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"It's Just Like Being a Student": Making Space for
Teachers to Think

Yvon Appleby

COMMON
GROUND

"It's Just Like Being a Student": Making Space for Teachers to Think

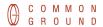Yvon Appleby, University of Central Lancashire, UK

Abstract: This paper looks at creating legitimate thinking spaces for teachers to explore their pedagogical beliefs and practices through collaborative writing. Based upon a project from a post compulsory Initial Teacher Training programme in the UK it will describe the process of working with teacher educators towards writing as part of a critical professional development process. Writing collaborativley for publication, a companion to a student research journal, has become significant not just for producing a useful resource but as a highly valued space for thinking and discussing teaching and learning. Teacher educators teach others to reflect, to be critical and to value their professional independence, yet there is little space for them to do this themselves. One participant in a recent writing day exclaimed it was the first space he had to think for years, whilst another said it was a vital space to reconnect with educational beliefs and pedagogical practices with others. This paper will explore using writing as a framework to support critical thinking, reflection and collaboration for professional development. It provides a case study to explore if using this method supports relevant, contextual and authentic professional developmnent both for self development and and as a site for resistance to the overwork and deprofessionalised culture in post-compulsory teaching.

Keywords: Collaborative Writing, Professional Development, Teacher Education, Critical Reflection

Introduction

THIS PAPER LOOKS at a recent project which supported a group of teacher educators to write a book about their practice providing a space for them to think and talk, something they rarely have the opportunity to do. The project was designed to provide a structured space for critical reflection, dialogue and sharing good practice: all the things the participants teach others but have little time to do themselves. Whilst the project had a tangible product in the shape of a book, itself a teaching resource, the process was perhaps the most significant outcome as this provided a structured and well-supported professional development opportunity. This highlights the value of working and writing collaboratively but also illustrates the lack of meaningful professional development opportunities available elsewhere. In the UK, where this project was carried out there is an increased requirement for continuing professional development, but rather than opening up opportunities several writers (E.g. Zukas, 2006; Edwards and Nicoll, 2006) argue that these requirements act to limit what is meant by professionalisation and constrain meaningful professional development. The project described here is located within and illustrates aspects of these wider debates. Whilst the paper refers to a UK example the discourse of professionalisation, of continuing professional development and reflective practice have global and transferable meanings.

To provide a context for the project and the participants I will start by outlining some of the emerging issues around professionalisation within what in the UK is termed the Lifelong

Learning sector, which covers much adult provision after school age. What emerges is a tension between an acceptance that critical reflection and the reflective practitioner are desirable attributes for the professional educator and on the other hand the process of dilution through conscription and regulation. This will be followed by a description of the project showing how it is possible, in spite of initial individual reservations, to create a space that supports critical dialogue, collaborative reflection and sharing practice through writing. The importance of developing a sense of ownership for working collaboratively will then be discussed using the idea of learning cultures (James and Biesta, 2007), showing how this supports Brookfield's (1995) more engaged view of critical reflection for professional educators. Lastly, whilst there have been positive tangible outcomes from the project, for the participants themselves as well as contributing to wider critical debates about professionalisation and continuing professional practice, there are also challenges. In the concluding remarks I will consider how sustainable such work can be.

Professionalisation and Continuing Professional Development in the Lifelong Learning Sector

