Learning to teach as the development of practice

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The assumption in most professions is that initial pre-service courses are a necessary preparation for practice. These courses are typically knowledge and theory-rich and involve some elements of application through supervised placements. The front-end loading of coursework remains the dominant model worldwide and higher education institutions are organised around the provision of such programs for pre-service and early career professionals in many disciplines.

With regard to the teaching profession, such as for school education, vocational education and training, adult education, or, more recently, higher education, the same assumptions often apply. A basic knowledge of teaching and learning is assumed to be required by all practitioners, and it is assumed that this knowledge can be effectively acquired through the provision of coursework. However, in higher education, there has been considerable resistance to formal teacher training, both in extent and type.

Although there is commonly an assumption that some course-like provision through workshops and structured activities away from the immediate settings of teaching is needed, this front-end loaded model has been challenged for what might be regarded as legitimate and illegitimate reasons. Illegitimate reasons include the assumption that knowledge and systematic development of skill in teaching is not needed; that the PhD and research training is all that is needed for a university teacher and more emphasis on the teaching role distracts from new entrants to the profession getting on to establish their research. Legitimate reasons are those concerned with the effectiveness of such provision.

Becoming a teacher is typically thought to involve acquiring a set of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes that can then be deployed, or 'transferred' in whatever setting is required. Courses then tend to employ an acquisition metaphor and to frame learning as if it were an attribute of individuals. Different knowledge and skills may be needed for different sectors of education or for the teaching of different disciplines but it is at this point that adaptation to context ends. In many sectors of education,

these features are often translated into competencies and enshrined in professional standards by registration bodies or professional institutes. Ironically, such frameworks typically underpin almost all courses in higher education that permit direct entry into a profession, but not necessarily the profession of teaching in higher education itself.

The limitations of using an acquisition metaphor have been known for some time (Sfard 1998). Hager and Hodkinson (2009) have drawn attention to our dependency on simple assumptions about the transfer of learning that are not borne out by much of the [recent] research and theorising about learning (p. 619). Boud and Hager (2012) point to the problem that the acquisition and transfer metaphors suggest pre-specification and standardization of the content that is learnt. Indeed, the nature of professional practice is greatly over-simplified by acceptance of the acquisition and transfer metaphors, and professional development viewed as the acquisition and subsequent transfer of content pre-specified by 'experts' ensures that continuing professional development is routinely divorced from actual practice. Boud and Hager (2012) suggest that more helpful metaphors for professional development are those such as participation, construction and becoming. They propose that a more fruitful lens for understanding professional learning is through practice.

Starting from this brief examination of assumptions about what it means to learn to teach, this chapter argues that learning to teach is learning to engage in a particular kind of social practice. It suggests that learning to teach can therefore be fruitfully viewed through the lens of practice theory. It follows from a similar argument that focused particularly on academic development in an earlier paper (Boud and Brew 2013). This practice focus is in contrast to a view that sees learning to teach as the development of personal skills and competencies to perform the task of teaching or seeing it as an entry into a particular disciplinary culture. Learning to teach according to the practice view needs to take place in the environment in which teaching occurs with the practitioners that do it within the micro-contexts of academic institutions (departments, schools and disciplinary groupings). Teaching is seen as an activity that connects the individual with the social. Ways of conceptualising its development need to accommodate that.

Taking a practice approach

What people tend to do when learning to teach is to draw on their own experience. Part of this comes from their own experience of being taught, but there are also strong influences from the social and cultural context in which they operate. That is, in understanding and exemplifying 'what we do around here'. Learning to teach becomes learning to do what those who teach do, in the contexts in which they do it. It is also judged as worthwhile within those contexts, not by educational experts, but by students initially and then by academic peers. If these peers do not value teaching highly, then teaching is influenced accordingly.

