Title: Thinking Differently About Continuing Professional Development: Teachers' Narratives Of Professional Learning

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Networks:
1. Continuing Professional Development
10. Teacher Education Research

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Professional learning; continuing professional development; teachers; narratives

General description (research questions, objectives, theoretical framework) (600 words):
Education currently operates internationally within a policy climate of neoliberalism where market forces underpin activity (Ball, 2012). There is an "emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures" (Olssen and Peters, 2005: 313) which leads to a culture of performativity. In England, as elsewhere, teachers have experienced an intensification of their work and challenges to notions of professionalism resulting in a culture of box ticking in order to fulfil the range of professional requirements (Ballet *et al*, 2006). In this climate, teachers are required to take increasing responsibility for themselves including their 'continuing professional development' (CPD), which is seen as both a requirement to support school improvement and a professional entitlement (Gewirtz, 2002; Ball, 2003; OECD, 2009; OECD, 2015). Over time, there have been suggestions in research, policy and practice that some approaches to CPD are more effective than others, where effectiveness is measured through school improvement associated to the impact on outcomes for pupils (OECD, 2015). Questions about CPD have often focussed on organisation, structure, delivery and audit, rather than on what works for teachers in relation to their involvement and engagement. This has resulted in significant debate about what constitutes valuable, relevant and practical CPD whilst omitting consideration of those individuals involved in it and their professional learning and learning to be a professional. As an example, Hargreaves (2007) focussed on the movement away from occasional courses, and the expert-to-novice approach; in favour of a completely school-based, peer-to-peer approach suggesting a greater value to particular structures for CPD over others with an emphasis on learning in the context of the school for the good of the school (OECD, 2015). These discussions result in a narrow view of CPD. I argue that a key reason that CPD continues to be problematic is because it is bound up in policy rhetoric and is routed in ideas of 'training' rather than education or learning, particularly ironic for teachers given that their work is all about learning. In this climate the teachers have become "missing persons" (Evans, 1999: i) and this research sought to address that.

The aim of the research upon which my presentation is based was to understand the ways in which professional learning is experienced by teachers and the meanings they attribute to those experiences by answering the following research questions: how do teachers narrate their professional learning?; what do they identify as the key influences? It built on a piece of case-study work conducted in Greece that recommended the consideration of the individual teacher when examining CPD (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011). The work presented here was underpinned by the recognition of the complexity in the interplay between the individual teacher and their social context specifically focusing on "the relationship between the state, the ideologies of professionalism, and lived interiority" (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 693). This study sought to make a unique contribution to the field of professional learning by using the detailed individual cases of each teacher to illustrate general concerns for the development of effective policy and practice.

Methods/Methodology (400 words):
The methodology for this study was developed to take a different approach to explore the professional learning experiences of teachers. It sought to fill the gaps that exist in research, policy and practice created by the failure to ask questions about the effective involvement and

engagement of teachers in professional learning to understand what impacts positively on them and their practice. On this basis, the research was designed as a collaborative process working with individual teachers to gather and explore their narratives or 'stories' of professional learning (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996; 1998).

A key premise for this approach was drawn from the work of Thomas and Thomas who identified that "if men [sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (1928: 572) and Nias' suggestion that the "attitudes and actions of each teacher are rooted in their own ways of perceiving the world" (1989: 14).

Rather than taking an approach where the researcher analyses a single narrative and attributes their own meaning to it, a multi-stage analysis of three research conversations over a six week period was developed drawing on ideas from the work of Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994). The first conversation began with a single generative question 'tell me your career story'. Audio and written transcripts were provided for the teachers and the second and third conversations were based on the teacher's reflections on the preceding conversation.

The research conversations facilitated the opportunity for the teachers to identify the things that they understood to be significant in influencing their professional learning. One key methodological concern was the importance of context and so meaning made by the teachers of their past experiences, and the way they understood them in the present, was placed at the centre of the research (Kelchtermans, 2009; MacLure, 1993). This research process took account of the teachers' ontological security in ways that other research has not (Dowling- Næss, 2001). This collaborative approach, and the subsequent analysis and re-presentation of the data enable us to understand more about teachers' professional lives. It also contributes to the methodological debates around the use of narratives as a means of understanding the "human condition" (Arendt, 1958).

Results (300 words):
The analysis of each case provided rich examples of "stories to live by" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998: 149) and ways of using 'particular' examples to illustrate more general considerations. The teachers' accounts of professional learning were underpinned by their understanding of themselves and their interactions with significant people and incidents (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994). Experiences were discussed in relation to their expectations of themselves and of people more generally drawing on both professional and personal contexts (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011). They talked about how others influenced them positively, including those who they had negative perceptions of. There were many examples provided of the challenges they face in balancing their professional and professional lives and their roles as policy subjects and policy actors. The data demonstrated that the teachers recognised, understood and engaged with the demands placed upon them in compliant ways: thus 'successful' in policy terms. However alongside compliance, they took a critical view and demonstrated resistance to some key aspects of policy development, interpretation, reconfiguration and enactment. The data provided support for the argument that understanding the context is critical for our understanding of professional learning. Overall, the teachers identified that CPD in the current performative agenda fails to take account of their individual needs and how they learn. They described their broader professional learning experiences as more valuable in sustaining them and enhancing their practice.

There are implications for research, policy and practice, particularly at a time that organisations continue to raise questions about the quality of teaching internationally (OECD, 2015). These data illustrating the complexities and contingencies underpinning individual teachers' experiences of professional learning support a further move away from a 'one size fits all' approach and can be used to develop previous ideas about what is effective.

Intent of publication: I will be seeking to publish aspects of this research in journals such as Journal of Education Policy; Journal of Social Policy; Qualitative Inquiry; British Education Research Journal; Teaching and Teacher Education

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