these English enhancement programmes (ETF 2015), demonstrating the deep desire and concerted effort that both teachers and their institutions exhibited to best prepare for the changing landscape.

These programmes were designed with the specific intentions to encourage cross-peer and cross-institution collaboration, discussion and problem solving in group settings, and echo Lave and Wenger's (1991) concepts of communities of practice. Despite the clear progress that has been made through national initiatives such as the 'English Pipeline', there are still shortcomings with viewing this alone as a panacea to the wider issues of professional development facing English teachers based in the sector. Many of the activities such as those in the 'English Pipeline' comprise standalone workshops that remove teachers from their own context so as to place them in artificial communities that exist only for finite periods, often only a day or less. As a result, teachers are not able to tackle genuinely challenging authentic issues that they face in their practice day to day, and accordingly apply existing knowledge to new contexts leading to the forming of new tacit knowledge. The development of Broad's conception of 'semi-codified' knowledge experiences a diminished role in these activities too as a result of the same circumstances. In instances where practitioners participate in professional development activities outside of their institutions the processes and mechanisms that their institution already uses do not feature. This is not to say that initiatives such as the 'English Pipeline' are not capable of fostering the development of tacit knowledge of teachers, but rather that the optimum conditions for its development exist in the teachers' own immediate professional context.

Collaborations that are fostered between colleagues at the same institution that attempt to facilitate the transmission of tacit subject specialist knowledge between English teaching staff members represent rich opportunities to foster growth in all members of the teaching team that participate. Ish-Horowicz (2015) identified that the trialing of sharing English pedagogy meetings led to 'an improvement in teacher competence and confidence [...], the space to share ideas was appreciated by teachers, and led to more collaborative teaching and planning' (2015, p. 1). Indicated here is the positive impact that small adjustments to typical working

practices within an institution, such as the fostering of collaborative learning communities between teachers, can yield for teachers. What is not apparent here is the tangible impact these activities had on student learning, either as a result of an increase in teacher tacit knowledge of English pedagogy, or otherwise.

One common activity that teachers undertake with relative frequency is standardisation of their assessment decisions. Typically, standardisation sessions held between team members would not be characterised as formal professional development activities, although this might vary depending on the design and running of the session. Standardisation practices vary across contexts, but predominantly comprise two or more teachers seeking to align their assessment judgements with that of the mark scheme and one another. It may also include moderation of other prior assessed work to ascertain the validity and quality of judgements. There are several components to standardisation that align with the tenets of effective CPD for teachers, as outlined above; such activities are grounded within an institution's own quality processes and mechanisms and require the participation of some or all of the teaching staff to contribute towards the completion of the activity.

Problem solving through collaboration and the establishment of common ground understanding across teachers is a goal of standardisation activities. The mention of standardisation in view of tacit knowledge chimes with Sadler's (1989) conception of *guild knowledge*, that comprises 'the ability to make sound qualitative judgments', that is forged through 'a history of previous qualitative judgments and where teachers exchange student work among themselves or collaborate in making assessments' (1989, p. 126). In spite of this, the extent to which standardisation practices can be considered to be effective CPD activities in which tacit knowledge is forged is a relatively under researched area. It is hard to draw conclusions from isolated examples of standardisation activities across institutions without an appreciation of the variable methodologies or processes employed in these specific contexts. This enquiry seeks to cautiously explore how standardisation may be framed as a form of CPD through the methodological approach that will be adopted in this enquiry, and it is here that we can explore adaptive comparative judgement approaches to assessment.

Adaptive Comparative Judgement

Adaptive Comparative Judgement (ACJ) is an assessment methodology that offers an alternative approach to the conventional approach to individualised criteria referenced judgement. This is derived from the research of Louis Thurstone featured in *Law of Comparative Judgement* (1927), in which he argued that while humans have great difficulty making quality judgements with validity and reliability, we are much more adept at making comparative judgements—judgements of quality between two items. ACJ differs from conventional modes of assessment, and what is frequently termed absolute judgement, in which scripts are read and assessed in isolation from its counterpart scripts against predetermined criteria. In advocating comparative judgement approaches, Laming (2011) argues that 'There is no absolute judgement. All judgements are comparisons of one thing with another'. Pollitt (2012a, b) extends this idea by stating:

> When a judge is asked to make an absolute judgment about the perceived quality of an object, previous experience, level of knowledge, self-efficacy and the opinions of others all influence that judgement. In summative assessment, examiners are (and should be) greatly influenced by the mark scheme to an extent that overcomes bias as far as possible. So the absolute judgement of what mark to award is relative to the mark scheme plus any error and bias in its interpretation. (2012, p. 2)

The resolution to such challenges, it is proposed, is the shifting in focus of what the judgement is made against. Rather than locating the quality of individual objects against a scale of quality, ACJ is only interested in the difference in quality between the two objects. In such an approach the only requirement for the judge is to be able to perceive the difference in quality based on their own personal standard or external criteria.

As previously discussed, there exists much debate on the nature of and relationship held between explicit versus tacit knowledge, and how different conceptions of what comprises a 'quality' item of work exists in a discipline as open-ended and subjective as creative writing. One significant feature of ACJ that attempts to address this matter is the flexibility it permits to judges regarding through what lens quality of items is judged.

ACJ is not solely reliant on a mark scheme to guide the judgement decision and offers teachers far more agency in considering what a 'quality' item is. This is possible as the comparative nature of the approach provides the judge with a frame of reference on which to base their judgement, regardless of the focus. This differs from absolute referencing, in which the judgement decision is entirely contingent on their interpretation of assessment standards. Bartholemew (2017) observes with an ACJ approach that a judge's decision can be based on 'viewing two items and choosing the better of the two based on their own expertise and a predetermined criteria or rubric' (2017, p. 2), suggesting that decisions can be arrived at through a tandem of a judge's conception of quality and predetermined criteria, which may be well placed to act either as an explicitly standardised definition of quality, or an interpretive heuristic.

In an ACJ mode of assessment, each script is seen several times in different item pairings to develop a ranked order of performance across a series of student scripts (Pollitt 2004, pp. 6–7). Over time student work gains a "win-loss" record; each time an item is chosen over another the piece of student work it counts as a "win," while a "loss" stems from not being chosen when paired with another item (Pollitt 2004, 2012a, b). After a number of different pairs have been judged in various combinations a ranked arrangement of scripts begins to form. Recent advances in technology have led to the creation of ACJ software applications and online platforms that can help to facilitate the process. With software teachers can view two scripts on a computer screen and choose the better of the two, making the process much more efficient than with paper based approaches. This software also helps ensure that ACJ approaches to assessment are truly 'adaptive' and respond to the decisions that are being arrived at. In recent years, ACJ has been piloted, tested, and refined over time and the algorithm which facilitates the judgements has been improved (Pollitt 2004, 2012b). As a result, pairings are increasingly more refined, and rather than random pairings being presented, items of work that hold similar 'win-loss' records are compared with one another and the overall rank in improved in terms of validity and reliability (Pollitt 2004).

ACJ as Assessment of Learning

The last few years have seen an increase in interest and exposure to ACJ approaches to assessment in the wider educational landscape, which can in part be attributed to Pollitt's (2004, 2012a, b) sustained interest in using the approach in varying contexts. This has been met with a renewed interest in investigating alternatives to prevalent absolute judgement assessment models, in some circles. One initiative that has arisen as a result of this is NoMoreMarking, a national organisation that leads projects on the use of ACJ on English study programmes in primary and secondary schools. They currently lead projects on the assessment of writing in years 1 to 6, on the assessment of reading and writing in years 7 to 9 and on assessing GCSE English in years 10 to 11, and institutions can subscribe to these to gain access to the training, standardisation and moderation offered by NoMoreMarking. The organisation's website, NoMoreMarking.com, provides free access to ACJ algorithm software through which teachers can upload work and judge its quality in adaptively refined pairs.

Small-scale research conducted by NoMoreMarking (2017) surveyed 32 of their affiliate school coordinators, comprising heads of English based in secondary schools, to provide a mark to a student's GCSE English reading answer script using the mark scheme. The original mark was removed, and the markers were not aware of the purpose of the exercise. The results are seen below (Fig. 5.1).

The significant disparity in marks awarded seems to further reiterate the discrepancies that can arise as a result of absolute judgement against mark schemes. The results do indicate some commonality in the judgement reached across these teachers, notably on the awarding of fourteen marks. This trend might point to a common interpretation of the mark scheme's standards by those teachers and a misinterpretation by the others, although we can only hypothesise.

The previous study served as a preliminary enquiry to a larger scale study that NoMoreMarking undertook in 2018. This enquiry sought to explore if teachers using comparative judgement to judge rather than mark GCSE English writing mock papers could reduce workload, and to

What mark out of 20 would you give the script attached to the email?
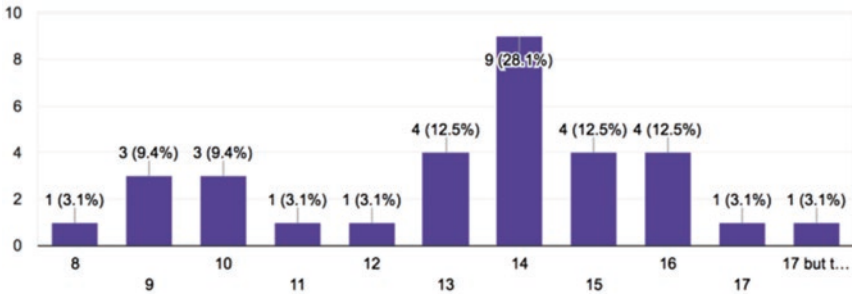
32 responses

Fig. 5.1 NoMoreMarking absolute judgement responses from GCSE English reading assessment

find out if teachers would agree with one another in their judgement decisions to a high level of reliability. Overall, 37 schools and 396 GCSE English teachers participated to judge 5530 student essays. Teachers were given no specific guidance on how to judge and were instead presented with the question: 'The better writing?' Anchor scripts were added to the student scripts, unbeknown to the judges, that were moderated samples of work at specific grades and levels. This allowed NoMoreMarking to determine at what position in the rankings specific essays were working at to facilitate the comparison of results.

With regards to workload, the findings determined that the median judgement time for the writing essay was 23 seconds per pair, and that a typical scenario 'appears to be a teacher spending just over half an hour to judge one set of essays' (NoMoreMarking 2018). In reliability terms, the findings suggested that after a script had been judged alongside a counterpart script in at least fifteen different pairings, the rankings that followed outperformed the marking metrics reported by Ofqual, of +/− 5 for a 40 mark essay. Across the sample of 5530 scripts the variation in marks in the writing scripts was just under 2.8 marks.

The results presented by NoMoreMarking, whilst promising, do present a potential matter of concern that should be noted. The findings present ACJ to be an intuitively appealing mode of assessment in that student work can be judged at a much faster rate than through the

conventional absolute judgement marking system. The declaration that a whole class of essays can be judged within a good degree of reliability by a teacher in only thirty minutes is undoubtedly an eye-catching claim sure to be of interest to stakeholders from across education. But focusing too much on possible time-saving ACJ offers and not on the actual process of judgement can risk diminishing the professional practice of assessment to a mere quantifiable output. Institutions must consider their motivations for the adoption of different practices; in a scenario in which an institution adopts ACJ but finds it to take longer for teachers to judge in this manner than with absolute criterion judgements, one wonders if it would it be retained, regardless of how reliable the process is. Sennett (2009) likens standardising reforms adopted by the National Health Service in the mid-2000s to 'Fordism', which 'takes the division of labor to an extreme: each worker does one task, measured as precisely as possible by time-and-motion studies; output is measured in terms of targets that are, again, entirely quantitative' (2009, p. 47), and similar risks present themselves for ACJ here. ACJ is currently enjoying relatively high exposure in primary and secondary school settings, and it remains detached from institutionalised accountability mechanisms. Whether an increasing influence in the ways institutions report student progress would lead to ACJ losing its educational value through the neglect of genuine judgement practice is not yet known, but is something that teachers must be aware of.

Methods and Preliminary Findings

Research Question

This enquiry has one main research question it seeks to address:

RQ1: *What are the benefits and challenges of using adaptive comparative judgement approaches when assessing GCSE English creative writing scripts in a Further Education institution?*

The construction of this question has been designed to invite a critical examination of the use of comparative judgement approaches in the practice of assessment. Adaptive comparative judgement is an approach to assessment that has been demonstrated in research to provide benefits for educators across a range of contexts; these include an increased reliability in assessment decisions (Heldsinger and Humphry 2010), a significant reduction in the time it takes to assess each script (NoMoreMarking 2018), and providing opportunities for teachers to draw on tacit knowledge beyond those of codified standards in making their assessment decisions (Whitehouse and Pollitt 2012a). This said, there is a paucity of research into the possible impact of using adaptive comparative judgement in FAVE settings and particular to this study FE Colleges.

In terms of scope, this question has several possible lines of enquiry. The first of these is to determine the average time spent assessing students' creative writing scripts using an adaptive comparative judgement approach. The second is to determine the reliability and accuracy of the assessment judgements that are being arrived at through the use of an ACJ approach. This is crucial in helping to determine that the findings from the first line of enquiry are valid, in that the central tenet of any assessment judgement should first be reliability and accuracy before considerations of time invested per assessment judgement are taken into account. The third is to explore the impact of giving practitioners opportunities to assess student creative writing beyond codified standards when making their assessment decisions. ACJ, as noted by Whitehouse and Pollitt (2012a, b), is an assessment methodology that is particularly well-suited to giving teachers an impetus to draw on tacit knowledge when judging student proficiency in an assessment context.

Methods

Adaptive Comparative Judgement Workshop

Five GCSE English teachers contributed a sample of three creative writing pieces from students that they teach GCSE English to, leading to a total sample of fifteen pieces. These creative writing pieces were written

by students under exam conditions in order to mirror an exam-style scenario, and the pieces were not seen or marked by the teachers before being added to the sample. Teachers then participated in an adaptive comparative judgement workshop, in which they individually completed as many comparative judgements as they could in one hour from the sample of fifteen texts. Teachers were asked to choose the 'most proficient' text from each combination, and no mark scheme or assessment standards were shared with them to help in reaching these judgements. NoMoreMarking was the platform used to facilitate the Adaptive Comparative Judgement process. The total number of judgements was set at seventy, the number recommended by NoMoreMarking to ensure a sufficient number of judgements per script (at an average of 23 decisions per script).

Semi-Structured Interviews

These interviews were conducted with the five GCSE English teachers who participated in the ACJ workshop. The intention of these interviews was, as Dornyei (2007) notes, to 'explor[e] the participants' views of the situation being studied' (2007, p. 38), and to better understand some of the complex issues of tacit knowledge and individual judgement practice through 'reporting multiple perspectives, identifying many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges' (Creswell 2012, p. 39).

Questions posed included:

- How did you find assessing creative writing through adaptive comparative judgement?
- Did this approach to assessment change the way you viewed each script?
- What have you gained through assessing with comparative judgement?

As part of the interviews teachers were also introduced to two creative writing texts and asked to narrate the thinking they were undertaking in comparatively judging these two scripts in detail (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Findings from the adaptive comparative judgement workshop

Teacher	Agreement	Local	Median time
Teacher 1	0.91	71	26.0 s
Teacher 2	0.72	96	16.5 s
Teacher 3	1.03	80	18.1 s
Teacher 4	0.79	71	11.6 s
Teacher 5	1.47	70	14.8 s

Preliminary Findings

Agreement: This metric represents the level of agreement between judges on scripts. A lower number (1 or lower) is high agreement, representing little disagreement amongst judges between scripts.

We can note in table 5.2 that the majority of judges were largely in agreement with one another regarding their judgement decisions, with teacher 5 the only teacher in the sample to show a significant difference to others.

Local: This metric represents how many judgements each teacher made in one hour.

All teachers achieved at least seventy judgements (the number recommended for the sample size), and the mean average was 77.6 judgements across the five teachers. This represented a significant increase in the number of judgements that are possible when compared with the duration of ten minutes per creative writing script that teachers self-reported when discussing individual script judgement using mark schemes.

Median Time: This metric shows the duration of time spent judging each script individually.

There is some variance evident here between teachers, with the shortest median time at 11.6 seconds and the longest at 26 seconds. Significantly, there is little evidence to suggest a correlation between time spent and the agreement between judgements in consideration of other judges decisions, suggesting that while some judges took far less time than others to arrive at judgements, these were still reliable and valid in respect of the wider sample.

Discussion of Findings from the Adaptive Comparative Judgement Workshop

Evident in the findings presented above is the level of detail the use of adaptive comparative judgement software can provide in relation to the reliability of judgements and time taken per judgement. When compared with other forms of standardisation, this approach provides a comprehensive and individualised insight into teacher summative assessment practice. From an institutional point of view, this offers considerable benefits in respect of quality assurance. In regards to training and development, it follows from this that professional learning opportunities would be possible to identify in view of this information too.

Teacher 5 provides an interesting case as a means to demonstrate this. Of the five teachers that participated in the workshop, teacher 5 is the least experienced in terms of GCSE English teaching practice. At the time of participating in the workshop they were working towards completing a teacher training qualification and their experience of teaching GCSE English had to that point only comprised of approximately three hours a week for the past eighteen months. This is in contrast to the other four teachers who had an average of over three years of full-time teaching of GCSE English. It is perhaps expected that teacher 5's assessment judgements might differ from other teachers, in that they have not yet established a comprehensive base of knowledge and experience on which to build these on. In view of this we can look again at Bell and Cowie's (2006) concept of 'getting impressions' and 'gut feelings' when assessing student work, and the crucial role of tacit knowledge in judging in the absence of a mark scheme or assessment standards. This finding points to the importance and value of accumulated experience and knowledge that can support practitioners in forming judgements that go beyond the codified assessment standards featured in mark schemes.

Discussion of Findings from the Semi-Structured Interviews

How teachers found the process of using adaptive comparative judgement:

Teacher 3: *It changes what I was looking at. There might be a few spelling mistakes but the actual content is really good, and I really think that the mark scheme—you don't always look at the content...the other bits and pieces...you've got to tick the boxes—whereas when you read it cold you think was that a good story? Did it grip me? Was it well-written? Did it flow?*

Teacher 5: *"I think it [adaptive comparative judgement] is a great method, particularly once you're at the level of a professional teacher where you've got knowledge of what makes a good answer … and that's at more of an instinctual level where you wouldn't need to check back against a mark sheet … It's as much a matter of feeling.*

Evident in the responses from all teachers to this question was how ACJ resulted in them judging texts holistically as a unified piece, rather than judging them relative to their constituent parts. Teachers articulated how a 'feeling' and 'instinct' enabled them to judge the more proficient piece of creative writing when choosing between two scripts. Further to this was the use of figurative language and metaphor to articulate these intangible qualities, as seen in the examples 'did it *grip* me?' and 'did it *flow*?' These findings give insight into how teachers articulate their tacit understanding of what good creative writing is beyond the specific criteria featured in assessment standards.

What teachers used when they were drawing on (in the absence of a mark scheme) when using adaptive comparative judgement:

Teacher 1: *Probably experience. I've read a lot of books and if a book doesn't interest me...doesn't pull me in...then I'm not interested. When you read something there has to be a draw...there has to be something to pull you in. If you're reading something and it's making you think—"why is that happening?"*

Teacher 4: *There was still an element where I was thinking of the mark scheme in the back of my mind, in relation to spelling and grammar. But in terms of the content I was reading through and thinking which one did I enjoy most, what one is the most complete story, that held my attention and made me want to read on to the end, which is something that we should be encouraging more in our learners.*

The responses to this question reveal the extent to which teachers adopt the position of a reader, in addition to that of an assessor, when forming a judgement. All teachers stated that they felt that 'engaging' with a text was an important indicator of quality and was what they valued over other technical aspects. The student scripts were appreciated in a holistic way, as authentic artefacts rather than items created for the sole purpose of measuring performance in creative writing. In this sense, there was evidence of teachers adopting a more dialogic approach to textual engagement when using adaptive comparative judgement, as seen in questions such as "why is that happening?" This example, and others like it, appear to indicate how ACJ might be used as a vehicle to facilitate assessment *for* learning, in which teachers and learners exchange dialogue about the creative decisions made and reasons for them. This resonates with the work of D'Arcy (1999) who advocates the use of 'interpretive responses' to creative writing, in which a reader 'adopts a meaning-related paradigm would be prepared to take an aesthetic stance to the text, prepared to engage with it, imaginatively, empathetically, and visually' (1999, p. 14).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The preliminary findings from this research indicate that adaptive comparative judgement provides a means through which teachers can reach judgements on the quality of a text in less time when compared with conventional methods while still maintaining reliability and validity in the judgement. Further to this, it also offers considerable benefits to organisations in respect of standardisation of assessment practice across a team of teachers. ACJ, facilitated through the use of NoMoreMarking software, provides a comprehensive account of the reliability of assessment judgements reached by multiple teachers in any given sample. This offers potentially valuable information on the level of agreement judges share in any given sample of text, which in turn offers a valuable base on which discussions around what 'good' work looks like, can take place.

Further findings indicate that ACJ provides an approach to assessment through which teachers can draw on their tacit understanding of what

makes a 'good' piece of creative writing when forming their judgements that includes considering the text as a holistic artefact, beyond the atomised criteria used in mark schemes. In this fashion it allows teachers to engage with the content of the text from the 4perspective of an interested reader, which is underpinned by internal dialogue that seeks to ascertain which text is more interesting, compelling and fully formed.

There are wider implications if we are to take this idea of knowing what a 'good' piece of creative writing looks like as existing partially, or wholly, in tacit form. In respect of this, this research points to the value of providing teachers with opportunities to talk about their internal conceptions of what they understand good writing to be with reference to specific artefacts. It chimes with Elliot et al.'s (2011) assertion that tacit knowledge can be passed on to others through the sharing of examples, which help provide a tangibility to work that is otherwise inherently subjective. Sadler's (1989) *guild knowledge* is again relevant here, in that it supports the notion that this knowledge of what quality work looks like is co-created through collaboration between teachers.

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6

Their Defining Moments: Identifying Critical Influences that Prompted Progression into Post Compulsory Education in the Arts

Martell Baines

Introduction

Before reading this chapter on defining critical moments of influence, spend a moment to reflect on your responses to the following questions which are designed to help you look back upon your developmental journey from when you started to where you are today:

Influencers: Who were the people who influenced you when making decisions about your education, or affected your decisions on which qualifications to take and where to study?

Influences: What were the defining moments in your journey from compulsory into post compulsory education?

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Defining Moments (Pivotal events, Critical Incidents, Turning points, Epiphany): What incidents do you recall; what moments or happenings occurred that informed your choices?

Enablers: What has occurred that helped you progress along the way?

Hurdles/ Barriers: What hurdles or barriers did you encounter whilst on your journey?

Your recommendations: Finally, what further interventions, support or opportunities would you have liked to have had along the way?

Background to and Motivation for the Research

The research study, presented in this chapter, is set within a specialist Arts institution and operates contingent to the policies and widening participation (WP) practices of the institution.

My role is Progression Manager of the WP team. We deliver outreach activities to all ages in schools, colleges and community settings, off and on campus. We engage particularly with groups and individuals who are identified by a range of 'WP criteria' or indicators of disadvantage. The impetus for this investigation of practice relates to meeting the requirements of the WP commitment of the institution as laid down in its policies and practices. As a busy team we enjoy the challenges of providing opportunities to our target cohorts because our roles advocate fairness of access and addressing social injustice. We provide new opportunities, guidance and experiences for the students we encounter in our role.

WP interventions have to be research informed as well as strategic, targeted, monitored and evaluated to identify impact needed to provide evidence of value for money and impact on practice. A further remit for members of the WP team is to keep abreast of current developments in the rapidly changing field of education and policy. I began to reflect upon the scale of the remit and what it is needed to provide effective and targeted outreach, to reach the most disadvantaged groups, from the perspective of a specialist subject education provider of the Arts, particularly in response to the policy context.

This quandary became the catalyst to look into contemporary empirical data and surveys of the populations involved. This research was created as a result of the larger surveys attempts at quantifying the numbers involved from contexts of disadvantage. It struck me that a member of a household who is experiencing poverty, no work or in-work poverty is trapped in a cycle of insecurity when navigating day-to-day challenges. This can be in terms of finance, housing security and basic-needs survival. These stresses also have consequences for the health and wellbeing of a household. One factor seldom occurs in isolation to other disadvantaged circumstances. In these circumstances progression through education for social and economic reasons might not necessarily be the most immediate priority for members of that household or community, particularly at critical times of decision making.

In terms of qualifications the Institution offers a portfolio of levels and subjects in the Arts. It provides a range of entry points in further, adult and higher education from compulsory stages of education and at post compulsory stages, from regulated qualifications (Ofqual) Level 3 to Qualifications and Credit Framework Levels 4 to 7.

Progression routes into undergraduate study are demonstrated through earlier attainment of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications including passes in English and Maths at Level 2 and Advanced 'A' Levels, Extended Diplomas, Access to Higher Education in the Art and Design at Level 3 or a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, which as a course of study bridges between Level 3 and Level 4.

Achieving basic qualifications at Level 2 GCSE is an early educational hurdle that can severely affect a young person's prospects. The JRF report on poverty (2017) concludes that prospects for solving UK poverty are worrying, adding that the majority of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds still do not achieve 5 GCSEs. Achieving a pass grade in English Language and Mathematics GCSE, Grade C or 4/5, is a minimum entry requirement for many Further Adult Vocational Education (FAVE) courses which then presents a significant qualification barrier for progression into the sector. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ 2018) demonstrates annually that significant percentages of students are failing maths and English and therefore falling at this hurdle.

The Context and Problem

There persists a glaring lack of participation from groups of students identified as having particular socio-economic, family circumstances or location concerns and further under representation from those in protected characteristics groups in particular subject areas in post compulsory education.

This chapter presents an account of practitioner research that focuses on the Arts and is located in the context of my team's role within a specialist Arts Institution.

The demographic of the student population in the institution is predominantly young, white and female, from areas or quintiles (POLAR4 (Office for Students, 2019) of higher levels of participation in higher education. This context (and problem) is not only occurring in the Arts, the specific context of this study, but also reflects the situation across many subjects and sectors to differing degrees.

In post compulsory education, equitable access is strived for through widening participation (WP) practitioners delivering outreach interventions. This is in order to address the barriers and hurdles encountered by many students who might otherwise fall through the education net. Targeted interventions are carried out in schools, colleges and community settings. The aim is to reach out to individuals and groups, put in place access to information and guidance and motivate participants to progress further in their education.

WP programmes are designed to raise aspirations, to acquire confidence in accessing continuing education and subsequently achieve their qualification. The overall purpose is to support individuals to gain the qualifications necessary to meet the entry requirements of higher-level education. An education which is considered to be necessary for achieving a fulfilling life in today's society.

Social Mobility

Wilkinson and Pickett state:

The possibility of social mobility is what we mean when we talk about equality of opportunity, the idea that anybody, by their own merits and hard work can achieve a better social or economic position for themselves and their family. (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, p. 157)

Government and education policy makers advocate for increased upward movement in social mobility. The policy for access and participation from the Office for Students (OfS 2018) is designed to enable a higher percentage of students from disadvantaged contexts to achieve improved social mobility through success and progression into post compulsory education. The policy guidance advocates for equity of progression and attainment for all, including those who have the potential to succeed but are experiencing disadvantage in its myriad of forms. Ultimately, the aim is to create fair and equitable access for all. They direct to acknowledge applicants' potential to succeed from all contexts, whatever their background in respect to WP criteria such as socio-economic circumstances, geographic location, attending a failing or low-achieving school or by the four main under-represented protected characteristics of gender, ethnicity, age and disability and to consider the implications of intersectionality of both WP and protected characteristics together.

In an article entitled 'Social mobility is a postcode lottery: Too many in Britain are being left behind'.

Milburn (2017) comments on current practice, stating:

There is, however, a mind-blowing inconsistency of practice. All too often, schemes start up and then wither away; initiatives lack scale; experience is not pooled; evidence is not embedded properly, or ignored. (Milburn 2017)

This is a searing criticism by Milburn of WP and mirrors the context and problem that many WP practitioners face. Their role is to make a difference in circumstances for participants through outreach interventions. It is necessary therefore to evidence impact of interventions that are successful in changing the group demographics of student populations. It is argued it would be a social injustice to lower the number of widening

participation programmes. However we need to know what aspects of WP practices succeed?

For many in the United Kingdom, the experience and immersion in entrenched and multiple facets of disadvantage deters them and their families from engaging in further and higher education. The impetus that holds the potential to enhance their prospects of employment, gain financial security for their family and to achieve upward social-mobility within their lifetime is to access further and higher education. Gaining the necessary qualifications to enable such a shift in circumstances compared to their parents' and grandparents' generations or from their own socio-economic situation is an essential first step.

The Social Mobility Commission in its 'State of the Nation Report' (2017, p. iii) warns us that:

> There is a fracture line running deep through our labour and housing markets and our education system. Those on the wrong side of this divide are losing out and falling behind. (Social Mobility Commission 2017, p. piii)

Success and achievement in education is seen as the means to achieving social-mobility, which is highlighted in the following quote:

> In both developed and developing countries, education is held up as the 'ticket' out of poverty, because it enables children from low income families' move upwards into a secure life, not only when it comes to income, but social status too. In other words, children born to poor parents who completed higher education are more likely to climb the social ladder than those with a lower level of education. (Learning and Development Agency 2015)

Compensating for Education?