In other words, learning to teach is a practice. That is:
> "a form of socially established cooperative human activity in which characteristic arrangements of actions and activities (doings) are comprehensible in terms of arrangements of relevant ideas in characteristic discourses (sayings), and when the people and objects involved are distributed in characteristic arrangements of relationships (relatings), and when this complex of sayings, doings and relatings 'hangs together' in a distinctive project". (Kemmis et al, 2014 p. 26)

A practice approach positions teachers, the social context of teaching and the organisation in which teaching takes place as mutually produced, and where knowing and doing cannot be separated (Gherardi 2000). Teaching is then framed as 'bundles of practices and material arrangements' (Schatzki 2006, p. 1863) or 'systems of practices' (Gherardi 2000, p. 215). Rather than focusing on individuals and their attributes, a practice approach positions practice, what Schatzki (2001, p. 12) calls 'embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understandings' as the central unit of analysis.

This 'practice turn' has been used to describe a set of shifts in theorising about many kinds of social phenomena (Schatzki et al. 2001). It conceptualizes all human activity including 'knowledge, meaning, science, power, language and social institutions' (Schatzki 2001, p. 11) as part of the field of practices and does so by eschewing dualities such as individual/social or structure/agency. It grounds thinking in the idea of practices as the primary building block of social life and meaning. The emphasis is on how activities come together through the sayings and doings of the various players involved in them, the artefacts or materials which form part of what happens and the context in which this occurs (Hager, Lee & Reich, 2012).

While there is no single unified practice theory, and while Green (2009: 2) regards the term as 'inescapably contested, if not essentially

contestable' there are common features shared by those theorists who adopt this point of view. Nicolini (2012) has identified a common set of assumptions and principles that have come from several distinct scholarly traditions to create a series of family resemblances (p.9). His view is that a practice-based view of social and human phenomena is distinctive in that it:

- emphasises that behind all the apparent durable features of our world …there is some type of productive and reproductive work. In so doing it transforms how we conceive of social order and conceptualise the apparent stability of the social world;
- forces us to rethink the role of agents and individuals, eg. managers, the managed, etc.;
- foregrounds the importance of the body and objects in social affairs;
- sheds light on the nature of knowledge and discourse;
- reaffirms the centrality of interests and power in everything we do. (Nicolini, 2012, p. 6)

When looking at learning to teach from a practice perspective we need to consider what acts of teaching involve, who are involved, through what means is the learning mediated and what are the shared understandings of what is occurring. Teaching according to this view is not an act of individual teachers engaging with students in a classroom or the context of a course. It is a socially located set of practices that are framed by structures and expectations of multiple parties.

What then are the sayings, doings and relatings of the practice of teaching and how are they located? Six partly overlapping features of practice are apparent in various practice theories and these can be usefully considered in explicating learning to teach in higher education: embodiment, material mediation, situatedness, emergence, relationality and co-construction.

Embodiment

Practice necessarily implies embodiment: embodied people practice with volition as well as with what they bring to the activity. For Kemmis (2009, p. 23), practice is embodied in that it encompasses what people do, when and where. Further, practice contributes to developing people's identities and their sense of agency. Practices inevitably involve bodies and material conditions. Chapter 6 provides an example of embodiment when a critical friend comments on the way the lecturer uses her body in the practice of her teaching. As Nicolini (2012, p.3) says:

'The contribution of a practice approach is to uncover that behind all the apparently durable features of our world there is always the work and effort of someone. … Practices with no things and no bodies involved are thus simply inconceivable.' (p.4.)

People bring their desires, emotions and values to be part of the practice.

Material mediation

Practice involves materials and material arrangements of many kinds. These may include resources, artefacts and tools, physical connections, communication tools and material circumstances (Kemmis, 2009). These materials can both limit and enable particular practices. In teaching there are for example, texts and papers, learning management systems, physical objects and ways in which they are used.

Situatedness

Practice is located in many ways. It is situated in particular ways, in time, in language and in the dynamics of interactions (Gherardi, 2008, p. 521). For Kemmis (2009, p. 22), practice 'has aspects that are "extra-individual" in the sense that the actions and interactions that make up the practice are always shaped by mediating conditions that structure how it unfolds'. These may include cultures, discourses, social and political structures, and material conditions in which a practice is situated. Nicolini (2012) draws attention to power, conflict, and politics as constitutive elements of social reality and how as such they serve particular interests at the expense of those of other people.

