

Developing the Qualities of a Good English Language Teacher

Summary

In the previous issue of the Digest, we explored the concept of 'Teacher Quality'. With that understanding of what teachers need to have in order to teach well, we need to ask the question: How does teacher professional learning support teachers in the acquisition and development of the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions to teach well? This issue of the Digest looks at how teachers learn and develop through various teacher professional learning programmes. It outlines how teacher professional learning has been developed and enacted through various teacher professional learning programmes in schools and how they have impacted teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. Using this lens to look at and analyse the impact of teacher professional learning, this issue also focusses on how teacher educators have been teaching teachers and the knowledge, skills and dispositions they themselves have to acquire in order to carry out effective teacher learning.

Introduction

Research has established teachers and their continuing development as keys to positive educational outcomes for students (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Goodwin et al., 2014; Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2008; Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004). This has led to a proliferation of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) opportunities, especially those that aim to improve teacher knowledge and instructional practices (Borko, 2004; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008).

While knowledge about teaching and learning has expanded, the same cannot be said about teachers' ability to access and apply the acquired knowledge and skills. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007) attributed this to the wide variations in the quality of teachers at entry level and on teacher-education programmes.

In a bid to explore the knowledge, beliefs and skills that good language teachers deployed in their practice, Richards (2010) emphasized that effective language teaching was not always easy to define because conceptions of good teaching differed from culture to culture. He asserted that no matter who you were, 'native-speaker or otherwise, you needed to ensure that the language you use is appropriate to the context' (p. 104). Hence,

it was not necessary to possess a native-like command of a language in order to teach it well. In the context of teaching English, Richards (2010) considered language-specific competencies such as the ability of a teacher to comprehend texts accurately, provide good language models and language experiences for learners, maintain fluent use of the target language in the classroom, select target language resources, monitor his or her own speech and writing accuracy, and give effective feedback on learner language as essential to effective language teaching. However, apart from the impact on teaching skills that language proficiency could make, he highlighted research that had shown that a teacher's perception of his or her own level of language proficiency would impact his or her confidence in teaching and sense of 'professional legitimacy' (p. 104). He hypothesized that this might be the reason research into teachers' perceptions of their needs for TPD had generally identified the need for further language training as a high priority.

According to Richards (2010), various TPD approaches had promoted the link between the theory and methodology components to help teachers connect what they learnt in theory with the enactment of the acquired knowledge in practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009; Richards, 2010; Timperley et al.,

2008). The central issue in language teacher-education concerned what constituted the content knowledge of language teaching and the question of what teachers needed to know and be able to do in order to become effective language teachers (Richards, 2010).

In the previous issue of the Digest, we explored the concept of ‘Teacher Quality’ using primarily three possible measures to ascertain whether it was present. In this issue, we will explore how the qualities of a good English Language teacher could be developed by looking at:

- i. How TPD programmes have been conceptualized and how they have impacted teacher learning;
- ii. How certain approaches to language teacher education enhance teachers’ knowledge and skills; and
- iii. What knowledge, skills and dispositions teacher educators need to have to help teachers learn.

How TPD programmes have been conceptualised

Mitchell (2013) defined TPD as the ‘outcome of multiple specific changes accrued through teacher professional learning’ (p. 387) and went on to differentiate TPD from Teacher Professional Learning (TPL). He defined TPL as ‘processes that [...] resulted in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes or actions of teachers’, while TPD was referred to as ‘broader changes that might take place over a longer period of time.’ In the words of Avalos (2011), the core of all TPD endeavours was the understanding that TPD was fundamentally about ‘teachers’ learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into action to improve student learning’ (p. 10).

While TPD programmes varied widely in their content and structure, Guskey (2002) argued that they shared a common objective: to change teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and practices to impact student learning. The author stressed that an effective TPD programme had to consider two important elements: (1) what motivated teachers to engage in

professional development, and (2) the process by which change in teachers occurred. He argued that teachers who engaged in professional development aspired to become better teachers, and what they hoped to gain through TPD were specific, concrete and practical ideas to

translate into day-to-day teaching in the classroom. The author stressed that the key to an effective TPD programme was in how the change process was enacted. He proposed a model of viewing change in teacher practices that looked at the

sequence of how these three domains of change (beliefs, attitudes and practices) should take place. This model of change was predicated on the notion that change was primarily an experiential learning process for teachers. Practices that were effective, that is, those that teachers found useful in helping students achieve desired learning outcomes were adopted and repeatedly used. Those that did not yield concrete evidence of improved student outcomes were eventually discarded. Evidence of improved student learning outcomes was the key to the sustainability of any change in instructional practice. Attitudes and beliefs about teaching in general were also largely premised on classroom experience. The author postulated that evidence of improvement in the learning outcomes of students might be a prerequisite to significant change in the attitudes and beliefs of most teachers.