The teacher educators who took part in the writing project are part of a large higher education partnership which delivers Initial Teacher Training in fourteen further education colleges in the North West of England. Students completing the programme gain a teaching qualification (Certificate in Education/Postgraduate Certificate in Education) to enable them to teach in the Lifelong Learning sector. This sector in the UK, also known as post-sixteen or post-compulsory education, delivers a wide range of vocational and non-vocational subjects in further education colleges and more recently in work based, voluntary and community settings. All teachers in this sector are increasingly subjected to regulation in terms of their professionalism, both directly and indirectly. Directly they are required to formally undertake continuing professional development (CPD) and indirectly they are part of the wider professional competence discourse. Professional development, based upon reflective practice, has increasingly been formalised and is now required to be logged centrally to show evidence to support professional status (see for example www. Ifl.org.uk). The Lifelong Learning sector in the UK has seen many recent changes designed to promote a qualified and professional workforce. This follows critical government reports (for example the Foster Report) and a move to more closely align the compulsory and post-compulsory sectors. The Further Education Teacher's Qualification (England) Regulation and the Further Education Teacher's Continuing Professional Development and Registration (England) are identified by Roffey-Barentsen and Malthouse (2009) as the most significant of these changes. Introduced in 2007 both have increased the significance of CPD and the regulatory framework which shapes the sector. As part of this regulatory apparatus the Institute for Learning (IfL) requires all practitioners in this sector to complete 30 hours CPD annually to maintain professional status. The teacher educators in this case study are therefore not just teaching about reflective practice to their students but are also now required to undertake and document it themselves as part of maintaining their own professional status.

The mainstream acceptance of reflective practice, now a cornerstone of CPD in the Lifelong Learning sector, can be viewed as progress as it has been advocated for in adult teaching (Brookfield, 1995) and within the further education sector more generally (Hiller, 2002). Within the rubric of reflective practice the experiential nature of learning (Moon, 2005) and

practitioner intuition (Atkinson and Claxton, 2001) have been acknowledged as important aspects of the professional knowledge, identity and practices of a teacher. There is therefore a history, both in the US and UK, of reflective practice being linked to the professional identity of those who teach adults. Whilst evident it has been relatively limited and has existed on the fringes rather than in the mainstream. That is up until now in the UK when reflective practice has become part of the mainstream CPD requirements for all teachers in the Lifelong Learning sector.

Although this could be viewed as progress there are dangers when such a complex notion as reflection is conscripted by policy makers in an attempt to professionalise a workforce through regulation. There are several areas of concern which may be raised about such conscription. The first is that that reflection may not be contextualised within practice resulting in apathy and creating 'I have to do something – I'll do anything' view. Secondly, it can become individualised and be seen as a way of simple problem solving. This may result in reducing an open view of practice looking at critical incidents only as negative and concentrating upon short term remedies. Thirdly, an externally imposed reflection can become instrumental lacking relevance and purpose thus preventing critical analysis of wider connections to policies and institutional practices. In relation to this last point Zukas (2006: 75) argues that as reflection has become institutionalised the reflective practitioner may have more in common with the discourse of competencies rather than being an alternative to it. She points out that as a result the individual teacher becomes seen as the sole location of learning where self-improvement is expected to overcomes problems – whatever the institutional context or reasons. Zukas adds that within institutionalised reflection blame can be attached to the individual teacher who fails to reflect adequately: "it has become a technique to be applied or a competence to be practised".

Although reflection is increasingly being used as a cornerstone of professionalisation the link between professionalism and reflection is less than straightforward with different notions of professionalism being utilised. Edwards and Nicoll (2006) cite three: the technical expert, the competent practitioner and the reflective practitioner. They argue that the reflective practitioner has become "almost hegemonic" (p.115) so that the notion of reflection does not always do justice to what they identify as the "reflexive intertextual and interdiscursive practices that make it possible" (p.123). In other words it does not account for how it is formed, performed and used within what they describe as a contemporary discourse of professionalism. The recent debates and emerging discourses around professionalism in the further education sector are also questioned by James and Biesta (2007) who argue that in the current climate only the narrowest notions of professionalism are allowed to prevail. They cite research from the Transforming Learning Cultures project to show that a managerial perspective allows only a *reduced* or *restricted* professionalism to exist, something they suggest could apply to carpet fitter as much as a teacher. Although acknowledging the externally driven pace of change surrounding professionalism they do recognise that what they term as an *expanded* concept of professionality remains *"even in the face of repeated and pervasive challenges to autonomy and scope for self determination of the practitioners"* (p.139). This suggests resistance to externally imposed changes that counteract experienced teachers' sense of their own professional standards linked to their practice. It also shows the length of time taken for top down policy to have an effect.