Emergence

Practices change and evolve over time and over contexts. New challenges require new ways of practising; new practitioners introduce new understandings. Practices tend to emerge in unanticipated and unpredictable ways: for example when people work with others various understandings and interactions emerge (Johnsson & Boud, 2010, p. 360).

Practice theories according to Reckwitz (2002, p.256) (quoted in Nicolini 2012, p.4) accommodate individual agency since agents embody and carry particular practices in their bodies and minds as they enact particular practices. There is always room for creativity, initiative and individuality as people adapt to the practices in which they find themselves.

Relationality

All people, artefacts, social groups and networks connect and develop in relation to other subjects, social groups or networks such that they are formed and structured socially (Kemmis, 2009). Practice takes place in relation both to others and to the unique features a particular practitioner brings to a situation. Practice is thus embedded in sets of dynamic social interactions, connections, arrangements and relationships. Communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1993), for example, provide a relational network of interactions to sustain and foster particular practices. In teaching, what is learned is in relation with what has been learned before and what is regarded as acceptable in the context in which one operates.

Co-construction

In addition to its relational nature, practice is also co-constructed with others. The meaning of the practice and the characteristics of practising are the meanings that those involved give to it. These others may be co-workers but also include in teaching, students, managers, members of the profession or others. Many practices only become legitimate or worthwhile when they are co-constructed with beneficiaries. Teaching is a typical example of this as without student learning, the act of teaching is not meaningful.

Knowledge is co-constructed with others. Only part of what is meant may be articulated, because to become part of a practice is to learn what to say, how to act and what to think. So there are shared implicit understandings (Nicolini, 2012, p.5).

These six features of practice mean that practice cannot be discussed independently of the settings in which it occurs or the embodiment of those undertaking it. Discussion of practice in isolation from practitioners or sites of practice is to misunderstand the nature of practice. It is always constructed with others (in various ways) and in the light of their volition. A practice orientation goes beyond acknowledging the importance of activities, or context, or the agency of people who perform them. It focuses attention on the nature of the interlinked connections between people and with people and artefacts.

To be clear: drawing on practice theory is not about being more practical or more pragmatic or less theoretical. Quite the opposite: it involves actively conceptualising practice and using practice as the lens through

which to judge teaching and learning to teach. Practice theory has nothing to do with discredited theory/practice divisions or other binaries, nor does it devalue knowledge and skills.

How do practices persist and change?

Drawing on Schatzki, we can consider teaching as 'bundles of practices and material arrangements' (p. 1863) that persist and frame past, present and future possibilities. They consist of elements of both structure and action. Structure encompasses understandings of the 'how to' of practice, rules, possible ends and goals as well as other appreciations. The existing practice structures sustain a practice by impacting on the material arrangements of it within its context. Practices are carried forward through the practice memory of an organization, such as a department or teaching group, and by all those who enact them (Schatzki 2005, 2006). Practices are not set in stone, but change over time and in response to influences on them and the actions of the various players (Kemmis 2007). Some of these influences are contextual, some material, some generated by those who practise. Practices, though, transcend any one person or occasion of practice.

The practice memory of an organisation exists even when practices are not being carried out. It includes the understandings, rules, expectations and types of activity captured in documents, history and infrastructure, eg. 'we know what a physics degree should look like and how it should be taught'. It persists beyond the individual memories of practitioners. In the enactment of practices teachers and others carry practices forward and simultaneously vary them in the light of their understandings of similar practices from other related contexts—their prior experience as teacher or student, other positions they have held and knowledge they have about what is acceptable. In enacting these practices, teachers' understandings of them become enmeshed with previous understandings of similar practices from other contexts and so practices are both perpetuated and varied (Schatzki 2006).