Enacting effective Teacher Professional Learning

In a review of the field of teacher education conducted, McDonald, Kazemi, and Kavanagh (2013) showed that numerous waves of pedagogical approaches to the preparation of teachers had been developed and trialled over different eras. The authors observed that each wave had been closely related to each era’s main conceptual lens for understanding teaching and learning. In the 1960s and 1970s, research on teacher education was anchored on a behavioural model of learning and competence-based teacher education. Concurrently, the pedagogy of microteaching surfaced, identifying discrete competencies for teaching and providing platforms for novices to practise and re-practise them. In the 1980s, the focus for research

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on teaching shifted from behaviour psychology to cognitive psychology: there was a shift in focus from teachers' behaviour to teachers' knowledge. In the 2010s, there has been a major shift from an emphasis on specifying the necessary knowledge for teaching toward specifying teaching practices that incorporated knowledge and doing. McDonald et al. (2013) also emphasized that the fundamental aim undergirding this latest shift in focus to teaching practices that incorporated knowledge and doing was to better support teachers in learning how to use 'knowledge in action' (p. 378).

Loewenberg Ball and Forzani (2009) proposed the 'work of teaching' as the core focus of TPL. The 'work of teaching' comprised core tasks teachers must execute to help students learn. The core tasks consisted of 'broad cultural competence and relational sensitivity, communication skills, and the combination of rigour and reflexivity fundamental to effective practice' (p. 497). In the same vein, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007) explained that, to enact effective learning in the classroom, teachers had to be cognizant of the various dimensions in which student learning could take place, taking into consideration student learning differences, language and cultural influences, individual learner's interests, and different approaches to learning. Loewenberg Ball and Forzani (2009) defined a skilful teacher as someone who knew how to appropriately deploy and integrate specific moves and activities in various contexts, and exercise professional judgment premised on this knowledge. Grossman et al. (2009) organized the three general areas of knowledge that would be important for any teacher to acquire:

- i. Knowledge of learners and how they learnt and developed within social contexts;
- ii. Conceptions of curriculum content and goals: an understanding of the subject matter and skills to be taught in light of the social purposes of education; and
- iii. Understanding of teaching in light of the content and learners to be taught, as informed by assessment and supported by classroom environments.

The role of content knowledge

Given what we know about what teachers need to have in order to teach well, this section explores the approaches to language teacher education

that enhance teachers' knowledge and skills.

Shulman (1987) argued that preparing teachers to teach without taking into consideration what they were going to teach did not provide them with sufficient skills. He suggested that the emphasis on empirical studies had resulted in support for codified teaching approaches that ignored the situations in which they were to be used and the content being taught. He believed that separating content and pedagogy would mean that teachers would be ill prepared to teach the content in the different situations in which they worked, unable to adapt their pedagogy to the different students and their ability to understand the content. This division had led to situations where observers with no relevant content knowledge were expected to evaluate teacher performance and this had resulted in fairly meaningless measures of teacher quality such as whether the teacher wrote the lesson objectives on the board being used.

Shulman (1987) suggested teachers needed a knowledge base of at least eight categories of which pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was the most important. PCK was a 'special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding' (p. 8). The teachers could draw on four sources for this knowledge:

- i. Content disciplines;
- ii. The institutional context such as materials, the curriculum and the school organization;
- iii. The research done on social organizations, learning, teaching and development; and
- iv. The wisdom gained through practice.

Teacher education needed to focus on preparing the teachers to make choices based on that knowledge base and thus on the beliefs of teachers that guided their decision-making. The choices the teachers made could not be without appropriate grounds. In making those choices, the teachers had to recognize the purpose of education and not just focus on methods and strategies. The key teaching skill lay at the juncture between content and pedagogy where teachers turned their own content knowledge into something pedagogically powerful adapted to the needs of the particular group of students.