Central to the discourse of professionalism is the notion of good practice. Here the interlocking relationship between these well-used, but frequently not defined concepts, appear

with an implicit assumption that good practice will be achieved through reflection and continual professional development. However, Coffield and Edwards (2009:372) argue that centrally determined policy which 'drives' the improvement of teaching and learning in the post-compulsory sector (in a similar way to James and Biesta above) is "like a ratchet screwdriver with no reverse movement allowed; only constant forward progress is acceptable." Such a continual forward progress is in tension with reflective practice, based upon a complex understanding of pedagogy, something which takes time. Coffield and Edwards ask if good practice can be identified in the Lifelong Learning sector and if so how it can be transmitted. This is particularly relevant in further education because of the wide range of subjects taught, the different teaching contexts and the aspirations of different students Rather than professionalism being based implicitly on received ideas of good practice what is needed is a sense of professional identities that explore complex pedagogies and which see learners as persons in the real world (Zukas and Malcolm, 2007).

The challenge emerging from the discussion above is therefore to explore ways of ensuring that professional development is relevant, contextual and takes account of all of those involved in the teaching learning nexus. As part of this process it is necessary to question what being a professional educator means by interrogating what counts as good practice using critical reflection and theory as thinking and talking tools rather than as simple procedures. Some of these challenges were negotiated in the project which supported teacher educators to write a book collaboratively about their experiences, insights and beliefs about teaching.

Collaborative Writing for Publication

The Initial Teacher Training programme at the University of Central Lancashire is a large and diverse partnership with fourteen colleges and almost 1800 students. As part of their study all students undertake a compulsory action research module enabling them to reflect upon and change their practice using research. This successful module has produced some profound insights, sometimes based upon 'failed' research, and nearly always generates critical and thoughtful discussions. Students comment on the importance of this structured space enabling them to talk and think critically about their own practice. A selection of the research reports are published in a university sponsored journal *Through the Looking Glass* which is sold to the partner colleges and to the next intake of students – increasingly over the last four years to other higher education institutions providing teacher training. The structure of the module and writing for publication provides the authors with a newly emerging professional identity, as an academic writer, whilst providing the programme with published material that is relevant and relates to a range of disciplines and contexts.

The success of *Through the Looking Glass* for both individual professional development and for the development of the programme prompted me to question how to create a similar space for the teacher educators. A small grant from the university enabled plans for a sister publication to be written by the teacher educators, and like the journal, to be published by the university. The grant enabled two editors, myself from the university and a colleague Concetta Banks from a partner college, to support writing, editing and the production of a book. It also provided a small amount for the authors to buy themselves out of teaching and for travel expenses.

Eleven tutors and managers responded to an open invitation to join a collaborative writing project to produce a book about teaching and learning in the partnership. All eleven, six

women and five men, had experience of teaching across a range of subject areas from catering to accountancy and varied but significant experience of working in teacher education. Although willing to share their knowledge and understanding, as a way of developing themselves, most had reservations about their writing ability and having anything to say that would be worth reading. They were also concerned about being too busy to give enough time and attention to what they felt would be a challenge. These are common fears expressed by those in education but not practised at academic writing (Morss and Murray, 2001; Moore, 2003; Murray et al, 2008; Murray, 2002). As way of structuring the process to take account of these reservations and practical constraints we held two facilitated collaborative writing days with additional and continual on-line support. The first of the two writing days, held at the university, provided a space to talk and discuss what was important in terms of teaching and learning. This was a physical and mental space that most commented they didn't have in their work, in spite of increased CPD requirements. The debates were at times heated as people reconnected with their politics and passion about teaching. This space to think and talk, to question and to explore was experienced as a world away from the requirements to "always be doing" at college. From wide ranging debates, which included remembering what was significant in their own biographies and training, to difficult and sometimes painful issues in their current work, each decided upon a focus for their own piece. The content which reflected their knowledge, insights and concerns was shared and worked upon with others in small groups as ideas were refined and refocussed. Each author also became a peer reviewer as well as colleague and in some cases mentor. In discussion it was agreed not have a template for writing or an overall writing style, instead allowing individual voices to represent the breadth of experiences, insight and intuition across the partnership.

