CHAPTER 12

Grandfather's Axe: Embracing Change While Maintaining Values in Curriculum Development

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Introduction

Over the last 15 years, there have been changes in expectations and practices around technology, policy, inspection frameworks, professional identity and professional formation in the further education and skills (FE&S) sector, all of which have challenged values for teacher educators as well as for student teachers. Looking back over what has changed and what has been maintained in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education and Certificate in Education (PGCE/Cert Ed) programmes provided at Plymouth University and its partnership of further education (FE) colleges in South West England, it is possible to identify some essential qualities and values that underpin success and resilience in these programmes. Changes in terminology, content and structure of such programmes may all have an impact in terms of how the characteristic features are perceived, but to what extent have these changes challenged the values within the PGCE/CertEd and the practice of those who provide the experience of teacher education and training? As we practitioners, yet again, reposition our role and ourselves as providers of initial and continuing teacher education and training, how do our core values sustain us as we act in the world?

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Setting the Scene

In 2001, two years into the life of the then new Labour government in the UK, employer-led occupational standards for FE lecturers were introduced by the national training organisation (GOV 2012a). This was a sea change for practitioners in FE who had traditionally come into the sector from a variety of backgrounds. Some practitioners in FE were trained as secondary or primary school teachers, whilst others came having industry backgrounds with, perhaps, no formal training or qualifications at all. Therefore, in this complex and inconsistent arena of practice, a new framework of Professional Standards was devised to underpin newly accredited awards for FE teachers, as well as professional development activities, and also to support organisations in improving quality in 'recruitment, appraisal and the identification of training needs' (FENTO 2001, online). Intriguingly they also provided the first, clearly articulated values for the sector, namely reflective practice and scholarship; collegiality and collaboration; centrality of learning and learner autonomy; entitlement, equality and inclusiveness. Of course these were not necessarily reflective of the values that practitioners held for themselves (at this point you may wish to reflect on your responses to Box 12.1). Unfortunately, the values read almost like instructions to be followed rather than to be upheld and indeed, by tying them into FENTO's Professional Standards, they became measurable elements and were therefore presented as being 'required to perform effectively as an FE teacher' (FENTO 1999, online).

Making teachers more accountable to external agencies through sets of standards was a key element of the government's 'New Professionalism' project that focused on competences rather than values, preparing the way for a profound change from initial teacher education to initial teacher training (Patrick et al. 2003). Following the 'Lingfield Report' (GOV 2012a), it was no longer a requirement to have a professional qualification or recognised teacher status to teach in the FE&S sector (Samson 2010)

Box 12.1:

- Can you identify your own 'core values' in relation to teaching and learning?
- In which ways do your core values influence your practice?
- In what ways do the values of colleagues and students impact on your practice?
- If you have taught for some time, have your values changed?
- How many of your colleagues do you think share your values?

and in 2014 the current Professional Standards emerged that moved even further away from 'requirements', and 'commitments', although this time inviting a critical engagement:

> Teachers and trainers are reflective and enquiring practitioners who think critically about their own educational assumptions, values and practice in the context of a changing contemporary and educational world. (The Education and Training Foundation 2014, online)

Now, three years on from Lingfield, this chapter presents an exposition of the personal and professional values that are the basis for initial teacher education and training offered by the Plymouth University Partnership. Furthermore, it explores to what extent these have helped sustain, sometimes re-establish, and develop good and excellent teaching practice for the sector. Given that these values have derived through practices, by practitioners, they could be seen to underpin any set of professional standards said to represent practice in the sector.

Underpinning Values and the Problem of Definition

Discussion around the nature and meaning of the term 'values' is a consistent theme of educational and philosophical debate. Snyder (1967, p.437) suggests that values have been seen as representative of 'ideals or goals that people in a society strive to achieve'. However, he warns that in complex, diverse and multicultural societies there will inevitably be contradictions and conflict. These then require education to maintain a wider view and to rise above what he calls the 'parochialism of the immediate'. Ultimately, he calls for education to instruct the next generations so that they gain the 'autonomy to transcend pure tradition and … make meaningful decisions' (Snyder 1967, p.443).

Box 12.2:

Before going on it might be worth reflecting further on Synder's Some points for further reflection. He argues that values themselves contribute to the selection of the means by which they are themselves upheld and might therefore be self-supporting. Think carefully about that. How far do you think your selection of personal values in Box 12.1 has been upheld by your own learning experiences at school and college? Or do your values stem from other sources, such as your cultural background or family? How far would your personal values in teaching allow your students to 'transcend pure tradition'?

(*continued*)

Box 12.2: (continued)

Oancea (2012) proposes that 'the nature, aims and values of education [include] issues of autonomy, self-determination, and well-being' (p.67). Therefore, an argument is being made for education playing a central role in the process of creating a society that values values. If education, as a whole, could be asked 'Whose values, and what values, should be propagated?' should the response be 'Mine'?

