Understanding Professional Enquiry  

Jenny Reeves

Introduction

The paper is written as part of an on-going interrogation of our own practice within the Institute of Education at Stirling University as providers of programmes to support the professional growth of qualified teachers at various stages in their careers. It is based upon studies of student experience on the Scottish Qualification for Headteachers (SQH) and the Chartered Teacher programme at Stirling. In addition it draws directly on the work of our students and conversations we have had with them at various events over the last few years.

The idea of having one flexible, practice focused framework for professional masters awards based upon the notion of Professional Enquiry took shape in 2001. At that time we perceived professional enquiry as synonymous with evidence-informed practice and engagement in practitioner or action research and we associated it with the development of a ‘new’ form of professionalism. Whilst there are a number of versions of the ‘new’ professionalism the common features we had identified:

- learner-centred practice;
- clarity about moral and social purpose – ethical practice;
- commitment to evidence-informed practice and critical reflection;
- discretionary judgement exercised both collectively and singly;
- collegiality and collaboration with colleagues, other professionals, pupils and parents: and
- commitment to continuing professional development and knowledge creation.1

Over the last six years our understanding of professional enquiry has continued to change and develop to the point where it is now important for us to re-visit the concept and clarify our current position. In order to do so this paper revisits ideas about the nature of professional practice as a basis for generating a clearer view of some of the parameters that bear upon its development. Establishing these parameters provides a means of relating professional development to professional enquiry. The paper proposes three different, but complementary ways, of conceptualising professional enquiry as:

- an orientation to practice;
- a socio-cultural process; and
- as sets of dialogic techniques.

Finally the paper looks at the implications this configuration has for practice at Stirling.

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1 Stenhouse, 1975; Eraut, 1994; Sachs, 2003; Hargreaves, 1999
Professional practice and its implications for professional growth.

Going back to first principles professional action is based on a claim to specialist knowledge and the capacity to exercise that knowledge to the benefit of clients/students/patients. Underlying this definition is an assumption of agency, where the work of professionals affects the lives of others, making a positive difference to their circumstances i.e. professionals take action in pursuance of what are agreed to be societal goods. There is a measure of consensus in the literature that professional action draws upon a complex mix of ‘knowledges’ that have been variously described by different writers in the field\(^2\). Underlying most of these descriptions is a two-fold distinction between propositional, or theoretical knowledge, and know-how as procedural, or practical knowledge. This theory/practice divide was built into the traditional pathway of initial training in a University or College followed by a practicum for qualification and entry into a profession. It is now both structurally and conceptually unhelpful. Whatever the professional activity there will be some mixing of so-called ‘procedural’ and ‘propositional’ knowledge\(^3\) in its execution. Every practitioner must incorporate within her practice artefacts\(^4\), whether in the form of conceptual frameworks, procedures or materials that owe their origin to both sources of knowledge. It is more fruitful to see practice as permeated by theory and theory as permeated by practice in professional fields. It is this ‘mixture’ of knowledges which constitutes the resource which a professional relies upon in carrying out her work.

Although a professional lays claim to the capacity to make appropriate judgements according to unique circumstances much professional work is essentially repetitive. Thus, in many instances, for an experienced professional, the exercise of knowledge results in routines. These take the form of standard flows of action that have become largely automatic. These routines, given their relative complexity, take several years to establish. Since many practitioners have to exercise judgement in contexts where decisions have to be taken very rapidly there is little time to engage in deliberation during practice\(^5\). Some time may be available pre-action (planning) or post action (evaluation) but this is likely to be scarce in pressured environments such as schools. Hence, once practitioners have established reasonably effective routines they are discouraged from changing them by the level of disruption and investment required to do so.\(^6\) The difficulty of changing practice is indicated by research studies on the impact of professional development such as Joyce and Showers’ work in the 80s (Joyce and Showers, 1988). They found that incorporating new teaching practices into teachers’ repertoires required complex and sustained forms of support across different contexts including classrooms.