A second writing day allowed authors protected space to write, discuss and edit each others work more closely gaining a sense of the emerging book as a whole and its potential use for their teaching. There was a sense of ownership and pride in producing something that, when finished, would be a valuable resource to support teaching and learning across the partnership. Over following months drafts were worked on with the editors by email fitting in and around the teacher educator's busy timetables and workloads. Some authors found this stage comparatively easy and merely tidied up pieces. For others this stage was more difficult either in adapting to academic conventions, such as providing references, or in questioning the authenticity of their piece and its relevance to readers. One author grappled with the issue of relevance which he then took into his classroom – the outcome was for him "one of those moments that you remember why you are a teacher" and for the book a powerful chapter which models critical reflection in action as well as some excellent pedagogical insight.

The chapters reflect the concerns and passions of the authors and address various issues within their own teaching. These are issues and insights they want to speak publicly about or raise for wider debate. The chapters cover a range of material including: looking at the experiences of vocational tutors managing their own learning, passing on significant motivational texts to counter cynicism, using images in teaching, using action research, mentoring, feminist pedagogy, assessing trainee teachers with learning difficulties, passion and politics in current initial teacher training, quality assurance, the learning cycle of managing a partnership. The range itself provides a fascinating snapshot of teacher educators' self- chosen concerns to be voiced and shared with others.

Whilst the book was being prepared for printing many of the authors attended a university conference discussing their experiences of collaborative writing. They supported first steps in writing for participants who attended, mirroring the process of their own writing journey, and spoke about the challenges and benefits of writing collaboratively. The challenges they described included not having enough time, as even with financial support to buy their time out they had no one else to fill their commitments. Therefore for most writing became an extra task to be fitted in at weekends or between marking assignments. Working with personal beliefs, politics and passion about education meant negotiating and accommodating differences. This was not always experienced as easy by all members of the group and at points needed careful facilitation to ensure that every voice was heard and that a respectful balance was maintained between core principles and values. Many found exposing themselves as novices in collaborative writing, rather than as expert teacher educators, required identity negotiation and management; this was experienced at times as uncomfortable. Many described expressing themselves in writing difficult with several commenting that 'writing is hard' something that academics do. This ironically reinforced the very barrier between 'thinking' in higher and 'doing' in further education that was itself being challenged by the book. It does show how difficult these barriers or assumptions are to change in the short term. Struggling with writing did however serve, as several authors commented, as a reminder of the difficulties students face as they undertake a programme that is predominately text based assessment. Lastly, many said they found themselves dealing with apathy and antagonism from colleagues or other managers in their institutions. Several reported being accused of wasting time indicating the pervasive nature and strength of the 'doing' culture in which they work where reflection may be an external requirement for professional status but is not regarded as an essential pedagogical tool.

The benefits described by the authors were in providing a supported space to think and talk about practice and pedagogy. All the contributors, whether managers or tutors, spoke of the increased pressure in further education to drive up students numbers, of new initiatives and larger student groups which left no time to reflect upon and develop their own practices. Whilst they supported linking theory, practice and research for their trainee teachers they had no time and little support to do this for themselves. Discussions in the writing days enabled a reassessment and reassertion of 'what mattered' individually and collectively as each person reconnected and re-examined their ideas. Some of the discussion focussed on big scale issues such as current educational ideology and feminist pedagogy whilst other areas looked at teaching practices such as alternative assessment for tutors with poor literacy or using symbols in teaching. The supported space enabled this engagement to be critical as my role as facilitator enabled ideas to be extended and revised in professional dialogue (see Brookfield 1995). A dialogical approach enabled voices, often several different and sometimes contradictory voices, to be heard. These are voices which more often transmit the educational theories or ideas of others rather than speaking themselves. Reflecting on the value of taking part one contributor wrote:

"This was the first chance to stop and think about and issue I have felt strongly about but had not previously written about. It was time to take stock and identify how I would like to see change implemented and what would be the consequence for that change.