Kemmis and colleagues (2014) add to this by introducing the notion of practice architecture that they argue prefigure the practice, shaping it and influencing how it is undertaken. They identifying three dimensions of it: the cultural-discursive, the material-economic, and the social political (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008 p. 37). The cultural-discursive arrangements of a practice influence what is said and thought in and about the practice (the sayings), the material-economic arrangements influence what is done in the practice (the doings), and the social-political

arrangements influence relationships that occur in, and in association with, the practice (the relatings). These dimensions are not distinct, but are interwoven and work together to enable and constrain the conduct of any particular practice.

As practices persist and impact upon past, present and future enactments and possibilities, they influence what is learned, how it is learned and by whom. Through 'teaching and transmitting' (Schatzki 2006, p. 1868) and by individuals describing, examining and questioning, the contextual characteristics and interrelationships among practices embedded in an organisation's practice memory, are learned. This transmitted practice knowledge is not simply replicated. Rather, different people attain different understandings about these practices owing to their previous training and experiences (Schatzki 2005, p. 480). It is these different understandings that contribute to the simultaneous perpetuation and variation of practices.

What then does teaching look like through the lens of practice theory? As we have seen, a practice frame moves teaching from a focus on individuals—whether they are teachers or learners—to the specific practices of teaching and learning and the nature of those practices. It also moves considerations of learning to teach from decontextualised locations separated from the workplace, to locate learning in settings of application (e.g. classrooms and laboratories), to building from practice, that is, the embodied, contextualised activities academics engage in with others including their peers, their managers and students. It does not deny knowledge and skills, but neither does it privilege them in the ways that a conventional training perspective does. It focuses more on what is done and what needs to be done, and less on the attributes of the individuals enacting the doing.

What follows from adopting a practice frame for teaching and learning to teach?

How does a practice view start to change the ways we look at the challenges of learning how to teach? The first implication is that it must shift focus away from what the individual teacher knows towards the practice of teaching. What then does actual teaching in higher education involve? From a practice view there is no essential answer to this question. Teaching is what it is. We have to examine what the various practices are that together make up this collection of practices. This takes

us immediately to the sites of teaching and what teachers with others necessarily do.

What are the practices of teaching in higher education? Any building of a program of learning to teach must be based on an analysis of the practices of teaching. Such an analysis must attend to actual practices *in situ* rather than idealised or assumed practices. In a recent study of continuing professional learning among civil engineers, one of the authors undertook a study of the practices through which such engineers learn. The resulting description bore little relationship to the kinds of features inscribed in accounts of competences for professional engineers by their professional body that informs their continuing professional education requirements (Rooney et al 2013). It was concluded that the ways that sets of competences get generated were conceptually quite different from the approaches needed to discern practices (Reich, Rooney and Boud, 2015). The former focused on remembered activities from representatives from an industry who were not necessarily immediate practitioners, the latter from documented current activities of those practising.

There are many ways of looking for and discerning practices in the sphere of teaching, but an important step in doing so is to be able to bracket out some of our conventional educational thinking. Attention needs to turn to the features of the practice, not the characteristics of the practitioner: How does the practice operate? Who is involved? What are the primary sayings and doings of the practice? What artefacts are involved and how do they operate? What conditions are necessary for the practice to occur effectively? A practice has been successfully identified when those who engage in it can readily agree that it is one of their necessary practices. For example, in a recent as yet unpublished study of assessment practices in which one of us was involved, one of the key practices that were identified was 'bringing a new assessment task into operation' (Boud et al, submitted for publication). This practice is one that all academics easy recognise and see the multifaceted nature of what is involved: it is localised in an institution and course, it involves multiple parties with different responsibilities and it has many variations within it. The materials of assessment policy and procedures for course changes are mobilised. The outcomes have a significant influence on other parties, ie. students.

While practices can be identified and described by interrogating what we do, it can be particularly helpful to utilise those not directly involved in the process to overcome the problem of only seeing what is already described in the conventional language of teaching and learning. This is a

particular trap when looking at the practices of teachers: they are so taken-for-granted that their practice-like character can be rendered invisible. In considering teaching, it can be helpful to continually reiterate the questions: what is the practice seeking to do, what is it for and how does it operate? Thus, lecturing may not be rendered as an act of presenting information to students in a compelling way, but as one of a number of related practices to mobilise and engage students to undertake their own studies. Accounts of the practice vary and the features that are taken into account vary according to the way it is framed.