Richards (2010) noted the important role of content knowledge in language teacher education. He stressed the need to distinguish between disciplinary knowledge and PCK to ameliorate the confusion over the theory-versus-practice issue. He defined disciplinary knowledge as a ‘circumscribed body of knowledge’ that was perceived by the language teaching profession to be necessary in order to gain ‘professional membership’ (p. 103). Disciplinary knowledge could include the history of language teaching methods, sociolinguistics, phonology and syntax, discourse analysis, language theories, etc. It had to be acquired through special training and the possession of this knowledge would lead to professional recognition and status. However, the author emphasized that although disciplinary knowledge formed part of professional education, it might not translate into practical skills.

On the other hand, in concert with Shulman (1987), he defined PCK as ‘knowledge that provided a basis for language teaching’ (p. 104). PCK was knowledge derived from the study of language learning and it could be applied in various ways to deal with the practical challenges of language teaching. It could include course work such as curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, etc. An effective language teacher education would be anchored in relevant PCK and should equip teachers with the ability to:

- i. Understand learners’ needs;
- ii. Diagnose learners’ learning problems;
- iii. Plan appropriate instructional goals for lessons;
- iv. Select and design learning needs;
- v. Assess students’ learning;
- vi. Design and adapt assessments; and
- vii. Evaluate their own lessons.

He argued that teachers with the relevant PCK would be better able to make decisions about teaching and learning and derive effective solutions to challenges than a teacher without such knowledge. For novice teachers, he advocated a focus on helping them acquire basic classroom skills and routines spanning from opening a lesson, setting up learning routines, monitoring students’ language skills, to concluding the lesson.

McDonald et al. (2013) postulated that focussing

on the core practices, the specific and routine aspects of teaching, might provide teacher educators with effective tools to equip teachers in their daily ‘in-the-moment decision making’ (p. 378). The move towards the development of core practices in teacher education, according to the authors, was an attempt to help novices integrate their acquired knowledge into the actual enactment of teaching in the classrooms. The authors proposed that the practical concerns of novice teachers should form the foundation of TPL, with a set of five practices forming the core. They delineated core practices as those that:

- i. Occurred with high frequency in teaching;
- ii. Could be enacted by novices in classrooms across different curricula or instructional approaches;
- iii. Were possible for novices to actually begin to master;
- iv. Allowed novices to learn more about students and about teaching; and
- v. Were research-based and had the potential to improve student achievement.

Integrating knowledge and practice

Grossman et al. (2009) asserted that focussing on core practices in TPL would provide teacher educators with the opportunity to address teaching as a complex task, while also allowing them to focus on building the fundamental knowledge and skills of the novice teachers. They argued that it would be critical for teacher educators to focus on developing teachers’ skilled practice by helping teachers transform what they learnt into the actual enactment of teaching in the classroom. This would mean integrating knowledge building and methods courses. While knowledge building courses focussed on equipping teachers with conceptual tools such as learning theories and ideas about teaching, methods courses focussed on the use of practical tools that were specific, concrete and designed to help them enact in the classroom what they had learnt in theory. Some practical tools included textbooks, assessment tools, curriculum guides, and other instructional resources. Grossman et al. (2009) cautioned that a separation between knowledge and methods courses would be problematic for these two reasons. First, there would be a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and teachers’ practical work in the

classrooms. Second, it would relegate issues regarding teaching practices to particular courses rather than integrating them throughout the teachers' professional preparation.

Timperley and Parr (2010) called the disconnect between theory and practice in TPL the enactment gap – a gap between what teachers gained in terms of new understanding about classroom practices and what they actually did. Addressing the enactment gap entailed undertaking strategies to move from knowing about effective classroom practices to enacting them on an ongoing basis. This implied that teacher educators had to play a vital role in narrowing the enactment gap. They had to provide teachers learning opportunities that 'combined the chance to come to grips with both why a suggested practice mattered and how to implement it' (p. 81).

An example of how teachers were supported in making connections between theory and practice throughout their professional learning was illustrated in a case study in Timperley and Parr (2010). In their study, English teachers discussed their own theories of why a strategy might or might not be effective and compared these with the results from the research. The teachers then video-recorded the strategy as they implemented it in the classroom. Finally, they identified the challenges they met doing so. As a result, the teachers developed a good understanding of the need for the proposed new strategy for teaching and of how, in this case, it connected with reading comprehension, particularly for English language learners. They also became confident and competent at implementing the strategy in practice.