This chapter draws upon key texts from a number of perspectives including the debate on whether education can, or cannot, compensate for society or achieve it in isolation from other agencies and interventions. This is examined principally through the work of Bernstein (1970), Gorard

(2010) and Coffield and Williamson (2011). The research question underpinning the study is:

> *Can widening participation (WP) interventions begin to compensate for society and education, and if so to what extent?*

This dilemma stems from a much longer-lasting debate: whether education can, or cannot, compensate for society, or even achieve it in isolation from other agencies interventions. This quandary has been hotly debated by authors in the field for almost 50 years. In this context, the overarching question, underpinned by key literature and highlighted by empirical data, subsequently became:

> *If education cannot compensate for the effects of society alone', as* Coffield and Williamson *(2011) suggest, then what is to be done?*

This question is generated in the context of practice and research in WP. It is a reflection upon the purpose of WP practice in society and education. This brings to the fore the importance and purpose of WP to support progression, for individuals onto the next level of education. In other words, what can be done within the context of home, community and education that might compensate for inequalities of access and for aspects of social life that are missing or insufficient due to an individual's circumstances?

According to Bernstein (2000, p. xx), education is a fundamental human right. He argues that 'people must feel that they have a stake in society'. He goes on to identify three 'Pedagogic Rights' or entitlements which he sees as being the hallmarks of a 'good' or 'democratic' education. First, there is the right to individual enhancement; second, the right to be included, socially, intellectually, culturally and personally; and third, the right to participate politically at the organisational, local and national level. Bernstein also advocates that; 'Participation is the condition for civic practice and operates at the level of politics.' (Bernstein 2000, p. xx).

Empirical data found in the Children's Commissioner's Report (2018) on sub groups of vulnerabilities of young people and the Joseph Rowntree

Foundation Annual Poverty Reports (2017, 2018) provide a stark picture of the complexity of disadvantage and the scale of the problem.

Data from these reports indicate that the state of affairs is far more complicated than simply identifying groups as being of 'low socio-economic status', 'minority ethnicity', 'disability' or 'under represented', labelled by a single term. The context is far more complex and complicated by intersectionality; an overlapping of factors.

This context provides the motivation behind this research study which is to reveal the intersectionality and complexity of factors which characterise the lives of the people in disadvantaged contexts. There are clearly gaps in understanding between the expectations of WP and access, the initiatives which target the most disadvantaged and the resulting progression into post compulsory education of under-represented groups. This dilemma illustrates the pressing need to develop an enhanced understanding of the challenges that WP practitioners face to reach those that the interventions are meant to address.

Ball writes on the complexity of social divisions and social exclusions as 'multiple, multifaceted, gross and subtle, intended and unintended and often poorly understood', (Ball 2004, p. 229). He describes this as an 'uneven multifaceted-ness of inequalities' that are difficult to grasp and describe due to the operation of market freedoms, the gaming of the education system and geographic variation. He summarises all of this simply by stating, 'The chances of your child being excluded from school depends on your ethnicity and where you live' (Ball 2004, p. 229).

As stated previously, for many, the experience of entrenched and multiple facets of disadvantage deter students and their families from engaging in post compulsory education. WP, equality diversity and inclusivity (EDI) endeavour is realised through a myriad of outreach interventions. These programmes aim to raise aspirations, attainment and the confidence to enable students to progress further in education and to gain the qualifications considered necessary to secure a fulfilling life for themselves.

Looking back to an Aristotelian concept, the Greek word *'Eudaimonia'* refers to a notion of happiness, through living and acting (Irwin and Fine 1995). In 384 BC, Aristotle wrote on the acquisition of knowledge and how different people create good or happiness. Eudaimonia as a term refers to the human function, how different virtues and actions are the

means to achieve the human good (Irwin and Fine 1995. p. xix). The virtues of character, in Aristotelian terms, is firstly 'virtue in thought' which requires experience and time, then secondly 'virtue of character' which results from habit, which Irwin and Fine (1995, p. 366) point out is derived from the word 'ethical'. Gregory in his preface also talks of '*ethos*'. Gregory describes people as ethical agents, 'as people who make decisions about good and bad and who decide their own conduct' (Gregory 2009, p. xiv). He argues that the influences that shape our character, or ethos, involve 'ethical criticism'.

The practice of considering widening participation in research is frequently considered through the lens of Bourdieu's field theory (1973), through the acquisition of social, economic and cultural capitals which a person possesses and which shape their 'habitus' or taken-for granted ways of doing things.

Brown (2002) questions the apparent disconnect between mass education systems and society outside of the education field. He talks of government imposed 'plethora of remedial interventions' to resolve 'the monolithic education system that is seen by many to be failing a significant proportion of its client-group and society as a whole' (Brown 2002, p. 2). WP practice may be considered to be part of these interventions and on the margins of formal education, which might be one of the problems that it is encountering.

The existence and quantified dimensions of the phenomenon of the lack of social mobility are illustrated through empirical surveys of large populations over time. These have been carried out by a number of governmental and charitable institutions over generations with thousands of participants. The resulting reports and surveys provide an epistemological underpinning and provide a supporting rationale for this study.

Key reports that inform this study were produced by McKinsey and Company (2007), UNICEF (United Nations International Emergency Fund), (2010), the Social Mobility Commission (2017), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2017), the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS 2010) and the Children's Commissioner for England's 'Vulnerability Report' (2018), which presents 70 subsets of Children's vulnerabilities and warns of overlapping datasets in its research methods.

Research Methodology and Methods

The research design is a multi-method study of narrative enquiry and documentary analysis that is underpinned by empirical data. This provides the epistemological basis for the investigation. The methods adopted are driven by the objectives, research questions, methodology and the research aims.

As its ontological starting point, this study takes an interpretivist view of the social world. It seeks to understand and interpret experience. Waring (2017) points out that in ontological terms, 'interpretivism' refers to a whole family of approaches to understanding the nature and form of the social world, which stand in direct 'contrast to a positivist sense of social reality' (Waring 2017, p. 18). The epistemic position adopted is therefore subjectivist, transactional and interactive.

The central position taken is that there are pervading inequalities of access to opportunities that may enable an individual to achieve upward social mobility. These barriers hinder progression to access to education for some groups in society. Pearson (2016), Gorard (2010), Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) indicate how deprivation, disadvantage and lack of social mobility continue to exist and how this is a complex area.

> The investigator and the object of the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are literally created as the investigation proceeds. Therefore the conventional distinction between epistemology and ontology dissolves (Waring 2017, p. 18)

The ontological approach taken is interpretative, to understand what is real. It is not a Platonic positivist approach of absolute truth, but more of an Aristotelian interpretation of the social world that interprets what is truth and reality within that context. The epistemological approach is pragmatic in that the research has emerged from a problem encountered in my own practice in WP delivering interventions aimed to improve access to and widen participation in post compulsory education.

The narratives offered by learners in the Arts are gathered to access, interpret and analyse the subjective and intersubjective experiences of the individuals involved in the study. Gregory (2009) notes how, as human

beings, we all lead 'storied lives'. He refers to stories as 'fundamental units of knowledge and the foundation of memory that is essential to the way we make sense of our lives; the beginning, middle and end of our personal and collective trajectories' (Gregory 2009, p. 14).

Narrative accounts are employed within the study to access, interpret and analyse subjective and intersubjective experience. This chapter is therefore an act of communication with you the reader. It does not seek objectivity but authenticity. It attempts to convey the experiences of individuals and groups who participated in this study, as well as my own experience of conducting the research.

The methodology underpinning this thesis is therefore ideographic, dialectical and hermeneutical in that it recognises that the 'variable and personal nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction between and among investigator(s) and respondent(s)' (Waring 2017, p. 18). The quest, therefore, is not for certainty but for understanding of subjective and intersubjective experience. 'It is not a matter of eliminating conflicting or previous interpretations, but to distil a more sophisticated and informed consensus construction …to become more aware of the content and meaning of competing constructions' (Ibid).

The methodological concept adopted for this study is one of a hermeneutic, interpretative approach. It brings together lived experiences which aim to provide authentic accounts. The data gathered for analysis are transcriptions of the students' accounts of the factors they consider to have influenced them in the decisions to access and engage in post compulsory education. The predominant research method, adopted in this study is narrative enquiry carried out through Critical Incidents Technique (CIT) (Flanagan 1954) leading to a series of case studies (Clandinin and Connelly 1990).

The Research Population

'Their Defining Moments' provides insights into a sample of students and their personal stories of their home and community environments. It explores how their interactions with other agents, places and episodes of

experiences had shaped their lives as they relate the events to the interviewer. The interviews are the participants' own recollection of parts of their journey through their education. Fundamentally what they chose to tell the researcher in that point of time.

In this study, a sample of 5 highly engaged Arts students (2 females and 3 males) were approached as 'best case' examples of individuals, who at the time had contributed high levels of studentship during their course of study. This engagement was beyond their course study requirements. Their activities were being employed as Student Ambassadors for WP outreach delivery (3 out of the 5), through the Student Union (SU) and their activism as officers which then led to becoming elected as presidents of the SU (2 out of the 5), or by gaining professional experience through winning awards of an external commission to develop learning resources (2 out of the 5). It is important to note that some of these roles overlapped for some individuals in the research population.

The case studies gathered provide a series of accounts of very personal journeys; these are set in the context of the society, the education system and the culture in which they were experienced. They specifically tell of individual experiences of progression into studying the Arts in post-compulsory education.

To introduce the respondents who had consented to tell their stories and to give their names chosen for anonymity, they are 'Amelia', 'Arthur', 'Bruce', 'Imaan' and 'Jack'. All were studying different creative subjects in different year cohorts. They had all played a part in supporting the aims of my professional role and that of my team for WP practice at the institution.

During the interview process some interviewees indicated that they possessed profiles with criteria that were not previously known to me as the researcher. These 'new' factors have the potential to be considered as being disadvantaged students in the context of post-compulsory education. For example, Imaan is from an under-represented ethnic group; Bruce is a mature student who was returning to education but did not possess the required qualifications due to his education abroad; Amelia is a young mother, was previously care experienced and had many multiple educational placements, she had also been diagnosed as dyslexic when starting her Level 4 study.

Storytelling Prompts

The question prompts used to create dialogue and narratives for analysis are 'Storytelling trigger questions' as described by Gremler (Gremler, 2004) in Spencer-Oatey (2013, pp. 81–82). The resulting clusters of responses are what Yin describes as 'units of analysis' (1994, p. 21). The action of gathering narratives presents a range of information from each individual's account. Analysis of the narratives and its units of data and themes in the case studies identifies the emergent categories of influence within these accounts. The storytelling prompts selected are as presented earlier in this chapter:

1. Influences
2. Influencers
3. Pivotal events (epiphany/light bulb moments, critical incidents/ turning points)
4. Enablers to progression
5. Barriers/hurdles encountered to progression
6. Stakeholder recommendations
7. 3 key words on the participants progression into creative education

The methodological concept is one of a hermeneutic, interpretative approach. It brings together narratives of lived experiences which aim to give authentic accounts. The data gathered for analysis are transcriptions of the students' accounts of what factors they consider have influenced them in the decisions to access and engage in post compulsory education.

Ethics Approval

Due regard has been given to the ethical considerations of the approach of this research study. The ethics proposal is guided by the British Educational Research Association Guidelines (BERA 2018) and General Data Protection Regulations (EUGDPR) (2017). The following ethical considerations have the potential to be problematic but are not expected to arise: Identification of the individual. To avoid this, personal data is re-coded as soon as possible. Individual's names have been changed to

protect their anonymity. If participants' disclosures contain anything that they do not wish to be included in the data for this study they can request that part of the narrative is deleted. In accordance with BERA Ethical Guidelines (2018), all direct references to institutions, schools, colleges and organisations are avoided in reporting data from this study. All participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Positionality of the Researcher

My own experiences are considered in a statement of positionality as they have an overall significance to the study. As part of a pilot study I created my own self-reflective narrative. This enabled me to understand the phenomenon and incidents that when researching the experiences of others shaped my perspective of the data. There is a question of whether I am actually a suitable comparable case study in the context of the participants who generously gave accounts of their personal stories and journeys in the period of their studies from 2017 to 2019.

I find Iam not entirely comfortable with using my own account despite also growing up in a context of relative disadvantage in the 1960s. I grew up in a county that did not have a higher education institution but it was a completely different time in the context of education provision after the raising of the participation age for compulsory education to 18 years. I was the first in my family to progress into post compulsory education; however, despite their limited circumstances (Dad was a car mechanic in a local garage, my mother ran the village shop), my parents had put in place actions for my education that not many could afford to be able to do in today's comparable economic context. I had taken a vocational qualification route after school. I did not study at higher education until the beginning of the 1990s as a mature student, married with a young family.

Analysis

Analysis of the narratives in this study brings to light personal 'critical incidents', a technique introduced by Flanagan (1954). This is achieved through gaining insights into significant themes found in the stories of

the lives of participants who told of their experiences. The analysis identifies 'critical incidents' and experiences encountered by participants on their journey into post compulsory education.

Hermeneutical analysis of the stories occurs at several levels at different times. The first level is the student's own recollections of their experiences at the point of the interview, the narrative as told to the interviewer. The second level is the researcher's transcription and analysis of those stories. The third level of narrative experience is yours—the reader and your interpretation of the written account. This account is shaped by my direct personal experiences of conducting the research and the meaning you make of that narrative. The positionality of the researcher, as a WP Practitioner, is therefore considered to be an integral part of this research.

The case examples gathered for this study are real and are presented with as much authenticity as possible. They provide a series of accounts of personal journeys through Arts education. These accounts are set in the context of society, the education system and culture in which they were experienced. The research population involved consists of a small sample of highly engaged students. They are presented as best case examples of individuals that I encountered as people who had contributed high levels of extra-curricular studentship during their course of study. Their contributions exceeded the basic course requirements of the subject they were studying. The respondents were Student Ambassadors for WP outreach delivery or were Student Union Officers or students who had gained professional experience whilst studying through commissions.

The narratives are analysed to elicit the range of influences and critical incidents indicated by those who participated in the study. Each emergent theme is then attributed a label of an influence or experience that is related to the sentence or paragraph.

Emerging Themes

An emerging theme from the sample of narratives and the data it provides is that the influences received and an individual's experiences of education are multi-layered and nuanced. The narratives reveal how student's

own self-efficacy is paramount, how it contributes to influencing their journey and the stories they choose to tell at a point in time. The study reveals that character-influencing decisions may also be demonstrated as *resistance*; counter to the presence of influence of immediate family members, it can also be demonstrated as *indecisiveness*; of direction to take, *changing their mind* once one decision has been made or applying *determination* to overcome setbacks. Access to cultural resources and digital capabilities also emerge as factors that shape the decision-making of participants in this study.

Immersion in the data and analysis created 5 predominant themes of influences:

The range of defining moments identified, the agents involved, the cultural experiences accrued, the setbacks encountered and 'Self' attributes of the individuals.

Although the Arts students interviewed were identified as highly engaged individuals, who had contributed their time and energy to the institution, above the requirements of the course, their accounts of their transition into their course of study demonstrate that they had all faced significant moments that required strategic decision making.

Jack had changed his mind about his choice of subject to study once he began his further education course, he was also turned away from a work placement opportunity in a hospital setting so was deterred from studying a health subject.

Imaan experienced rejection with her first application to her chosen Level 4 course but successfully reapplied after completing an Arts Foundation course at the same institution. She relates how she was being resistant to the pressure of influencers, countering the wishes and expectations of her family members and peers.

Amelia describes 'her stubbornness' and resolve to study the Arts at the same time as becoming a young mother and enrolling despite being very ill at the time.

Bruce had stepped out of an established career in order to pursue his studies, returning to learning to gain a level 3 qualification on an Access to HE course as a mature student as he had missed out on essential qualifications earlier when in education abroad.

Arthur related how, as the youngest sibling, he thought he should resist being a creative student because all of his family were creatives.

Through analysis of the transcripts I began to be drawn more to references made by the interviewees of their own 'Self' attributes. These were the references that they relate to their own behaviours or aspects of their own character. A conceptual link to Aristotle's virtues can be made here for example by demonstrating persistence and courage. These developments in character can also be connected to Gregory's (2009) references to ethical character and their 'ethos'.

Whilst this is still a work in progress, a number of recurring insights are emerging as important from the transcriptions of the narratives;

> Imaan recommends to others who are following her path to:
>> *'Be strong and adamant as to what you want.'*
>> *'Do not let family and certain people such as peers to become a hurdle.'*
>> *'To speak up and speak to parents and teachers.'*
> Amelia describes herself as:
>> *Stubborn! I'm really stubborn.*
> Jack related how:
>> *'A lot of things happened to me by fluke or chance.*
>> *I was an indecisive person and made rash decisions at the time.'*
> He then reflects by saying:
>> *'The decisions I have made through my education have got me to*
>> *where I have got to now'.*
> Bruce recommends:
>> *To make that move, make that jump.*
> Arthur's suggestions were on developing personal networks, to;
>> *'Seek out those people who are invested in the creative subjects.'*
>> *'Surround yourself in that community.'*
>> *'The more limited your personal experiences and context you are in the*
> *more work you have to actively go and find it.'*

Summary

The central position taken in this study is that there are pervading inequalities of access to opportunities that may enable an individual to achieve upward social mobility. These barriers hinder progression to access to education for some groups in society. Pearson (2016), Gorard (2010), Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) have indicated how deprivation,

disadvantage and lack of social mobility continue to exist and how this is a complex area.

A key recommendation from this study, drawn from the narratives examined, suggests that compensatory and positive cultural experiences should be available to enhance the life experiences of those who only have access to limited resources and a narrow range of social networks, in order to build upon or broaden their social and cultural capital. This should be a moral and ethical imperative for education leaders, teachers and policy makers concerned with protection and promotion of pedagogic rights (Bernstein 2000) and in the interests of democracy and education (Dewey 1916).

A further recommendation is that post compulsory institutions should offer ease of access to high quality resources to under-represented groups to enable students to gain experience of the institution. This could help to encourage a sense of belonging and feeling enhanced by their engagement in post compulsory education (Bernstein 2000). This could go some way towards breaking down perceived barriers of whether post-compulsory education could be *for* them.

A third recommendation is that programmes of WP should purposefully include educational experiences through connections with wider social networks to enable under-represented students to be able to connect with identifiable positive role models in their lives in order that influence for the good might happen. Another approach is to provide a focus on recognising personal traits and character in response to decisions that may begin to strengthen understanding for how an individual might navigate a personal journey.

In summary, the outcome from this research has been to influence and inform WP practice and the outreach interventions that we implement in our particular context of the Arts. This may contribute to creating a more even playing field of access for individuals who may be experiencing disadvantage in its myriad of forms to encourage progression into the creative sector. To put in place outreach activities that build upon recognition of an individual's own attributes and character that may assist progression. A desired outcome is to incorporate students' voices in informed WP delivery, to enable students to be co-producers of WP interventions which are shaped by their own experiences of their journeys into the Arts.

Conclusion

In relation to a broader conclusion in response to the original overarching research question:

Can widening participation (WP) interventions compensate for society and education, if so to what extent?

The finding that can contribute from my research to the current debate is that endeavour to compensate is not a contribution that education or widening participation can provide alone or in isolation. The context of disadvantage is complicated and multifaceted, it is too all-encompassing to provide simple solutions to the problem.

Politically there should be a wrap-around of interconnected agencies support for welfare to engender sustainable household security for all. The empirical data demonstrates the need to create household security for basic needs, to be able to increase capacities to aspire for a fulfilling and stable life. Achieving this would engender capacity for families to consider participating in additional positive influential experiences that expands participants' capitals and influential experiences for the positive good for the whole family over and above basic day-to-day securities.

A multi-agency, collaborative approach of support for the whole family is required across the lifespan of under-represented students. This study demonstrates just the peak of the iceberg on life-course journeys of a few individuals. Their stories and case studies cast a light on the twists and turns of decision-making journeys throughout education.

A limitation of this study is that it is currently focused solely on the field of Arts and Education, that the sample is small, that participants were all highly engaged and successful students who were making good progress. However, their experiences also demonstrate the hurdles and barriers encountered that require consideration in the role of WP practitioners and educators across disciplines. Emerging conclusions and recommendations may have applicability across wider subject areas in education but were outside the boundaries of this particular practitioner research study at the time.

As a Practitioner Researcher I feel very privileged to have received these rich qualitative accounts from Arts students and to be able to offer my analysis and interpretation of their stories with them.

Therefore, thank you, Amelia, Arthur, Bruce, Imaan and Jack for your willing participation in this research study, I am exceedingly grateful. Your stories impact upon my practice and personal development in many ways and will undoubtedly inform my WP practice in the future; through further dissemination I intend to extend your influential insights further.

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7

Developing Critical Thinking and Professional Identity in the Arts Through Story

Frances Norton

Introduction

Brown (1998, p. 189) states that the idea of educating students in an atmosphere of equality and joint inquiry could maximise each student's access to the legacy of the critical traditions might at first appear to be a high risk strategy. He goes further describing critical the introduction of thinking interventions in education as an invitation to classroom disorder. Positive, creative, fruitful disorder is what I was hoping for when I embarked on this research journey. Close reading of the ideas of Lipman (2003) reveals that he turns his back on confrontational, rote, shame based teaching and instead advocates, telling stories to each other. Lipman observes that the education system can sometimes operate as a machine to create 'biddable' citizens who cannot think for themselves. Some of the Access students I teach have had a rough ride through education, and silent resistance with a set face is a polite version of the strong emotions their educational past brings up. Brown and

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Lipman offer us a soft skills alternative approach to teaching critical thinking (CT) which has a radical undertone. Art education in its best form allows for experimentation, unpicking past knowledge and remaking it with surprising new elements. Access students readily came to lunch time experimental critical thinking interventions involved in the research. They understand the value of social and cultural capital, and they do not want to be left out of the big conversations any more. Reading and adapting Brown and Lipman's ideas, I developed Community of Inquiry interventions with my students Some students found critical thinking interventions moving, vocabulary expanding, healing, new horizon finding and (form them) authentic and 'true'.

This chapter describes the nature of the educational issue which provided the impetus for this study and the context in which it occurred. It then discusses issues surrounding the development of critical thinking in educational contexts. It considers the works of key contributors to the debate concerning issues of whether critical thinking can be taught or whether conditions can only be created in which critical thinking can develop and flourish. It then presents, analyses and discusses illustrative examples of empirical data collected from the study's participants. This chapter reports different perspectives of practitioners of the Arts, educational theorists, Arts educators and students regarding the development of critical thinking.

Definitions, problems, and issues in the development of critical thinking are considered in some depth. The stories of students of the Arts and those of their lecturers and other education practitioners regarding their experiences of engaging in the pedagogical interventions in the study are presented and discussed. This chapter also provides accounts of participants' experiences in the study in relation to the development of their identity as artists. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the ways in which pedagogy in the FE sector has become overly concerned with the acquisition of narrow learning 'outcomes' and preoccupations with highly prescriptive curricula, to the detriment of considerations of enduring educational issues and the development of more creative pedagogical approaches potentially capable of encouraging students to think critically, creatively and for themselves (Lipman 2003).

The Research Problem

Vocational students (particularly students of the Arts) often find it difficult to engage with theory. On the other hand, the same students often find practice to be enjoyable instinctive and fulfilling. Baldisserra (2020) draws attention to the resistance and frustration felt by many vocational students who are intent on engaging in thinking through making by creating artefacts and objects of art by hand. At the same time, students of the Arts are also required to think and write in order to demonstrate competence in their chosen vocational area and to meet the requirements of their course.

I work with intelligent, committed, and enthusiastic students who nonetheless feel inhibited in their learning by at least some of the assessment methods currently employed to capture their creative and critical achievements. On the face of it, this phenomenon could be seen to support the existence of Cartesian mind-body duality deriving from a nineteenth century rationalist philosophical world-view (see Chaps. 1 and 11) in which theory and practice are regarded as being separate or diametrically opposed (Carr 1998; Merleau-Ponty 1945). However, while intuitively appealing, taking arbitrary divisions and dichotomies in education at face value may in the long run prove to be unhelpful. Hyland (2017) points to the creation of a vocational and academic divide, a further dichotomy whose roots he detects in the social and political structures of ancient Greece where vocational education was regarded as subordinate to 'intellectual' pursuits.

Broad (2013), Gregson et al. (2015b) and Lavender (2015) draw attention to the importance of recognising that the value of learning of *all* human beings. They argue that the needs of vocational students are as important as those in any other sector of education or from any other walk of life. Hyland's (2017) underscores the importance of this. He argues that any ranking between vocational education and academic education needs to be reconsidered in light of an affirmation that vocationalism is useful and meaningful. He notes Aristotelian intrinsic goods in vocational education and states how these should be valued as highly as those found in academic education. Dewey (1934, p. 236) concurs with Hyland (2017) controversially stating that all ranking of higher and lower

when it comes to a Cartesian mind/body split, or vocational versus academic, are 'out of place and stupid'. According to Dewey, each medium, craft, or discipline has its own efficacy and value. Kant (in Gregor and Denis 2017) notes that the concept of a rationally guided Will adds a moral dimension to human action and he argues it is this recognition, together with an appreciation of duty itself, that must drive our actions. Research in the field of critical thinking also fuels the debate between vocational and academic education. These competing perspectives are compared, contrasted and discussed in some detail in the literature review section of this chapter.

Context of the Research

The FE Art course which I teach has both practical art and theoretical contextual studies elements. This conflation causes a problem. Students come to art school because they are practically interested in making art. The same can be said for their lecturers (Baldissera 2020; Barrett and Bolt 2007). However, many students are indisposed and resistant to writing and reflection (Lavender 2015) and reluctant to commit themselves and their thoughts to paper (McNicholas 2012). Furthermore, many lecturers say they simply do not have time to provide extra tuition and support. An informal interview with FE lecturers Roma, Lupe and Jupiter in the data analysis section of this chapter highlights this issue.

Research Population

The research population for the Diary Project is made up of 26 participants from the art college: 18 students, 6 lecturers, 1 technician and a student's husband. The project lasted for 12 weeks. Throughout the research, I also kept ongoing reflective field notes in the form of a research diary. Participants completed their diaries at home in their own time. There are 28 participants in the Book Club intervention, 23 students and 5 lecturers. This intervention lasts for 6 months and is held weekly at lunch time where the participants can discuss a chapter from a selection of books on artists in an informal learning atmosphere. Interviews were also set up as part of the

study to capture the student and teacher voice, identity development, and gauge experience of engagement in the pedagogical interventions. Each intervention is informed by literature from the field of critical thinking with the aim of improving and developing students' capacities for, and willingness to engage in critical thinking. Literature informing the study includes the works of Brown (1998) and Lipman (2003), together with literature and research regarding the development of professional identity Biesta (2014), Broad (2013). This chapter captures perceptions of experiences the Book Club and Diary Project. Research methods in this small-scale, qualitative, ethnographic study include observations, recorded field notes, analysis of students' written notes from Book Club and Dairy Projects and images and artefacts created by the students reflecting their experiences of these interventions. The techniques of thematic analysis are employed to illuminate and analyse data.

Debates and Issues in the Teaching of Critical Thinking

In the past, the study of Education has been variously located in the fields of Philosophy, Liberal Studies or General Studies. The term 'critical thinking' in relation to discussions of the nature of thinking was used first by Dewey (1933) and then in the 1960s as a component of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al. 1956). Through the late 1970s the Critical Thinking Movement, headed up by Elder and Paul (2018), emerged. Their *framework of Intellectual Traits* was tentatively taken up in the 1980s and 1990s as part of UK educational policy but soon came to be marginalized or dropped from curricula. In current policy (DfE 2016, 2018; UNESCO 2015) critical thinking is only referred opaquely, without overt references to peer-reviewed literature and research. In an alternate point of view McPeck (1981, in Hitchcock 2018) attacks the Critical Thinking Movement for its over generalisation. Brown (1998) illustrates how critical thinking must be understood in historical and philosophical terms [as a] recognition of an individual right of enquiry and criticism which has clear democratic and libertarian implications. Brown (1998) advocates teaching critical thinking but reminds us how, in his opinion, it is specificity that is all important. Lipman (2003) emphasizes the

importance of experiential critical thinking, introducing the reader to the educational philosophies through the linguistics of Vygotsky (1989) and the epistemology of Piaget (1973). Lipman (2003) claims that it is essential to teach reasoning and argumentative skills to children. He argues this can be accomplished through his programme of Philosophy for Children (P4C). There is a genuine concern in Lipman's work for the betterment of students. His central message is that didactic styles of teaching are not positive, and that confrontational education does not work. He goes on to argue that children are not learning because they are not learning to think / taught to think (Coalduca 2008).

The Right to Learn

Plato (428–347 BC), philosophised about the relationship between the individual and society and believed that education is a basic component of a good society. His thinking led to a vision of an ideal city or *Republic*, and an imagined social world with a tripartite education system. Citizens would be trained or taught from childhood within the bounds of their class. The UK school system used this Platonic triple streaming in post World War II. Some would argue that despite rhetoric to the contrary, this is how state schooling still operates today. Dystopian novels often use this trope to set up a system for the hero or heroine to rebel against.