Is a practice perspective inherently conservative? A naïve understanding of it might lead one to think so. If it merely looks to current practices and prepares novices to reproduce them, it does. However, it also encourages us to look further at what the practices seek to do and how they achieve these ends. In doing this we can look beyond the conventional: preparing someone to lecture, to examine what this practice is for and how does it work? Importantly, how does it connect with other practices: such as those involved in student study, to achieve this end.

What are some implications for learning to teach?

A practice perspective leads to a different set of priorities for organizing the learning of academics for teaching through emphasising the development of practices, fostering learning-conducive work and deliberately locating learning activities within practice.

Emphasising practice development

If practices are central to teaching, then the focus of learning needs to be on how they are enacted and how they develop. This involves an understanding of practices and how they come together to operate in particular ways. Specifically, what are key practices in any given aspect of teaching? What are their characteristic sayings and doings? What are the assumptions that underpin these? What constrains or limits the practice? What is there scope to alter and what is there not? How does the practice purport to do what it seeks to do? As a practitioner positioned in a particular way, and as one perhaps less adept at transacting some aspects of the practice, how can one enter effectively into it? Who else locally might need to be involved? In what ways may they need to be involved?

Practices might be developed through critical examination of current practices and whether they achieve what they claim to do. For example, do comments on student work lead to improved performance in the areas

on which comments are made, or do classes stimulate students to spend time on study compared with the setting of particular kinds of task for them?

Fostering learning-conducive work

Some forms of work arrangement are more conducive to learning than others. Considerable potential for development occurs through organising work in ways that support learning (eg. Felstead, Fuller, Jewson and Unwin, 2009).

What forms might learning-conducive work take? This question has been addressed more widely for workplaces beyond education. A study of Norwegian organisations (Skule & Reichborn, 2002, Skule, 2004) asked the question, what made some workplaces more conducive to the learning of their employees than others? The authors identified that it was the various properties of work that were most important in explaining the differences in the opportunity to learn through work (Skule & Reichborn, 2002, p. 10).

The learning conditions that they distinguished as relevant here were: a high degree of exposure to demands from customers, management, colleagues and owners, and to changes in technology, organisation and work methods; managerial responsibility; considerable external professional contact;   good opportunities for feedback from work;   support and encouragement for learning from management; and   a high probability that skills would be rewarded through interesting tasks, better career possibilities or better pay.

Similar factors appear in Ellström's studies of Swedish workplaces. He identified the learning potential of the task in terms of task complexity, variety and control; opportunities for feedback, evaluation and reflection on the outcomes of work actions; the type and degree of formalisation of work processes; organisational arrangements for employee participation in handling problems and developing work processes; and   learning resources in terms of, e.g., time for analysis, interaction and reflection (Ellström, 2001).

In the UK Fuller and Unwin identified features of what they termed expansive and restrictive participation in work. Expansive features of environments that foster learning include: recognition and support for workers as learners, managers giving time to support workforce development and workplace learning, wide distribution of skills through the workforce, workers having discretion to make judgements and

contribute to decision-making, opportunities to expand learning through participation in different communities and planned time off-the-job for reflection and learning beyond immediate job requirements (Fuller and Unwin, 2004, 2010). Many of these expansive features are common in the academic workplace.

While these structural features of the workplace may contribute to conditions conducive for learning, in themselves they do not ensure effective learning will occur. They need to be taken up and realized in local contexts (in the department or workgroup) as well as the institution more generally. They need to be perceived by participants and utilized as enablers, and managerial practices need to sustain them. The interactive effects of managerial and teaching practices are generally little considered, but teaching can be severely inhibited in unfavourable circumstances for staff. At the most basic level, if teachers are not given opportunities to flourish, how can it reasonably be expected for them to create circumstances in which their students are able to do so? The irony of looking to workplace learning research to inform higher education institutions is that it should be easier to change when the rationale for learning is so much part of the mission and culture of the institution than in conventional industrial environments. That it might not be so in many situations is an important impetus for further investigation.