Motivation that supports persistence in pursuing an alteration in practice is thus critical. Change needs to accord with the “self” of the teacher, with her desire for agency\(^7\). This is

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\(^2\) Schon, 1983; Eraut, 1994; Flyvbjerg, 2001  
\(^3\) Gibbons et al, 1994; Schwandt, 2005  
\(^4\) Reeves & Boreham, 2006, Spillane and Sherer, 2004  
\(^5\) Brown & McIntyre, 1993  
\(^7\) Hargreaves, 1996; Day et al, 2007

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because altering her practice in any substantive fashion also alters her professional identity to some extent. For example, a teacher changing her habitual questioning technique from closed to open questions needs to change her understanding of her role from one of testing for retention to one of encouraging the development of her students’ thinking i.e. she needs to change her mind about what it is to be a good teacher. Most teachers have aspirations for their practice and experience a gap between actual practice and values 8 which suggests there is a sense of latent practice, waiting to be developed. The centrality of values in professional work means that the judgements an individual teacher makes about attempts at change are more likely to be informed by the immediate behavioural feedback from pupils and significantly mediated by emotions 9. Returning to the earlier point about theory and practice it is important that new practices are justifiable in the eyes of practitioners, that they are supported by evidence of efficacy in terms of their educational value i.e. that there is a clear case for having a positive impact on learning and relations in school settings which will override the difficulties which inevitably arise during implementation. Collaboration which provides access to professional dialogue and discussion, for instance in the form of coaching and mentoring, helps to provide the personal support a practitioner may need during a period of change10.

What this discussion indicates is that professional practice is systemic in that it includes affective, cognitive, behavioural and material aspects in an indivisible mix and that all of these parameters are affected as part of professional growth. Evidence for this complex emerges from the results of reviews conducted by Cordingley et al (2003, 2005) of studies which they judged to have established a link between collaborative continuing professional development and impact on students’ learning. In describing the effects on teachers cited by these studies the review team identified the following:

- greater confidence;
- enhanced beliefs about self-efficacy in regard to students’ learning
- enthusiasm for collaborative working
- development of knowledge, understanding and skills in a curricular area
- changes in teacher beliefs
- access to suitable resources ‘teachers changed their practice to make use of specific tools or interventions which introduced greater collaboration’

(ref.)

However, this analysis at individual level needs to be extrapolated further. For instance the teacher’s working context includes her pupils and her colleagues all of whom: teacher; pupils; and colleagues; are bound into ways of conducting educational activity which are largely customary and habitual at that particular site11 Classroom discourse is a particularly powerful anchoring feature of practice as teachers, and indeed pupils, are habituated to variations of the teacher dominated I-R-F(E) pattern12. The customary

8 James & Pedder, 2006)  
10 Lieberman & Miller , 1999  
11 Reeves et al, 2005.  
routines of such a grouping will be inscribed in the artefacts that the practitioner and the others she works with use in any given setting. Any change undertaken by an individual teacher disrupts practice on the part of others and alters her relationships with them and the procedures and materials that they use in common. What is being asserted here is that practice is relational and therefore opportunities for professional growth need to be contextualised within the social spaces in which practice occurs. The practitioner is part of a collaborative activity system. Change on her part, because it disrupts the practice of others, is therefore likely to be resisted. She will have to justify any alterations she makes not only to herself but to all the others concerned in order to engage them in the process and secure a measure of co-operation^{13}. Thus being able to ‘theorise’ and argue for a new practice is critical since politics and practical change are bound together in the network of relationships that shape and define what practice is at a given location.

Establishing links to this wider contextual framing, empirical studies carried out by a researchers across a number of fields indicate the importance of socio-cultural factors in either blocking or supporting professional growth^{14}. Interestingly an account of one of the initiatives which met the terms for an ‘objective’ measure of a change in teaching technique leading to significant gains in student achievement itself bears witness to the complexity of the process of change. Adey et al (2004) cite three key dimensions for securing effective change. These are: firstly, in the nature of the innovation and how convincingly it can be argued and understood as being of educational value; secondly, elements in the provision of professional development such as longevity and intensity, and access to coaching and reflection and thirdly in the nature of the environment in which the change is engendered including levels of collegiality, the attitudes of the senior management, opportunities provided for the personal engagement of teachers and teacher turnover.