Lipman (2003) supports the promotion of practice and experience-based thought and learning. If this theory were married to the utilitarianism of Mill (1859 in Philip and Rosen 2015) and the equality, freedom to learn and rights of education for all of Freire (1968), could go a long way to augment the State Educational programmes in the UK. Brown (1998) paraphrases *On Liberty* (Mill 1859), saying that the 'rote' learner whether it be a child or an FE student, is a microcosm of the 'servile society'. This is reminiscent of Lipman's concerns about education creating 'biddable citizens'. For Lipman, learning appears to be inhibited because insufficient attention is being paid the development of critical thinking. Making a similar point, Brown observes that thought and action are 'embalmed' in superficiality and contradiction. Both Lipman and Brown are looking for a way to defrost the embalming process and its

genesis in rote learning. Both note how little access or recourse to philosophy, debate and critical thinking students have in the current state systems of education in the UK and the USA.

Can Critical Thinking be Taught?

As a teacher I like to think that anything can be taught. It is however unhelpful to think of critical thinking skills in the same way that 'special' skills just as grammar or correct wiring can be learnt. Learning any skill to a high standard takes a great deal of time, effort, repetition and sacrifice (Sennett 2008). If Art and critical thinking are skills to be mastered the question is then becomes why cannot critical thinking in an arts context be honed in the same way that other skills are crafted and honed?

Against Generalization

Brown (1998) and McPeck (1981) say that critical thinking can be taught but not in a general way. They argue that critical thinking needs specificity. Brown (1998) and Oakeshott (2015) both point out that ideas about 'exfoliating' and rejecting generalization lead to the assertion that critical thinking cannot be vaguely channelled into what they assert as meaningless 'transferable skills'. The specificity imperative is also echoed in Mitchell et al. (2017), who talk about critical thinking as being extremely specific. They believe critical thinking is contracted and negotiated between educators and students; it is a collaborative activity tailored to a particular pedagogic situation.

In this research lecturers, technicians, and FE students are both collaborators and participants. The futures of these FE students can be visualised in a geographic walk from our FE site, up the hill to the HE building. HE is a mapped upward ascent, mirroring student aspiration. The measurement may not come this year or next but maybe in five or seven years after graduation at undergraduate or postgraduate levels.

For Disciplinary Specificity: Brown's Narrative

The concepts of intentionality, expectation and diverse standards make critical thinking a Herculean task to pin it down. Brown states that, worryingly, school leavers are showing a 'thinking skills deficit'. Lipman (2003) wants to span the gap of this thinking skills shortfall. He corroborates the philosophies of Aristotle and Hyland (2017) extolling the virtue of teaching. He wants to wake students up to critical thinking and philosophy as a way of rousing minds to life, making the world more creatively potent.

McPeck (1981) believes that empirical subject-specificity raises the general problem of transferability. He argues that each subject must develop its own version of critical thinking. Once this is achieved what happens to critical thinking in everyday life problems and issues, or societal and governmental difficulties; how can critical thinking solve those? Proponents such as Brown (1998) and McPeck (1981) emphasise that transferability is more likely to occur if there is critical thinking instruction in a variety of subject areas, with explicit attention to dispositions and abilities (the transferable skills) that cut across FE sectors of teaching and education. In a previous pilot study I discovered that the separating of disciplines into ever narrower areas and silos is detrimental for the students and their learning. In an interview conducted for that research study it was found that FE students desired collaboration and interdisciplinarity: one participant reported the benefits of 'working with *old skills*' and in the 'multiplatform context of a collaborative, creative multi-skill community'.

Brown's specificity may not always be the answer. This raises the question as to whether generality always needs to be seen in opposition to or 'versus' specificity? Perhaps generality and specificity need not be binary or regarded as polar opposites of each other.

Transferability of Critical Thinking Skills

McPeck (1981) deems it is unsuccessful in education to teach critical thinking as if it were a separate subject. He insists that practitioners should guide their students to autonomous thinking by teaching in such

a way that develops cognitive structure, discussion and argument. That critical thinking is specific is also contested by Sennett (2008) who points to the 10,000 hours of practice and repetition that it takes to develop mastery of a craft. The muscle memory of craft Sennett argues, lends itself easily to a different discipline that still involves using the eye, the judgement, sensibilities, and the hand. Hyland (2017) posits an example of less transferable skills, such as someone who inputs data into a computer being asked to engage in highly vocational occupations. Brown (1998) advises that early repetitive memorizing creates a foundation from which to start to think critically. FE students engaging in the acquisition of hairdressing, electronic engineering, or Art practice must start with emulation and mindful repetition. As Sennett says in his book *The Craftsman* (2008), the path to mastery has stages, and right at the beginning these stages involve learning to observe, to watch, to look, notice and to absorb. Then to imitate and to emulate. Finally it is the practice, and repetition, the 100,000 hours Sennett (2008) required for a practitioner to become proficient that leads to the modification, extension and transcendence of a practice from one tradition or form of life to another.

Lipman

Lipman (2003) proposes that conducive conditions for critical thinking can be created by teachers but that critical thinking cannot actually be taught. He judges that critical thinking must be practiced or experienced in tacit, experiential learning. This would echo the Aristotelian notion of phronesis, or practical wisdom advocated by Broadhead and Gregson (2018). However Elder and Paul (2018) have written books on how to teach critical thinking and are in no doubt that it is not only teachable but also successfully learn-able. Lipman (2003) is adamant that critical thinking also needs creative thinking.

Critical Thinking Toolkits

Critical thinking toolkits and tips for teachers are to be found on many college library shelves. It is important to view works of this kind though a highly critical lens. What appears to be a crucial toolkit for one teacher may not be relevant or be completely out of context for another. Elder and Paul (2010) have devised the *Intellectual traits* a framework by which to judge whether thinking is critical. They also introduce six stages of critical thinking, from Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker, to Stage Six: The Accomplished Thinker, and explanations of how each category may be understood for critical thinkers. While De Bono (1974) (among others) devises games, strategies and propositions to develop lateral thinking.

Critical Thinking, Critical Making

Broadhead and Gregson (2018), supported by Hyland (2017) have found through teaching experience and research that technical-rational world views have many shortcomings. They offer an alternative understanding of the world rooted in Dewey's Pragmatic Epistemology which is informed by Aristotle's understanding of practical wisdom. Hyland (2017) and Dunne (2005) challenge the primacy technical-rational reasoning. Somerson and Hermano (2013) show that critical thinking is at the heart of their practical curriculum in Rhode Island, say that students are immersed in a culture where making, questions, ideas, and objects, using and inventing materials, and activating experience all serve to define a form of critical thinking albeit with one's hands. They call this critical making.

Transformation Through Narrative Inquiry

Gregory (2009) and Rogers (1994) discuss the changes educational stories and narrative inquiry can make on educators and FE students. Transformation has a lot to do with Mezirow's idea (1991) that adult learners break out from 'habitual action' giving themselves permission to change, do something new. The transformation of class, gender stereotypes and life experiences can come into being through a strong sense of connection and identity. Data from this study suggests that this in some way has been facilitated and supported through the Book Club and the Diary Project, by meeting, sharing, talking, planning and becoming inspired by each other's aspirations and stories.

Data Analysis

Pedagogical Intervention 1: Diary Project

Diaries have been used successfully in the past by Schönn (1991) which he calls reflection in action. Shulman (1989) in Sá (1996) describes diary writing as an important data source. Burke (2001, p. 9) adds a feminist framing and 'auto/biographical' elements to her Diary Project for Access students, using her own story as a starting point. The diary writers had no teaching or input, no parameters, did this increase writing skills? I was hoping to find out that that CT and skills in written and spoken English were developed through the practice of diary writing. A daily practice of setting down thoughts and reflections to increase criticality. Diary writing offers an approach for staging and conducting creative arts research, to situate art studio enquiry more firmly within the broader knowledge and cultural arena. The diary could be a work of fiction revealing underlying emotive, heartfelt beliefs about art, practice, and self-reflection of the participant. Criticism is that diaries could lead to unproductive introspection or overly descriptive entries, participants could get bored and their enthusiasm trails off leaving no entries at all in the latter days of the project. Data from thus study produced mixed findings from the Dairy Project intervention.

Artemis course leader of Access to HE used the diary in quite a formal way, making his reflections factual, and planning notes and used that space as a place to work out detailed schemes of work. Conversely Gaia, course tutor on Foundation Art and Design (FAD) observes herself as a practitioner, 'becoming more confident in judgement and perceptive about where students are going wrong or what they need to consider' including the development of her own capacity for the exercise of wise judgement through teaching practice and the reflective process.

Another aspect of practitioner identity is evident in Lupe's narrative, a Pathway Leader on FAD, she expresses that she feels more comfortable as a team player (not being singled out) and often suffers from 'imposter syndrome', low self-esteem and class anxiety. Instances of practitioners in the study feeling like a fake or a fraud are documented and corroborated in, *The Journal of Higher Education*, article by Brems et al. (1994). Professional identity is not simple or straightforward and is often influenced by personal circumstance, past educational experiences both as a teacher and as a learner as well as in working contexts.

Research Project Interviews: Accidental Experts

Informal discussion in staff-rooms and interviews throughout the study repeatedly and regularly centred upon working with students and trying to find ways of encouraging the development of critical thinking in students. Examining the kinds of resistance practitioners come up against regularly and recognising that some of that hostility is actually something we as teachers struggle with too. This is a recurring theme in the data.

Roma, Lupe and Jupiter lecturers on FAD discuss the prevalence of dyslexia at art school, with the students and lecturers. Roma comments that she found reading 'really frustrating' and avoided it 'I thought I was a moron'. Jupiter comments that 'I have presumed students are neglectful or lazy when not keeping up with reflections [in their journal] but I'm doing the same thing.' A study by the Royal College of Art (2015) states that twenty nine per cent of students identify as dyslexic. The theme of not having time also repeatedly recurred in the data. Roma states that some days it is 'Hard slogging work,' trying to see and speak to students

in huge classes. She also talks about teacher guilt when students fail, 'always asking if I could have done more?' Lupe conjectures that 'as a teacher you are passing on part of yourself' and asks, 'is being a supportive inspiring teacher just an ego dance?'

Issues such as, not having enough time to spend with students, or practicing our own vocational subject area were also repeatedly raised. Feeling pressure from the institution to complete paperwork, go to training and development sessions, away from family and being submitted to imperatives from outside college influences all served to make teaching a challenge. Staff in the study reported that the critical thinking issue as just 'one more thing to add and we are already loaded with things to complete'. It was quite a task therefore to find volunteers who took the research project seriously were prepared to give it the time it needed. Coalter (2008), draws attention to the value of critical thinking in the classroom and the difference it can make to progression.

Eliahoo (2014) calls FE practitioners 'accidental experts', in her study she has found that very often their identity is with the actual subject they teach, they see themselves as an engineer, a hairdresser, a dental hygienist. Being a practitioner-lecturer seems to be a secondary identity. In a practitioner survey about critical thinking and professional identity devised in a previous study, eight lecturers and fourteen technicians responded. 92.31% of technician and 87.50% of lecturers identified as being an artist, designer or craftworker. So more technicians and instructor technicians see themselves first and foremost as an expert in their chosen field. A few less lecturers described themselves as art and design practitioners. Could this be that the dual role of practitioner and artist is difficult to maintain with the heavy load of administration and after teaching hours planning and paperwork? Surprisingly comparing the practicalities of being an artist and designer 100% of lecturer respondents said that the identity of being an artist was very important to them. A highly motivated group of lecturers who most clearly see that specification as artist is substantially significant to who they are. Conversely, when looking at the response to the question 'Does teaching define you?' it was a very mixed reaction. 37.50% replied yes teaching does define them. Positively associating as a pedagogue and embracing teacher status. However 62.50%

replied that teaching does not define them. Leading to the conclusion that vocational lecturers much more strongly identify and their chosen professional subject rather than as a teacher. Eliahoo (2014, p. 19) corroborates this evidence stating that, 'Those who taught in FE colleges were usually employed with professional and high level vocational qualifications.' Despite this high level of expertise she goes on to state that 90% (Ofsted 2003) of FE practitioners did not have a teaching qualification at the point of employment, she goes on to acknowledge that, from her study, FE lecturers experience 'dual professional identity' at the start of their employment. That of being an expert and a learner a teacher and a student while they compete their in-service PGCE or PG certificate in education and training.

Pedagogical Intervention 2: Book Club

The Book Club is attended by lecturers and students. There is a flattened hierarchy here allowing for open dialectics (hooks 2007). This precedent is set on the first meeting when I read out my own educational story. One of misdiagnosed dyslexia, and being written off as non-academic and even special needs and starting my future art career colouring in with the dinner ladies, excused from formal classes with other children. This story connects with other students and practitioners who have a connection to my narrative and could find parallels in their own histories. My story gives permission and agency to the book club members, for students and lecturers to accept each other as equals in this particular situation and leads to an exploration through the personal stories along with the texts chosen to reflect life experiences of vocational students and teachers.

Change Theory from Mitchell et al. (2017, pp. 174–176) is applied to the Book Club. Participant stories of resistance and educational journeys are collected to build up a picture of collective experience. Book Club members listen to each other's stories and coach each other with solutions to address resistance to writing and speaking. From interviews, students report increased confidence speaking in class and finding their voice. Duff (2018) has a particular perspective working with the Māori in New Zealand. 'Instead of labelling them [students]…, we reach them with

these narratives. When they hear the pūrākau (stories) you see a little spark in them.' Māori creation stories are used as a form of healing, connecting alienated Māori to their whakapapa or their genealogy and culture. Perhaps participants by reading art texts and hearing about other's educational journeys feel they are part of a Community of Inquiry. The group created a forum where political, economic, equality, diversity and inclusion discussions around the texts could develop and flow. Biesta and Goodson (2010) state that the interior conversations whereby a person defines their personal thoughts and courses of action and creates their own stories and life missions, is situated at the heart of a person's map of learning and understanding of their place in the world. Coalter (2008) considers that social capital is used as a heuristic device to examine the mechanics of classroom activity, the bonding of the group and how the small world of an FE classroom relates to the larger networks of the workplace, the community and HE. Criticisms of the Book Club intervention could be that dominant members of the group might take over, speaking over everyone else. Varying the texts in an effort to interest all members could also alienate others in the group if they are not interested or feel they don't have anything to say.

Discussion

Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking

Lucas and Spencer (2017) agree with Lipman (2003) and consider it natural for criticality and creativity to coexist. Lipman goes on to use the terms Creative and Caring when writing about critical thinking and adds that in addition to critical thinking students must also develop creative thinking and that the two elements of critical and creative go together to create holistic teaching experiences for students and lecturers. This is borne out in the experiences of the Book Club and the Diary Project. Each has grown into a Community of Inquiry where practice is developed in and through mutual engagement and dialogue (Fielding et al. 2005; Lipman 2003). Biesta (2014) and Dewey (1934) agree that critical

thinking involves a conceptual investigation into problematic situations which disturb routine thinking and trigger a process of transaction where thinking occurs across the action in an attempt to understand the nature of the problem and potential responses to it. In this way problems begin to be unravelled through the research process, a process, which is itself a process of investigation.

Reflexivity and Measurability

For Socrates, a life unexamined is no life at all. This can equally apply to Aristotle's concept of *praxis* which involves the development of practical knowledge and practical wisdom or *phronesis*. Baggini (2005) hints at academic elitism that leaves 'unexamined' the lives of 1000s of vocational practitioners of engineering, hairdressing, telephone operatives at call centres or teachers. Practice can be defined, reflected upon and captured in so many ways, not just the strict academic and scientific rules of measurement including highly questionable vanity metrics. Hairdressers may verbally analyse and make critical judgements of their last cut, which in FE we would call self-assessment and peer review with other students or with a tutor using speaking and listening. Mechanics working in pairs may collaborate, diagnosing and recommending solutions to complex mechanical problems, which Fielding et al. (2005) and Gregson et al. (2015b) would call collaborative working and Joint Practice Development (JPD).

Phronesis and professional judgement contribute to the development of art, the accumulation of experience, a judgement, getting your eye in, connoisseurship, expertise, deep physical knowledge, and knowing when it is enough, when it is just right, when to stop the process and how to avoid ruining a thing with overdoing it. In practice-focused research, the doing informs the thinking, or thinking through doing. In all of this, careful thinking is so important, it is the analysis of vocational subjects and the criticality of knowing. Asking, who else works like this? Contextualising professionalism with others in the same field. It is making choices and judgements to develop further. Making the teaching or electronic engineering more coherent, elegant, efficient and more inclusive. There is evidence

from this study to illustrate the interconnectivity and inseparability of the two elements of thinking and doing in a non-dual, argument. Sennett (2008) reveals philosophical contexts for talking about the theoretical underpinnings of craft, vocation, professionalism, the intelligent hand and practice, whether it be carpentry, painting and decorating, computer science or graphic design.

Findings

Emerging findings from this research-in-progress are as follows:

Exploring practitioner story and identity through the two critical thinking pedagogical interventions employed in this study supplemented by a Community of Inquiry (Lipman and Sharp 1978) has been useful and illuminating to students and lecturers alike.

Both of these interventions provided lecturers, other practitioners and students with opportunities to intersect and interact in innovative and non-hierarchical ways.

The same interventions enabled story and personal narrative to inform and contribute to the formation and development of student identity through interpersonal connection and shared insights.

Through the Thinking Diary Project and Book Club, participants across the range of research participants, from students to practitioners and technicians found support and inspiration in published story texts as well as narrative accounts of their own experiences leading to aspirational long-term professional development. For example, Gaia applied for and is now in the first year of her MA. Roma seriously thinking about her future, post PGCE and planning in an MA either in education of art in the next few years. Artemis had the support and encouragement not to stall in his PhD and carry on to the end. Through the group work and discussions, Jupiter and Roma both had the courage to and achieved positions in HE as well as securing teaching positions in FE. Echo successfully completed her PGCE and has a teaching position at Gimmerton where she did her teaching practice and is planning to do an MA next year. Lupe after a period of uncertainty has gained a permanent contract and a teaching position in HE. Eos was almost cut from her team but

through demonstration of commitment to the college as well as participating in the research project she was retained.

The central theme of the chapter asks, can critical thinking be taught or can we only create conditions to support its development?

Findings from this study also lend support to the claim that the same discursive aspects of all three interventions helped to create and sustain a sense of community and group identity.

Findings from this study also indicate that the pedagogical interventions employed in this study lend support to the claims that these approaches have contributed to enabling the students engaged in this study to think more critically, carefully and creatively about their engagement with their subject and their future as practitioners within it.

Data sets from this study suggests that using critical thinking skills to connect people and stories, and (Scott and Usher 1996, pp. 21–22) can fuse horizons between research and practice could prove to be an interesting way forward in the development of critical thinking skills in the arts and in other disciplines and subjects. Emerging findings are that critical thinking and be ignited with initial light touch teaching, in an informal teaching setting, with no learning outcome pressures or grades attached. As participant Skerrion states, 'I think you can teach the structures of it [critical thinking] but is works best when there is spaces where people can do it in their own way.' The theme is continued by Lamia when she says 'I think once people understand what it [critical thinking] is, what it can do for them, then I think they can teach themselves.' The most useful finding is that critical thinking once introduced by the facilitator develops through the practice of participants or students using critical thinking skills to interrogate a topic or creative project. Lamia again states, "I think it [critical thinking]… surely it unfolds if an opportunity presents itself. I think people have a knack for, you know, when they are talking with people, it is kind of something that just happens on its own. I don't think you can teach it with a flow chart anyway. "wonderfully creative imagery expressed by Lamia of an unfolding, like a map and that the Book Club members have a knack of bringing out critical thinking in each other. It is by the doing of critical thinking, the practice of discussing, dialogics and thinking critically that critical skills are developed. Critical thinking needs an impetus and a structure to start it off in the

minds of participants or students but essentially the best educators can do is create the conditions that support its development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this small-scale qualitative ethnographic research study reports work-in-progress which is some respects runs counter to a trend which favours positivist methods and randomised control trials in the FE sector. A Department of Education report states,

> There is a lack of evidence on how current practices operate to improve quality and improve learners' outcomes. (Owen 2018, paragraph 6)

This research hopes to redress this trend towards positivist approaches … at least in some small part. The 'softer' aspects of these interventions described in this study may be viewed by some as being unreliable or 'unscientific' due to the interpretivist, and qualitative methodologies employed on the grounds that interventions analysed interpretively in a small-scale ethnography are not the same or of the same credence and value as hard statistics.

The Ethnographer Campbell- Galman (2013) and Burke (2001) an FE lecturer and researcher and Coffield (2008) an educational researcher of international standing, write about the messiness of educational research. Cultural art school practices especially are also 'messy' in contexts where too much system or structure is deemed suspicious and counter cultural. Critical thinking research in FE and art school is not neat and tidy. It is messy and non-conformist. It does not fit into clean categories, siloes or educational pigeonholes. It works in the interstitial negative spaces around the objects of teaching or not teaching. Lipman (2003) and Brown (1998) hold the view that some curricula have the intention to make 'reasonable citizens' biddable, compliant, un-argumentative students. Critical thinking aims to wake students up (Clarke et al. 2019) to rouse their minds to life. This involves infusing imagination, arousing curiosity and encouraging higher order thinking in students. This is an important ideal and a goal to work towards. Brown states that we need to dismantle and reconstruct the old institutions, that the traditional educational system must be replaced with a polymorphic education

provision, an infinite variety of multiple forms of teaching and learning. This is a big ask. He calls for a radical reappraisal of the system and the freedom to let teachers and their students to develop and employ critical thinking interventions and strategies to become more critical, creative and caring in teaching and learning in a wide range of FE contexts. Data from this research-in-progress supports the view that the guiding principles of Community of Inquiry are helpful in framing pedagogical intervention aiming to develop critical thinking. Data also suggests that such interventions can be an accessible way of developing critical thinking through group discussion and investigation. Biesta (2010) calls for a shift in the focus of learning away from centralised curriculum prescription towards more democratic forms of education. The combination of creative pedagogies reported in this chapter appear to be capable not only of opening up spaces where personal narratives and story can be heard and shared but also in the process operate to strengthen connections between theory and practice, enhance professional identity and support the development of critical thinking.

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8

Identity in Focus: Examining FE Practitioners' Informal Professional Learning Through the Lenses of Online Community Dialogues

Lynne Taylerson

Setting the Scene for Practitioner Research: The Problem and Its Context

Further Education (FE) is important for the individual, the community and the country. The positive impacts of engagement in education beyond school-leaving age are well documented. Studies suggest benefits of FE participation include improved economic and employment prospects, acquisition of transferable skills, enhanced skills transmission to family members, increased self-confidence and esteem, wider community involvement and better ability to manage personal health and wellbeing (WEA 2017).

Many of those responsible for designing and facilitating the important FE curriculum are not undertaking regular, meaningful continuing

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professional development (CPD). Almost two-thirds of FE staff recently reported engaging in no annual CPD whatsoever (ETF 2017) and it seems unlikely that employers responsible for submitting CPD engagement figures have under-reported participation. More recently, 38% of respondents to a *Training Needs Analysis* (ETF 2018, p. 56) for FE state that some CPD is 'tick box', designed to meet organisational requirements not development needs.

The ETF's (2014) '*Professional Standards for Teachers in Education and Training—England'* comprise 20 standards formulated in consultation with the sector and divided into 3 domains: 'professional values and attributes', 'professional knowledge and understanding', and 'professional skills'. The standards set expectations of teachers and seek to support them to 'maintain and improve standards of teaching and learning, and outcomes for learners' (ETF 2014, p. 1).

Teachers' participation in CPD appears an issue worthy of further research, especially as a commitment to ongoing professional learning is a core element of the Professional Standards for FE set by its professional body (ETF 2014). As a teacher educator and designer and facilitator of CPD programmes, teachers' participation in regular, meaningful professional learning is a critical issue for me and, I would hope, for the entire sector.

Despite the Standards' lofty aims, the *Auger Review* of FE funding calls FE a 'demoralised' sector, 'crucial to the country's economic success', yet suffering a 'steep, steady… widespread and protracted' funding decline (DfE 2019, p. 5). The Review holds that the major barrier to teachers' professional development is 'simply a lack of money'. The reduction in FE CPD is a direct result of increased workload according to Trades Union research, which cites increased administrative burdens, widening of role remit, significant sector restructuring, staff cuts and rising student expectations as contributory causes. Time pressures and resultant increases in stress impact teachers' capability or motivation to undertake CPD (UCU 2016). Coffield (2008, p. 25) concurs, holding that the 'long, varied and constantly expanding' list of tasks given to the sector 'continues to grow despite repeated reductions in staffing', prompting us to ask is FE being 'asked to do too much?' A further alternative perspective is

that FE leaders exercise power to act as gatekeepers. Pragmatic, financial or micro-political power factors result in the withholding of permission, funding or staff cover required for attendance at CPD or networking events (Brown et al. 2001).

FE teachers are, meanwhile, engaging in informal professional learning dialogues on an online-first basis. Rhizomatic, social media-based networks host spontaneous, eclectic dialogues with 'neither a beginning or end, but always a middle from which [dialogue] grows' with 'multiple entranceways and exits… its own lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 21). Teachers engage in themed dialogues or respond to ad hoc posts, going against traditional, objectives-based CPD models as 'community is the curriculum' (Cormier 2018, p. 1). Practitioners undertake 'asynchronous learning' when time and energy permit to 'pool their answers to a problem… receive feedback on new ideas… ask for support', working at a kind of 'collective knowledge building' (Trust 2012, p. 134).

A Fruitful, Necessary Area for New Research

Teachers' online communities seem, perhaps, a logical, connective response to FE's highly competitive climate in which 'stakeholders work in silos, looking after their own interests' (Policy Consortium/*TES* 2018, p. 53). The growth of alternative online learning spaces poses questions for CPD auditing in FE: are we capturing a partial picture by restricting data-gathering to formal events, and is formal CPD what is in decline rather than professional learning per se?

Despite the popularity of informal online communities, 'empirical' understanding of them remains 'under-developed' (Lantz-Andersson et al. 2018, p. 310). Teachers' online dialogues may not be 'an expansive process' but sites for superficial information-sharing in a 'smash and grab approach' (ibid., p. 311). Communities 'merit further exploration' of their affordances in development of self-identity and professional status, requiring a 'content analysis' of interactions (ibid., p. 313). We could be witnessing valuable professional learning discourses or unproductive, dissatisfaction dialogues. A mutually supportive community may benefit

members without necessarily developing practice, engaging in 'comfort radicalism' rather than challenging the dominant capitalist paradigm (Avis 2016).

Research that 'goes beyond self-reports' is called for (Carpenter and Krutka 2014, p. 430) to better determine the value of online communities as learning spaces. Examination of Twitter dialogues gives an opportunity to explore liminal discourse spaces between 'institutionally managed systems and non-institutional, personal usage' of social media to determine what value this third space holds (Burbules 2016, p. 459). A critical research lens is required to investigate phenomena against 'wider socio-historical context', to examine power structures and whose interests dialogue agendas serve (Hammersley 2012, p. 25). We may be being served old wine in new bottles via social media, the appetite for which will decline along with its novelty.

Online learning communities require 'renewed scrutiny' as there is little informed consensus on their form and impact, mirroring the general shortage of knowledge around teachers' informal CPD practices (Lantz-Andersson et al. 2018, pp. 303–304). This chapter seeks to shed light on the first of these areas of required scrutiny, the form of teachers' informal online dialogues. It explores what the nature of online discourse can tell us about the contested concept of the FE CPD agenda. By undertaking this exploration, we may illuminate a space allowing discussion of a far slipperier concept, assessment of the 'impact' of informal CPD.

Dialogues taking place on informal, Twitter-based communities for FE teachers are investigated using a netnographic study (Kozinets 2015) conducted over a six-month period. I would go as far as to say that I do not consider my research to be 'on teachers', but 'for teachers', because by creating models of teacher dialogue, we can spur discussions on what matters the most to us, our core identity and values, and how we learn best.

Reviewing the Literature on Teachers' CPD

A precis of likely indicators of successful professional learning will be useful to frame this chapter's findings and examination of the nature of language is relevant when we investigate what teachers mean by 'undertaking

CPD'. Language use and change recur as significant themes in this research. Culler (1997, p. 59) holds that readers must be mindful of the 'settings of their language', examining meaning and changes to it, attending to 'categories through which we unthinkingly view the world' (ibid., p. 60). The transfer of professional learning dialogues from the classroom to social media can presage further language change. Concepts are 'slippery' and language 'exported from one discourse to another' can convey a different meaning (Gregson and Hillier 2015, p. 111). As Bernstein notes (ibid., p. 111), 'every time a discourse moves there is space for ideology to play'.

Terminology around assessment of learning and teachers' performance adopts words such as 'robust' and 'rigorous', words whose denotation is lost as 'official texts have, through overuse, rubbed them smooth of meaning' (Coffield 2017, p. 43). Ideal professional learning, being cautious of employing the word 'ideal' but calling on definitions offered by respected authors and researchers, requires agency, community, and a clear sense of purpose and identity.

The need to exercise agency in craft building, owning narratives to become one's 'own maker', is noted by Sennett (2009, p. 72) as skill develops 'within the work process… connected to the freedom to experiment' (ibid., p. 27). CPD should be based on identified needs, be sustained, subject-specific, iterative and importantly be collaborative, occurring in teacher communities which can be 'informal in nature', notes Whitehouse (2011, p. 10). Bruner (1996, p. 11) holds that 'culture shapes the mind', encouraging engagement in critical peer dialogue as does Wenger who advocates for 'interpersonal relations, shared knowledge, negotiation of enterprises' (1998, p. 85). Coffield adds that learning dialogues must be modulated by practical, peer-led action or teachers will be 'sharing, but not implementing, good practice' (2017, p. xiii).