The role of contextual knowledge

While learning to teach from the perspective of skill development could be considered as involving the mastery of specific teaching competencies, Richards (2010) recognized that there were complex levels of thinking and decision making in learning how to teach well. He stressed the importance of integrating these complex cognitive processes

in language teacher education because he perceived teaching as encompassing more than the application of skills and knowledge. Rather it was a much more 'complex cognitively-driven process affected by the classroom context, the teacher's instructional goals, the teachers' beliefs, the learners' motivations and reactions to the lesson, and the teachers' management of critical moments during a lesson' (p. 108). From a sociocultural perspective, this indicated that learning was situated, that is, it occurred in specific settings that shaped how learning took place. Richards (2010) referred to any teaching situation as 'the social and physical context – the rules, facilities, values, expectations, and personal backgrounds, which would act as resources, constraints, and direct influences on teaching and learning' (p. 108).

In order to teach well, he emphasized that teachers must understand that the various contexts for teaching would help develop their potential for learning and teaching. He gave the example of how a teacher teaching English in a college, a public school or a private language institute would have to interact with learners of different ages and from various social, economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. These different teaching contexts would require different language teaching processes. Thus language teacher education involved developing not only the skills of teaching but also the norms of practice expected of teachers, and an understanding of the dynamics and relationships within the classroom and the rules and behaviours specific to a particular setting.

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As schools had different cultures embracing different goals and missions, Richards (2010) highlighted that the notion of context would be very broad. Besides the school's goals and mission, a school culture would include its management style, its physical resources such as classroom facilities, the curriculum, the role of assessments, as well as the characteristics of the teachers and learners in the school. Teaching in a school thus encompassed understanding the school's values, norms of practice, the role of the prescribed curricula, the school culture, and learning how to interact with students, school authorities and colleagues. It had to take

place through classroom experiences and interaction with teachers, especially – the experienced ones.

In addition to integrating knowledge with tools and practices, Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) asserted the importance of developing teacher dispositions – habits of thinking and action with regard to teaching, interacting with students and their teacher roles as educators. These included the disposition to reflect on their own teaching practice and learn from practice – a willingness to take responsibility for student learning, an indomitable spirit to work with learners until they succeeded and to explore effective ways to teaching that would allow greater success with students.

Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) echoed Richards' (2010) claim that the acquisition of a repertoire of language teaching skills would take time, and the process entailed teachers teaching in varied contexts, teaching different types of learners and content, observing experienced teachers, and doing practice-teaching in a controlled environment such as micro-teaching or peer-teaching. Lastly, the authors concurred that learning how to teach effectively also meant learning with and in a community of teachers, in which the more experienced teachers could share the standards of practice with the novice practitioners through collaborative lesson planning and putting lessons learnt into action. The importance of this collaborative learning in a community of teacher learners will be covered in the next section.

Learning Collaboratively

In a similar way to the case study by Lee and William (2005) described below, Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, and Hunter (2016) illustrated how quality TPL could be embedded into daily practice and a collaborative learning culture. They took four of the top-performing education systems based on the PISA results and analysed the factors that contributed to the outstanding performance as reflected in their students' performance. The four were British Columbia (Canada), Hong Kong,

Shanghai and Singapore, whose students, based on the PISA results of 2012, were ahead of their American peers by between 11 and 22 months in Reading, between 12 and 39 months in Maths and between 15 and 26 months in Science, with Shanghai leading the group. While Jensen et al. (2016) acknowledged that geographical and cultural factors could affect education systems, they felt that the deciding factor behind the success of all four systems was the type of professional learning opportunities provided for the teachers within those systems.

The important difference between these four and other less successful systems, Jensen et al. (2016) felt, was that, in all four systems, professional learning was a regular part of teacher duties and was not an add-on to be done after hours. In all four systems, professional learning was tied in with a school improvement cycle focused on student learning. In all four systems, teachers looked at student learning, considered ways of improving that learning and then checked whether the learning had improved. They did this in collaboration with

their schools and colleagues and each of them was also responsible for the learning of their colleagues and their collaborative effort was built into their performance review.