When it comes to the systemic aspects of knowledge transfer, usage and creation there is less evidence to hand, certainly of a direct nature. What we do have, particularly in the field of organisational and networked learning are a number of case studies of these processes^{15} which bear witness to the influence of socio-cultural factors in the change process. In addition there are numerous studies of resistance, of the difficulties change agents face in organisational settings, and of the lack of success of attempts at institutional reform particularly in the public services that indicate the extent of these difficulties^{16}. Recently, in an attempt to address the interlocking elements in educational settings there has been an increased interest in collaborative enquiry and networking as a basis for professional development and school improvement which includes new forms of partnership between HEIs, schools, local authorities and other bodies with mixed results reported so far^{17}.

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^{13} Reeves and Forde, 2004.
^{14} Hargreaves, 1994; Davis and Sumara, 2002; Day et al, 2007
^{15} Engestrom, 2001; Latour, 1997; Borum, 2002
^{16} Daniels et al, 2007
^{17} Temperley and Street, 2004 – Sammons et al, 2007; Hadfield, 2007 – difficulties of maintenance
The implication of the model of practice outlined here is that professional growth and development that leads to a transformation in practice is about adapting complexes involving, broadly, contemporaneous changes:

a) At individual practitioner level of:

   beliefs and values (knowledge);
   self-concept and identity;
   relationships;
   artefacts (including conceptual frameworks, procedures and material equipment); and
   skills.

b) And, by implication, the same ‘complex’ needs to undergo some alteration.

   on behalf of the others she works within her context of practice: students, parents and colleagues,

The outcome of this framing is that we cannot seek to establish simple relationships between inputs - changes in practice - and outcomes in the field of professional development, i.e. the model of cause and effect and generalisability that traditionally underpins scientific method. Thus there is no sense in the search to test the effect of, for example, altering teachers’ approaches to questioning, because a change in questioning will be ‘contaminated’ by all the other changes which have to take place in order for a teacher’s questioning to change. Whilst it still makes sense to look at whether professional growth, defined in terms of complexes, is associated with positive effects on desired student outcomes it does not make sense to attribute this to a change in a technique. Equally, the belief that the adoption of a new practice is simply a matter of changing a practitioner’s knowledge and/or skills is unrealistic.

We need to base our approach to professional enquiry on a systemic and relational model that accommodates the dynamics of professional growth and development. The whole complex of interlocking systems has to be affected and altered to some extent in order to sustain the development of practice. Furthermore any such alteration can only be achieved through the on-going performance of an iterative, dialogical process within the system that is the practitioner, her tools and her working context because the space to change has to be actively made as part of the process of professional growth. The claim here is that changing professional practice is necessarily an embodied and lived social process that takes place at a variety of levels.

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18 The easiest way to conceive of this, though too mechanical and bounded, is to think of the practitioner + tools + relations as a interactional system within another system.

19 Whilst I am with Adey et al (2004) that there is a degree of predictability in matters of practice I am not in agreement with them that controlled experiments are possible whereby the only variable is ‘a single change in teacher behaviour’ and indeed they later point out the considerable flaws in this argument themselves.

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If this is the case then for professional enquiry to provide a means for professional growth it must function at a number of levels; at micro-level in classroom contexts, at meso level affecting the local contexts within which practitioners work: schools and their communities; and at macro level in the wider field of professional practice and in relation to the formulation of policy and theory in the field.

