Toward a Culture of Teacher Learning

Julian Edge

University of Manchester
Macro-Cultures

- Australian culture
- Bosnian culture
- Sudanese culture
Academic culture

• Researchers strive to produce the simplicity of theory, which seeks general truths by abstracting away from the complexity of action.
Bureaucratic culture

• Policy-makers seek the simplicity of rationality, as it is expressed in the exercise of control toward quantifiable accountability.
Socio-educational culture

• This provides a pervasive emphasis on the importance of learners’ needs, where these needs are expressed in terms of employability and all too often equate to the needs of capital.
Cultural tendencies combined

• The task facing the teacher is the rational application of educational theory in accountable ways that lead to the successful integration of immigrants into the labour market.

How bad is that?
The learning teacher

- The reflective practitioner
- The teacher-researcher
- The action researcher
Threats

• To students
• To parents
• To employers
• To academics
A philosophical stance

• Rather even than *truth*, this culture seeks the *good*, and seeks it by insisting that the *reasonable* (situated and unpredictable as it is) take precedence over the (distant and regulated) *rational*, and that the (situated and complicated) *how* of action take precedence over the simple *why* of abstraction.
A reasonable conclusion

- It is in the increasing empowerment of responsible professionals that the best hope lies for effective teaching that is informed but not controlled by theory and regulation.

- It is, perhaps, a slender hope.
Contexts for teacher development

• ‘Our data suggest that consciousness of their own values, predispositions, evolving styles and their own biographical development as a person and a teacher provides a fundamental base for the reinterpretation of external prescriptions.’

• Raymond, Butt & Townsend, 1992:155.
Developing the Community of Practice in the AMEP

- The constantly changing nature of immigrant background and need demands unusual flexibility and creativity from the teachers involved.

- The AMEP teaching force has a wealth of knowledge and experience at its disposal that needs to be reinvested in its own development.

- The AMEP’s potential for renewal depends in part on its ability to mentor new colleagues as they join the teaching force.
Cooperative Development

• After attending an introductory Cooperative Development workshop, one participant later reported that colleagues found it, ‘tedious, quirky and weird as a process,’ while asserting that, ‘The work environment requires a quick question-answer/response fix.’
The developing professional

• I have found that CD works very well and that the solutions are powerful ones, because they come from your personal reflection. It is very satisfying and empowering to find your own solution rather than relying on someone else’s advice.
The supporting colleague

- Developing the skills in CD is wonderful. For me it is good to learn to slow everything down, to remove any obligation for assisting or rescuing, and to guide someone to see their own solution – or if not a solution, their own path to trial. It is a strange, subtle, yet powerful skill.
Cooperative Development

A Discourse Framework for Individuals as Colleagues
A final evaluation

• I found CD to be a very powerful process to help a colleague solve a problem in their own unique way. It increased my respect for my colleague and it also made me feel good about the contribution I could make to their teaching by ‘Understanding’. I also had the feeling that our students are really lucky to have teachers who take the time and space to resolve classroom issues.
Developing appropriate cultures of teacher learning

Karen Barber, Donna Butorac & Shirley Haak

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