Within the climate of 'new professionalism', attention has focused on values of society being closely aligned to the regulation and directives required for what is considered to be good management and performance (Storey 2007). Storey reports that although it was found there were examples of congruence between productivity and performance as underlying drivers of professional practice for teachers, there were also examples where this had been felt to be insufficient as a measure of the quality of the learning and teaching. He notes that this critical view is also shared in the wider education research literature, resulting in an 'erosion of creativity and professionalism' (Storey 2007 p.253) caused by a limited and limiting view of educational practices; beyond productivity and performance lie values.

Recognition of the significance of values for educational practitioners continues. Contemporary debate in education increasingly calls on all those involved to reconceptualise the key issues by looking at education and its values differently. This could shift from a tight focus on managerial or economic concerns to a renewed focus 'on such values as respect, trust, participation, ownership, democracy, openness, and environment', deemed to have been somehow lost along the way (Sterling 2001a, b online). Sterling sees this as the need for a cultural change in education to a:

> transformative paradigm which values, sustains and realises human potential in relation to the need to attain and sustain social, economic and ecological wellbeing, recognising that they must be part of the same dynamic. (Sterling 2001a, b, p.22)

The call is for economic and social imperatives to work together, with shared values and understandings, rather than being in opposition to each other. Without co-operation, those things valued culturally, globally and educationally—the ecological environment, social cohesion, economic sustainability—will be under threat. Without holistic understanding of the

discourses of our time, we threaten the core values in education, and specifically in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Box 12.3 looks at these points in more detail.

Box 12.3:

Thinking about Core Values. Read through the following UNESCO (2005) core values for ESD:

- Respect for the dignity and human rights of all people throughout the world and a commitment to social and economic justice for all;
- Respect for the human rights of future generations and a commitment to intergenerational responsibility;
- Respect and care for the greater community of life in all its diversity which involves the protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems;
- Respect for cultural diversity and a commitment to build locally and globally a culture of tolerance, non-violence and peace.

You might find them hard to disagree with, but how far is each one addressed in your own teaching?

Could you devise ways in the taught curriculum whereby you could promote them further?

Think back to your list of personal values from Box 12.1. Can you see any connection or similarity? If so, in which areas?

Reading through the UNESCO list of values, the emphasis on respect is apparent. However, there is a potential tension here between, on the one hand, the values that promote liberal, critical education and, on the other, respect for tradition and culture in increasingly pluralistic and multi-ethnic societies. Conflict is of course not inevitable and may only arise when personal values of respect compete with diverse cultural practices that may represent intolerance and even violence. In situations such as these, the professional values would perhaps take primacy over policy or other external drivers. To return to the metaphor of Grandfather's axe, the relationship between policy and professionalism could be described as being a combination of the head and handle, each needing to be joined with the other to help form the right tool for the job. As further change will occur over time, it is values that underpin, form and inform practice, retaining the essence that is Grandfather's axe.

The Development of Values

Reflecting on the values promoted by the PGCE/Cert Ed offered through the Plymouth University Partnership over the last few years, several threads appear and come together as tenets that we have stood by. Repeatedly, in programme documentation, certain themes emerge: well-being—social, economic, environmental and personal; professionalism; reflective practice; pedagogical knowledge; having an impact on learners and the learning experience; and critical reflexivity.

However, a more radical view of the underpinning values might look like:

1. Curiosity
2. Courage
3. Creativity

These are meant to be positive and forward looking, yet to realise them over time suggests a fourth value of:

4. Commitment

Each is discussed below.

Curiosity

The programme is a generic teaching qualification with students already having subject specialist knowledge that is appropriate to the FE sector. Although they have all experienced educational processes from a young age, few of the students have even studied education as a unit or module in their previous courses. Some students have qualifications that are relevant to the field of education, such as sociology, psychology and, of growing relevance in recent years, business (Hayes and Wynyard 2002), but these students are in the minority. The students are studying education at a higher education level and, with most entering these studies without a formal grounding in the subject, this can be challenging. The programme of study recognises this and tries to turn it into a strength.

The subject specialisms and life experiences the students bring with them are mixed but form the basis of valuable discussions. They share experiences of both their own education and their experiences from teaching placements. This enables the students to understand the content of the course from a variety of perspectives, rather than simply from their own. The programme's 'generic qualification with multiple disciplines' approach does

not encourage a simple intradisciplinary approach, over time it helps the students build a curiosity for, and an appreciation of, difference and facilitates opportunities for multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to teaching (Stember 1991). For example, notions of scientific methods put forward by the physicist Richard Feynman are of enormous interest and worth to student art teachers because it provides them with new and alternative ways of engaging their learners with approaches to hypothesis forming, experimentation and learning through experience (Feynman 2015). By encouraging curiosity and inquisitiveness for the world around them, and by developing empathy for other disciplines, the programme hopes to open up the minds of our students to new opportunities for the development of their subject pedagogy. We are trying to provide what Sir Ken Robinson (2008, online) calls an 'aesthetic experience' (2008, online), one that excites and animates the students.