Learning to teach from a practice view is not limited temporally or spatially. There are always new contexts to respond to, new students with quite different preparations and characteristics and new programmes or types of programme in which teaching occurs. There are also quite radical challenges such as being required to teach online or in another country. Learning to teach is a continuing activity and not limited to those new to the profession. Hutchings and Shulman (1999) highlighted the importance of teachers learning within work contexts in establishing the idea of the scholarship of teaching and learning. They suggested that academics do not sufficiently develop their practice in teaching in the normal process of doing it. Turning the practice of teaching into a scholarly endeavour that goes beyond the particular classroom and engages teachers in scholarly discussions about teaching with colleagues turns teaching into work facilitative of learning.

For academics, practice development involves confronting the competing and sometimes contradictory demands on them, and marrying these disparate requirements. For example, does a peer review system of lectures lead to changes in practices, or to less substantial change, and what effects does it produce? Do work allocations change practices that

involve academics spending time on activities that lead to improved student outcomes? It is not usual for academics' research skills to be utilised to solve problems in the academic workplace in the normal course of academic work, but this is implied in the idea of learning-conducive work. It is also the idea behind the notion of the scholarship of academic practice (Brew, 2010). As Brew (2010, p.112) has argued, 'The challenges of academic practice need to become questions for investigation.' Teaching may thus be viewed in the context of academic practice more widely.

It must be acknowledged that teaching involves interactions with a variety of others in a range of contexts that go beyond the immediate work group or department. Much of the learning involved is likely to arise when the exigencies of work are questioned. Some of this learning falls within the conventional boundaries of that work, such as when members of research teams have different interpretations of data, but other learning arises outside and needs to be addressed from beyond the knowledge and skills of the practitioner. One example is when teachers used to taking individual responsibility for a module, are grouped to take responsibility for a number of modules. Other learning takes place only when the conduct of work requires it. For example, the introduction of a new virtual learning environment (VLE) that teachers are required to utilize. This means coming to understand how the VLE is going to be used by the group of academics in a specific context and working to ensure that the changed practices have the desired effects on students. The most powerful influence is not the provision of learning opportunities but changing work demands to drive teachers' learning.

Deliberately locating activity within practice

A third focus is to start with an emphasis on changing situations, not changing people. Fundamental to a practice focus, as we have seen, is the notion of locatedness. Practice always takes place in and is positioned with respect to particular contexts and, as Schatzki (2005, 2006) says, contexts contain traces of past practices. Location, however, is not just about physical proximity. Again, as we have seen, what is said and thought about the practice is influenced by its cultural-discursive arrangements; what is done in the practice is influenced by the material economic arrangements; and the relationships that occur in and with the practice are influenced by the social political arrangements (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). So deliberately locating activity within practice has a number of elements, any one of which may need to be considered on any

occasion of development. These include the spatial, the temporal, the personal, the social and the professional.

Spatial location (where?)

Learning to practice cannot take place independently of sites of practice. A close alignment of activities with sites of practice is needed. So, many aspects of learning to teach need to take place in local sites, and facilitation may need to occur as coaching within practice rather than about practice. The material-economic arrangements are expressed in the spatial location and influence teaching in a variety of ways. For example, teaching sites might include things like: the use of equipment; the arrangement and layout of rooms; the deployment of a learning management system; choosing and using texts; employing casual staff for tutoring or marking.

Temporal location (when?)

Different practices occur at particular times. The practice of course preparation occurs mainly before the start of a semester, the practice of marking occurs within it. There are times when teachers are open to learning, times when they are closed to it. If a major course revision has recently taken place, it may not be appropriate to work on the practice of course design. Alignment of development opportunities may need to take place within normal work: the common activity of peer observation of a lecture and subsequent feedback conversations is an example of this. The timeliness of development interventions is crucial: a worthwhile conversation in one week of the semester may be irrelevant in another.

Personal location (with which practices?)