Professional learning was facilitated by the appointment of staff within the system who could lead the learning

and by the allocation of time for professional learning. Jensen et al. (2016) contrasted this situation with that in the USA, where teachers saw professional learning as separate to teaching, and the OECD data that showed that worldwide some 40% of teachers reported that they had never taught a class jointly, observed classes or provided feedback to other teachers. They noted that OECD data showed that USA teachers taught 27 hours a week as against the world average of 18 hours a week, the Shanghai average of 10 to 12 hours and the Singapore average of 17 hours. While this data might have seemed to point to teaching hours as a possible factor, Jensen et al. (2016) noted that British Columbia was one of the top performers but their teachers averaged 22 to 23 hours of teaching a week and they thus theorized that providing hours

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for professional learning was not the key. Rather the key was the quality of the professional learning and how well that was integrated into the whole school programme through inquiry-based group learning.

Giving Singapore as an example, Jensen et al. (2016) pointed out that such professional learning systems did not appear overnight but were developed incrementally over a period of years. One aspect of such systems was the appointment and recognition of professional learning leaders. In Singapore, a specific career track had been developed for teachers that allowed for the appointment of such leaders (Senior Teachers, Lead Teachers, Master Teachers and Principal Master Teachers) without them having to move out of the teaching that they were so good at. This made it easier for them to influence other teachers with whom they worked side by side and also allowed for an alignment between teacher professional needs and broader school objectives.

Jensen et al. (2016) believed that another important feature of these four systems was that evaluation and accountability were not simply based on student results. The teachers were also accountable for their own learning and their collaboration with their colleagues. The weight given to helping others develop their teaching increased as the teacher moved up the promotion ladder. For the schools, what was important was improvement in student learning. The lever for such learning was teacher professional learning and, thus, effective professional learning was central to school improvement and evaluation. Within the schools, the school staff developers helped to coordinate the professional learning programmes together with the leaders in teaching, the Senior and Lead Teachers in the schools, as well as the Master Teachers from the academies, who spent much of their time working with teachers in the schools.

Jensen et al. (2016) believed that, although there was variation across the four systems that they looked at, the foci in all cases were on the quality of student performance, of teacher instruction and of professional learning programmes. While student performance was the eventual target, the evaluation of the professional learning programme had to start with its effect on instruction as it might take time for the effect of the programmes to

make noticeable improvements in student performance. Fullan (2000) pointed out that it would take three years in an elementary school and six years in a secondary school to see a positive impact of any change initiative on student achievement. While findings could seem promising, he cautioned that any results might not always be sustainable as the studies were more widely replicated.

Another case study of a successful TPL model that had integrated knowledge and practice, and developed teacher dispositions in a collaborative learning community could be found in the enactment of formative assessment (FA) practices in the Singapore classroom through Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs). TLCs were established on the principle of transforming tacit knowledge into an explicit theory of action, and the belief that substantial improvements in student achievements were conceivable with changes in teachers' practices (Leahy & Wiliam, 2012, p. 50).

The study looked at 72 Singapore schools that adopted TLCs in formative assessment (TLC-FAs) as a professional learning model to enhance 'teachers' assessment literacy (knowledge of quality classroom assessment principles and strategies) and FA implementation (translating assessment literacy into competency) between 2013 and 2015 (Fangxi, Teng, Tan, & Peng, 2014). The implementation of TLC-FAs was premised on the principle that Black and Wiliam in Lee and Wiliam (2005) posited with regard to teacher learning:

Teachers will not take up attractive sounding ideas, albeit based on extensive research, if these are presented as general principles which leave entirely to them the task of translating them into everyday practice (p. 266).

The project conducted by Lee and Wiliam (2005) documented how formative classroom practices were successfully operationalized in the classrooms of 24 teachers. In the Singapore schools, the change process was embedded in workshops and school-based TLCs in which the teachers discussed, operationalized, and reflected on the FA practices they were implementing on an on-going basis. As a result of this job-embedded engagement, the teachers changed the way they thought about and planned their FA practices. A noteworthy feature of this collaborative learning approach was the

flexibility each teacher possessed to decide how much of the presented ideas they wanted to take on. According to the teachers, there was empowerment as they were able to control their learning process.