Curiosity is fostered in a number of other ways, throughout the programme. Students are asked to reflect on practice and to theorise their teaching (Schön 1984; Brookfield 1995). All of the module assignments are investigations of the students' own teaching practices, from their classroom pedagogy through to curriculum design, and the ways that teachers interact with internal departments and external agencies. Students quickly build a complex contextualisation of their practice. We encourage our students to research the history of their subject pedagogy so that they understand trends and trajectories relevant to their own developing professional knowledge (Timperely 2011). We try to develop practitioners who are not 'technicians' (Ball 1995) who deliver predefined packages of education but are 'intellectuals' who are widely informed and able to make conceptual links concerning the interrelationships between individuals, their education and wider social structures (Jarvis and Parker 2007).

By valuing curiosity, we hope to create a learning environment where the students feel engaged, rather than alienated (Mann 2001), where they see the world around them as one that is full of opportunity, where they feel empowered and positive, ready to tackle the challenges that lie ahead of them. These are characteristics that we also hope they pass onto their learners as they create their future (Sterling 2001a, b).

Courage

In a revision of their grading criteria in 2012, Ofsted reclassified 'satisfactory' education as 'requires improvement' (GOV 2012b). Their aim was to attain the highest possible standards, rather than aiming for the minimum

standard of acceptable performance. There is a degree of performativity and surveillance attached to Ofsted's inspection regime and the effects that it has on those being inspected. Ball (2003, p.216) explains performativity as:

> a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement.

This construction of performativity closely parallels the ways that the PGCE/Cert Ed programme pushes students to be the best they can be, and to evidence this process of 'becoming' a teacher (Rogers 2004). However, our approach has a strong values base, rather than a mere performative production of evidence. As Palmer (2007) suggests, to be able to teach the teacher needs courage. For student teachers, the challenge is to understand educational policy and theory, gain mastery of the full roles and responsibilities of a teacher in the FE sector, establish a professional identity and to do all of this whilst under close scrutiny.

Student teachers on the programme get to experience the whole academic year in their placement. They are expected to attend placement from the start of the academic year, meeting many new learners, with all their hopes, expectations and anxieties, as they cross the threshold of their new college for the first time. To help the student teachers gain confidence in their new professional identity, the programme supports their learning experience in a number of ways. Perhaps the most important of these is that every student is assigned a personal tutor from the programme teaching team and a trained mentor to help guide their practice at their placement. Confidence gained through authentic engagement with experienced practitioners helps the student to want to move forward. Courage is developed through the student feeling they are part of a team, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with allies, drawing strength from those around them. Palmer (2007) recognises, even in experienced teachers, there can be fear induced by a sense of failure if things do not go well in the classroom. Similarly, Hargreaves (1994) identifies feelings of guilt associated with teaching contexts. Both of these strong and challenging feelings are derived from values-based practice.

In terms of sustainability, it is vitally important to scaffold the learning of the student teachers in the early months of the course. They are being pushed to be the best they can be in an environment that can be disorienting and stressful. They are being asked to confront (and sometimes deconstruct) who they are, and to knowingly, and publicly, develop many facets of their being-in-the-world. They are going through a rite of passage (van Gennep 1960), or what Turner (1967) calls a period of liminality. As they are making this transition from one state into another, there is a danger of depression, disillusionment or hostility (Fisher 1999). Apart from the economic loss to the student and the course, there are matters of social sustainability to consider as relationships within a community will have been formed between the student teacher, their learners, the mentor and the programme lecturers. Effective support can help ensure that positive outcomes occur (Hitchcock and Willard 2011).

Creativity

Creativity is a defining and complex value for those helping teachers in the development of their practice, whether in-service or pre-service. Bleakley's (2004, p.469) definition of 'creativity as problem solving', is a useful approach to take when supporting student teachers in demonstrating their understanding of professional practices. Of interest here is the way Bleakley (2004, p.469) aligns this form of creativity with the 'Protestant work ethic', where the practitioner is, firstly, expected to take part in a 'dedicated form of gathering and coagulation of life experience', through portfolio building, before 'a more technical transformative process as a re-arrangement of the known, that may provide the conditions for a shift in learning' (Bleakley 2004, p.470). This approach to portfolio building allows students to draw on the 'well' of experience, expertise, knowledge and so on gathered and evident in a professional portfolio, aligning this with the 'will' to reorder 'this often chaotic material' (Bleakley 2004, p.470).