**Defining Professional Enquiry**

Based upon the description of practice and professional development outlined above professional enquiry can be understood in three broad senses:

Firstly, it can mean an orientation to practice, a professional disposition, a way of being a practitioner. In this sense it consists of enacting a professional duty to seek to increase the good of the practice you are engaged in. Questioning and seeking ways to improve practice become an ethical and a political obligation;

Secondly, in part following on from the first sense, if we believe professional growth and development to be a socio-cultural phenomenon professional enquiry has to be understood as a collective and interactive process. In the long run, whether it is instigated by individuals or by groups, enquiry can only lead to sustainable professional growth if questions are asked and responded to in the context of joint practice within and across relevant activity sets.

Thirdly, it can be understood in technical terms, as an identifiable series of events driven by a dialogic engagement between enquirers and contexts of enquiry. In this sense professional enquiries occur when practitioners identify problems in practice, trial solutions and incorporate these into their professional repertoire. Enquiries can be predicated as having a measurable duration consisting of a beginning, a middle and an end which lies in the mastery and incorporation of a new element into practice.

**Professional Enquiry as Orientation**

For the reasons advanced in the opening section professional practitioners have an obligation to seek to pursue the ‘good’ of the practice they are engaged in. They cannot rely on methodological/ontological justifications of change but must argue for new approaches based on ethical and political grounds. The obligation here is to enquire as part of a continuous, collaborative, and democratic process. The purpose of this activity is to try and establish a consistency of beliefs about the enaction of good practice for the achievement of mutually desired ends. On this basis professional enquiry should be a fundamental characteristic of a field of professional practice, a dialogic that binds

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20 This is very idealistic and Habermasian on the surface but, in fact, it is, in practical terms what happens – sort of - in the establishment of dominant discourses - though far from the operation of the ideal speech community because of the power relations involved. Enquiry as part of professionalism is therefore a political act as an assertion of the right to question discourse.

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together all those engaged in the activity and characterises everyone’s approach to professional action.\textsuperscript{21}

The implications of this position are that, whether you are engaged in the activity as researcher, theoretician, educator, manager or practitioner you are part of a community of enquiry in which you have a professional obligation to engage and contribute. This collaborative enquiry process should be characterised according to Rorty by, ‘a duty to talk to each other, to converse about our views of the world (practice), to use persuasion rather than force, to be eager for new data and ideas, to respect the opinions of colleagues, to be tolerant of diversity and to be contritely fallibilist’\textsuperscript{22}

With regard to fallibility it needs to be emphasised that the abandonment of a positivist orientation does not mean that anything goes. A pragmatic, social constructivist position does not require a denial that there are objects in the world and that these are causally related to our beliefs and actions. As everyone is subject to the discipline of the material world, brought sharply to mind when you stub a toe, there is no good reason to act arbitrarily. Thus it remains important for professionals to subject their context of practice and their actions to close and rigorous scrutiny, to wit enquiry, in order to pursue the good of their practice\textsuperscript{23}. On this basis the case for evidence-informed, but not evidence-based, practice remains.

\textbf{Professional Enquiry as socio-cultural evolution}

As socio-cultural evolution professional enquiry is synonymous with changing practice. It is transformational because the very act of engaging in enquiry in the context of practice alters both the practitioner and the situation. Asking questions always interferes to a greater or lesser extent with normality and has the potential to upset routines. In so doing it provides a point of entry for new ideas and relationships\textsuperscript{24}. It opens up a basis for dialogue between the practitioner and her context. However, as posited earlier, the individualistic flavour of this last statement is unsustainable since ‘the context of practice’ always consists of the practitioner, artefacts, clients, and colleagues. The transformational potential of professional enquiry is not so much ‘a finding out’ as the creation of new situations, a becoming, with the potential for disrupting established systems.