Practices are imbued with different personal meanings. The discourse teachers use about teaching, the language they use to communicate with students; the kind of texts involved; curriculum documents which guide the course unit; and many other arrangements are all constitutive of the cultural-discursive arrangements which form part of the practice. At different stages of development of an academic career, individuals may be more available to consider some of their practices rather than others. When deadlines are due for a major grant round, then a given person may not be ready to consider aspects of teaching. When workload is being negotiated some practices are more to the fore than others and priorities may be able to be set.

Social location (with which others?)

As practices always occur in association with other people, social location is an important consideration. The socio-political arrangements of a practice influence relationships between people and between people and object that are involved in the practice. What learning should occur at an individual level, or with the group who teaches together or with students? Any one person has a limited effect on changing practice so the community setting of practice is a topic for consideration and a place for learning to take place. What needs to take place with the course team, with tutors, with practitioners, etc.? Another dimension to social location are students and how they might be involved. Practices that work with some students do not work well with others. Students with language difficulties, or those who have not been well prepared by previous study for example may provide different kinds of challenges that lead to sometimes entirely different practices.

In higher education, social-political arrangements include the relationships that are associated with the everyday practice of teaching. This includes: how students engage with teachers, expectations and practices of work groups, the importance of teaching *vis à vis* research, how policies are used or ignored, relationships which are and are not possible, positioning of teachers in relation to others in departments or programmes, and the hierarchy of the institution. The notion of stewardship in academic development practice discussed in Chapter 7 provides a further example of the socio-political dimension.

Professional location (within which disciplinary contexts?)

The context of practice is much wider than the immediate teaching group. Practices are framed by disciplinary or professional contexts. These act as part of the practice architecture to influence what is accepted as legitimate to be done or to be changed. Learning involves not only exploring what might be possible, but also what is acceptable 'around here'. It also requires consideration of how to operate within particular kinds of working arrangements. How can new ideas be introduced in particular contexts? What makes them more or less likely to be taken up? Some of these considerations are for the immediate working group, but others are constrained or enabled by the disciplinary location. Particular innovations that are commonplace in some disciplines would be difficult for a novice to introduce in others.

Which features of locatedness are pertinent vary in any given instance. What a practice perspective does is to remind us that each needs to be

considered as it is rarely obvious to the individual practitioner nor to those assisting them, which elements may be relevant at any moment.

Conclusion

While teaching in higher education has conventionally been regarded as highly individualistic and perhaps idiosyncratic, this belies the consistency of practices within a given discipline or department. These commonalities suggest that there is shared understanding of what occurs and what is appropriate to occur in teaching in a particular context. Contemporary processes of course development, quality assurance and revision all depend on much higher levels of cooperation and joint planning than have traditionally been the case and this in turn creates circumstances in which greater levels of interaction are regarded as legitimate and worthwhile. In considering practice development, it is increasingly necessary to consider that academic work is becoming more collective rather than individual in nature, involving co-producing practice with others, particularly students and other teachers in a programme.

In this chapter we have argued that professionals engage in practices, they extend these practices and they take up new practices. Learning may be driven by, for example, encountering new groups of students with different needs and expectations, or by working with a new issue not previously identified. Success in learning is judged by how successfully the practice with the new group or new issue is undertaken, not by how much is learned by the individuals involved. Practice drives learning, not only to solve immediate problems, but also to address wider concerns.

A focus on practice development is not only more consistent with the day-to-day experiences of academic work, it also avoids models that imply a deficit on the part of individuals that can only be filled by their own endeavours. If practices, while retaining their practice architecture, are normally evolving and changing, then the insertion of a new player is just part of normal academic practice which can be accommodated along with any other impetus on it. As the practice is a shared enterprise, then responsibility for learning to teach is similarly shared. Aspects of it, for example, introduction to the language and wider context of higher education teaching may require the intervention of those beyond the immediate setting. However, learning to teach remains a local responsibility and ways of recognizing this and providing suitable conditions for new teachers is a core responsibility of the group (School,

Department, teaching team) involved. For, the most compelling learning occurs when practitioners see it as needed in order to do their work. That is when learning is an imperative, not an option.

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