Aristotle holds that practice-building requires patient attention as excellence is, 'not an act but a habit… we are what we repeatedly do' (Durant 1991, p. 76). Akin to arts and craft disciplines, such as mastering an instrument, Sennett (2009) reminds us that the honing of any practice requires subtle judgements and practical wisdom. Developing a capacity for 'the right response' (Heilbronn 2011, p. 49) requires teachers

to draw on ethical codes and personal values, a 'rootedness' of action in 'character, disposition and qualities'. Freire (1998, pp. 41–42) adds that the teacher must be unafraid of risk, challenging themselves and their learners to 'critically consider reality' (ibid., p. 72). CPD should enable educators to become more 'educationally wise in their doing and being' (Biesta 2010, p. 10), above all, empowering us 'to get better rather than get by' (Sennett 2009, p. 24).

Research Methods for Informal Online Community Investigation

'Netnography' is a logical evolution of ethnography for digital network contexts (Kozinets 2010), making growing contributions to investigations of the behaviour of 'digital tribes' (Bartl et al. 2016, p. 1). Data originates from digital imprints of naturally occurring public conversations and may be used in investigations into 'construction of a digital self' or a determination of how communities 'manifest cultures, learned beliefs, values and customs' (Kozinets 2010, p. 12). A naturalistic technique in which the researcher exerts no control, netnography's 'unobtrusive nature' provides insights into co-constructed meanings (Costello et al. 2017, p. 2).

Three online FE-based teachers' communities are selected for netnographic study, all of which display attributes necessary for successful netnographic investigation. All communities are relevant to the research focus with regular, current activity. Communities hold substantial dialogues, show a critical mass of communications and participant heterogeneity, and appear data-rich in dialogue detail (Kozinets' 2010, p. 89). The 3 selected communities have all been active for at least 2 years; each has more than 700 followers and has generated more than 600 separate dialogue threads since inception. Each rhizomatic community is given a pseudonym after a rhizomatic plant to protect the community, and therefore contributor, anonymity, *Ivy*, *Fern* and *Lily*.

An application of Social Network Analysis (SNA), a method recognised as valuable for investigations of networked learning (Laat et al. 2007), has been used over a six-month period. A non-participatory approach, observing, analysing and categorising interactions was employed. A graphical mapping strategy, an adaptation of approaches originally employed for the mapping of neural connections (Borgatti et al. 2009), allows comparison based on community 'attribute… interactions and flows' (Vicsek et al. 2016, p. 87).

Decisions regarding which codes to use in content analysis are somewhat simplified in Twitter thread analysis compared to more complex texts; a 280-character limit for Tweets is in place (Twitter 2019). Contributors' use of hashtags (#) to broadcast post topics makes the use of low-inference descriptors possible, with codes being derived directly from authentic words and remaining faithful to the source data (Kozinets 2010). Publication of whole or partial Twitter dialogues to better illustrate dialogue themes is avoided. Kozinets reinforces the importance of a strong ethical stance during netnographic work; researchers should ensure participants' 'confidentiality and anonymity' (Hall 2010, p. 282). An example network diagram from the '*Ivy*' Twitter community is shown in Fig. 8.1.
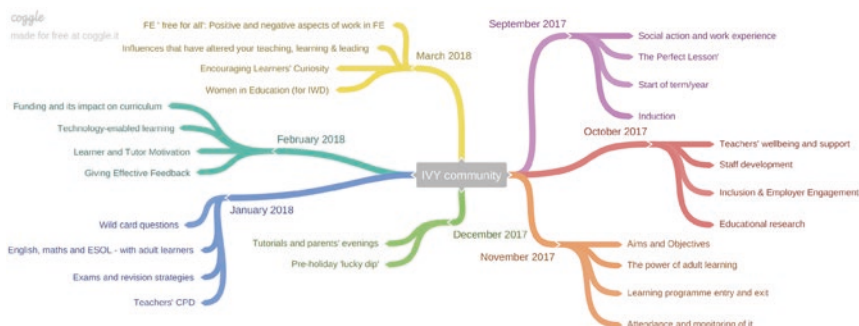
Fig. 8.1 Network diagram of dialogues from the 'Ivy' Twitter community

Data Analysis

Once network activity maps of dialogue threads on the three Twitter communities are created, the construction of analysis categories begins. A domain analysis seeking to group content into coherent sets which could be validated by later community member-checking is adopted. The first two dialogue categories emerge naturally from the data, initially suggesting themselves relatively unproblematically as 'evidence-informed practice' and 'professional learning and supportive networking'. An examination of the remaining threads reveals that outstanding dialogues cannot be simply shoe-horned into any one category, demonstrating that content categorisation is an iterative, 'messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative' process (Denscombe 2017, p. 316).

While discussing learning theory with fellow teacher educators, talk of the affective domain prompted a reflection that I did not initially appreciate how many uncategorised threads involved identity, attitude or values-based dialogues alongside more functional, role-focussed discussions. Multiple threads reveal FE teachers' regard their role as one which transcends the more pragmatic concerns of pedagogic practice, going beyond planning, facilitating and supporting learning. The theme of self-empowerment regularly emerges, casting teachers as advocates for FE's wider impact on family and community.

A change of approach positions as-yet uncategorised threads into a temporary placeholder, in effect a 'none of the above' node. An examination of these threads reveals focus on learners as integral to their wider community, on learner emancipation and educator empowerment. Once a 'professional identity' category was in place, it appears that all 'none of the above' dialogues can be said to be a good fit within it.

What Does the Model Tell Us About Teacher Identity?

The complexity and range of educators' dialogues mean that a perfect dialogue-category fit is not a realistic expectation. Development of a three-lens model allows forward movement, throwing focus on the main

Fig. 8.2   Lenses of Educators' online community dialogue focus

task, the examination of the nature and scope of Twitter dialogues. Dialogue lenses entitled the 'pedagogy' lens, the 'learning community' lens and the 'identity and voice' lens were decided upon. Each lens is given a subtitle to aid explanatory potential; a graphical overview of the lenses is provided in Fig. 8.2.

An examination of the dialogue weightings by lens reveals that almost half of the Twitter threads focus on *pedagogy*. The next most popular lens was the *identity and voice lens*, comprising just over a third of online dialogues. The third lens, whose focus falls on *learning communities*, encompassed a fifth of thread themes. Teachers engaging with the three Twitter communities, then, place strongest focus on nurturing knowledge and skills, the technical and practical wisdoms of the development of informed pedagogy. Beyond this, significant values and identity focus is evident, suggesting building of values-informed praxis with a lesser, yet evident, focus on building and maintaining growth-focussed, supportive professional networks. The dialogues under the three lenses are summarised in Box 8.1.

Box 8.1 Dialogues under pedagogy, community, and identity and voice lenses

The Pedagogy Lens: 'What we do in evidence-informed practice'

About 46% of community dialogues can be said to be directly related to the development of evidence-informed practice, what teachers do in learning spaces and the theoretical underpinning informing action. Each Twitter community engaged in at least nine dialogues in this area.

Dialogues engaged with theories of learning including behaviourism, social constructivism and humanism, and explored metacognition, fostering of creativity and theories related to informed technology use. Competing approaches were critiqued; for example, the value of socially situated learning and explorations of motivational theories linked to feedback were undertaken.

Development of skills in the core curriculum was explored in dialogues on development of English, Maths, IT, wider digital skills and evidence-informed use of technology.

The teacher's role and tasks at significant points in the academic year were discussed in dialogues around programme recruitment, entry and exit, induction, parents' events, attendance monitoring, revision and supporting learners during end-of-year exams.

Specific curriculum areas and learner groups including learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Access to Higher Education learners, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students, groups for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners, Offender Learning and Apprenticeship cohorts were discussed in terms of meeting learning needs. Learners' choices in relation to progression at the end of their programmes were considered.

Holistic, cross-curricular issues such as inclusive learning, promoting positive behaviours, use of learner role models, effective communication strategies, learner motivation, self-efficacy and resilience, and learners' mental health were discussed.

There were also dialogues around the mundane 'nuts and bolts' of teaching, valuable to new teachers, such as framing of aims and outcomes, differentiation strategies and the shape of the 'perfect lesson'.

The Learning Community Lens: 'How we connect and support each other to develop'

The learning community lens had fewer dialogues than the other two lenses, 19% of the dialogues in total, but evidenced at least four active threads per community.

The importance of mentoring, coaching and peer support to teachers in the sector figured in the dialogues including how mentors might be trained and how those seeking support might locate and select a mentor and develop productive relationships.

Discussions on the trajectory of teachers' professional progress, opportunities for promotion and the raising of professional profiles occurred. Dialogues signpost opportunities for writing for academic journals and discussions of under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities.

Peer support dialogues extended to how teachers can safeguard their mental health in day-to-day work and during times of transition and progression. Teachers solicit advice on peers' experiences during significant career- and study-related life changes such as moves into leadership and management roles or academic advancement.

Professional learning opportunities at networking events are promoted and discussions occur of outcomes from events such as signposting to opportunities to attend conferences, face-to-face professional network meetings, and community and employer engagement events.

Significantly, in addition to signposting to existing work of other practitioner researchers, there was advocacy of and steering towards practitioner research opportunities and solo and team action research projects.

Informal learning and its value to CPD participation access featured in dialogues. Discussions also considered online and offline informal learning and the value of 'non-conventional CPD'.

The Identity and Voice Lens: 'How we define our values and advocate for them'

About 34% of dialogues can be regarded as being values or identity-related. All communities evidenced dialogues around professional identity. One in six dialogues in the Ivy community, over a third of the dialogues in the Lily community and almost half of the dialogues in the Fern community have an identity or values focus.

Topics include social justice or mobility, helping marginalised communities, improving access to FE for under-represented groups and what can be termed 'political discourses'. Dialogues discuss development of anti-fascist curricula and explore links between literacy development and participation in democratic processes. A desire to make learners politically aware and active is evident in threads marking 100 years of women's suffrage, redressing the 'white curriculum', actions to oppose FE funding cuts and threads such as 'women in education' and 'mature students' voices'.

Threads span other topics including learner and educator mental health, decreases in funding for support for SEND learners, the self-empowering power of adult literacy, and promotion of equality and equal access to learning. Dialogues consider the impact of FE beyond individuals, extending to family, community and future generations. The value of belongingness and need to build strong communities both inside and outside the classroom, recognising the lobbying power of the group voice, is evident.

Dialogues such as 'decolonising the curriculum', 'ACL and social mobility' and 'social action and work experience' (each from a different community) speak to educators' desire to cast themselves as agents who promote the

voices and needs of those traditionally under-represented in FE, and as advocates for equality of opportunity. Perspectives on intersectionality were explored around factors leading to marginalisation of groups; for example, the compound, complex challenges faced by female ESOL learners from deprived backgrounds who have fewer female role models in education or the workplace.

The power of education as an instrument for building a democratic society emerges. Alongside promotion of achievements of women in fields traditionally regarded as male-dominated such as STEM, dialogues promoting widening educational participation in marginalised communities and advocating democratic adult education appear beside threads on how educators might aid self-empowerment in others.

Dialectics on instrumentalist, employability-focussed curricula, performative, data-focussed organisational priorities and current Ofsted practices fall under this lens. Threads such as 'Talking back to numbers'—'rebuttals to statistics', 'Data use implications for professionalism' and 'When did T&L become data?' speak to mismatches between teachers' core purpose and the focus of organisational or wider professional learning curricula in the sector and challenge simplistic judgements of teachers' professionalism.

Pedagogy Lens Dialogues

Pedagogy lens dialogues encompass areas covered by the ETF (2014) Standards' domains of 'professional skills' and 'professional knowledge and understanding'. Teachers are collaborating, networking and discussing what works best in their teaching, evaluating practice against research evidence and holding dialogues around classroom strategies and resources. These discussions offer hope that Twitter dialogues may find favour with those setting the standards for FE and steering the course of CPD for educators working in it.

Dunne (1993, pp. 18–19) holds, however, that 'atomisitic' objectives, commonplace in both FE curricula and the 20 ETF Professional Standards, are worthwhile only if they 'aggregate over time into qualities of mind and character', encouraging reflective, independent thought, the 'significant achievements of education'. Those advocating an objectives-based curriculum, or a standards-based CPD model for teacher-learners, risk eliminating the 'hermeneutical dimension' (ibid., p. 20) of teaching,

consideration of which requires us to examine discourses against a wider of literature on educational purpose.

Biesta's qualification domain considers education's purpose as the development of role-related ability (Gregson and Hillier 2015, p. 5). Professional development involves growth of technical reason (*techne*), the 'knowledge possessed by an expert' in a craft, whether this is a carpenter making a table, a doctor restoring health or a teacher facilitating FE's employability-focussed outcomes. Development of technical reason enables makers to comprehend and articulate the 'why and where, how and with what of making (*poiesis*) with purpose (*telos*)' (Dunne 1993, p. 244).

Teachers' pedagogy lens dialogues are rooted in Biesta's qualification domain. By engaging in dialogues around practice, roles throughout the academic year and the tools called upon to fulfil these roles, teachers build knowledge regarding the 'how and with what' of practice. An initial teacher training curriculum is enacted in microcosm, albeit in a more organic, haphazard manner than managers planning formal CPD curricula may find fitting when focussing on homogenous output. Macro and micro views are adopted, examining perennial, year-round challenges such as promoting positive behaviour, motivating learners, and developing learners' self-efficacy and evidencing specific dialogues on annual events such as induction and examinations. This development of practice relates to short, time-bound events and what screenwriters term a 'longer story arc' of programme-long or progression-related needs.

Teachers build theory-informed practice, yet the roots of pedagogy lens dialogues draw from experimentation, examining areas of practice which require nuanced, situational approaches. Developing functional maths skills in an engaging, contextualised manner and how we might communicate sympathetically when managing challenging behaviour are examples of 'shared experiment, collective trial and error' (Sennett 2009, p. 288). Teachers look beyond building of technical reason rooted in intellect to work with practical wisdom (*phronesis*). This work involves 'sensitivity and attunement' (Dunne 1993, p. 256) to unique, arising classroom situations and an awareness of their own responses as well as those of learners. It is notable that pedagogy lens dialogues adopt a case study-based, solution-focussed approach seeking to expose generalised theory

to specific context. Responses to questions, such as 'how can we get learners to appreciate that maths is relevant?', 'how can I help build learners' confidence?' or 'how can I encourage focussed mobile phone use?' evidence this.

Teachers seek to be builders of 'theory that grows out of practice' (Scales 2012, p. 1). Deleuze (in Foucault 1977, p. 208), when considering theory-practice duality, describes theory as 'exactly like a box of tools… it must be useful'. Outside purely intellectual exercises, theory is only a 'relay from one practice to another'. Teaching is no intellectual exercise, but an unpredictable, 'variable process' (Biesta 2010, p. 10), so it is necessary to work at 'piercing' the wall which, according to Deleuze, untested theory inevitably encounters (Foucault 1977, p. 208).

Learning Community Lens Dialogues

Twitter communities do not develop practice through solitary reflection on theory, but intentionally undertake this work in community. Dialogues under the learning community lens show teachers connecting and supporting each other to manage careers and develop new professional trajectories, updating knowledge of subject or vocational areas and accessing and leveraging educational research.

Biesta holds that educational purpose goes beyond qualification to embrace socialisation, ways in which 'adults become part of existing traditions and cultures' (Gregson and Hillier 2015, p. 6). Community lens dialogues evidence teachers seeking to meet the Professional Standards (ETF 2014) by building professional networks that embed them into practice and help them develop. Dialogues on progression to Doctoral or Master's level study and discussions on professional body membership evidence teachers 'playing the progression game' by participating in qualification-based programmes set and overseen by officially recognised bodies.

There is a need to take a wider perspective beyond a narrow 'property' definition of progression to 'fit policy agendas' (Priestley et al. 2015, p. 5). A broader 'ecological conceptualisation' of community engagement sees teachers exercising agency to build alternative networks, working against 'local constraints' in cultural, structural and material resources

(ibid., p. 10). A key issue in the formation of professional agency is the availability of 'relational resources'. If teachers judge the 'practical-evaluative' aspects of agency (ibid., p. 15), the support and environment provided locally by conventional professional networks, to be appropriate and sufficient, then participation in wider, online networks would likely be redundant. Informal online networks develop 'organically out of short-term needs' helping teachers to connect in 'action, interpersonal relations, shared knowledge, and negotiation of enterprises' (Wenger 1998, p. 85).

A further aspect of the socialisation domain is reproduction of existing traditions, inculcated ways of being which can be imposed, even insinuated, 'behind the backs' of teachers and students (Biesta 2005, p. 6). Drawing on Kelly's ideas of a 'hidden curriculum' (1999, p. 8), Biesta notes that socialisation acts as an engine for upholding existing social inequalities, ensuring maintenance of prevalent agendas (2005, p. 6). Beyond discussions of mandatory CPD activity, subversion lies in sign-posting to teacher-led, informal, 'non-conventional CPD'. This is somewhat recursive but perhaps to be expected; participants who value benefits of non-formal networks encourage others to participate more widely in them. Agency involves presenting 'active resistance' to policies which do not fit with moral standpoints or core identity. Exercising agency involves 'much more than simply following unproblematic trajectories' as autonomy and agency are not the same thing (ibid., p. 20). Teachers use agency to be less heavily influenced by 'the thematic priorities of others' (O'Leary 2018, p. 2), attempting to set their CPD agendas from within the sector or beyond.

Coffield (2017, p. 45) notes that a key part of teacher CPD is building the professional confidence to challenge the 'assumptions, methods and findings' of those setting their agenda. Sennett also highlights the beneficial, defensive properties of the commune in this respect. Challenges to professionality, worth or achievement are rebutted only by groups as, without community, artists lack a 'collective shield… against [clients'] verdicts' (2009, p. 67). What we may witness in the informal online communities is the birth of a fledgling, rival hidden curriculum, a 'shift in discourse' emerging through confidence in numbers, a shift which makes 'space for ideology to play' (Bernstein in Gregson and Hillier 2015, p. 111).

Identity and Voice Dialogues

Coffield contends that the course of teachers' CPD moves beyond being a simple educational issue and impacts widely on society. A 'vibrant democracy' requires teachers to remain in control and exercise autonomy over their practice considering 'ideas, values and beliefs by which [teaching] is informed, sustained and justified' (Coffield 2017, p. 4). The value base of a rival CPD curriculum is evident in the identity and voice lens dialogues. Dialogues can be described as political, values and identity based, showing teachers evaluating their practice, values and beliefs in a critical way which transcends the scope of the current ETF Standards (2014).

Tensions occur between the vocabulary used in the Standards and that employed in the Twitter dialogue threads and are particularly significant regarding the stakeholders considered. Under the Professional Standards' remit, individuals and groups considered are learners, employers, peers and the organisation(s) that teachers work in and with. Identity and voice dialogues reveal significant additional focus being given to alternative constituencies, an emphasis on the learner situated in their family and immediate and wider community and, beyond this, the learner as an active global, political citizen. Concepts from Social Purpose Education are evident calling for teachers to be activists as well as educators, possessing a 'moral charge' with a commitment to democratic, 'egalitarian and humanistic values' (Johnston 2008, p. 1).

Dialogues under the identity and voice lens invite an extension of the consideration of *phronesis* towards its ultimate aim, the building of *praxis*. As well as concern with reflective, practical application of theory, praxis relates to engagement with or realisation of ideas. Praxis is values and emotion laden, requiring a person to 'realize excellences… constitutive of a worthwhile way of life' calling upon 'a realization of one's self', which has 'formed and revealed one's character' (Dunne 1993, p. 256).

Rather than viewing themselves simply as theory-informed, technicist 'makers' judged solely by achievement of rational learning outcomes, identity and voice dialogues show teachers joining a community where identity-informed praxis is understood and valued. They wish to

influence the content and direction of the curriculum, regarding learners not as 'docile listeners' but as collaborators, self-empowered to view reality not as static, but as 'in process, in transformation' (Freire 1968, p. 81). Praxis is evidenced by ethically committed action and dialogues around redressing a 'white curriculum', 'decolonising the curriculum', promoting community voice, celebrating mature students' success and throwing focus upon women in education evidence this emancipatory stance.

Teachers' habitus, 'dispositions… structured propensities to think, feel and act' is created through socialised norms, dependent on social assets (Navarro 2006, p. 16). Habitus evidenced in teachers' Twitter communities speaks in opposition to FE's received wisdoms. FE's employability-fixated curriculum focus, its funding and quality assurance/improvement processes are examined in critical discourses. Quality systems are framed as reactions to inspection regimes lacking nuance and sound methodology in dialogue threads such as 'talking back to data' and 'When did T&L become data?' Also evidenced are criticisms of funding levers used by the government to steer curriculum and the availability of support that teachers can draw on when facilitating learning. Participants are aware of issues around intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991). They are critical of reductions in funding for support for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or programmes for students participating in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, specifically because they consider these learner populations to be already marginalised and disadvantaged.

So What Next? Calls to Action and for Further Research

This chapter began by asserting that online networks require 'renewed scrutiny' due to the absence of informed consensus on their form or their impact (Lantz-Andersson et al. 2018, p. 304). Netnographic study has added to the knowledge of the form of online dialogues, modelling them, from a six-month sampling. Dialogue topics under the pedagogy and learning community lenses can be mapped to the ETF (2014) Standards

and to evidence from key texts on the development of practice and praxis, providing initial entwined 'fibres' in the 'cable' of evidence of value (Gardner et al. 2008, p. 98). It can be argued that the mere presence of identity and voice dialogues, dialectics around learner and community self-empowerment, and encouragement of political activism provide evidence of seeds of emancipatory praxis. The sustained presence of emancipatory dialogues signifies teachers' need for and valuing of these discourses.

Teachers' online dialogues reveal an informal professional learning agenda intersecting yet in contradiction to the habitus of government and sector leaders, evidencing a disconnect between teachers and those setting, funding and quality assuring the curriculum. Bourdieu, describing doxa, notes that 'what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying… tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition' (1977, p. 167). Though doxa can lead groups to forget causes of inequality and adhere to 'relations of order… accepted as self-evident', doxa can empower when questioning discourse legitimacy (Bourdieu 1984, p. 471). By refusing to know their proper place, informal online community voices may represent opportunities for leveraged cultural capital for FE teachers. When informal dialogues question wholesale rubber-stamping of an instrumentalist, neoliberal 'learning for earning' agenda (Biesta 2005, p. 688), counterpoints can build to create a reframed doxa.

Bourdieu conjectures that a doxic 'universe of the undiscussed' might be overhauled when 'drastic socio-cultural modifications and disruptions… give rise to critical consciousness' (Deer in Grenfell 2008, p. 118). Coffield (2017) holds that significant upheaval is evident in the UK caused by substantial internal political shifts, such as impacts of an austerity agenda and Brexit and extra-national concerns including climate change. We may be witnessing crises sufficient to exacerbate, even empower doxic overhaul. Social media-based dialogues originally intended for pragmatic professional learning may be questioning the tacit 'rules of the game' in FE provided teachers possess the required cultural capital to effect change. It will be important, however, for agents of emergent doxa to recognise their own assumptions and beliefs (Deer in Grenfell 2008, p. 125) when assuming the validity or supremacy of new doxa.

Critics of the value of informal online dialogues will rightly make the argument that the presence of discourse on 'topic X' is not evidence per se of meaningful professional learning. Equally, professional dialogues may occur and be contested, problematic or lacking in collegiality or inclusivity. A rebuttal is to draw parallels between informal online dialogues and a face-to-face CPD event. Would gathering teachers to focus on an area of practice with the teacher trainer as 'ringmaster' be any greater guarantee of inclusive, meaningful, professional learning? Learning does not occur merely through proximity effects and whether professional dialogues are meaningful aids to pedagogy development is decided by consequent impression on practice.

The netnographic work detailed in this chapter is being built upon focus groups and semi-structured interviews with teachers who are founders and moderators of informal online communities or are active participants in them. Sector leaders and managers are also being engaged to establish the value of communities to the development of professional networks and practice. Early results of this community member checking reinforce the validity of the three-lens model and evidence teachers voicing support for the value of dialogues under the identity and voice lens in particular.

Further research on alternative online groups is needed to help us map the rhizome and establish if there is new wine sitting in the digital bottles, providing an emerging emancipatory doxa for our challenging times. As this chapter recounts 'newly minted' research, rather than reporting on the established effects that the work has had, calls to action are now made in suggestions for further engagement with this work and, more widely, with practitioner research in general.

To Fellow Teachers

Teachers need to take 'social constructivism to the digital age' but extensive teacher training is needed if educators are to devise 'authentic pedagogic designs' for online, rhizomatic networks (Kjaergaard and Sorensen 2014, p. 1). A first step can be to engage peers in discussions on online, informal construction of pedagogy and meaning. Teachers participating

in social media learning communities should encourage and enable peers to join dialogues, providing the support required to navigate social media environments. Teachers need to raise awareness of online community value with managers and sector policy-makers, inviting them to join these alternative discourses, lest dialogues become an echo chamber. Beyond this, all FE practitioners should be practitioner researchers, investigating their own practice, whatever form such research may take. Practitioner research affords invaluable opportunities for personal and professional development as well as allowing educators to lend their voices to the evidence-informed practice base. It is an engine for personal and professional growth. Beyond simple practice-building, research allows practitioners to explore their identity and to question or affirm their place in the sector, enabling them to be a more confident, connected part of FE.

To Fellow Teacher Educators

The three-lens netnographic model described in this chapter can be used as a powerful discursive tool allowing teachers to explore the value of informal online learning. Teacher educators must become evidence-informed users of online communities if they are to encourage trainees in the reflective use of them. Trainees' engagement should begin with nuanced appraisals of community value followed by initial participation allowing netiquette to be mastered, digital pedagogies to be explored and skills challenges to be overcome. Teachers should also be encouraged to learn from their own learners, some of whom may well be less circumspect, but more experienced, adept users of social media.

To FE Leaders and Managers

A significant and broad evidence base developed over decades confirms that teachers need to be allowed to exercise agency in decisions and actions around their professional learning. FE's highly contextualised learning scenarios and diverse learner groups make it particularly

unsuitable for one-size-fits-all, bite-sized, teacher CPD 'events'. Practitioners need to be given investments of time and funding and allowed to form learning networks both on and offline. Consideration of research such as this netnographic work by FE managers should prompt reflection on the differences between informal online CPD and its less-favoured, mandatory cousin. Teacher educators and CPD/quality managers could capitalise on the popularity of informal online dialogues, using them as a model and a primer for in-house CPD. Methodologies for successfully integrating such hybrid learning into FE practitioners' existing pedagogy need to be explored and researched to better inform the sector of new ways of working.

To Government and Sector Bodies

FE's Professional Standards reflect government priorities which cast teachers as makers of skilled employees for the workforce, a 'learning for earning' agenda (Biesta 2005, p. 688). Employability, functional and technology-related skills are prioritised. The ETF Professional Standards (2014) intersect but remain somewhat at odds with the identity and values of FE teachers revealed in this chapter, so should be reviewed—and be authored and owned—by FE teachers. Teachers should be served by co-created professional standards not made subject to them as part of an appraisal process. Recognition of the need for growth of the self and the intrinsic value to learners' health, wellbeing and family of lifelong learning needs to be codified. Omitted from the Standards is the significant recognition of teachers' desire to develop the learner as a whole person, as an empowered, political citizen of local community and global society. The absence of recognition of learners as active 'world citizens' at a time when climate change and shifting political agendas have global and local impacts is stark. No mention is made in FE's Standards of promotion of active community, citizenship, social responsibility or issues around sustainability. The Professional Standards have been overtaken by circumstance and a re-balancing rather than a rewriting seems in order. Online dialogues emerging under the identity and voice lens suggest the need for a realignment which better considers teachers' stated core values and

identity as partners in a learner's journey to independence and happiness as well as into employment.

To Fellow Practitioner Researchers

Further research is required to gather more concrete impacts from informal online learning community activity and related offline, rhizomatic networks. The use of hybrid, social learning models requires further exploration. Though it is more challenging to gather imprints from informal, spontaneous professional learning, if value is to be acknowledged and lessons are to be learned, further practitioner research projects are necessary to better investigate it. Broader, longitudinal consideration of a wider number of online communities involving more diverse participants is required to add to provocations offered in this chapter. If it can be established why, when and how teachers are using outcomes and resources from online dialogues in the classroom, then these outcomes can add to the research base, guiding better-informed use of social media for FE teachers' learning and, in turn, learners' progression.

A Closing Thought on Essential, Human Presence

Haraway holds, in her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), that we have moved into a post-human age which witnesses the breaking down of boundaries between human and machine, evidences the physical and non-physical becoming less distinct. Personally, I concur with Hyland, who regards technology as providing potential for 'transformative epistemology… extension of human capability' yet holds that the human aspect is key (2019, p. 15). Use of technology is a social process. The 'extended mind' of the Twitter community sees 'minds and hands… inextricably conjoined'. Technology may place the world 'at our fingertips', but Hyland reminds us that fingertips 'are connected to hands manipulated by bodies and minds' (ibid., p. 16).

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9

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: An Exploration into the Realities of Sharing 'Good Practice' and Developing the Craft of Teaching Through an Online Video Platform

David Galloway

Introduction

This chapter draws attention to how time is the number one resource which many teachers identify as being in short supply. It describes how increasing demands on teachers' workloads limit the time and opportunity to engage in meaningful Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Consequently CPD can be seen by many teachers as being unrealistic and even impossible. It describes the Teacher's Takeaway project which is born out of ongoing collaboration and cooperation in a college of Further Education (FE) in England. The project is based on a social media platform designed to capture teaching and learning practice via short videos which can be accessed by teachers anywhere and at any time.