Professional enquiry can thus be conceived as a process of collaborative/collective sense-making where justification and argumentation are a critical part of the process. Professional enquiry is about exercising the power to change and therefore has, at the collective level, some of the dimensions of a social movement in that it challenges and stands ‘outside’ the status quo. It is about changing frameworks and disrupting custom and therefore it is inherently dynamic and unstable in socio-cultural terms. Since it carries

\textsuperscript{21} Flyvebjerg,2001.
\textsuperscript{22} Rorty 1991: 67 and 39
\textsuperscript{23} Haraway, 1991, Latour,1997
\textsuperscript{24} Rorty 1991 – notion of the effects of ‘othering’ also fits with Bateson (H) and Deleuze – Dewey and Darwinism.
the possibility of revolution, as well as evolution, there are questions about how far it is a ‘sustainable’ orientation. As a result it carries with it risks and discomforts for those involved who may well arouse the suspicion and censure of others in the work setting.

The socio-cultural perspective, because it alerts us to the implications of professional growth for the collective, requires that there is a social process of legitimation associated with changes in practice. It emphasises the importance of theorisation, which Greenwood et al (2002:61) describe as ‘the development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect’. Researchers in the field of organisational development see this as a critical aspect of the change process. Their observations indicate that it is not so much pressure from the environment that leads to changes in practice within organisations, but whether or not such pressure is accompanied by convincing ‘theorisations’ that simplify the properties of new practices, explain their outcomes and legitimise their adoption. They point out that this process is particularly critical in settings such as public service organisations:

‘The importance of theorisation is likely to be especially acute in mature or highly structured settings (for instance highly professionalized settings), where the boundaries of occupational communities and the templates of appropriate organisational forms are well established and structured.’ (ibid).

As a socio-cultural process professional enquiry has the potential to develop social spaces which are open to knowledge exchange and creation because it opens up the possibility of difference therefore creating a thirdspace between what is and what might be. Equally the experience of difference is necessary to provide a spur to enquiry because it is usually the experience of otherness that provokes the imagination to the exploration of what might be. The thirdsaces opened up by enquiry can be linked to hopes and aspirations for the future in terms of making a difference to the good of practice. Such spaces may foster the desire for agency. For instance on the professional enquiry modules at Stirling a social space is created in which practitioners can subject their experiences and knowledge to critique in the light of ideas which are new to them without arousing the censure that might arise if they did so in their own school setting. They have a place in which it is safe to play with new ideas and rehearse the re-theorisation of their own practice.

Professional Enquiry as a staged dialogic process.

25 Tsoukas, 2005, Greenwood et al, 2002, Weick, 1995 – again this is too broad an assertion - the OLIPA research aligned better with Weick’s view of theorisation as a two stage process of (looking back) justification – aligning beliefs and values after taking action and (looking forward) argumentation – proceeding from beliefs and values to argue as to what constitutes appropriate action. This again is systemic and relational – it is a process of debate and dialogue over time – not something concluded in the generation of a ‘mission statement’ Reeves and Boreham 2006.

26 Lefebvre
Undertaking professional enquiry is also directly integrative of the various knowledges that go to make up practice since it is about learning by practising. As a practitioner it consists of a series of ‘experiments’ in the context of practice motivated by the desire for improvement. This opens up a ‘dialogue’ between practitioner and context in which there is a constant evolution of practice as the object of enquiry.\textsuperscript{27} It consists in an on-going ‘conversation’ between practitioners and their situations where feedback generates ideas and the enaction of ideas generates feedback. Pea provides a succinct and useful description:

\textit{Humankind is reshaped through a dialectic of reciprocal influences. Our productive activities change the world thereby changing the way in which the world can change us. By shaping nature and how our interactions with it are mediated we change ourselves.} (1993:53)

The basis for these ‘experiments’ is the selection and enaction of ideas which arise both in contemplating what you observe as a practitioner in your own setting and in gathering information from others through reading and discussion. Underpinning such enquiries are tools and procedures that are part of the activity such critical incident analysis procedures, learning journals, observation logs etc. Professional enquiry in this sense is an activity whereby practice can be subjected to critical review and alteration. Enquiry as technique exists in both a long and a short form as shown in Figure 1.