Another notable feature of this collaborative learning structure that suggested its positive impact on teacher learning was the follow-up that proceeded after the implementation of a strategies' sharing workshop – a repeated cycle of lesson observations culminating in immediate feedback and deeper reflection for the teachers. This reiterative cycle provided teachers with 'new insights and perspectives' (Lee & Wiliam, 2005, p. 278). Furthermore, with this collaborative learning structure integrated into their daily routines, this helped teachers to automatize the new learning and break the 'adherence to a series of old professional habits' (Leahy & Wiliam, 2012, p. 55). Leahy and Wiliam (2012) concluded from the positive results that the success of engineering belief change in teachers resided, therefore, in *first* altering habits, and subsequently anchoring these beliefs on a practical and strong support system in a working environment that engaged and empowered them.

Empowering teachers through engagement

The empowerment and engagement of teachers through TLCs were also supported by the claim of Gardner, Harlen, Hayward, and Stobart (2008), who believed that it was important to understand TPL as not about trying to change what the teachers practised in the classrooms merely 'by the superficial alteration of teaching techniques but [by] aiming for the enduring principle of changing understanding' (p. 241). This indicated that changing what teachers did in the classroom encompassed more than just knowledge and skills' equipping, but also entailed, as advocated by Wedell (2009), a 'reculturing process'. In other words, it would be a slow process of changing mind-sets and, subsequently, action through the *engagement* of the most critical agent, that is, the teachers responsible for this change. Stobart (2008) emphasized the importance of situating TPL efforts in order to improve teaching practices and student learning in the wider context of educational changes that were all occurring within a particular social framework. Schmidt and Datnow, cited in Kelchtermans

(2005), considered emotional responses an important indication of the significance and impact of any change on the teachers involved in the change. According to Kelchtermans (2005), teachers' concerns and emotional responses could be interpreted as the result of the experiences and interactions that they had encountered in the professional working environment that they were situated in. Opfer, Pedder, and Lavicza (2011) corroborated this claim with results from a survey of 1,126 teachers that highlighted how teachers learnt and changed their practices over time, while 'Learning to Teach In, From, and Through Practice' (Lampert, 2010) in a collaborative culture.

Similarly, Timperley et al. (2008) believed the critical factor that would determine whether TPL activities impacted student learning was the extent to which the intended TPL outcomes formed the rationale for, and ongoing focus of, teacher *engagement*. In their study, which drew on individual interviews with 50 teachers in 15 Canadian elementary and secondary schools, findings demonstrated that, although teachers displayed positive emotional responses to change that was self-initiated and predominantly negative ones when it was mandated, as many as half the instances of change were self-initiated but actually had a mandated origin. Therefore, the key was not whether change implementation was a top-down approach or a bottom-up initiative, but whether it was inclusive and engaging in its intention and implementation.

Focussing on core practices

In her *Learning to Teach In, From, and Through Practice* project, Lampert (2010) talked about changing practice as changing a habitual way or mode of acting. (See also Guskey, 2002; Lee & Wiliam, 2005). Practice, in contrast to theory, suggested things that were done constantly and habitually. In the project, she experimented with core practices as the basis for the design of teacher education. McDonald et al. (2013) also argued that, in focussing on core practices, teacher educators must attend to both the conceptual and practical dimensions associated with any given practice. They gave examples of some core practices which were discipline specific such as conducting a guided reading lesson in elementary reading or engaging students in choral counting in elementary mathematics. Others, such as providing clear instructional explanations and orchestrating classroom discussions,

cut across grade levels and subject areas. They suggested that teacher education at the pre-service stage be focussed on these core practices, and that pedagogical skills be integrated into the interactive aspects of teaching, as well as into field experiences.

Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) saw this approach as a form of 'deliberate practice' and recognized the need to provide structured opportunities for teachers to practise the knowledge, skills and dispositions they had acquired. In his survey study, Farrell (2008) looked at the practicum experiences of 60 English Language learner teachers in Singapore. Farrell (2008) noted that, during the practicum in pre-service programmes, learner teachers were socialized in all aspects of teaching whether inside or outside the classroom. When going to a school for the practicum, the learner teachers assumed that they would have the opportunity to put into practice what they had learnt on their teacher preparation programme. Their experience in the school would have a long-term influence on what they subsequently believed about teaching and learning.