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This chapter reports research-in-progress which explains how the site uses a social media forum to support discussion and share practice between teaching professionals across the Further Adult and Vocational Education (FAVE) sector.

A successful bid to the Education and Training Foundation for a grant to explore outstanding teaching, learning and assessment created the opportunity to design a website which showcases instances of 'good practice' from practitioners at three local colleges. I was involved in the creation and development of resources for the Teacher's Takeaway website the purpose of which was to provide a platform which allowed individuals to work together and develop examples of 'good practice' which could be interacted with via the social media section of the site. The social interaction and building of discussion ideas within the site are discussed with application to Vygotsky (1978) where skills can be developed based on social interaction and through the reduction of pedagogic solitude, stimulating Joint Professional Development (JPD) in the process of resource creation and discussion.

The ethos which is enriched in the branding of the Teacher's Takeaway is about creating a space where teachers can reflect and discuss in a social, interactive and connective way just as we do over a coffee. The five-minute networking that happens at conferences, the corridor conversations where problems are shared and solutions spitballed, are examples of this. Teacher practitioners from the three participating colleges created their own content-based videos on their experiences of what worked for them or others in the past.

Context and Problem

In a letter written in 1676 by Sir Isaac Newton to his fellow scientist Robert Hooke, Newton acknowledges that his achievements would not have been possible without the discoveries of the past and he humbly scribes 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants' (BBC World Service, no date). Sir Isaac Newton was master of the Royal Mint from 1699 to 1727 and it was the introduction of the £2 coin into circulation in 1998 that saw a carefully crafted design with the

inscription 'Standing on the shoulders of giants'. The design of the coin serves to illustrate the story with four circles representing industrial and technological development. The coin fuses both these concepts in its craft as it used state-of-the-art technology to feature a security component within the centre as well as being constructed with two separate parts of differing alloys. The four-circle design, from its core and outwards, represents the iron age, the industrial revolution, the dawn of the computer and finally the outer circle symbolising the internet (The Royal Mint, no date).

The question is how do we get up there?

The internet or the worldwide web as Sir Tim Berners-Lees, its inventor, 'coined' it in 1989, was created out of frustration in sharing information from different computer systems. Berners-Lee wanted to reframe the way we used information, to think differently about the ways we work together. In his lecture, Berners-Lees (2009) explains that it was a grass-roots movement that was the most exciting concept, not the technology, not what things people were doing with it but the community and the spirit of all these people coming together. He continues with the suggestion that we should all be demanding 'Raw Data Now', data which he says can be 'Linked data' which is used to connect thinkers, data which we can all make and contribute. In a recent interview (CACM 2017), Berners-Lee poses the question 'how does humanity come up with an interesting idea when the problem is in lots of people's heads, and different parts of the solution are in different people's heads?' He goes on to remind us that part of the goal of the web is to be a powerful tool connecting thinkers in a web woven from the fabric of science and democracy. The internet itself therefore is very much designed and crafted as a collaborative tool based on a ground-up concept where society can work together in the development of problem solving.

Literature Review

In his book, *The Craftsman*, Sennett (2009) introduces the concept of craftsmanship as one which has far expanded the craftsmen who existed in pre-industrial society. He describes craftsmanship as 'an enduring,

basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake' (Sennett 2009, p. 9). He acknowledges its existence in vast forms. It includes the manual labourer but expends this to multiple crafts such as doctors, artists, parents, and (in relation to the development of the internet) programmers. Sennett uses the example of the computer programmer who writes code for open source software, that is to say, 'free software' such as Linux. One its most well-known applications, Wikipedia, as an example of people doing things together not for the excitement of the technology, but for the sake of the community and in the spirit of people getting together to cooperate. In the Linux network, when coders problem-solve to squash 'bugs', new opportunities arise for the use of the code and hence there is a frequently evolving skill developed which is not focused on a finished object; it is in fact an ever-evolving craft. The importance of the slow and incremental nature of the development of a practice or craft is not lost on Dunne (1993), who describes his own personal experiences of being at the receiving end of the development and implementation of the Behavioural Objectives model. Describing how it was introduced as the 'blueprint' for planning and hailed as the royal road to success in planning for and conducting lessons that were almost guaranteed to lead to a significant improvement in the quality, effectiveness and productivity in teaching.

Based on teachers formulating demonstrable measurable outcomes for students, Dunne explains how using the Behavioural Objectives model teachers were expected to plan their lessons as a series of steps towards achieving pre-specified end goals. As a mentor in a College of Education, Dunne describes how he was sceptical about the quality of the information that would be gathered from this approach when analysing lessons. It was taken for granted that such objectives were needed to control teachers and keep them 'on target'. Dunne goes on to question, 'how can a teacher know that the target set is a desirable or appropriate one?' For example, when analysing a teacher against those learners that have achieved the set objectives, if the objectives were not met, is that to say the objectives were too difficult, or were not challenging enough? Or could it be that the instructions of the objectives were not delivered effectively, was the classroom dynamic not suitably interpreted by an observer and key information missed regarding group dynamics? The key issue

that Dunne highlights with this model is that it is based on instructional outcomes and neglects teaching as an engagement or a process. He suggests that a major drawback of the Behavioural Objectives model was that it needed to pay much more attention to the experiential dimension of learning and the importance of teacher judgement in context. Dunne goes on to express his frustration to the proposed 'blueprint' or 'toolkit' empty promise of the Behavioural Objectives model; he notes that 'it is as if action can be resolved into analysis, that problems of the first-person agent can be solved from the perspectives of the third person analyst' (Dunne 1993, p. 4). Dunne is critical of measuring atomistic and context-free behavioural objectives as a means to an educational end. He draws attention to the importance of aspects of education which are not easily measured, which 'aggregate over time into qualities of mind and character such as an ability for independent thought and reflection, a habit of truthfulness, a sense of justice, a care for clarity and expressiveness in writing and speech' (Dunne 1993, p. 6).

When applying literature from the field of philosophy of education to his analysis, Dunne suggests that practice is 'irreducible to technique, that it calls for a distinctively practical and therefore non technical type of knowledge'. From his readings of Aristotle, Dunne explains technique as coming from the Greek word *techne* meaning a kind of activity which calls for 'making or 'producing' a product or state of affairs when the end (product) is known. Essentially this encapsulates the 'means to an end' view, where the creator has a very clear vision of what it is they are going to produce and therefore makes and produces it in that fashion, through a kind of rule following. Dunne exposes the limits of *techne* when he asks, what do you do when it is not clear what to do? This technical-rational worldview he points out assumes that social life can be simplified and easily measured. From the same technical-rational perspective, the assumed model of change takes a 'top-down' cascade process where knowledge transfer and changes in practice are expected to come about simply by telling people what to do on the basis of … just give them the toolkits and get them to use them! Sennett (2009) notes a number of problems with this view of practice including its built-in instrumentality and its implicit settling for mediocrity, when he points out,

When practice is organized as a means to a fixed end, then the problems of the closed system reappear; the person in training will meet a fixed target but won't progress further. The relationship between problem-solving and problem-finding…builds skills, but this can't be a one-off event. Skill opens up in this way only because the rhythm of solving and opening up occurs again and again. (Sennett 2009, p. 38)

Through the work of Aristotle, Sennett draws attention to another form of knowledge, *praxis*, where someone in a public space acts in the interests of others to embody aspects of character and good judgement valued as hallmarks of excellence by the community in which it is enacted. Sennett argues that practice cannot be reduced to techniques that can simply be picked up in order to produce a specific instrumental prescribed objective, but is an extension of a person's character.

As a teaching and learning coach, a large area of my responsibility is to work in collaboration with other teachers to improve professional practice. When exploring how individuals learn and develop there is a belief that collaboration is more effective than individual problem solving and vice versa. This concept has been debated for many years. Vygotsky (1978) explores the concept that cognitive and social development is most effective during interactions with others in scenarios that are relevant. Vygotsky explains the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as full development, depending on full social interaction and how the range of skills that can be developed with guidance or peer collaboration exceeds that what can be attained alone. Within my teaching and learning coaching role, the exact nature of this collaboration will vary depending on the areas for improvement identified, but will usually involve meetings to discuss teaching and learning issues—supportive, informal observations followed by professional discussion and opportunities to observe other teachers, including teaching and learning coaches. It is viewed that members of teaching staff have a responsibility to engage positively and professionally with the support provided from teaching and learning coaches…. but when? As a practitioner-researcher I am, alongside my colleagues, submerged in teaching and learning amidst an overwhelming torrent of administrative, logistical and pastoral challenges. Time, or more specifically the lack of time, is frequently the call made as teachers tread water.

So how do we learn to swim? How do we find the time to learn and practise the skill of gliding effortlessly across the water, to play passionately but respectfully in an environment that can drown us?

Teacher Workloads

In 2014, the Department of Education (DfE) implemented The Workload Challenge to gather feedback from teachers in schools requesting their experiences and any potential solutions they may have to address unnecessary workload. From the data collected, the DfE set out a programme of action with a large-scale online workload survey completed every two years to establish progress. Key findings from the self-reporting survey (Department of Education 2017) highlighted the average total working hours in a week including the weekend, for all classroom teachers and middle leaders to be 54.4 hours. Almost one-third of all part-time teachers and one-quarter of full-time teachers surveyed reported that 40% of their total hours worked took place outside of the regular school operating hours. This signifies a considerable workload demand still. With regard to attitudes towards workloads, 93% stated the workload was at least a fairly serious problem and 52% felt that the workload was a very serious problem and over three-quarters of staff were dissatisfied with the number of hours they worked. Most staff suggested they were unable to complete the work in their contracted hours, did not have an acceptable workload and that they did not have a good work-and-private-life balance. There is also some evidence that supports the notion that less-experienced teachers may have an increased perceived workload compared to their more-experienced colleagues. It was reported that primary school teachers with less than 6 years of experience accumulated 18.8 hours per week working outside of school hours; this was 2 hours more per week than their experienced colleagues. Whilst it can be suggested that these findings mirror trends in the FAVE sector, it should be acknowledged that the Teacher Workload Survey 2016 focused its data collection on primary and secondary schools and not within FAVE.

Addressing the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) at their annual conference, Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, acknowledges that

> Education is, above all, a people business. Syllabus, technology, structures—these things all matter. But ultimately it is about people: the teacher, the head teacher, the lecturer, the support staff…the quality of teaching matters more than anything else. (Hinds 2018)

Both the education secretary and Geoff Barton, the ASCL general secretary (Association of School and College Leaders), highlighted their support in view of the challenges faced in the sector. Both stipulated rising pupil numbers, a competitive employment market, and (one of the biggest threats) workload as significant contributors to employment and retention of staff challenges within the teaching sector. Barton describes leaders as ones who need to

> *Redefine what it is to be a teacher in the twenty-first century, to make sure we don't become the Luddite profession, doing things in the way we've always done them… We need to explore how technology and artificial intelligence can take some of the routine activities from teachers' lives…and we have to tell a better story about teaching—to the world outside but also within our schools and colleges…We are losing good people of deep experience—people who have taught and retaught topics and skills, honing their practice, refining their craft, and becoming ever better as teachers. We need more people like them in our classrooms.* (Barton 2018)

In a bid to address the key areas as highlighted in the data collected by The Workload Challenge, the DfE commissioned three independent teacher workload review groups. These groups focused on eliminating the unnecessary workload associated with data management, marking, planning and teaching resources. Greenhalgh's foreword (Department of Education 2016, p.3) as chair of the review group focusing on planning and teaching resources stresses the claim that 'Current education policy is supporting far more autonomy and freedom…it is an ideal time to consider collaborative work, both within schools and across partnerships.

This demands a culture where teachers are prepared to share their best ideas and learn from one another.' The focus of this report is on the resources and the planning of their use and within it lies a poignant statement linking resource development to implementation and teaching application:

> We also feel strongly that any resource will only be truly effective when it is supported by high quality training and professional development. Having a shared and secure understanding of what effective teaching and pupil understanding looks like to inform planning is essential. (Department of Education 2016)

Recommendations within the report were directed towards teachers, senior leadership teams and other bodies and included a focus on 'a shared understanding of effective teaching to inform planning, underpinned by effective continuous professional development' and that 'Subject associations and school networks and chains should review their offer to teachers on evidence of effective practice, research and resources'. The paradox here is that it is crucial to invest time in order to save time and reduce workload. However, the focus must be on the correct investment of that time.

The training needs analysis report published by the Education Training Foundation (ETF) explored the training needs of people within the FAVE sector. Ninety per cent of providers reported that their training and development activities carried out in 2017–2018 met the majority of needs of the organisation; however, over a quarter of people working in the sector reported that they did not receive all the training they wanted/needed. One-third of the sector staff also reported that the training they undertook was of little value (Education Training Foundation 2018, p. 56). The top training episodes that were highlighted as most useful to individuals were, encouragingly, those which focused on teaching or classroom competences. From the institutional perspective, it was interesting to see that the most frequent training theme was not identifiable but there were clearly identified successful and valuable methods of development and these were small group meetings or workshops.

Monthly staff development days—we do these internally and staff talk about anything that is topical, what they have learnt, and share best practice. It's about experiences and focuses on teaching and assessment skills as well as sector learning.

Anything workshop-based where staff can take the knowledge but also have time to apply it. This is because sometimes you can deliver something which they think is a good idea but then they go away and don't have time to implement it. (FE College)

We have a team meeting every month, and group training every 3 months—this sort of sharing best practice is probably the most effective.

It's good when an external trainer comes in and offers a new perspective. It's normally to do with people skills, and takes the form of a small workshop. It shakes them up a bit and makes them think about something new. Things that force people to interact are always beneficial.

Classroom-based, 12 or so people. Group learning. This is because there's more scope to share ideas and learn from each other. (Education and Training Foundation 2018, p. 79)

Feedback from the above institutions appear to reinforce the points raised by Dunne (2005) and Sennett (2009) in that workshop-based collaborative practice development may support the inner drive and feelings of development in individuals rather than specific, objective-based tangible, measurable outcomes. With a significant proportion of time invested in staff development and a significant proportion of teaching staff feeling that their development needs have not been met, I am reminded of the points from Sennett (2009, p. 52) when referring to the craftsman at work being pulled in conflicting directions: 'There is the trouble caused by conflicting measures of quality, one based on correctness, the other on practical experience.' This is an even more troubling conflict when it is noted that the main barrier to staff development is time. For example, 46% of institutions reported that 'It is difficult to allow staff to have time off-the-job for training' (Education and Training Foundation 2018, p. 79).

Current policy within one FE college is that there are no longer formally graded observations but drop-ins with observational feedback. When looking at the transformation of this policy against with the work of O'Leary (2014) this could be viewed as a significant step forward.

O'Leary discusses the need to reconceptualise classroom observations and to move away from formal assessment of lessons where the control and the autonomy of the observation are subjective of the beholders, who are often managers or members of the senior leadership team. Sennett (2009), when discussing quality and judgement, suggests the most important concept is not the words and numbers but who is responsible for making the judgement and who is accountable for the improvement. During a debate exploring the validity of using graded observations to improve teacher performance at the Newbubbles National Further Education Conference, O'Leary (2013) highlights that there is no evidence that graded observations improve performance. O'Leary goes on to state that evidence suggests it is in fact detrimental and counterproductive to a teacher's professional identity, learning and development. Whilst the teaching and learning policy moves away from the formal grading categories, it does employ three distinct pathways that teachers are signposted to following a drop in observation: good practice, continuous development or requires improvement.

Good Intentions, Wrong Turns and Cul de Sacs

Initially, the CPD pathway in the college which constitutes the site of this study encouraged teachers to attend a 'tips' session which was led by a learning coach who would hold a discussion for 20 minutes on 'ten tips for successful application' within the area where the member of staff was deemed as needing continuous development. Categories for this included strategies and resources for teaching, assessment for learning, meeting individual needs, management of learning, development of English and Maths and so on. Over a period of time it was clear that attendance at the tips sessions was poor and it was suggested that the primary reason for this was a lack of time. As a teaching and learning coach heavily involved in this process, it just didn't feel right. Having taught within the college for over 15 years, I knew that staff were passionate about teaching and learning, so I couldn't believe time was the only factor. It should also be noted that resources used within the tips session had limited collaboration in their preparation and were often anecdotal rather than

based on sound pedagogical research. Coffield (2008) and Gregson et al. (2015) discuss the idea that giving teachers improved access to research and recommendations has the potential to create confidence in teachers' actions and potentially improve teaching and learning overall.

Fielding et al. (2005) explain the concepts of Joint Practice Development (JPD) where rather than CPD being top-down, event-led and enforced centrally, teachers are able to take ownership of their own development, building links between practising professionals. The work of Fielding et al. (2005) was based on the sharing of practice across institutions and focused on teachers learning with each other and from each other. Fielding et al. noted four elements of positive transfer identified as being of special significance. These included the need for the process to be social and built on trust, a sense of identity for both the teacher and the institution, support being available for learner engagement, and that finally there was an understanding of time investment. With ever-increasing time pressures on teachers, teaching can far too often become an isolating profession. Teachers eating lunch at their desks or in classrooms as they rush to complete the next administrative task on the ever-increasing 'To Do' list can leave them feeling isolated and separate from other professionals. Arguably, in what should be a career steeped in discussion, growth and collaboration with teaching and learning at the heart, there is a danger that teachers are becoming isolated in their role Are they being exposed to an ever-increasing environment of what Shulman (1993) calls Pedagogical Solitude? In situations of Pedagogical Solitude, the opportunities for collaborative innovation and reflections on sharing an understanding of 'good' teaching are lost. Fielding et al. (2005) go on to highlight the importance of practice content being the driver of relationships and thus of practice transfer. They also point to the significance of the 'social, personal and interpersonal dimension of collaboration'. They note that, whilst collaboration is seen as a good thing, collaboration is not simply enough to ensure its success. In developing new effective partnerships, there is a need for considerable investment of time, resources and commitment.

The Importance of Small Acts and Incremental Improvement

In his TEDx talk, David Gauntlett (2016) highlights the impact of small acts of everyday creativity in the journey back to connection, empathy and participation in the world. Gauntlett talks of three components which form the basis of making and creating and these include 'conversations, inspirations and making things happen'. In his book, *Making is Connecting*, Gauntlett (2011) expands his points to explain that there is a need to ensure we become makers and not just consumers to help people feel they contribute, stimulate engagement and stay 'switched on', ensuring the power of the individual is established to change their own world. Gauntlett suggests that a key element to this is an invitation to step into a particular kind of experience with others and to do something together and connect with some kind of story. In his work, Gauntlett (2011) draws many similarities to that of Sennett (2009) and discusses that in making and in the act of creating, people increase their engagement and connection with the social and physical environments. Gauntlett's work has included links with the international toy company LEGO and he has established 'creative research methods', where participants are asked to make something in a physical process. This gives individuals an opportunity to reflect and turn thoughts and feeling into something more tangible. Gauntlett discusses that within education we may be seeing a shift from what he calls the 'sit back and be told culture', where information is presented and information recall via testing measures progress, to a more making and doing culture. Comparison can be made between Gauntlett (2011) and Dunne (1993), with his discussion of technical reasoning versus practice reasoning. Gauntlett explains that every act of creativity and the sharing of work are made much more accessible since the creation of the internet and the development of electronic media. This he reinforces with statistics that in 2017 YouTube had over one billion users watching five billion videos every day and uploading 300 hours of video every minute. Gauntlett cites the work of Csikszentmihalyi, who describes creativity as being less about the lightning bolt moment and more about the long-term hard work towards mastering a particular 'symbolic domain'. Csikszentmihalyi states

'Creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate the innovation' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, p. 8). Gauntlett suggests that Csikszentmihalyi's definition of creativity is very much of a high order level of creativity where the unique and even masterpieces are created, which are equally acknowledged by experts in their field. It is suggested that it is about the individual experience, shared with a collective group, and that it is often on a much smaller scale. However, these smaller acts of creativity, when shared by others with such ease on the internet, can collectively form powerful movements of progress.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Teacher's Takeaway showcases what are deemed as 'good practice' videos. It offers one solution to the problem of limited time, that is, teachers have to engage in CPD, but it is only one option and it may not be the best. This chapter has made the case that the improvement in practice and the development of craft take time and that these appear to be done best in collaboration and cooperation. Sennett (2009) suggests that the desire to do things well resides in all of us and in our drive for perfecting skills. He goes on to say that when we downgrade dedication, we do so at our peril and that there may be a need to increase the space and freedom to experiment with ideas and techniques, and to risk making mistakes and hold-ups. Sennett highlights that doing a job takes time and doing our own work well can enable us to 'imagine larger categories of good'. However, Sennett also points to the reality that the current economic climate and austerity measures work against the concept of long-term job tenure. The increase in pace to find a quick solution can come at the cost of reflection and a reduction in skill refinement, whereas through repetition and modification processes, skills and craft development can become ingrained in practice.

Regarding questions of the extent to which Teacher's Takeaway operates to encourage collaboration where 'craftsman' share the journey of skill development with and in cooperation with others, it is perhaps too early to say. It is doubtful that there is a quick fix to developing practice. Teachers are not able to behave like a gamer, making an in-app purchase to move onto the next level without the need to practise their craft. However, something new and different seems to be happening, where Teacher's Takeaway is beginning to move beyond its technology-focused origins and into actual spaces in the college.

The first step will be to evaluate the impact of Teacher's Takeaway across all three colleges in a more formal and systematic way to explore the extent to which a video-based social media platform can create opportunities to capture and share outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.

The second step will be to explore if/how the digital resources created in collaboration with all three FE colleges are being evaluated and developed through the lens of JPD (Fielding et al. 2005; Gregson et al. 2015).

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10

Re-dressing the Balance: Practitioner-Research as Continuing Professional Development

Patricia Spedding

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, sir—peremptorily Thomas—Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a pair of scales*, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir,* ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, *and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures*, a case of simple arithmetic.

—Charles Dickens, Hard Times first published 1864 (Hard Times is a satirical novel set in the fictional community of Coketown where Dickens surveys English society alongside the social and economic conditions of the era. The character Thomas Gradgrind MP academic supervisor, a man obsessed with facts, provides a compelling metaphor to frame this chapter.)

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Educational Evaluation and Improvement: *Gradgrind, a Case of Simple Arithmetic*

Changing the way we go about educational evaluation and improvement in the FAVE sector is unlikely to be as easy as it sounds. Accounts from educational research foretell that such development is hard won and that what might appear to be 'quick fixes' rarely, if ever, 'fix' anything and never very 'quickly' (Coffield 2010; Sarason 1990; Sennett 2009). The costly limitations associated with top-down approaches to evaluation through 'outcomes based' metrics are increasingly documented in the literature. Such literature serves to bring this debate into sharper focus and ultimately more open to public scrutiny (Gregson et al. 2019; Gregson and Spedding 2018; Coffield 2017; Biesta 2010; Ball 2008; Gardner et al. 2008).

This poses two significant challenges for policy and educational professionals responsible for the evaluation and improvement of FAVE in England. Firstly, top-down, micro-managed approaches to evaluation and improvement such as those used by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) are expensive to maintain. In turn, these are becoming increasingly difficult to justify in terms of empirical and robust evidence of educational improvement. Such a challenge directs to systemic problems in current approaches to external evaluation and improvement of educational practice in the sector, suggesting they are in urgent need of review. Secondly, despite considerable levels of public investment in the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers in the sector, return on this outlay has not produced value for money in terms of improved levels of achievement for learners. Pointing to the realisation that educational improvement within organisations, operationalised through taken-for-granted approaches to teachers' development based on 'CPD days' and other management-led 'CPD events', might also be failing. These challenges draw attention to the need for those currently responsible for educational evaluation and improvement and the widely accepted model of teacher CPD to find out why they are not working and set in motion ways in which these issues might begin to be addressed.

Problems of evaluation and improvement in systems of professional and vocational education based on obtuse measures of educational outcomes are well known. Critiques of their rationalist technological concept of knowledge, which seeks to separate ends from means and theory from practice, are widely recognised (Carr 1995; Dunne 1993; Hyland 2019). From a technical-rational perspective, theoretical, disciplinary knowledge can and should be separated from practical skills, creating a systematic separation of the theoretical from practical in which the theoretical always dominates the practical in circumstances where the former is routinely imposed from the top-down by those who 'know better', upon those whom it is assumed 'know less'. See Chaps. 1 and 11 for an extended discussion of these ideas.

Where conditions for policy draw even harder lines between educational practice, educational theory and educational research, and where approaches to educational research are increasingly privileging randomised control trials and the elevation of 'research intensive' universities above their more lowly 'teaching' counterparts, this thinking is on the rise. This movement appears to be founded on at least three rather dubious assumptions. The first is that teachers are passive consumers of knowledge gained from research conducted by others. The second is that the role of teachers is simply to apply this knowledge in their practice. The third is that theory comes from research (not practice) and that knowledge gained from practice is somehow inferior or 'second rate' (Gregson and Spedding 2018). The implications here are that educational practice, educational theory and educational research can and should be developed in separate contexts, by different groups of people, for different purposes. This chapter argues that such separatist ideas are not based on an adequate understanding of how educational practice is constituted and how it develops but are instead founded in questionable technical-rational epistemic perspectives. One-sided rationalist understandings of how educational practice is constituted and developed, it is argued, not only are misplaced and inadequate, but also lead to serious problems in the evaluation and improvement of education. Sarason (1990) describes this tricky technical-rational bind as the 'predictable failure of education reform'. He refers to how systems of education based on a technical rational worldview fix power relations in place and how in

such circumstances teachers are pushed into positions where they are expected to act as if their experience is not real. In this situation, he argues fabrications of truth and reality are demanded and supplied on demand. Nothing really changes because it cannot. The conditions of the transaction are not there to allow truth and reality to 'appear' because this might cast doubt upon/question how 'rational' and how 'technical' the approach really is. In this way, Sarason claims education reform based on technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement becomes locked into 'predictable failure'.

There is a growing body of research in education in England (Fielding et al. 2005; Ball 2008, 2018; Gregson and Nixon 2009; Coffield 2017) that supports the view that the demands of highly prescriptive, top-down systems of accountability, performativity, inspection, league tables and so on introduce a climate of fear and distrust between teachers, education leaders and evaluators, which in turn directs the instrumental behaviour and fabrications of compliance discussed above. In a climate of austerity, the responsibility for and the costs of educational improvement are laid firmly at the door of teachers and education leaders. At the same time, overall levels of funding are being reduced, budgets are getting tighter and teacher workloads are increasing. There is a deep irony here. While the Ofsted inspection regime in England controls the field of judgement, what is judged and what criteria for measurement are used, the work of collecting performance data, monitoring and reporting in order to produce and supply the volume of information needed by inspectors and the inspection process to make those judgments (for the purposes of monitoring and controlling the sector), the weight of this work is placed upon the shoulders of teachers and education leaders. Elliott (2001) and Coffield (2017) point out how the burden of this activity consumes so much time, morale, energy and resources that in fact it is operating to seriously limit and even debilitate the sector's capacity to make real improvements in practice. Elliott observes the seductive and fatal flaw in technical-rational systems of education is that ends can masquerade as means, while real educational needs remain unmet.

Time for Change: What We Have Is Not the Same as What We Need

Education by its very nature is multifaceted. All sectors of education are complex, challenging and beset by almost continuous change. With links to the workplace and the economy, a diverse student body and an ever-expanding range of qualifications, the FAVE sector in particular is in danger of being overwhelmed by the pace of incessant policy change (Ball 2008, 2018; Coffield 2008a, 2015, 2017). Coffield's claim that despite "*more than 30 years of policy hyperactivity*", there is little sense of things moving forward for the better and if anything more harm than good is the result (2015, p. 13)—a damning indictment of the way things are. He points to dilemmas teachers face in balancing competing demands. He describes the toll that pressures to reflect on practice and develop curriculum, alongside requirements to collect and record quality assurance and performance data as part of the constant preparation for short-notice inspections, is having on teachers across the sector, leading him to comment on relations between government policies and the teaching profession as 'disastrous' (Coffield 2017). Hadawi and Crabbe (2018) take a similar position when they observe that whatever policy-makers may think the sector is about, it is to a large extent not shared by those working in it. Ball's striking critique of policy turbulence brings into sharp focus the ways in which the demand for speed of reform pushes teachers' concerns to the margins in order to satisfy the voracious demands of 'what works'.

> And in the heat and noise of reform, of initiatives and fixes of 'what works', the issue that is neglected or ignored, or simply just pre-empted within the processes of reform, is 'what for'. Any sense of the values of education is lost in the maze of policy hyperactivity, and goals and purposes are forgone by the demands of fast policy …. The values, commitments and professionalism of teachers are displaced by forms of technical expertise and the celebration of technocratic solutions to social and political problems: what matters is not what is educationally meaningful, but 'what works'. (Ball 2018, p. 234)

This vivid reference to teachers 'displacement' is ever more relevant. For it remains the case that it is teachers who have to *make* policy work in practice despite tensions between policy imperatives and teachers' own personal values. In other words, teachers' practice and professional development are neither context free nor value free. Further to this, Gregson et al. consider that for the practitioners engaged in the implementation of education policy at the local level, there still remains a responsibility "*to take action, based on wise educational judgments, in the pursuit of educational values and ends and the human good*" (2015a, p. 110).