In the short form a cycle of enquiry is largely confined to reflection on personal experience, this is obviously usefully extended where you have feedback from all the others involved in your practice – clients or students for instance and/or the cycle is carried out in collaboration with them. The disadvantages of the short form of the cycle are that it provides less access than the long cycle does to:

\begin{itemize}
  \item new ideas;
  \item support with theorisation
  \item resources (as a formal piece of action research for instance)
\end{itemize}

Being confined to the practitioner’s immediate milieu the short cycle is less likely to afford access to social spaces where roles and practices may be debated, rehearsed and explored in greater ‘safety’ than in the working context of the individual practitioner. In the long cycle what you do in your own context is also informed by what has been experienced in other contexts because you investigate what is already known about tackling the issue you are interested in – thus other spaces, experiences, people and artefacts become part of the process\textsuperscript{28}.

\textsuperscript{27} Knorr-Cetina 2001
\textsuperscript{28} This needs to be accompanied by the opportunity for discussion and debate at all stages in the cycle – people need a social space for playing with ideas – Reeves and Forde etc.

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In the extended form of enquiry the feedback loops are stretched to include a dialogic relation between the enquirer, the situation and others outwith the situation. In any given enquiry these cyclical processes may be repeated several times and in the course of many enquiries, there will be a mixture of short and long cycles.

The Forms of Professional Enquiries

Enquiries incorporating the long cycle can take several forms – influenced by the need for them to be resourced:

- those which, for administrative reasons, are structured as projects either to meet the terms of assessment on an accredited course or to provide accountability for funding as part of a wider development initiative and/or
to fit within the parameters of an organisational or departmental development plan as legitimated devices for the governance of change\textsuperscript{29}.

- those which are structured directly as professional growth projects where a mentor or coach works with someone to develop aspects of their practice – here the enquiry element follows a particular form but the focus remains on taking action and gauging the consequences of that action in the pursuance of improvement.

- a rather more diffuse activity which centres around an on-going conversation with a situation and emerges in planning, evaluation and dissemination/theorisation activities. This type of enquiry is more open-ended, lengthy and sporadic than a project although it may contain identifiable projects within the overall process\textsuperscript{30}

Within any given setting professional enquiry may take all these forms and, of course, hybridise between them. Whilst a single practitioner with the consent of her clients may undertake a piece of action research the evidence suggests that professional enquiry is likely to be most effective and expressive of the good of practice when it includes her colleagues and others. Collaborative professional enquiry that follows the parameters of the long cycle provides a context for critical debate and discussion, exchange of experience and pedagogical tools, and access to greater sources of personal support for those involved.

Professional enquiries, as projects and/or procedures for supporting professional growth, should be motivational in that they should be premised upon the enquirers addressing those issues that they choose and agree to be worth focusing upon\textsuperscript{31}. However, the requirement for resourcing and legitimation means that projects are the outcome of negotiation between a number of interests where the enquirers are often one of the least powerful groups.

**Effects of conceiving Professional Enquiry within a systemic socio-cultural framework**

This paper has drawn a picture of professional enquiry as a form of disturbance and a source of learning operating at a number of interconnected levels: the micro level of individual practitioners and their immediate contexts of practice, the meso level as an organisational or cross-organisational phenomenon and the macro level of the professional field ‘as a whole’.

\textsuperscript{29} Daniels et al, 2007, Engestrom et al, 2003

\textsuperscript{30} Reeves, 2007.

\textsuperscript{31} Back here again to politics –Usual system deficits re: collaboration and the skills to manage it. Reeves 2006
These interconnections are critical because they constitute lines of power that run through the field and place both constraints and opportunities in the way of professional enquiry.

**Figure 2 Interconnections of hard and soft dialects of managerialism**

**Key**: Gray shading and straight lines – artefacts and their linkages
- Rounded shapes activity sets and their linkages
- HGIOS = How Good is Our School (HMIe, 2002). The production of annual LA and School improvement plans was made compulsory in Scotland under the Standards in Scottish Schools etc. Act 2000. The Chartered Teacher Standard was introduced in 2002.