The learner teachers needed a lot of teaching and emotional support in this process but Farrell (2008) noted that the only people who could provide that support were the cooperating teachers as they spent a lot of time with the learner teachers along with the supervisor. It had previously been shown that the cooperating teachers had immense influence on the learner teachers' future teaching styles and it had thus been recognized that the learner teachers needed to be placed with competent cooperating teachers. Learner teachers had also indicated in surveys the important role of the cooperating teacher. In Singapore, the selection of cooperating teachers was usually done from among the teachers with the most experience. However, they were not always trained for their roles of mentor to the learner teachers and were thus not equipped to give the necessary support even if they were highly competent teachers.

The results showed that learner teachers were

most positively influenced by their supervisors from the training institution rather than by the cooperating teachers in their schools or by the principals or school coordinating mentors. In the follow-up interviews with eight of the learner teachers, the teachers spoke of the conflicting role expectations and difficult relationships they had with their cooperating teachers. They suggested that the cooperating teachers had, on one hand, been too restrictive or, on the other, had virtually abandoned the learner teachers seeing the learner teachers taking over their classes as substitute teachers that provided a break for them. Farrell (2008) noted, however, that, for their part, some cooperating teachers felt that they needed to reteach the lessons taught by the learner teachers.

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All eight of the interviewed learner teachers said the cooperating teachers had strongly encouraged them to follow the cooperating teachers' way of teaching and they had felt the pressure to conform as,

in the end, the cooperating teachers would be evaluating them. As a result, they had used a teacher-centred approach rather than encouraging the students to interact as had been advocated at the training institution. They had seen it as important to appear in control of the class when being observed by the coordinating teachers and had thus avoided group work.

Farrell (2008) found that most of the cooperating teachers had been designated by their principals without regard to their being trained as mentors. The principal had to play a role in selecting cooperating teachers but Farrell (2008) felt that teacher training institutions should play a role too to ensure that the cooperating teachers were properly qualified or trained to act as mentors. The problem was exacerbated to some extent because the cooperating teachers often already held positions of responsibility and acting as cooperating teachers simply added further to their workload.

Farrell (2008) reported that a new system, the Partnership Model, was being implemented at that time with the aim of bringing into closer cooperation the supervisor from the training institution, the cooperating teacher (as well as the principal

and heads of department) and the learner teacher. It was hoped that this would improve the practicum experience of the learner teacher.

The role of teacher educators

While it seemed logical to attribute quality TPL to quality teacher educators, Goodwin et al. (2014) highlighted the lack of a codified research base regarding what these teacher educators should know and be able to do. Teacher educators cannot teach what they do not know, just as teachers cannot impart to students the knowledge that they do not have. However, what *should* teacher educators know, and how should they be prepared? In an attempt to answer these questions, Goodwin et al. (2014) investigated the specific and current teacher educators' knowledge base and preparation, their practices and their needs. (See also Goodwin & Chen, 2016.) This study, which involved 293 teacher educators from America, inquired into the following:

- i. What do current teacher educators consider to be the foundation elements of their practice?
- ii. How do they evaluate their own preparation in these areas?
- iii. How can their experiences inform the preparation of teacher educators?

The results of the study indicated that there did not seem to be a curriculum to prepare teacher educators to help teachers learn. In fact, most of the teacher educators revealed that they never intentionally sought out knowledge for teacher educating practice (the practice used in educating teachers, Goodwin et al., 2014), and most of the knowledge they had was acquired when they originally entered the teaching profession rather than when they became teacher educators. They regarded the prior teaching experience they had as sufficient for their role as teacher educators. There was no coherent, codified 'pedagogy of teacher education' (Goodwin et al., 2014, p. 296). Goodwin et al. (2014) argued that there had to be greater clarity regarding what teacher educators needed to know, and support from institutions had to be systematically built into the existing school structure to meet the complex demands of preparing teachers for the 21st century. They proposed that the 'pedagogy of teacher education' had to trans-

end beyond school pedagogy and be one that 'involved a knowledge of teaching about teaching and a knowledge about learning about teaching' (p. 296).

The work of Cochran-Smith and Lytle's, cited in Goodwin et al. (2014), on the 'relationships of knowledge and practice' (p. 249), could provide a starting point for thinking about the teacher education profession in terms of teacher educator preparation and quality. The three areas in their framework were:

- i. knowledge-for-practice ... was formal knowledge and theory
- ii. knowledge-in-practice ... was what many people called practical knowledge ... embedded in practice and in teachers' reflections on practice ...
- iii. knowledge-of-practice ... was generated when teachers treated their own classrooms and schools as sites for intentional investigation.