In essence, central to meeting the demands of policy change are the actions of FAVE practitioners and, by extension, the CPD support they need to help them change, improve and evaluate practice. The following section traces the position of teacher professionalism in the sector, the type of approaches to CPD currently on offer and suggestions for moving forward to more democratic, teacher-led CPD arrangements.

Teachers Professional Development: *Gradgrind—Ready to Weigh and Measure Any Parcel of Human Nature*

Programmes for initial teacher education (ITE) and approaches for the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers in the FAVE sector are relatively new phenomena. It is only in the past 40 years that governments and universities in the UK, Australasia and the USA have formalised programmes for the professional development of teachers. Before this time, knowledge of the vocational or subject specialist area was considered both a necessary and sufficient condition in order to be able to teach. The tide of teacher professionalism appears to be turning back and the status of teaching as a profession in FAVE is increasingly contested in England. Following pressure from professional groups in the sector between 2001 and 2013, it became a statutory requirement for teachers in FAVE to hold a teaching qualification. Unlike in other sectors of education during this period, a high percentage of FAVE teachers were unqualified and completed their initial teacher education in-service (Orr

and Simmons 2010). In 2011, Lord Lingfield was commissioned to review the progress made in professionalising the sector. In 2013 the statutory requirement for FAVE teachers to be qualified was revoked despite Lingfield's call for teachers to be "treated with greater care and respect" (Lingfield 2012, p.13). As a consequence, responsibility for decisions for the ITE and CPD of teachers in the sector shifted to individual FAVE institutions rather than to national requirements and registration through other statutory bodies. Lucas and Crowther (2016) argue that the upshot of such policy reversal results in the serious neglect of teachers' professionalism. The need for well-qualified teachers is a view shared by many education researchers including Wiliam (2007); Coffield (2008b); and Ball (2018) with Hattie going so far as to say, "*teachers and teacher expertise are at the heart of a successful education system*" (2019, p. 11).

CPD: The Way It Is

At the same time as changes to the initial education of teachers has taken place, their continuing professional development (CPD) has become increasingly associated with a narrow range of 'approved' activities. Such activities are likely to be associated with the collection and monitoring of student data such as recruitment, achievement, value added, attendance and so on, and the endless preparation for Ofsted Inspection led by 'experts' telling staff how to improve inspection outcomes. Simultaneously, less time is available to focus on those aspects of practice identified by teachers themselves as being in need of improvement.

The term CPD itself varies and is now used interchangeably with a number of labels, with 'professional learning' in particular growing in popularity. The move from 'development' to 'learning' may appear to suggest more active opportunities for teachers to be creators of their own development. Although in reality such changes in vocabulary rarely signify corresponding changes in practice!

When CPD budgets (and undoubtedly these are shrinking) are used to update the subject and pedagogical knowledge of staff, it is often at whole organisation events the focus of which is inevitably determined from the 'top-down'. Usually this experience involves attending time-consuming,

often expensive, workshops, conferences or other events where someone who is considered (or considers themselves) to be 'an expert' tells everyone else in attendance what to do.

While such CPD events and networks might be helpful in raising awareness of new developments, exchanging ideas and sharing resources—in itself a necessary first step in improving practice—it is not enough to guarantee it. It can be challenging for education managers and practitioners themselves to grasp why something as intuitively appealing as simply telling someone about somebody else's good practice won't work. Chapters 1 and 11 provide a compelling discussion on how the nature of a practice and the pragmatic processes through which a practice changes and improves. In contrast, notions of the validity of 'cascade', 'beacons of excellence', 'advanced practitioners', 'champions' or other technical-rational slogans and approaches to educational improvement are deeply entrenched and consequently hard to shift.

Critical to this is the argument that educational practice cannot be reduced to the simple or instrumental application of concepts, theories, ideas or tips for teachers. Instrumental approaches to the professional development of teachers, often presented in the form of recipes, which on the face of it appear to offer simple solutions that are intuitively appealing and seem to be easy and cheap to implement, are seldom what they seem. Such recipes for good teaching can prove difficult and sometimes quite impossible to put into practice across the FAVE sector's wide variety of contexts. This is largely because the instrumental application of recipes or tips either overlooks or significantly underestimates the amount of professional knowledge and additional learning and support that is needed to develop in order to put good ideas into practice in educationally sound and sustainable ways. A lot more 'new learning' (Eraut 2004) and 'recontextualisation' (Guile 2014) has to take place before knowledge is 'transferred' well enough to bring about real changes in practice. Eraut uses the metaphor of an iceberg to explain how practice really changes. He argues that abstract, theoretical knowledge and information about a 'good practice' constitutes only one-eighth of the knowledge needed to put a 'good idea' into practice and that the remaining seven-eighths represents the amount of *new* learning needed to bring about real changes in practice. Guile's view is that practice is a continual process of 'recontextualisation',

in which knowledge, as it is applied, is not simply transferred from the old context but always to some degree transformed to suit the new context. This view suggests that most complex practice (such as teaching) involves 'research' in the broadest sense most of the time, as teachers are always in effect testing and renewing their expertise in contexts which are never quite the same. Every teaching session is effectively a laboratory session from this perspective, with the potential to generate both professional learning and innovative ideas. Closely related to this is the tradition of peer review, which is used widely, both formally and informally, in higher education and is at the heart of both quality assurance and the development of new knowledge. Formal and informal peer review of teachers' work (e.g. peer observation of teaching, moderation or collaborative curriculum work) can be valuable for the development of professional expertise. Social frameworks characterised by shared expertise, experience and trust within which informal professional learning can take place are often referred to as 'professional learning communities'. Lave and Wenger's work (1991) paved the way through their conceptualising 'communities of practice' (CoP). Emphasising these as "a group of people who come together to share common interests and goals, with the aim of sharing information, developing knowledge and developing themselves both personally and professionally" (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 29). Wenger (1999) advocates a joint understanding of the purpose of the community, a mutual agreement of how the community evolves and the development of the community's knowledge and practice. It is possible for these communities to exist over long periods or temporarily for the life of a single project, and they can also operate partly or wholly online, making use of digital media tools allowing for synchronous online teamworking. Likewise, learning communities can exist wholly within or across different organisations. See Taylerson Chap. 8 for an interesting discussion of online professional learning communities.

Recognising that changing and improving practice involves *more than* the simple transfer of information or somebody else telling you what to do is fundamental to the principles of practice-focused research. The practice-focused approach to CPD acknowledges that change takes time. It recognises that the reality of putting ideas into practice places greater

demands on the relationships of those involved in the processes of change and those responsible for the practices of improvement.

In view of this, education leaders need to think carefully about the extent to which existing, taken-for granted approaches to CPD can be justified in terms of value for money and impact on learning. A useful table identifying many of the main strengths and limitations associated with a range of approaches to CPD can be found in Duncan et al. (2020 forthcoming).

CPD Can Be Different

CPD can and should be determined by the needs and support identified by teachers for themselves. When opportunities are present for teachers to think carefully, to share their thinking with others and to improve their practice in a spirit of critical professional friendship, then meaningful change will happen.

Gregson et al. (2015a) use three key concepts—reflection, judgement and wisdom—to describe how teachers might develop the capacity to change. Reflection is seen as the way in which teachers think carefully about what they do—alone and together with others. Judgement focuses on one particular aspect of reflection, namely engaging with the question of how to do things and with the question of what is to be done—the question of purpose. Judgements are not about the application of rules or about following prescriptions, but are about applying knowledge, standards, principles and theories to the always-concrete and often-complex and unfolding situations in which teachers work. In a sense, these are the unique situations in which teachers find themselves day-to-day, minute-by-minute. Wisdom refers to the way in which, over time, a teacher begins to embody their capacity for good educational judgement so that it becomes part of their whole professional self. Sennett (2009) refers to judgement and practical wisdom as necessary to the development of professional practice. Equally important is the value associated with getting better at what we do, rather than simply "getting by" (Sennett 2009, p. 24).

What makes good sense for leaders, managers and teachers is to use the knowledge, expertise and talents of existing staff, alongside educational research and the resources they already have available. This will enable

them to build and develop collaborative and mutually responsible relationships and arrangements, capable of supporting improvements to educational practice. Practitioner-research, which utilises approaches such as Joint Practice Development (JPD), can help to make real and sustainable improvements in teaching, learning and assessment as an integral part of an organisation's CPD strategy (Fielding et al. 2005; Gregson et al. 2015b). JPD provides different and arguably meaningful and practical ways to improve practice, meet professional requirements for continuing professional development (CPD) and becoming more 'expert'. The importance of teachers' reflecting and developing practice through interaction with peers throughout their careers is a vital aspect of meaningful professional development.

Of note in the call for 'bottom-up' approaches to evaluation and improvement is the suggestion that in relation to developing wisdom and practical judgement, JPD as a type of practitioner-research has a potential key role to play in moving our thinking beyond individual reflective practice towards a more active, collaborative, practice-focused, research- and evidence-based approach to improvement.

Improving practice is about making, acting upon and evaluating judgements in the complex and unfolding situations encountered in everyday teaching. Shortcomings in framing the concept of reflection solely in terms of individual teachers thinking about their own practice (Thompson and Pascal 2012) point to the need for more pragmatic, co-operative and exploratory ways of making sense of our work and improving what we do together with our learners.

Changing practice in this way encourages teachers to consider how their actions and understandings inform not only the improvement of practice but the business of what being 'a professional' really entails.

CPD Starting with Practitioners: Getting Better at What We Do

Practitioners, irrespective of their role in FAVE organisations, have unique cultural and material experiences making up their biography. Being able to review 'what is' and 'what ought to be' helps teachers

examine their aims, their educational values and philosophies. A balance between idealism in commitment to teaching and a concern with practical realism takes place. Teachers have to cope personally as well as professionally, with the vocational contexts in which they work. Reducing constraints on teachers to enable them to exercise professional judgement in a wider range of circumstances is called for. However, as discussed earlier, inspection regimes, target-driven funding systems and league tables operate to shape teachers and their CPD activities in less than helpful ways.

Coffield moves our thinking forward and away from top-down approaches to educational evaluation and improvement by proposing a new model of inspection based on a "*pragmatic, collaborative, formative and open-ended system that promotes the learning of all those associated with it*" (2017, p. 43). Of particular interest to this chapter is his positioning of '*Professional Learning: The engine of improvement*', (p. 45) seeing this as an essential component of the new model and casting teachers firmly as the drivers for improvement. Of note are the questions he poses to senior managers: "*what percentage of the budget is spent on professional learning and how could it be increased? Is the culture of the college as conducive to the learning of tutors as it is to the learning of students? What model of staff development do they have and how effective is it?*" (ibid., p. 45).

Such questions together with his alternative model for improvement stand in stark contrast to the discussion in the Section "Educational Evaluation and Improvement: "*Gradgrind, a Case of Simple Arithmetic*" of this chapter. Top-down approaches to improvement are at odds with a growing body of research evidence claiming that the most significant means of improving the performance of national education systems is through encouraging and supporting the on-going development of creativity, excellence, research and innovation in teachers and their teaching (Hattie 2009, 2012, 2019). Here teachers are seen as the main creators of professional knowledge and improving educational practice resides in their capacity to scrutinise ideas, theories, ethical values and empirical evidence as an integral part of what they do. This involves teachers working together, strengthening the shared professional language used when talking about education in ways that make sure teachers understand it for themselves and for this discourse to be able to stand up to scrutiny,

argument and evidence from others. At the same time, encouraging and enabling teachers to present, share and justify their professional practice in research and evidence-informed, accessible and collaborative ways are central to the success of teacher-centred models of improvement and evaluation.

Educational practice involves making moral judgements about what to do in complex and unfolding situations both for the individual and collective good. So even if we are sure that a particular action is likely to lead to a particular outcome, that outcome might not be in the interests of students or staff in those circumstances at that time. Therefore, we cannot assume that identifying a set of universal laws of 'what works' will be possible or even desirable in informing our practice. The danger of such approaches to improvement is that under-researched and under-examined ideas can be (and have been) rolled out on a 'one size fits all' basis, sometimes to the detriment of good educational practice and often with educational costs to learners and financial costs to public funds.

In response to the position argued in this chapter for locating teachers at the heart of educational improvement and evaluation is the suggestion that the methods of practice-focused, HE-supported practitioner-research and pedagogical inquiry can offer the educative means to do just that.

Educational Evaluation and Improvement: Time to Relinquish Gradgrind's Rule and Scales

This closing section discusses the possibility of a different model for educational improvement and evaluation illustrated through the ETF-SUNCETT practitioner-research programme (PRP) from its inception in 2017 to date. The PRP as a starting point for a more useful, alternative way to develop teachers' professional practice stands in glaring difference to current approaches to educational evaluation and improvement used in the sector.

In contrast to the 'top-down', 'outside-in' approach to educational improvement, the works of Dewey (1933, Revised Edn.) and Hunt (1987) support the case that practitioners in the FAVE sector interested

in improving educational practice should begin with themselves and value their direct experiences of practice. Hunt explains how, through personal and practical experience, he became dissatisfied with the conventional view that theories developed and verified through research can and should be applied directly to classroom practice. He argues that abstracting theory from practice in this way cuts us off from direct experience, thereby removing us from the realities of the practice we are trying to improve. (Gregson et al. 2019)

This 'inside-out' approach underpins the practitioner-research programme (PRP), and its model of educational change and improvement is rooted in experience and grounded in personal and practical knowledge. Hunt (1987) calls for 'inside-out' to come first 'because among other things, this approach provides a valuable base from which to consider outside-in information' (p. 2). Importantly, Hunt is not declaring that implicit theories held by practitioners are completely valid or that experienced knowledge is better than all formal theories. He takes the view that identifying implicit theories of practice creates a foundation for determining their validity and value compared with formal theories from 'outside'.

Redressing the Balance: The ETF-SUNCETT Practitioner-Research Programme (PRP)

The PRP is an extensive national programme of practitioner-research funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), the national representative body for the FAVE sector in England. The programme aims to develop understandings of practice-focused educational research, its role in improving educational practice and its potential to contribute to theory. The overarching purpose is to create epistemic conditions in which teachers, education leaders, policy professionals and university researchers can talk openly about problematic aspects of educational practice from a teacher's perspective and in the context of direct experience. Through the PRP, practitioner-researchers aim to address a number of questions including the question of if or how educational practice and

the development of educational theory can be improved through practice-focused educational research.

The programme is built on the premise that the relationship between educational research and educational practice cannot be reduced to the simple application of knowledge gained from research conducted by others. As discussed earlier in this chapter, and elsewhere (Gregson and Spedding 2018; Gregson et al. 2019), is the belief that teachers far from being passive consumers of knowledge produced by others, often in the form of 'blueprints' or 'recipes' for good practice, are in fact the creators of new educational knowledge as well as potential generators of and contributors to educational theory. Practitioner-research emphasises that the new learning involved in putting an idea, concept or theory from educational research into educational practice is a process of inquiry and therefore an important and legitimate form of educational research. This approach to the continuing professional development of teachers, based on practice-focused educational research and inquiry-based pedagogy, coupled with a programme of dedicated research support, can enable teachers to produce significant, well-theorised and systematic educational research, leading to improvements in educational practice.

In this way, the PRP begins with the practice-focused concerns of teachers and uses direct experience, inquiry into practice, story and other creative media to develop understandings of key ideas, theories and concepts in educational research and practice. These include considerations of the realities of conducting educational research; recognising and knowing what you have found; the processes of educational inquiry; the processes involved in the improvement of practice and the processes involved in the development of high standards of research and scholarship.

Depending on the scale and scope of the research, this includes documenting the investigation and its contributions to knowledge, through the production of a written assignment at master's level or an MPhil or PhD thesis. Other research outcomes include as a minimum the production, presentation and justification of findings in the form of a research poster and/or a presentation at the Foundation's National Annual Research Conference in London or the University of Sunderland's International Conference on Practice-Focused Research. In addition to these mandatory assessed outcomes, a burgeoning collection of published

research outputs from practitioner-researchers are now in the public domain. These include research papers in peer-reviewed journals; chapters in books; articles in professional journals; presentations at regional, national and international conferences; workplace CPD events; and contributions to research networks, blogs and think pieces. Such research outputs are providing important sources of evidence for the evaluation and improvement of practice stemming from the PRP. Furthermore, they ensure that scholarly research outcomes stemming from practice-focused concerns and solutions are disseminated to ever-wider audiences. In addition to the above, different forms of quantitative and qualitative data are being collected in terms of research impact grids completed by practitioner-researchers and their evaluations of residential PRP Research Development Workshops. The programme is also subject to scrutiny and evaluation from the academy, the ETF and professional evaluators.

Getting Involved in the PRP

FAVE Practitioners in England are encouraged by the ETF to apply for a place on the programme. It is noticeable that many applications come via 'word of mouth', demonstrating the powerful effect that involvement in the programme (or previous versions of it) has had upon teachers, managers and leaders in the sector.

Application to the PRP requires practitioners to submit a written research proposal focusing on an aspect of educational practice identified by them as being in need of improvement. Written applications are carefully considered by the ETF/SUNCETT teams, shortlisting to the next stage is based on those scoring most highly on the assessment matrix. Shortlisted applicants are invited for a telephone interview so that further exploration of their proposal with members of the team can take place. Successful candidates are then offered a place on the programme and according to the quality of the proposal, previous research experience and qualifications practitioner-researchers are allocated to either an MA short course or an MPhil programme of customised research support. A number of practitioner-researchers who began the programme in 2017 have transferred to PhD from MPhil and at the time of writing, four are

scheduled to submit their PhD thesis in 2020 with a further eleven in 2021. The customised MA/MPhil programme of support financed by the ETF and delivered by SUNCETT does not apply to PhD study. However, the number of students capable of and desiring to move to PhD is testament to the success of the programme of support at MPhil level and the capabilities and commitment of individual practitioner-researchers to continue their research at this higher level. The current 2019–2020 cohort of the PRP consists of seventy practitioner-researchers from across the FAVE sector in England.

ETF-SUNCETT Research Development Workshops

Research Development Workshops are essential to the PRP model of evaluation and improvement. The workshops provide space to investigate how various stakeholders experience and respond to challenges in conducting, completing and reporting their practice-focused research, including sharing the findings of their research with colleagues, wider stakeholders, policy professionals and other researchers in the field.

Three residential Research Development Workshops, each of three to four days, are provided over a ten-month period for practitioner-researchers progressively engaged in Year 1 and Year 2 of a customised Master of Philosophy programme or a standalone MA short course. In addition, participants are supported through a series of regular supervision and tutorials across the year. Research Development Workshops use a variety of stories of research and practice, as well as creative media, to help teachers from the sector research to improve an aspect of their practice. The methods used include stories of educational research, practice and knowledge development; narrative enquiry; multimedia ICT-based games and conventional board games; music; film and art. These resources are used throughout the programme to enable and encourage teachers to engage deeply with key ideas and concepts in educational research. Engaging with published educational research texts helps teachers to deconstruct the research designs of others to see what good research in a range of educational situations looks like. The workshops include critical considerations of rigour, originality and significance in educational

research. They also involve in-depth discussion of what it means to be critical; how to read between the lines when reading published educational research texts and how to develop individual and collective capacities for research and scholarship. The process of teachers critically evaluating and making sense of epistemological, methodological and educational issues for themselves in the contexts of their own practice resides at the core of the PRP programme.

What follows is an outline of some emerging guiding principles which appear to be important in realising an alternative approach to educational evaluation and improvement in practice.

Guiding Principles of the PRP

Six guiding principles have emerged as important for conducting practitioner research on this programme. Direct, practical, co-operative and mutual engagement in practice-focused research appears to be a central principle in the ETF-SUNCETT PRP. This suggests that the starting point for educational research should be an issue or concern in educational practice identified by the practitioner in the context of their own professional experience.

The second principle is that each PRP participant should have the support of a research-active mentor from a university who has previously worked as a teacher in the FAVE sector and who has maintained direct contact with the sector.

The third principle is that attending a number of residential Research Development Workshops, where practitioner-researchers work alongside a research-active mentor of the SUNCETT team, helps practitioners to begin to engage in the research process by enabling them to talk openly about the 'problem in practice' and think about it more carefully in order to try to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of the problem and the extent to which the work of other researchers might contribute to helping to address the problem.

The fourth principle is that the mentor and the practitioner-researcher embark on a process of co-operation and mutual engagement in identifying an intervention which may potentially address the problem in

practice. The practitioner-researcher then implements the intervention and examines the consequences of the intervention in practice in collaboration with their mentor. It is important to note that this is not a one-way process in which teachers simply apply the ideas and theories of others to their own practice, or where the mentor simply tells them what to do. On the contrary, it is a process through which practitioners and their mentors question and challenge theory and published research in the light of and with reference to their experiences of practice. In this way, teachers use practical experience to contribute to the development of theory and develop the courage, care and qualities of mind to critically examine and challenge ideas from research conducted by others in practice.

The fifth principle is that each residential workshop is designed to reflect relevant stages in the research process. At each workshop, university mentors provide stage-relevant research training for PRP participants. It is important to note that this involves SUNCETT and other invited research mentors sharing their own experiences of research with PRP participants at each stage in the research process, including mistakes made and lessons learned. Residential Research Development Workshops are designed to provide time and space where PRP participants can talk openly with their mentor and other PRP participants about what is really happening in practice. Workshops also provide time to think, time to read and time to write about what is happening in practice with reference to the work of others who have thought, read and written about the same issues in educational (and other forms of) practice.

The sixth principle is that each practitioner-researcher is expected to prepare, present and justify the findings of their research. As described earlier, this requires, as a minimum, a research poster, presentation of findings at a research event and a written research report or thesis depending on their pathway. These outputs are shared with the ETF and made accessible to practitioners in the sector via the ETF website and through regular updates on practitioner-research in the Society for Education and Training's (SET) professional research journal *In Tuition*. As discussed earlier, a growing majority of participants are disseminating their research findings through publication in peer-reviewed journals, books and conference proceedings, and presenting and sharing work at conferences, development events and networks, both in person and through virtual channels.

What We Have Started to Find Out: Emerging Findings

Recent and extensive experience of working with significant numbers of practitioner-researchers supports the claim that teachers in the FAVE sector do not routinely have enough time, space, support or resources to conduct systematic research into their own practice with a view to improving it. Likewise, practitioners are also increasingly limited by time and space made available to them for any continuing professional development. This lends further support to the argument that current technical-rational approaches to educational evaluation and improvement in England, based on the assumption that it is enough just to tell teachers about the good practice developed by others, is failing to enable teachers and education leaders to realise educational improvements in practice. Practitioners repeatedly cite these problems as being a direct result of the financial and human costs involved in providing data for real and anticipated short-notice Ofsted inspections and the increasing number of activities associated with the bureaucratisation of teachers' workload. An absence of supported opportunities to enable practitioners to investigate and address aspects of practice identified by themselves as being in need of improvement is seen as a key obstacle to undertaking practice-focused research. Teachers and education leaders who do get opportunities and support to engage in practitioner-research through the PRP report that traditional approaches to CPD based on management-organised 'events', together with historical and socially constructed divisions between educational practice, theory and research, which routinely elevate theory and research above practice, have in the past discouraged them from engaging directly in research and from using practice to interrogate, challenge and extend ideas generated from theories and to question research conducted by others.

Outcomes from the PRP to date suggest that co-operation between practitioner-researchers and their research-active SUNCETT mentors, coupled with mutual engagement in a research project designed to investigate an educational problem identified by teachers in the context of their work, is crucial to developing research capacity across the sector, building appropriate levels of scholarship, capturing 'hard' and 'soft'

evidence of impact and securing real improvements in practice. Almost all of the practitioner-researchers who begin the PRP see their research through to completion and present their findings at the ETF Annual Research Conference. Wider and varied dissemination is becoming the norm on the programme, as described earlier. In addition, a growing and critical mass of data related to the impact of such research on the FAVE sector, individual organisations, and learner and practitioner progress is being gathered by practitioner-researchers themselves using Impact Grids designed for the PRP. Similarly, high numbers successfully achieve qualifications on the programme, submitting written accounts of their research in the form of an MA assignment or MPhil thesis. One practitioner-researcher from a previous cohort has completed a PhD and co-authored a book with her SUNCETT mentor. A further four are due to submit their PhDs in February 2020 and eleven from the current cohort are beginning to pursue their research at the PhD level after successful transfer examinations in 2019. Seven PRP participants from current and previous cohorts are contributing authors in this book, alongside Paul Kessel-Holland, the policy professional at ETF, the programme's sponsor, together with the editors, SUNCETT mentors Maggie Gregson and myself Trish Spedding.

What Next?

Any new approach takes an extended period of time to develop and mature, and the PRP in its current form has been in operation for only two years. The six guiding principles presented in this chapter are offered as an interim account of the challenges associated with developing a new approach to the continuing professional development of teachers and an alternative model for the improvement and evaluation of practice in the FAVE sector. Emerging findings are understandably at first base but point to solutions to the well-documented structural problems of space and time reported here and realised through high completion rates and advancement to higher degrees by the practitioner-researchers on the programme. It shows that when practitioners have the support, time and space to be involved in practice-focused research, they are more than

capable of seeing research through to completion, and sharing and disseminating their research findings to wider audiences and beyond the library shelf.

Future research will need to focus on the impact of practitioners' practice-focused concerns. This will include identifying improvements in the levels of achievement for learners and further development in the professionalism of teachers. The analysis of 'impact grids' collected during the course of the programme (and beyond) will provide a useful first step here. Related to this is the enduring challenge associated with tackling the thorny issue of "scaling up" this approach to the whole sector (Nutley et al. 2003).

Summary Thoughts

Consistent throughout this chapter is the proposal that the continuing development of teachers involves much more than simple introductions to the knowledge and techniques of teaching and learning. Rather, it is argued that key to meaningful professional development is the necessity for teachers to take control of what they identify as being important to change or develop, to critically and systematically examine this through practitioner-research and to engage actively with the discipline of education throughout their careers. Such ways involve upholding the values of educational practice and being able and prepared to challenge 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about what should be done in the field of education and in the subjects and disciplines that are taught. Being able and prepared to justify positions taken and judgements made as a teacher are critical and enduring qualities of any professional engaged in improving and evaluating practice.

The PRP, as a bottom-up, practice-focused and inquiry-based model of educational evaluation and improvement, offers education and policy professionals in the FAVE sector an alternative to current technical-rational, top-down, outside-in approaches to inspection and improvement in educational contexts. The PRP takes an incremental approach to the ways in which a practice is constituted and develops this through problem-finding, problem solving and critique. It criticises current

technical-rational approaches for their expensive and time-consuming shortcomings in practice.

It is argued that experience, learning and the development of knowledge happen through participation in practices and that it is in practice that theory is tested through the processes of inquiry involved in putting an idea into practice. The alternative model and emerging guiding principles discussed above aim to make educational evaluation and improvement more democratic and educational for those participating in a wide variety of practices, including the practices of education, evaluation, theory-development, research and policy-development.

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11

What Do We Mean by Good Work? Issues of Practice and Standards of Quality in Vocational Education

Margaret Gregson, Patricia Spedding, and Paul Kessell-Holland

The Relationship of Practice to Theory

Discussions first presented in Chap. 1 are extended here regarding how theories of action which came to dominate rationalist philosophy in the nineteenth century emanate from a particular view of human and social life as mechanical, and capable of simplification and manipulation for the purposes of external measurement, prediction and control (Carr 1995). With reference to the 1934 horror movie *The Man They Could Not Hang*

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(Columbia Pictures), Chap. 1 also illustrates how the rise of nineteenth-century rationalist philosophy, premised upon a particular kind of (largely white, male-dominated and rather elitist view of) science, aimed to see beneath the 'surface' of things from the 'outside' to uncover principles of order which accounted for the workings of the hidden mechanism beneath. From this point of view, the experiences and understandings of 'insiders'—practitioners who are 'in the action'—are regarded as unreliable and even unreal. The task of science therefore is to remove itself from the experience of action in order to be able to theorise about it so that it can reveal the real forces through which action can be determined, directed and controlled in the future. From this perspective, both theory and theorists are located on the 'outside' of the action. Their main concern becomes a search for description, explanation and control in an endeavour in which concepts of practice and the activity of practising are separated from concepts of theory and the activity of theorising.

Carr (1995) notes however rationalist world-views fail to provide us with a satisfactory understanding of what a practice is, including questions of how a practice comes into being and how it develops. This includes the practice of theorising as much as it includes any other form of practice.

Carr points out that the separation of theory from practice and the privileging of theory over practice infer that theory can and should be a guide for practice. However, this predicating of practice on theory, he argues, obscures the ways in which theory is itself predicated on practice. He goes on to illustrate that the relationship of theory to practice cannot be reduced to a mere cognitive function or just a matter of social roles and relationships or simple divisions of labour. Theorising, Carr contends, is therefore a public process and a social practice as much as is any other practice including the practices and spaces in which research; scholarship; medicine; law; politics; glass blowing, baking, carpentry, engineering and so on are conducted. Kemmis (1995) draws attention to how the rationalistic theory of action,

> Permits a power relationship to arise in which those whose tasks are theorising may be seen as hierarchically and managerially superordinate to those whose tasks are practice: on the other side it demeans (and deskills) practice and practitioners as sources of ideas (theory)…The one is expected to be articulate, a source of ideas about how the work of education should

be done in order to be effective; the other is expected to learn the hard-won lessons of educational science and apply them in practice (following orders?). (Kemmis in Carr 1995, pp. 9–10)

Kemmis invites us to consider the contradictory implication in the rationalist theory of action, which regards practitioners as being poorly informed about practice even though they know it from the 'inside', while at the same time regarding theorists as well informed about practice even though they are removed from it by the division of labour. As we saw in Chap. 1, Hunt (1987) makes a similar point where he argues that that the quality of human experience is a neglected aspect of educational research and that the starting point in the change process is personal and practical knowledge rather than theoretical knowledge. As Hunt cautions, when the theorising is removed from the sites of practice, it is the quality of theory that suffers.