The language of creativity has become integral to the criteria for higher-level work in the coursework element of the programme where research and investigation is expected to demonstrate 'deep and systematic engagement in/with current research to encourage innovation/creativity and improve own practice'. Similarly, for 'outstanding' grades in placement practice, students are required to show creativity in the negotiation of learning goals, employ and design 'creative and realistic subject specific assessment activities' and consistently 'make use of a range of creative,

innovative and motivating learning opportunities' (Plymouth University 2014, online). This desire to maintain the values of innovative practice is now also clearly supported by the new professional standards for the sector (The Education and Training Foundation 2014). The relevant standards, which comfortably mirror the criteria stated above, are:

> 4. be creative and innovative in selecting and adapting strategies to help learners to learn
>
> 16. address the mathematics and English needs of learners and work creatively to overcome individual barriers to learning

Even though the language changes, as does the way in which creativity is recognised in various areas of the programmes on offer, there is a consistent, even persistent, expectation and call to engage in creativity as thought and deed. This could be described and defined as 'creative praxis' (Goodman 2004; Belinda 2012).

Commitment

The programme tries to elicit and foster conscious and conscientious engagement in continuing professional and personal development. The students show curiosity, courage and creativity through their early engagements with the course, but the application of these values need to be sustained over time and be reapplied or translated into a range of contexts and behaviours. Summers (2010) and Summers and Turner (2011) explain the commitment that the programme has to ESD and how it has been embedded into the written and taught curriculum. Most students arrive on the course with an understanding of environmental sustainability, and some have understandings of social and economic sustainability. These understandings tend to be from a personal perspective and reflect activities that the students have personally taken part in as part of their personal life such as recycling, or that they have seen or read about such as global warming or ethical sourcing of materials. Asking students to take a lead on ESD in their professional life by getting them to embed it into their teaching practices is a major step change for them. Suddenly, their roles and responsibilities regarding ESD move from a private arena to a public one. They are expected to understand policy relating to ESD at college and both national (GOV 2013) and international levels (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007; UNESCO 2007). Through reading suggested texts (Murray 2011; Jones et al. 2010; Stibbe 2009; Sterling 2001a, b),

but even more importantly, through sharing ideas and experiences with each other, the students quickly develop a range of competences in not only mapping and tracking ESD-related events in their practice but also creating genuine opportunities for new ESD practices. As the students develop their professional identities, and take on a more autonomous role, they develop what Murray (2011, p.142) might call 'conscious practice'. Understanding that the educative process they are leading involves more than the transmission and assessment of a particular body of knowledge is an important stage of development for a student teacher. Box 12.4 may help you consider these points a little more.

Box 12.4:

Thinking about teaching and ESD.
How might you embed ESD into your teaching practice and curriculum?
How can ESD principles be used to enhance your students' wider curricular experience?

With autonomy and increased responsibility comes the realisation that individual teachers can have a significant influence on their learners. This realisation can be daunting, but also empowering. It heightens the awareness the student teacher has of the values they are passing onto their learners. The programme offers intrinsic values that are embodied in practical, pragmatic application of those values, such as a contextualising framework for ESD (UNESCO, undated, online), and a humanistic approach to interactions with learners (Heron 2001, 2005; Rogers 1969). Having these pragmatic value applications to hand enables the student teachers to transmute their commitment into transformative practice (Taylor and Cranton 2012).

Conclusion

The future is in the hands of those involved in FE&S, not the policies. Whether it is to enact change, or maintain good practices, the core values, capabilities and capacities of lecturers and teachers are central. If ESD is at the heart of our practice, one of the ways this is expressed is through the shared values of the teacher educators seeking to maintain the effectiveness of Grandfather's axe—the technologies, policies, inspection frameworks and interpretations of our professional identities may appear to change but the values and purpose underpinning practice should be clear, well articulated and well maintained.

Through investigating and identifying the common practices that have survived or been rediscovered over the last 17 years of change and readjustment, patterns emerge of what beliefs, values and actions have been sustained. The humanistic approach to training and values-based teaching, along with an expectation of professionalism, emerges. If the aim is to facilitate the emergence of disciplined teachers who are also reflexive and critical thinkers, this can be achieved through the integration of UNESCO's (2005) core values for ESD. The values of curiosity, courage, creativity and commitment are principles that underpin the PGCE/Cert Ed programmes. If these are upheld, and sometimes refreshed, then the programmes will remain the right tool for the job whatever may change around them. UNESCO (2005) cite respect as the key value, in its various forms, and this is mirrored in the values listed here. Curiosity, courage, creativity and commitment both demand and can engender respect for and by others and our environment. In educational terms, if these values are modelled by practitioners, promoted in the programmes and embedded in curricular processes and procedures, they then become sustainable in themselves as they are renewed and rediscovered on a regular basis.

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