The findings and recommendations of this study were:

- i. The lack of knowledge-for-practice among teacher educators could be attributed to how TPL was conceptualized – that it was simple work that did not require highly specialized knowledge, skills and dispositions. Teacher educators had to recognize the complexity of teacher educational practice instead of seeing themselves simply as specialist teachers of discipline knowledge. Apart from the theoretical and content knowledge such as learning theories, models of teaching and educational philosophies, teacher educators required an explicit and systematic preparation in teacher education pedagogies. These teacher education pedagogies would then allow them to develop a framework for their teacher educating practice that could be applied to a broader range of content in varied teaching contexts. Without a specific and concrete knowledge-for-practice, teacher educators would teach teachers in the way they were taught.
- ii. Knowledge-in-practice should be an intentional goal of preparation for teacher educators. The practicing teacher educators in

the study recommended an ‘apprenticeship in teaching and teacher education research’ (p. 298) with ‘intentional mentoring’ (p. 298) and an organized curriculum to be the core syllabus in preparing these teacher educators to train teachers. The core syllabus would integrate theory-practice-research, combined with a structured induction programme to enable the teacher educators to not only learn about teacher educating practice, but also to learn about teacher educating situated within a fluid and complex socio-political context. This would better equip the teacher educators to become advocates for teacher educating.

- iii. Knowledge-of-practice would require that teacher educator preparation placed equal importance on research – in/of/on teacher education – as well as on teacher educating practice. According to the practicing teacher educators in the study, the time and energy expended on their primary responsibility – training teachers – had left little over for research. The result was that research and teaching were seen as separate instead of mutually informing. Therefore, research preparation for teacher educators needed to begin with the assumption that teacher educating would be hard work, which meant that novice teacher educators would need to learn how to integrate their teacher educating and research agendas so that as they learnt *in practice*, they were also learning *of practice*.

Conclusion

With an increased emphasis on integrating core practices and, in particular, pedagogies of enactment in both teacher education and teacher educating practice, it would seem imperative to re-evaluate how teacher education and teacher educating practice are conceptualized and structured.

Studies by Grossman et al. (2009), Jensen et al. (2016), Lampert (2010), Leahy and William (2012),

McDonald et al. (2013) and Timperley et al. (2008) showed that there were knowledge and skill domains required in enacting effective TPL that could ignite parallel changes in the ‘knowing and doing’ of initial teacher preparation (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013, p. 343). According to Goodwin and Kosnik (2013), the curriculum for initial teacher education could not be enacted in the usual way: through discrete units, often topic-focused courses, arranged in a sequence that culminated in some kind of field practice. Teaching had to be perceived as complex, fluid, not confined to subject, instructional method, or technique, and teacher education needed to be conceptualized as holistic and integrated, and teacher knowledge as inquiry-based and focused on problem-solving.

TPL had to focus on strengthening core practices so that teachers could learn how to use knowledge in action, and develop skilled practice continuously

Teacher Professional Learning had to focus on strengthening core practices so that teachers could learn how to use knowledge in action, and develop skilled practice continuously by transforming what they learnt in theory into the actual enactment of teaching in the classroom.

by transforming what they learnt in theory into the actual enactment of teaching in the classroom. This indicated that it would be necessary to develop a common language of teacher education and an identified set of pedagogies that could map onto the relevant areas of content to be

covered in teacher education programmes (McDonald et al., 2013). This meant that a shift toward pedagogies of enactment would also require skilled coaching on the part of teacher educators (Grossman et al., 2009) to help teachers learn how to situate and adapt their work to the specific contexts and students with which they would work. This issue has highlighted the challenge of the insufficient knowledge base about teaching practice. Effective teacher educators would prepare teachers with knowledge and skills that could help them teach effectively and impact student learning. According to Loewenberg Ball and Forzani (2009), the current lack of a common framework and a language to describe and analyse instructional practice could impede the capacity to specify and teach practice. The authors suggested clarifying what practice-focussed teacher education should look like. They argued that ‘making practice the centrepiece of teachers’ education would elevate, not diminish, the professionalism of teaching and teacher education’ (p. 509). They established the urgent need to acknowledge that teaching

could be hard work that teachers and teacher educators needed to learn to do well, and build a system of reliable professional preparation.

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