Educational Practice

Oppositional views of theory and practice regard each as being not only mutually exclusive but also diametrically opposed to the other. Theory is regarded as dealing with abstract ideas, analytic and context free, involving universal generalisations, removed from the pressures of time and involving knowing something. Practice is regarded as being concerned with context-dependent instances, the concrete realities of everyday life and involving doing something. The twin assumptions at work here are that all practice is non-theoretical and all theory is non-practical. Carr (1995) observes that oppositional theories of theory and practice are at their most unsatisfactory when applied to the field of education. What is being underestimated, he points out, is the extent to which those who engage in educational practices have to reflect upon and therefore theorise about the judgements they make and the actions they take in educational contexts. The general problem here is that oppositional views of theory and practice generate criteria for 'practice', which when applied to the notion of an educational practice rule out too much, where they assume that all practice is non-theoretical.

Carr is equally critical of accounts of educational practice, which focus on the dependence of practice upon theory rather than upon its opposition to it. The theory-informed, or theory-laden, view of practice he argues presupposes that all practices are based on a more or less coherent set of assumptions and beliefs, and are to this extent always governed by an implicit framework or theory. The twin thrust of this argument is that all practice presupposes a conceptual framework and that practitioners appropriate externally produced theory to guide them in their practical pursuits. For Carr, the central problem with the theory-guided view of practice is that it excludes too little in terms of what is considered to be 'theory', in that educational practice can be guided by a 'theory', which is little more than a guess or a hunch, as well as 'theory' that is produced through systematic disciplined inquiry. The most serious shortcoming inherent in this view, Carr notes, is that theory is always a set of beliefs, while practice always involves taking action in a particular situation. Therefore, the decision to invoke or apply such theory in any particular situation cannot simply be guided or determined by theoretical principles or rules for a number of reasons. Firstly the issue that the theory might not be sound or even appropriate to the situation. Secondly the theory may need to be adapted or modified in the context in which the practitioner is trying to apply it. As discussed Chap. 1 the question then becomes; if educational practice cannot be reduced to a form of theorising, the question then becomes can educational theorising be reduced to a form of practice? Here, Carr turns to the work of Ryle, who argues that in order to 'know that 'something is the case we have to 'know how' to do a vast number of things, so 'know how' is a concept logically prior to 'know that'. Far from practice being born of theory, effective practice he argues, precedes the theory of it,

> 'theorizing is itself a form of practice requiring skill, competence and know how of various kinds…' Theorizing is one practice among others and is itself intelligently or stupidly conducted. (Ryle 1949, p. 30 cited in Carr 1995, p. 63).

From this perspective, simple or instrumental engagement in the techniques of educational practice is not sufficient, although it is always necessary to 'know how' to do a variety of things. This is because educational

practice is a moral activity undertaken in pursuit of educationally worthwhile ends in the interests of the common good. These ends cannot be independently determined to be the 'good' to which educational practice aspires in advance through simply specifying instrumental or technical means. The educational character of any practice can only be arrived at with reference to an ethical commitment and moral disposition to embody educational values in practice. In other words, to act educationally. When this disposition is present, a practitioner may, irrespective of 'know how', practise in an educational way. However, where this disposition is absent, for example, when a practitioner is only prepared to draw upon technique, then they will be quite incapable of practising in an educational sense at all (Carr 1995).

Accounts of practice which draw attention to its opposition to theory, its dependence upon theory or its independence from theory, Carr argues, not only offer incomplete and partial versions of what an educational practice may be, but are also limited by two false assumptions. The first is that the meaning of a practice can only be determined in terms of its relationship to theory. The second is that practice is a stable and static concept. Once these two assumptions are challenged, he argues, it becomes possible to interpret the criteria of practice being in opposition to theory, being dependent upon theory or being independent of theory, not as mutually exclusive criteria but as three essential features of an historically prior concept of practice for which problems about its relationship to theory do not arise.

From here, we turn to the work of Aristotle where he offers insights into forms of knowledge and rationality appropriate to practical action. For Aristotle, the most important conceptual distinction was not to be found between theory and practice but between two forms of human action. It is important to note that for Aristotle, two forms of action, *praxis* and *poiesis*, are socially embedded human activities. *Poiesis*, is at work when action is intended to bring a specific product or artefact into existence. At the end of poiesis is an object which is known prior to action. This is a kind of rule following action guided by a form of knowledge which Aristotle called *techné*, technical knowledge or expertise. *Praxis* however, is conduct in a public space which is also directed towards the achievement of some end but where the end is not to produce and

object or an artefact but to realise some morally worthwhile good in the interests of others. 'The good for which a practice is pursued cannot be "made" but can only be "done". Practice is a form of "doing action" because its end can only be realized in action and can only exist in the action itself' (Carr 1995, p. 68). Practice therefore cannot be understood as some form of mechanical, instrumental or technical expertise designed to achieve some externally related end which can be specified in advance of engaging in the practice. *Praxis* is different from *poiesis* because in *poiesis* the ends of the "making action" are known. Whereas, when we are engaged in *praxis*, we are involved in arriving at a judgement about the 'good' of what to do for the best in a public space in ambiguous and uncertain situations where the ends of action are not known. Only when we arrive at a judgment and act upon that judgement, can we see the consequences of our actions. As noted earlier, Dunne defines *praxis* as 'conduct in a public space with others in which a person without ulterior purpose and with a view to no object detachable from himself acts in such a way as to realise excellences that he has come to appreciate in his community as constitutive of a worthwhile way of life' (Dunne, 1993, p.10). When we engage in *praxis*, the ends of action are not immutable or fixed but are constantly revised as the 'goods' intrinsic to a practice are progressively pursued. Such standards of excellence (the ability and dispostion to act in the right way, at the right time for the right reasons) are moral acts and can therefore be closely related to the growth and development of a person's character.

Although it is possible and frequently desirable to produce a theoretical specification of what the ends of *poiesis* should be, the ends of practice cannot be predicted or prescribed. Instead, the ends of practice can only be understood in terms of the practical knowledge,

> which constitutes the tradition within which the good intrinsic to the practice is enshrined…to practise is thus never a matter of individuals accepting and implementing some rational account of what the aims of their practice should be. It is always a matter of being initiated into the knowledge, understandings and beliefs bequeathed by that tradition through which the practice has been conveyed to us in its present shape. (Carr 1995, p. 68)

Carr goes on to point out that to practise is always to act within a tradition and it is only by submitting to its authority that practitioners can begin to acquire the practical knowledge and standards of excellence by means of which their own practical competence can be judged.

As we saw in Chap. 1, however, through the work of Dunne (2005), the authoritative nature of tradition does not make it immune to criticism from its 'insiders', its genuine practitioners. The practical knowledge carried by tradition is not mechanically or passively reproduced but is constantly being reinterpreted and revised through critical dialogue and discussion about how to pursue the practical goods that constitute the tradition. It is through this embodied process of critical reconstruction that a tradition or practice changes and advances rather than remaining static or fixed. For it is when the ethical aims of a practice are regarded as being uncontentious or impervious to criticism, that it cannot evolve. As Dunne (2005) reminds us in Chap. 1, a practice must look to its insiders to keep it alive and moving forward. Sometimes this happens through small incremental shifts and 'sometimes by shifts which may at the time seem dramatic or even subversive' (Dunne 2005, pp. 152–153).

For Carr (1995), raising the practical knowledge embedded in tradition to the level of reflective awareness and to correct and transcend the limitations of what has been thought, said and done before is, for Aristotle, the task of practical philosophy. It is the continued presence of a critical tension between contesting philosophical viewpoints that is essential for critical thinking to realize its transforming role in offering us knowledge of how to promote the good of a practice through morally right action. However, this practical knowledge can never tell a practitioner what to do—it can only state the general directions that practical action ought to take—nor take account of the changing conditions under which practice has to operate. Understanding and applying ethical principles are mutually constitutive elements in a continuous dialectical interplay between knowledge and action. This requires a form of reasoning in which choice, deliberation and practical judgement play crucial roles when faced with competing and perhaps conflicting moral ideals and dilemmas in situations where it may only be possible to respect one moral value at the expense of another and in situations where the question is not about *how* to do something but what *should* be done. This

involves a deliberative process of moving from a carefully reasoned assumption about the nature of the problem or issue, towards a reasoned judgement concerning what action should be taken to address the problem or issue in this context. As discussed in Chap. 1, for Aristotle, collective deliberation by the many in which competing reasoned actions can be defended discursively in argument and justified as morally appropriate to the circumstances in which it is being taken, is always preferable to the isolated deliberation of an individual. Good deliberation is always dependent upon the possession of what Aristotle describes as *phronesis* or practical wisdom, the virtue of knowing what general ethical principle to apply in a particular situation. Carr (ibid.) argues that the person of practical wisdom is someone who sees the particularities of a practical moral situation in the light of their ethical significance and is prepared and willing to act so that this knowledge can take concrete form. This involves a union of practical knowledge of the good, with sound judgement about what, in a particular situation, would constitute an appropriate expression of this good.

Following the works of Hunt (1987), Carr (1995), Kemmis (1995) and Dunne (2005) discussed above, this section of the chapter frames educational practice (both vocational and academic) as the realization, development and advancement of tradition, first through its acquisition and then through its subsequent critique rather than as the acquisition of technical expertise. It points to the limitations of accounts of educational practice which characterise it in terms of its opposition to theory, its dependence upon theory or its independence from theory as some kind of theory-free 'know-how'. Instead, it sees educational practice (vocational and academic) as forms of reflexive action capable of transforming theory, and modifying, extending and advancing practice. This includes being prepared to challenge nineteenth-century fabricated divisions between theory and practice in favour of older, more comprehensive and more coherent accounts of how the concept of practice has been understood in the past.

The Fabrication of a Vocational-Academic Divide

In the UK and elsewhere, the term vocational still carries second-rate connotations, in a culture where 'academic' and 'professional' education are prized above an education for the purpose of pursuing a craft or 'trade' (Gregson and Todd 2019; Hyland 2017, 2018). In contrast, Dewey (1933) points to the importance of recognising that the meaning of the word 'vocation' (from the Latin *vocātiō*) involves a calling to do something well in the world for its own sake. This includes the 'internal goods' of a practice (Dunne 2005), the intrinsic rewards that come from knowing that we have done something well, sometimes in the interests of others. Dewey argues that it is necessary to define the meaning of a 'vocation' with some care in order to avoid giving the impression that an education, centred upon a vocation, is superficial or instrumental, something that is done just for financial reward. The general acceptance of a vocational-academic divide in England is particularly interesting in that this dichotomy arguably runs wider and deeper in England than in other UK home nations and in industrialised economies in nations across the globe (Hyland 2017, 2019; Coffield 2008).

We have seen (See Chap. 1) how, Aristotle (384–322) draws attention to how the acquisition of any practice involves not only an introduction to the traditions of a practice or form of life, the body of practical knowledge underpinning its development up to that point in time, but also the acquisition of technical skills required to bring an artefact or some other phenomenon into the world. Dunne's (2005, pp. 152–153) definition of a practice (see Chap. 1 and also discussed in brief above) draws attention to the evolutionary, cumulative cooperative and temporal nature of practice which is kept alive and moved forward by its insiders. Dunne's definition of practice, ultimately take us back to the work of Aristotle and his notion of *phronesis* or practical wisdom involves the development of good judgement through engagement in action in a particular *context*. Gregson et al. (2019) point out that the existence of a vocational-academic divide is often used to justify the second-class status of vocational education in relation to academic education. The creation of this dichotomy is also

often used to support the perpetuation of existing relays of power and deep inequalities in social and economic stratifications.

While Sennett (2009) acknowledges how a way of working in craft can give people an anchor in materiality, he points out that

> History has drawn fault lines dividing practice and theory, technique and expression, craftsman and artist, maker and user; modern society suffers from this historical inheritance. But the past life of craft and craftsmen also suggests ways of using tools, organizing bodily movements, thinking about materials that remain alternative, viable proposals about how to conduct life with skill. (Sennett 2009, p. 11)

Sennett (2009, p. 52) describes a 'skill as a trained practice', which begins with careful observation, imitation and repetition, and progresses in line with how repetition is organised. The first stage of skill acquisition, he argues, involves 'ingraining the habit' through disciplined observation, obedience, imitation and investigative repetition. This supports many of the points made by Carr (1995) and Dunne (2005) where they foreground the combined authority of the traditions of practice alongside an ongoing invitation to their critique. Once again, the work of Dunne (2005) combined with the work of Sennett (2009) underscore the importance of viewing skill and craft in terms of a set of trained coherent and complex activities, which through practise (observation; investigative repetition; problem-finding; problem-solving and critique), lead to the mastery, creative development and extension of standards of excellence, which are themselves subject to active development and redefinition by practitioners (insiders) in the light of practical experience and unfolding evidence.

Through the work if Schofield (1972) Hyland (2018), notes how the historical construction of fault lines or divides between vocational and academic education led to the introduction of the notion of a differential hierarchy in educational pursuits in terms of their social and intellectual status. In the process of constructing these divides the theoretical was separated from the practical and mental activities were elevated above physical activities. Hyland locatesthe construction of a vocational - academic divide, long before the nineteenth century, back to the economic

and poltical structures of Ancient Greece. He argues that for centuries, these fault lines or divisions have reinforced the notion that only cognitive aspects of learning are of interest, importance and value in education. This partial and misguided conception, he contends, contributes to the current, subordinate and second-class status of vocational education, including the relative continued neglect of the psychomotor domain. The inferior status of the psychomotor in the vocational education, Hyland (2018) observes, is a legacy of practical work being conceived as unworthy of elites. He argues that this has historically reinforced the notion that only cognitive aspects of learning are to be valued in education. This pretentious and elitist framing of practical work deliberately separates the action of thinking from the action of making and in doing so demeans the latter for political ends and purposes of social control. The same division creates a hierarchy where it elevates detached, 'logical' or 'analytical' thinking over affective engagement in thought. This distorted divide, coupled with elitist framings of human thought and action, continues to contribute to the subordinate and second-class status of vocational education and the neglect of psychomotor and affective aspects of thinking and learning today.

Mid-twentieth century cognitive psychologists (e.g. Bloom et al. 1956) organize learning into different categories or taxonomies (systems for arranging or grouping things often into some kind of hierarchical order). These domains are important in that they include and acknowledge not only cognitive aspects but also psychomotor and affective aspects of education. However, the strategies they advocate for the implementation and use of these taxonomies derive from and therefore return to a rationalist world-view and theory of action which, as Kemmis (1995) reminds us, creates conditions for the establishment of power relationships in which those whose tasks are considered to be theorising may be seen as hierarchically and managerially superordinate to those whose tasks are considered to be practical. Here cognitive psychologists and educational theorists are assumed to be more knowledgeable about how the work of education should be done in order to be effective, while educational practitioners are seen as 'footsoldiers' who EW expected to learn and uncritically accept the hard-won lessons of educational science and simply apply them in practice. In this way, practitioners are cast in the subordinate role of rule

followers. Sarason (1990) argues that the establishment of such power relations locks educational reform into predictable failure. He asks,

> Why …have our efforts—and they were many and expensive—met with intractability? Why should we expect that what we will now recommend will be any more effective than our past efforts? (Sarason 1990, p. 3)

The answer he suggests is that power relationships in the development of education policy and its implementation and evaluation need to be more democratic, so that teachers' direct experiences of implementing policy in practice can be used to inform and develop policy and, as this chapter argues,not only contribute to the development of theory but also to the improvement of educational practice.

Bloom and his associates divide their taxonomies into three domains. Those which deal with learning from a physiological or psycho-motor stance. Those that deal with learning from a psychological or cognitive point of view and those which deal with learning from an emotional or affective perspective point of view. Within each of these categories, Bloom and his associates (1956) heavily promoted their three-domain taxonomy as a 'toolkit' or 'blueprint' for the 'effective' design and evaluation of education for teachers to follow.

Bloom et al's cognitive domain focuses on the development of the understanding of concepts and ideas and includes the development of what are sometimes described as 'thinking skills' (See Chap. 7), arranged from 'lower' to 'higher' order. At the 'lower' levels of this taxonomy, these are usually framed in terms of verbs such as 'recall', 'remember', 'identify', 'describe', 'explain' or 'apply', for example, identifying the major bones in the body. At the 'higher' levels, these are usually framed in terms of verbs such as 'analyse', 'synthesise', 'create' or 'evaluate', for example, evaluating the impact of a banking crisis on the economy of a region or a whole nation or a global pandemic virus. Bloom et al's taxonomy can help teachers consider the level of challenge associated with a task and the incremental staging of learning. For example, it may make sense to start with recalling three different types of paint before analysing the advantages and disadvantages of a certain choice for a particular paint job. One way to think about this is to use the metaphor of a staircase or

ladder, where the lower level steps have easier challenges for the learner, such as being able to understand a concept, and the higher-level steps in the staircase represent more challenging demands, such as being able to evaluate or synthesise knowledge.

The affective domain developed by Krathwohl in assocation with Bloom in 1956 focuses on developing attitudes, emotions and feelings, including how we feel about ourselves, what matters to us (what we value) and how we get along with other people. For example, paying attention to the affective domain would mean paying attention to how a teacher thinks about and plans how to make their learners feel safe and welcome, how to ensure everyone feels included and respected and that everyone's opinions are listened to and valued.

Dave's (1975) taxonomy maps out the levels within the psychomotor domain. The psychomotor domain focuses on embodied learning (Hyland 2017, 2018). It begins with observation and imitation (Sennett, 2009) and moves up to the combination of complex skills in sequence and the creation of new practices. Table 11.1 below extends Dave's psychomotor domain to include more recent contributions from the disciplines of sociology regarding the development of skilled practice and craft (Sennett 2009) in workplaces and other settings, together with the contributions of Dunne (2005) from the philosophy of education, regarding the nature of educational practice. Developments in the psychomotor domain might involve the physical dexterity required to play the flute, give an injection, perform a *pas de deux* in a ballet, make a surgical incision or take a goal kick. The important point to note here is that skills develop in practice. However, it is also worth reiterating that a practice is never just a set of technical skills, and the consideration of the combination of all three of Bloom et al's domains in interaction may be of more interest and use to practitioners when planning for learning than considering each of them in isolation, not as rules to be followed but as devices to help practitionersfocus on the complexities of learning and attending to different dimensions of education.

The following Table 11.1 developed by Gregson and Gregson (2020) offers a revised overview of all three of the domains of learning originally presented by the cognitive psychologist Bloom and his associates. This Table 11.1 is updated and adapted this table in the light of

Table 11.1 Bloom et al's taxonomy updated in all three domains

Cognitive domain (Benjamin S. Bloom et al 1956, Revised by Anderson and Krathwohl 2001)	Affective domain (D. R. Krathwohl 1956, 1964)	Psychomotor domain (R.S. Dave 1975 informed by Sennett 2009, Dunne in Carr 2005, revised by Gregson and Gregson (2019)
Recall/Remember	Receive	Observe/imitate/ engage in supervised trial and error/ investigative repetition to acquire a skill
Comprehend/ Understand	Respond	Develop habits of practice to perform a skill with guidance
Apply	Value	Perform skill independently of instruction and with precision
Analyse	Organize	Automatically problem-find, problem-solve, critique and improve
Synthesize	Characterize by value	Combine complex skills in sequence and perform to a consistently high standard
Evaluate	Critically reflect upon existing values	Modify and adapt learned skills in context and in changing and unfolding circumstances
Create	Formulate new values/value system	Originate new practice to advance/ transcend existing practice

recent discourses regarding the neglect of the affective and psychomotor domains (Hyland 2018; Sennett 2009; Dunne, in Carr 1995).

On a positive note, seeing learning in terms of these three different domains can help practitioners to think more carefully about how learners and others feel about themselves, each other and the activity of learning itself. Using these ideas might help teachers to provide learners with opportunities for differentiation and progression. For example, in teaching a programme on publishing using a particular brand of software, learners may have different previous experiences and levels of achievement in related areas such as word processing and using spreadsheets. A practitioner would need to identify how best to support learning and think of not only the cognitive domain of Bloom et al's taxonomy to use the publishing software but also their levels of confidence and anxiety

(affective domain), as well as their ability to type efficiently (psychomotor domain). Bearing these three different domains in mind, might enable practitioners to plan how they might include and justify activities that aim to achieve more than just the instrumental achievement of cognitive outcomes. As discussed above, a strength of cognitive approaches to learning such as Bloom et al's cognitive domain therefore is that these domains can act as useful focusing devices when teachers are planning for learning. Another is that domains of learning might help teachers to simplify the complexity of learning in ways which can help them to plan for teaching, learning and assessment in incremental, systematic and structured ways. A drawback of taxonomies of learning is that they can tend to emphasise the individual learner overlooking more social and cultural aspects of learning. In addition, taxonomies of learning are less helpful in offering insights into how domains of learning interact while a human being is engaged in education and in the actual process of learning in different contexts, including learning in the workplace.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the need for some caution here. Dunne (2005) and Hyland (2018) illustrate how the nineteenth-century rationalist world-view infiltrates the work of cognitive psychologist Benjamin Bloom and his associates as they worked in the USA in their production of their taxonomy of educational objectives. Infused by the spirit of rationalist theory of action, this taxonomy was widely promoted at the time (and since) as a 'blueprint' for the effective planning and conducting all lessons. Dunne draws attention to how Bloom's Taxonomy was hailed as the royal road to efficiency and effectiveness in education and how its supporters proclaimed that Bloom et al's taxonomy would rescue teaching from woolly mindedness and muddle and establish education as a truly rational and scientific practice. Note the strength of this return to technique and the nineteenth-century rational theory of action. Also note how this stands in stark contrast to the works of Dewey (1933), Hunt (1987), Carr (1995), Kemmis (1995), Sennett (2009) and others discussed in this chapter where they argue for, the restoration of older, more comprehensive and more coherent understandings of educational practice which, do not separate practice from theory or regard educational practice as something that can be reduced to technique or accept that academic and vocational educational can and should be separate.

Dunne's cautionary note about the technical-rational origins of the work of Bloom and his colleagues is well made and should be loudly sounded. He presents a vivid account from his own professional experience of how and why concerns regarding the behavioural objectives model of Bloom et al. (1956), based upon instructional outcomes, brought about a movement towards the subsequent neglect of teaching as an engagement or a process. Dunne's concerns are well founded. In particular, he argues, Bloom's Taxonomy is seriously flawed in its inattention to the experiential and embodied dimensions of learning. Dunne draws upon his own experiences to present a vivid account of how and why the techniques of Bloom at al's taxonomy were difficult to realise in practice, largely because of its central instrumentalist assumption that everything essential in teaching can be reduced to discrete elements, set out in terms of a hierarchy and disembedded from the contexts and traditions in which education is practised.

Despite the obvious multi-sensory practicality of teaching, learning and assessment in the FAVE sector, cognitive aspects of learning still tend to be given more time and prominence than their affective and psychomotor counterparts. Drawing mainly upon literature from the philosophy of education, as well as literature from the disciplines of sociology and psychology, Hyland argues that embodiment is an essential feature of almost all learning but is particularly important in vocational spheres in which psychomotor and physical aspects of a practice operate in union. However, the importance of affect in the development of psychomotor and affective domains should also not be underestimated (Gregson and Todd, 2019).

Hyland reminds us that there is still much work to be done if we are to move towards Dewey's call for more holistic approaches to learning which break down the false divisions and dualisms of mind-body, theory-practice, vocational-academic, through a more holistic emphasis upon the dynamic nature of cognitive, psychomotor and affective aspects of learning (Moseley et al. 2005).

What Do We Mean by Good Work and How Will We Know It? Realising Standards of Quality in Vocational Education

As discussed above and in Chap. 1, Dunne (2005) illustrates how standards of excellence in any tradition or craft are themselves subject to development and redefinition, and demand responsiveness from those who are or are trying to become practitioners. He underscores the centrality of this process to the critical and creative development of practice. Sennett (2009) also draws attention to how these standards of excellence include understandings of what we mean by good work in the context of each of these practices. In considering the question of what we mean by good work and how to make standards of good quality work explicit, meaningful and workable in practice, it may be helpful to look back before we look forward.

Through the work of Lopez (1971), Sennett (2009), Gregson and Todd (2019) describe a time when the journey into a craft was literal and embodied in a wandering way of life in which craft workers moved from place to place plying their trade. The workshop, historically one of the oldest economic and social institutions, is significant because it signals settlement. They point out that in ancient Greece, through the use of more sophisticated if less portable tools, the workshop demonstrated how shared and settled workers could become more skilled than their itinerant counterparts. They explain how the growth of urban workshops in medieval times led to the establishment of craft guilds designed to manage conflict between competing workshops and to act as gatekeepers in assuring the authenticity and quality of the goods produced. Masters who owned the workshops contracted apprentices for seven years. Apprenticeships came at a price, the costs usually paid by the parents of the young person in question. Journeymen who had completed their apprenticeships were contracted by masters for a further three years. The workshop doubled as the home for all three levels of craft workers. Masters and apprentices lived, cooperated and worked together on the premises. At the end of their training, the apprentice presented a piece of work, which demonstrated to the rest of the workshop what they could achieve.

The apprentice's presentation was largely focused on copying or imitating the journeyman or master, with the master being the initial (and often final) judge of the quality of the work. This work was sometimes subsequently exhibited in the guildhall and could be commented upon by anyone in the city. Apprentices were not allowed to speak or explain their work during the assessment/exhibition nor were their journeymen or masters.

The work was expected to speak for itself.

Gregson and Todd (2019) go on to illustrate how judges of the apprentice's final work engaged in shared critique identifying the merits of each object produced by an apprentice at the end of their training. Judges then decided if the work was good enough to pass. Apprentices whose work was not of a sufficiently good standard, were given a second and sometimes a third chance to try again the following year. What is lost in this genral account are the moments of formative questioning and regular engagement in critical dialogue; shared practice; cooperation; mutual engagement in demanding tasks; problem-finding; problem-solving and the exercise of professional judgement and critique in context. These experiential and embodied encounters were threaded extensively and powerfully throughout the apprentice's everyday experience and deeply embedded in the formative and summative processes of assessment which contributed to the development of their practice prior to the final assessment of their work. In these relational circumstances, the spoken word, direct observation, repetition, problem-finding, problem-solving, formative assessment, summative assessment criteria, explicit critique, feedback and cooperative relationships were and remain central pedagogical features in the development of any practice.

Gregson and Todd (2019) point out how in the workshop, studio, office, factory or laboratory of today, the spoken word can often still prove to be more effective than written instructions. When a procedure becomes difficult, it is usually quite easy to ask someone else for advice. For this to happen, you both often have to be in the same place at the same time. An advantage of this arrangement is that learning becomes local. However on the down side, what is local also can become less portable and accessible beyond the immediate context of the practice.

Gregson and Todd (2019) trace how modern journeys into practice have come to rely heavily upon the written word in the form of long lists of pre-specified, prescribed standards, framed in terms of discrete competences. These are in turn made up of knowledge skills and attitudes to be demonstrated and expected to be assessed through the completion of checklists. They point out that the language of instruction used to make the standards explicit is often expressed as verbs framed in terms of observable and measurable cognitive, psychomotor and affective commands/outcomes. However, as Sennett (2009, p. 183) notes, 'verbs name acts rather than explain the process of acting; this is why they tell rather than show …in their sheer number and density the verbs cast an illusory spell; in reality the verbs are at once specific and inoperative '. A problem here is that, while each verb used in contemporary vocational standards issues a command often framed in the terms of cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains set out in Bloom et al's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives and although the list of commands may (arguably) be accurate, they are simply not enough to support vocational learning effectively. One reason for this Sennett contends, is that they do not explain the process of acting. Another is that they do not attend to ways of thinking and acting in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain, nor do they accommodate how learning in all three domains interacts in human thinking and in doing or making something in the world. They are also silent on the subject of the internal rewards that come to human beings from doing a job well in cooperation and together to the highest possible standards. Furthermore, written lists of standards do not help to convey what success looks, feels, sounds, smells or tastes like in the process of doing something well in context. Finally, as Gregson and Tood explain, such lists often rest upon the assumption that progress in the development of a skill is linear, thereby overlooking or underestimating the irregular developments, cul-de-sacs and detours which are the hallmark of the journeys into skill development that most of us experience.

Put together by (often remote) experts, these lists of verbs are often only serviceable to someone who is already highly familiar with, and so experienced in, performing the task that they may well have forgotten what it was like to learn to do it in the first place. Sennett (2009) observes how the paralysing volume, density, tone of authority and certainty in

much of the language of contemporary standards of vocational education provide a clear indication of the writer's inability to reimagine the insecurities and vulnerabilities involved in learning a practice in the first place …including the *experience,* and feelings of insecurity as well as lack of confidence we encounter in learning how to do something on our own for the first time.

Writers of new vocational standards, Sennett (2009) argues, need to be able to share experiences of learning a practice by returning to the liminal point just before they themselves were competent and able to complete the task; just before they mastered the practice; and before their routinized habits were formed. Reliving the threshold between knowing what to do and not knowing what to do is crucial in order to be able to guide others in the learning of a practice. Vocational standards need to be able to explain and make accessible the process of acting. It is not enough just to name the act. Sennett (2009, p. 183) cautions, 'familiarity risks producing only dead denotation…the challenge posed by dead denotation is precisely to take apart tacit knowledge which requires bringing to the surface of consciousness what has become so evident and habitual that it seems just natural'.