QuickTime™ and a TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor are needed to see this picture.
For instance, in our own context, feedback arising from the requirement that students on the Chartered Teacher programme undertake a collaborative professional enquiry in their schools has revealed a number of points of contestation. The most significant of these have occurred at the interface between chartered teachers and their school managers. Chartered teachers often found themselves in an uncomfortable position because their managers generally construed school development as a matter of overtaking tasks and targets which had been prescribed through the medium of the local authority’s improvement plan. They were therefore very uneasy with the idea of projects originating in the form of enquiries at classroom level led by teachers. This arose in schools regardless of whether chartered teachers saw their relationship with their headteachers/managers as good or as strained. It appeared to attach to roles rather than to personalities. Ideologically this source of disturbance could be tracked back through the artefacts defining standard operating procedures for the two groups (senior managers and chartered teachers) as shown in Figure 2. The differing discourses of school improvement at the macro level lead to disturbance and contention at the micro level as they were promulgated through the system via various activity sets and their associated tools. On the left of the diagram ‘hard’ scientific managerialism posits the worker as passive and compliant in the pursuit of improvement whilst on the right ‘soft’, normative managerialism, posits the worker as proactive and generative. Attempting to enact this second understanding in a hierarchical system dominated by the first inevitably causes problems.

This experience illustrated that the introduction of professional enquiry as practice cannot be confined to a particular level and become sustainable – it has to permeate the whole system and draw strength from those elements that lend it support. The argument here is that the systemicity of professional enquiry as an activity should be made explicit and guide the way in which we participate in the activity as a political project. On this basis professional enquiry should characterise not only our teaching and the practice into which we are attempting to induct students but also drive our engagement in the professional field at all three levels. This implies linking work on the various Professional Enquiry programmes to strategies for engagement, dialogue and critical discussion of professional issues at the meso level. Such activities will require the formation of structures to facilitate interaction and the exchange and creation of knowledge. We need to make a deliberate attempt to foster a local ‘community of practice’ as a platform for engagement at the macro level. In adopting this approach we would be participating in a re-positioning ourselves as active participants in the creation of public, practitioner knowledge emanating from a situated, collaborative and contested engagement in professional enquiry.

32 Reeves 2006 and 2007
33 There are a number of uncomfortable issues for us underlying our engagement – some of which are made more explicit in the companion paper: Delineating a pedagogy for professional enquiry.
34 Nespor’s (2006) characterisation of paradigm shift through the engagement of educational researchers in the creation of public knowledge, practitioner knowledge and participation in discursive political processes.
References


Appendix

Key Features of Professional Enquiry

1) In PE the enquirer is concerned with her own development as an essential part of the enquiry process i.e. the professional identity and practice of the enquirer is central to the process.

2) Professional enquiry is a way of being a practitioner, as someone who is open to change and innovation given convincing evidence of its benefits.

3) PE is subjective and objective in the sense of being subject forming on the part of the enquirer whilst at the same time altering practice as its object.

4) There is not one alteration in the context of practice during a PE but rather an ongoing process of transformation so that all of the parameters within the context are altering all the time as the enquiry proceeds including the practitioner herself.

5) PE leads to an alteration to the context of practice for all involved in that context i.e. it has an holistic rather than a partial effect.

6) PE as a way of being ceases when practitioners cease to ask questions of, and imagine new futures for practice.

7) A PE ceases once a response to a problematic, that is associated with the improvement of outcomes, becomes incorporated into the practitioner’s usable repertoire of responses.

8) PE is ‘naturalistic’ enquiry insofar as it uses and builds upon data which is usually available to a practitioner i.e. it requires the honing of those analytical skills and processes which are key to the person’s practice not the development of skills which are appropriate to another form of practice. You are not seeking to turn a teacher or a nurse into a researcher.

9) PE is an essentially political process because it is an endeavour to change the forms and balances of agency.

10) PE can only be carried out by practitioners through using tools (conceptual, procedural and material) which are appropriate to its practice.

11) PE is a form of socialisation.

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12) PE develops the self-confidence to exercise agency and actively engage with professional practice.