As Gregson and Todd (2019) remind us, anyone who has ever tried to assemble at home something bought on the internet or in a large department store, for example, a bean to cup coffee-maker, digital camera, electric sewing-machine and so on, only to find themselves faced with a confusing set of instructions, knows the problem. The need to turn to other human beings (sometimes literally, more often now via a web search engine) who have found the same problem and solved it becomes particularly pressing. They illustrate how sometimes we are able to watch and listen as the 'expert' shows and tells us what to do as in sites (e.g. when using YouTube) where we can watch a demonstration of breadmaking again and again, pausing at different points in the action, until we understand the instructions well enough to try to put them into practice. They also illustrate how at other times, we are able to enter into a written dialogue with a remote 'expert' on the worldwide web in order to ask a specific question to which we receive a written response (e.g. when using a search engine such as Google) to which we can then, if necessary, ask another question.

The language and principles of instruction that we use to make standards of good work explicit, meaningful and workable in practice matter because specific kinds of writing can confuse and bewilder or enable and empower us. Linguistic tools, sounds and images can help us to gain an overall sense of a practice and to imagine how others have thought, felt and acted as they learned the practice before us. The challenge for writers of vocational standards is to present written instructions in ways which communicate a vivid sense of the practice overall, including a vicarious experience of what it means to learn the practice and to practise it well. This includes aiming specifically to inspire confidence by reminding vocational learners when a new task is similar to something they have done before.

Gregson and Todd (2019) echo Sennett (2009) where call for writers of vocational standards to be prepared to retrace their steps to access tacit knowledge that has become embedded into routine. The expert knows what comes next and where things might go wrong. As such writers of vocational standards will need to be able to act as vicarious 'masters' and 'journeymen' in situations where face-to-face communication and cooperation in the same physical location are not always possible. Rather than getting rid of explicit written standards of vocational education, the challenge is to make them more manageable, intelligible, educational and workable in practice (Sennett 2009). The first step, as Wolf (2011) and Sainsbury (2016) suggest, will be to ensure that there are less of them. New vocational standards will need to be based upon coherent and authentic narratives (stories of practice), grounded in a sound understanding of practice, articulated clearly and well enough to ensure national consistency but also broadly enough to be capable of accommodating a locally negotiated proportion of practice that is flexible enough to reflect local context and employer needs.

Gregson and Todd (2019) argue that such standards will need to take the importance and dynamics of face-to-face and remote observation and dialogue seriously. They will also need to provide supporting written materials framed in expressive language which not only instructs (tells) but also explains (shows) and supportively illustrates how practice is acquired and developed. Sennett (2009) envisages, how this might be best achieved through the increased use of representations of accounts of experience (including liminal and affective experiences of learning), as well as written and digital narratives, story, analogy, images,

sounds, metaphors and other linguistic and semantic tools, written/created by those responsible for the development of standards of practice which bring to light the processes though which practice is acquired, developed and advanced more vividly than those merely fashioned from words.

Gregson and Todd (2019) conclude that writers of vocational standards will also need to remember and value what is ancient and enduring in the human condition, human capabilities of thinking and experiences of learning and thinking through making. The making of tradition and craft and the experience of acquiring a practice include finding ways of being in the 'presence' (one way or another) of those who have practised tradition and craft before us, those who continue to practice it with us and those who will inherit and advance traditions of practice in the future.

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12

Bringing Practitioners Back In

Margaret Gregson and Paul Kessell-Holland

Introduction

Predicting the effects of a policy and anticipating the impications it will have for a particular social group has troubled policy makers since the dawn of policy-making. It is therefore not surprising to find that the landscape of education is littered with unintended consequences of well-intended policy reforms.

Measures of impact in education are of course of central importance in that they can provide us with evidence to support claims that educational improvement has been brought about by an education policy. Gregson

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and Nixon (2009) point out that debates about the purpose, use and value of identifying the impact of educational policy initiatives give rise to serious issues in the wider social and political arena. Decisions about what should be evaluated in education, how and by whom, have far-reaching consequences for systems of education and the societies which shape them and are in turn, shaped by them. They argue that the language we use to think and talk about education reforms and the ways in which we go about evaluating their impact say much about what we consider to be real, true and of value in the world and our understanding of our place within it. Our 'ways of seeing' impact in Further Adult and Vocational Education (FAVE) contexts they contend, signal what is viewed to be important and worthwhile in the FAVE sector and what is not.

This chapter makes the case that traditional, positivist approaches to the development, implementation and evaluation of education policy are at least in part to blame for the high failure rates and unintended consequences of education policy reform. Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) argue that claims by politicians and policy professionals to prescient judgement, combined with an epistemic assumption of absolute knowledge alongside preoccupations with top-down, command and control have, much to answer for. This chapter calls for a more democratic-pragmatic- interpretive approach to policy development, implementation and evaluation. It takes practice as its unit of analysis and opens up spaces in which collective, interactive discourse can take place in situations where aspects of policy, including the 'implementation deficit' (Bardach 1977), can be admitted and tackled through judgements arrived at using local knowledge derived from lived experience (Dewey 1916, 1933) in a wide range of educational contexts.

Sarason (1998) attributes high failure rates in education reforms in the USA to superficial conceptions of how complicated settings are organized. He emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the dynamics and structures operating within education systems and the institutions which constitute them. According to Sarason, education reforms in the USA have largely failed because education reformers have not yet recognised the need to take local knowledge and power relationships seriously. In particular, he criticizes those concerned with education reform for 'missing the point and ignoring the obvious' (p. 6). The 'point' being that

power relationships influence and control activity at all levels of a system of education, influencing how people think and act in given situations, signalling what patterns of thought and behaviour are expected and are routinely taken to be accepted and those that are not, thereby setting the parameters of what is thinkable and unthinkable. The 'obvious' is, that to ignore these power relationships, to leave their rationales unexamined, is to effectively defeat efforts at education reform before they start, or at least drastically reduce the prospect of achieving their desired outcomes. This is,

> not because there is a grand conspiracy or because of mulish stubbornness in resisting change, or because educators are uniquely unimaginative or uncreative (which they are not) but rather because recognising and trying to change power relationships especially in complicated, traditional institutions, is among the most complex tasks human beings can undertake. (Sarason 1998, p. 7)

Through the work of Silver (2003), Gregson and Nixon (2009) draw attention to difficulties in the concept of impact and contemporary positivist-technical-rational usage of measures of 'impact' in education in England. They register reservations about the often short time-scales made available for the collection of 'hard' evidence of impact. Silver claims that realistic and authentic impact evaluation, must look for evidence of outcomes which attempt to 'consider how a programme or project or other activity is proceeding, and the manner or extent to which it is attempting to carry out intentions' (Silver 2003, p. 2). From this perspective, impact evaluation is interested as much in the processes of policy implementation as its outcomes. While Silver recognises the essentially flawed and absurd nature of impact studies which attempt to measure educational or other social processes in the same 'hard' ways that 'length of track laid' or 'yield per acre' might be measured, he objects most strongly to outright dismissals of '*all* interest in impact' and what he describes as unwarranted condemnations of any search for impact and its influences in *all* situations (original emphasis). Silver accepts that in some situations sensitive evaluation is not possible given a quantitative, testing framework in which results are required to be scrutinized. He argues

however that even within situations where only 'hard' measures of impact, collected within short time-scales are deemed to count, there is a case for attempting to say something about impact even 'if only to suggest ways in which more serious further analysis might be conducted, further questions asked about the ongoing or apparent outcomes of the experience being considered, and to offer a continuum of guidance' (Silver 2003, p. 3). Gregson and Nixon (2009) draw attention to how Silver foresees situations where impact evaluation could be conducted without the crudities and inelasticities of traditional summative evaluation. They point to the potential of formative evaluation to guide action during a programme or activity without necessarily waiting to assess 'failure' or 'success' at its conclusion. Overly narrow critiques of evaluation in education Silver asserts, seriously overlook how evaluation and policy can be conducted in flexible and responsive ways which can develop the capacities and understandings of both the policy professional and the practitioner leaving room for judgement, manoeuvre and adaptation on all sides. For Silver, approaches to evaluation, incorporating interpretations of both processes and outcomes in studies of impact, could establish different configurations of power and processes that enable more than one corner of the landscape to be seen by a range of constituents. Silver concludes that such formative approaches to evaluation are capable of relating impact beyond surface appearance to deeper levels of meaning and experience. From different standpoints, Fielding et al. (2003) and Silver (2003) agree that 'hard' measures of impact are in the main crude and clumsy and do not offer deeper insights into the processes of impact. Silver emphasizes the importance of developing more formative and interpretive approaches to evaluation. He draws attention to the potential of such approaches in informing both education policy and practice and in developing the evaluative capacities of practitioners alongside those of policy professionals.

Gardner et al. (2008) underscore the conceptual poverty of the mechanical world view underlying technical-rational approaches to policy evaluation. Pre-occupations with 'hard' indicators of impact associated with this approach, they maintain, are 'necessarily crude with large samples smoothing out errors and disguising instances of significant success and failure' (Gardner et al. 2008, p. 89). Echoing Fielding (2003), they also acknowledge that the impact of an educational change or

intervention may take years before it becomes observable. In circumstances where the pursuit of conventional quantitative and qualitative evidence is impractical in terms of time and cost, they propose that the 'collation and convergence of a wide variety of "soft" indicators offer a credible means of identifying subtle processes that are often neglected as evidence of potential and actual impact' (ibid.). A primary concern of the work of Gardner et al. (2008) is to identify the processes that give rise to impact, establish how impact might be assessed and recognise the types of impact that may be observable in different circumstances.

Through the work of Stake (1973), Gardner et al. (2008) point to the need to describe and represent programmes in ways that do justice to their unique context, setting and symbolic character.

> We need a reporting procedure for facilitating vicarious experience. And it is available. Among the better evangelists, anthropologists and dramatists are those who have developed the art of storytelling. We need to portray complexity. We need to convey holistic impression, the mood, even the mystery of experience. (Stake 1973, p. 7)

Gregson and Nixon (2009) readily accept the need for policy makers to have 'hard' evidence upon which to base decisions to abandon, develop, consolidate or extend a policy. Gardner et al. (2008) also support the view that policy makers require 'hard' evidence of impact in order to justify the use of public expenditure in supporting policy directives. However, the same authors go on to point out that a variety of other methods including democratic, 'illuminative' approaches to evaluation' (Parlett and Hamilton 1972), based upon principles of shared data analysis and meaning-making in a genuine spirit of open-ended inquiry, can provide equally if not more rigorous/useful data than their 'harder' counterparts. Citing the work of Davies et al. (2005), Gardner et al. (2008) advise researchers in the social sciences to develop a sound understanding of research impact by 'mapping the processes through which impact occurs' and then using 'appropriate models of these processes to guide data collection and analysis' using 'multi-dimensional categories of impact and a range of data sources'. Gardner and his associates go beyond a simple examination of narrow instrumental evaluations of policy initiatives to include more

subtle considerations including 'enlightenment effects, capacity building, cultural change and impacts on public discourse and understanding' (Gardner et al. 2008, p. 99). Despite ministerial anxieties to the contrary, Gardner et al., insist that multi-various items of data have the potential to cohere into a mutually supportive and therefore arguable and credible evidence base in relation to impact. Building upon the work of Thagard and Beam (2004), they define these 'soft indicators of impact' as

> Any form of subjective, anecdotal or impressionistic data that allows impact to be identified through reasonable interpretation of their strength and variety. (Thagard and Beam, 2004, p. 8)

Configurations of 'softer' measures of impact they argue, can potentially offer insights into the processes of impact and represent an invitation to engage in a transaction where the intention is to find pointers for future action. The work of Gardner et al. (2008) is useful in underscoring the importance in educational evaluation of paying attention to what went before (antecedent); what is going on now as the policy is in the process of being implemented (transaction); and the impacts (outcomes or consequences) of the policy, what has changed as a result. They go on to draw attention to the importance of describing and representing programmes in ways that do justice to their unique context, setting and symbolic character. The term' antecedent, transaction and outcomes/consequences are derived from Dewey's pragmatic epistemology (1916, 1910, 1933).

Taken together, the works of the above authors present a convincing case where they illustrate how traditional top-down approaches to policy formulation and implementation based on the measurement of outcomes, together with micromanaged approaches to the evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning, characterized by imperatives of command and control, involve high maintenance and incur expensive overheads (Coffield 2017). For example, in relation to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England, charged with the inspection of schools and colleges, Coffield notes that despite consistent investment of public funds to support the work of Ofsted, the return on this considerable financial outlay has not yet yielded discernible value for public money in

terms of system-wide quantifiable educational improvement. However, as also argued above, it is worth noting that much of this may be related to difficulties in proof of causality, a multitude of competing agendas and the use of blunt, outcomes-based instruments to measure impact.

This places a duty upon those responsible for the development and evaluation of education policy and those responsible for its implementation, to work together to understand the nature of the policy 'implementation deficit' and how it might be overcome in ways which offer better value for money to the taxpayer and improved educational experiences for both teachers and their students. Building upon insights derived from the Practitioner Research Programme (PRP) funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and delivered in partnership with the University of Sunderland's Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (SUNCETT), this chapter argues for the development of democratic-pragmatic-interpretive approaches to policy development, implementation and evaluation on the grounds that these may be capable of generating illuminative cases of educative value not only to the teachers engaged in educational research but also to other teachers and policy professionals interested in developing new and (arguably) more cost-effective ways of improving educational practice.

Practice

As discussed in Chaps. 1 and 11, there are a number of ways to look at a practice, since its origination in the positivist social philosophy of the nineteenth-century philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857). As Wagenaar and Cooke observe,

> policy analysis has been the vanguard of the modernist project, the pervasive cultural project characteristic of the western world to take rational scientific control over the social and physical environment and shape it according to a preconceived ideal. One of the cornerstones of the modernist programme in public policy and social reform specifically is the opposition between theory and action. (Wagenaar and Cook 2003, p. 139)

Comte makes a distinction between the thinking (thought) and doing (action). He identifies a dichotomy and then constructs a hierarchy in which thinking is elevated above doing. The impact of this doctrinaire, hierarchical ordering of thinking above doing, upon policy analysis is not be underestimated. By positioning thinking above doing, Comte effectively paves the way for the insertion into policy analysis, of a normative stance of the inquiring (policy professional) subject towards the object of inquiry (in the context of this chapter—educational practice and educational practitioners). From this perspective, the inquirer in policy analysis must be detached and analytic while the object of the inquiry is seen as inert, pre-existing and manipulable. Wagenaar and Cook (2003) show how Comte's distinction between doing and thinking is in a way a vulgarised, heavily ideological version of a theme which has its origins in Aristotle's distinctions between realms of human activity, two modes of reason and action, *techné* and *phronesis*: *techné* or technical reason, which involves making (*poiesis)* where the end is known, for example, making a door, a loaf of bread, a shoe or a guitar, and *phronesis* or practical wisdom, which is broader and proceeds by acting in situations where the end is not known or pre-determined. The difference between *poiesis* and *phronesis*, Wagenaar and Cook claim, is particularly significant regarding the rightness of the actor's actions in relation to the endeavour.

> Rightness in the case of technical reason is more or less exhaustively defined in terms of the quality of the product it generates. The qualities of a good shoe for example can be specified in advance and after the shoe has been produced, assessed with precision. Technical rightness is thus contained within the produced object. It does not exceed it. Rightness in the case of practical wisdom on the other hand is broader. It not only involves other people but also the specific circumstances of the situation at hand. *Phronesis* occurs in a communal space with others to realize excellences that are constitutive of that community. (Wagenaar and Cook 2003, p. 144)

Standards of rightness, the ability and the willingness to act in the right way in a public space, are therefore closely tied to a person's character (see Chap. 11). From this perspective, action becomes the core element of any concept of practice. People negotiate the world by interacting with and in it. 'The centrality of action is what distinguishes the practice

approach from the traditional-rational perspective on knowledge and policy formation' (Wagenaar and Cook 2003, p. 149). Engaging in action unifies the problem and solution; a kind of ecology or activity system gets activated by the impetus to act. The situation is grasped holistically by the actor. By engaging in ongoing action, the actor discovers what needs to be done, how it needs to be done and what counts as good or bad, right or wrong resolutions of the problem in context. 'In this sense action is both spontaneous and purposeful' (Wagenaar and Cook 2003, p. 150). The same authors point out that, viewed from this perspective, action can never be seen as random; when we attribute meaning, direction or disposition to behaviour, it becomes action and, when action draws its meaning from a community, it becomes practice. The social, they argue, is therefore central to practice. However, this communal dimension of practice makes it very different from *techné*. On one hand, practice is aimed at a network of relationships which bring with it an intrinsic indeterminacy which limits the extent to which mastery or control of the activity and effect becomes a matter of influence over others. As Wagenaar and Cook observe, 'People at the receiving end of policy tend to elude *techné*' (2003, p. 151).

Practice is therefore always situated in a network of relations, conventions or traditions and obligations in the community from which the meaning of the practice is drawn and within which instances of practice are seen and evaluated. Aspirations, values, purposes and standards are established dynamically in community. Those who act in the community do so in a public space. Individuals and the community adapt to maintain their obligations to each other. This is what unites the practical and the moral in practice. Members of the community must be willing to understand and be influenced by other members of their community. In this way, the dichotomy between the individual and the community dissolves. 'Good practice is not just an individual achievement. A practice can transcend and transform the historical, cognitive, emotional and experiential capital of a particular community in purposeful collective action' (ibid.). However, not every community and not every practice is good. Communities can be focused on standards that conflict with those of wider communities. Actors in the community may not be aware of the unintended consequences of a misguided policy. Practitioners who

succeed in making a policy 'work' against the odds may in effect be distorting practice in harmful ways. To accept the traditional or received view of knowledge in policy analysis as being one of formal, codified, inert and communicable over groups and organisations is to confuse knowledge with information. Here knowledge is seen as an individual attribute, a triumph of individual possession. However, knowledge requires knowers, is always embodied in people and is tied to action:

> What people know gives form and direction to what they do. … Following this we treat knowing as the epistemic dimension of action or in the context of a given community, as the epistemic dimension of practice… Differently put with respect to practice knowing is always situated in communities. (Wagenaar and Cook 2003, p. 152)

The strength of the dynamic relationship between thought and action advanced by Dewey (1933) is perhaps best captured by Geertz where he states:

> When I try to sum up what above all else I have learned from grappling with the sprawling prolixities of John Dewey's work, what I come up with is the succinct and chilling doctrine that thought is conduct and is to be morally judged as such. It is not the notion that thinking is a serious matter that seems to be distinctive … It is the argument that the reason thinking is serious is that it is a social act, and that one is therefore responsible for it as for any other social act. Perhaps even more so, for, in the long run, it is the most consequential of social acts. (Geertz 2000, p. 21)

Here Geertz is reminding us of how Dewey brings thinking and the 'practitioners of the intellectual trades', out into the public world where ethical judgement can get at them. He notes how 'since Dewey is has been much more difficult to regard thinking as an abstention from action, theorizing as an alternative to commitment and intellectual life as a kind of secular monasticism excused from accountability by its sensitivity to the Good' (Geertz 2000, pp. 21–22).

The central point here is that any discipline is what the people who practice it make it. A further problem with the traditional or received

view of knowledge in policy analysis in terms of it being one of formal, codified, inert and easily communicable is that knowing as a dimension of practice often involves improvisation and local knowledge. While some aspects of a practice may be routine, practice is never completely formulaic. Routines are often optical illusions (Wagenaar and Cook 2003, p. 153). Problems and their solutions emerge because people are always thrown into the world in ways which require them to negotiate it, particularly when things do not go as expected. Problems and their solutions are often ambiguous and indeterminate. Biesta and Burbules (2003) draw attention to how Dewey used the term *experience* to refer to the transactions of living organisms and their environment and that he saw this as a double relationship where people act in response to their environment and in turn suffer the consequences of their actions on and in the environment. This close connection between acting and experiencing the consequences of our actions, Biesta and Burbules contend, shows that for Dewey, experience is *not* as is the case of the dualistic tradition of the philosophy of consciousness, a veil that shuts people off from nature.

> What Dewey wanted to stress with his transactional redefinition of experience is that this is the very way in which living organisms are *connected* with reality…While experience refers to the transactions of all living organisms and their environments, the difference between the experience "of an oyster or a growing bean vine" (Dewey 1916, p. 321) and the experience of human beings is that the latter's experience is always mediated by culture. (Biesta and Burbules 2003, pp. 28–29)

Biesta and Burbules illustrate how Dewey had an anthropological understanding of culture, where he saw culture as everything that is the product of human action and interaction. For Dewey, the most important cultural product is language defined as everything that has meaning. Dewey's definition of language goes well beyond spoken and written language to include rituals, ceremonies, monuments as well as the products of art, music and technology. Such things and events derive their meaning from the role they play in coordinated, cooperation in human action in community.

Improvisation is therefore an integral part of human action. Every task demands us to determine whether a standardised routine can be applied or not and, if so, we have to decide how to apply it. However, standard solutions often work because they are balanced by the improvised practices of experienced workers. Sennett (2009) argues that the general issue here lies in what we think the purpose of the model or standardised routine to be. Any model shows how something ought to be done, however, its purpose he argues, is not to invite us to imitate but to innovate or improvise. Where the standard is one of perfection, he cautions, this allows no room for either variation or experiment, then the perfect standard can itself inhibit the development and improvement of practice. Criteria and standards of practice therefore have to be flexible and negotiable in context in the light of local knowledge and emerging evidence if they are to be effective at all. The ongoing dialogue within the environment in which a practice takes place, may raise questions about the usefulness of the criteria and standards employed in the situation and even invite some revision of them. In this way, some criteria and standards of practice are recognised as being possible and feasible while others come to be regarded as irrelevant or unimportant. This process is an inherent aspect of determining what we mean by good work and how we will know it when we see it. Preoccupations with the prescriptions of perfection require the impossible task of exhaustively describing of all the ways it means to do something well. In addition realizing standards of perfection in practice alongside the expensive demands of command and control, discussed earlier, are unlikely to serve us well in the drive to move policy and practice forward together and in community (Gregson and Todd 2019; Sennett 2009). Sennett draws attention to how emotion is not only an inevitable companion of action but also a necessary element of perception and learning to notice when something about a situation is not quite right. Hyland (2018) and Gregson and Todd (2019) observe that practice is at one and the same time a cognitive, affective and embodied activity. They argue that affect can help us to see things in fuller perspective in situations where emotions can act as 'guideposts on the road to practical judgement' (Wagenaar and Cook 2003, p. 155).

Values sit at the nexus of problem-finding, problem-solving and knowing in practice (Wagenaar and Cook 2003; Sennett 2009). Moral, political, social and aesthetic values can tell us what is worth paying attention

to and what is not. Values are an integral part of the way in which actors negotiate their standing in the communities of which they are a part. Furthermore, practitioners regularly tell each other stories of practice as a means of introducing newcomers to a practice. Engineers, glassmakers, architects, philosophers, teachers, doctors, musicians, accountants, actors, dentists, scholars, writers, visual artists and so on, all tell their apprentices/students of their own journeys into practice (Sennett 2009) as ways of bringing newcomers into the traditions of a practice. The relation between practice and story is subtle and complex. Stories tell about development of character, coping with disappointment and failure, overcoming setbacks, and dealing with success and disaster in the context of a practice. Stories help us to think more carefully. They bring us into the presence of those who have engaged in a practice before us. Stories tell about experience and the formation and development of tradition. Gregory (2009) reminds us that the human need to tell and listen to stories is tied up with our need to act and exercise judgement in the world, often in complex and unfolding circumstances.

As argued above and in Chaps. 1 and 11, the concept of practice embraces the human condition in profoundly experiential and embodied ways which go far beyond prescription and technique. The importance of human experience and embodiment can be found in our actions; in our communities; in the situations in which we find ourselves; through criteria and standards we use to arrive at judgements; in our knowing and in the known; in the improvisations and adaptations we make; in critiques and discourses in which we engage; through the stories we tell ourselves and each other; in the emotions we feel; in the skills we develop; in the ways in which we try to live up to our values; in the experiences which influence who we are and what we can become and the futures we can imagine; and perhaps most importantly of all in maintaining our deepest and most central commitment, 'the moral obligation to hope' (Geertz 2000, p. 260).

Conclusion

In view of the above, understanding the nature of practice and the dynamics of its improvement are therefore central to the effective implementation and evaluation of policy and educational improvement. The

'implementation deficit' begins to dissolve when policy professionals and practitioners can work cooperatively in implementing and evaluating a practice in context. Dewey's accounts of experience and knowledge offer a way past the gridlock of the existing power relationships embodied in the evaluative practices associated with the technical-rational approach to education reform in England and the USA and elsewhere. Gregson and Nixon (2009) provide some glimpses into how Dewey's epistemology offers new ways of seeing impact and the processes of impact, which might enable a shift away from traditional evaluative practices towards a more democratic-pragmatic-interpretive model discussed above.

As discussed above an exploration of what more democratic-pragmatic-interpretive approaches to educational evaluation might look like in practice is currently being piloted in England by ETF and SUNCETT through the Practitioner Research Programme (PRP). This endeavour is guided by Dewey's pragmatic epistemology and informed by the works of the above authors. The PRP is exploring how this approach to educational evaluation and improvement might be applied more widely including how both 'hard' and 'softer' measures may be used to evaluate the impact of practitioner-research. This includes the establishment of spaces where situated inquiries into educational reform and practice can be conducted in collaboration and cooperation with policy makers and practitioners with the aim of generating the kinds of knowledge and evidence that might point to new possibilities for action. However, as Sarason (1998), Scott (1998), Keep (2006) and Coffield (2008) caution, unless the state manages to find new ways of working and sharing power with those expected to implement its policies, it is likely that it will find itself locked in a system of state control where the high costs, the soaring overheads of command and control and the supervision of the unintended outcomes of policy will ultimately outweigh potential benefits. Finding the right balance between, approaches to policy-making which do not rely on highly prescriptive policy imperatives and exhaustive and exhausting policy prescription with their demands for top-down, bureaucratic scrutiny and close micromanagement and its corrective, alternative, democratic-pragmatic-interpretive approaches to policy-making and evaluation, based upon general principles which can be interpreted and

operationalised in context, will be a difficult step forward. But it need not be impossible.

To this end, Gregson and Nixon (2009) cite Midgley who notes, that the time may have at last come when we can acknowledge that we are not, 'some supernatural variety of Lego… (and) admit that we are not self-contained and self-sufficient either as a species or as individuals but that we live naturally in deep mutual dependence' (Midgley 1996, p. 10). Here Midgley echoes Dewey where he advises us to remember that we think as whole people not disembodied minds and that we live in a world where there is never enough knowledge or time to see the perfect solution to an educational problem or make the 'perfect' policy decision, let alone implement that decision 'perfectly' in practice.

Policy development, implementation and evaluation require that we bring the person (the practitioner) back into the frame. In this sense we regard policy professionals as practitioners as much as we regard teachers and education leaders as practitioners. Professional policy practitioners need an understanding of the formal and tacit professional and local knowledge that informs the daily lives of practitioners of education working hard to implement policy in educationally sound ways in context. There are no quick-fixes or shortcuts to this work. To get inside the way ordinary people who implement a policy and to recognize its impacts and feel its effects, professional policy practitioners will need to open up and enter into spaces in which they can have direct access to the experiences of practitioners of education who are trying to implement policy in practice. Techniques and frameworks for inspection are no substitute for grappling with the ambiguities and uncertainties, the give-and-take and hard work involved in putting an idea from policy into practice. The practice perspective in policy, development, implementation and evaluation implies not just a change in the level from macro to micro or in the direction of analysis, ground-up instead of top-down. It is much wider and more profound. It requires a change in focus which recasts practice and practitioners not as 'objects' of policy but as co-interpreters and realizers of policy in practice in context. In short, putting an idea from policy, from educational research or indeed from any source into practice always involves careful judgement which involves taking local knowledge, lived experience, emerging evidence and context into account.

A practice-oriented approach to policy development, implementation and evaluation is one which approaches problems, people and policies interactively and deliberatively. Policy problems are located in concrete settings in which judgements are made that give rise to a sense that something is not quite right in practice in the first place. Policy problems are therefore tied to situated people and are enacted and unfold through the practices of particular communities.

Opening up spaces in which policy and education practitioners can talk honestly and openly about what is really happening in practice, including their lived experiences of implementing policy (policy problems in practice) is pivotal in all of this. By supporting practitioners of education in researching how problems and enduring issues in education might be addressed (as in the PRP), practice-focused policy professionals and practice-focused professionals in education can cooperate in mutual engagement in a shared endeavour to become powerful agents for real change and sustained educational improvement in practice. The book and this chapter open with discussions of the importance of beginning with ourselves and of bringing practitioners back into policy discourses surrounding educational evaluation and improvement. We argue that locked inside a positivist, technical-rational view of science, traditional policy analysis fails to understand the socially constructed and pragmatically driven nature of scientific knowledge, finds its origins in Aristotle's notion of 'practical reasoning' (*phronesis*). The main reason that practitioners need to be 'brought back in' is that in practice, the understanding and implementation of public policy ultimately require local knowledge derived from 'lived experience' (Dewey 1916, 1933).

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