Another described the process as a joy if rather exposing:

"I've valued discussing the issues/ideas with like-minded colleagues.We do this so little in FE and it's such a joy to be given time to do this. It's hugely stimulating if rather exposing!"

Despite challenges writing the book called *Looking back and moving forward: Reflecting on our practice as teacher educators:* (Appleby and Banks, 2009) has been successful. It has provided a structured thinking space to support critical professional development of those involved as authors. The authors became 'authorised and authoritative writers' in the words of Rowena Murray (Murray, 2002). It has produced a text which is relevant and contextual exploring what is meant by good practice for teachers in the Lifelong Learning sector. The authors use their own practice knowledge, insight and intuition as well as sharing their beliefs, passions and uncertainties. To paraphrase Zukas and Malcom (2007) they are real people relating to students as real people in the real world of teaching and learning. The 'realness' is significant as Bathmaker and Avis (2007) argue, as it is important to understand how further education lecturer's identities are formed in the context of their students' behaviours and expectations. They suggest that recognition of this identity formation is essential if initial teacher training and continuing professional development are:

"...to intervene in lecturer's pedagogical practice in ways which are meaningful in the context of their lives, experience of working in further education and which go beyond the instrumental notion of simply changing teachers techniques as a way of improving their practice". (Bathmaker and Avis, 2007: 512)

The individual chapters, and the book as a whole, model teachers exploring their own practice in ways that are more complex and challenging than simple techniques for improvement. One of the beliefs that underpinned the work of thinking, talking and writing was a commitment to authenticity; that is authenticity of self and the professional role of teacher. Authenticity, although not an uncontested concept, is rooted in recognition of the significance of learners and the need to be open to possibilities of an interchange between teaching and learning. This is explored by Kreber et al (2009: 41) who suggest that authenticity in teaching "involves features such as being genuine, becoming more self aware, being defined by one's self rather than but others' expectations, bringing parts of oneself into interactions with students and critically reflecting on self, others, relationships and context". The collaborative writing project has produced a book which will support the learning of others by providing space for teacher educators to articulate, share and write about what matters to them as authentic professionals. Does it however, returning to my earlier question, contribute a useful model for continuing professional development? I will consider this in relation to collaboration as opposed to individualism, the types of professional knowledge being articulated and lastly whether this type of collaboration supports critical, relevant reflective practice for those engaged in it.

Developing Learning Cultures for Professional Development through Writing and Reflection

Collaboration is an important way of making sure that professional development is not an individualistic problem solving activity. Collaboration is however something that could be

argued as being under threat within individual competences discourses in further education and the wider Lifelong Learning sector. In opposition to individual learning the notion of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) is used extensively in different educational discourses as a way of recognising informal, social and community aspects of learning. Although an alternative, and seductive, vision it is rather more difficult to see it happening in reality. In their recent work James and Biesta (2007: 137) found what they described as a fragmented sector with no discernable communities of practice as many staff had left the sector or teaching altogether. Also Barton and Tusting (2005) point out issues of power and context remain largely unexamined within Wenger's notion of communities of practice. This has the effect of reducing the ability to explain clearly how situated learning does or does not take place, also making it difficult to talk about absences and analyse what contributes to institutional constraints for such communities existing.

In our project the collaborative writing was part of a wider professional network which supports what James and Biesta (2007) call a learning culture. This is perhaps a more useful conception of a situated learning frame that sees learning as "located in the interactions between context, concept and activity" (p.11). Zukas (2006; 71) points out that in post-compulsory teacher education there is often little regard for supporting the existence of learning cultures. The project was able to do this by creating a collaborative space within an existing professional network that took account of the contexts and purposes of education and training. Rather than being a simple community of practice the project extended and developed the learning culture within the existing network by creating and supporting a time limited and managed space. Issues of power, context and purpose were addressed in the planning, facilitation and management of the writing process – both through talk and text. Although individuals developed their own focus and voice this was within a collaborative enterprise where the overall aim was not to solve problems but rather to uncover some of the difficulties, tensions and paradoxes of teaching. The book is seen and valued as a shared enterprise where each person has learned through their own writing and in supporting the writing of other professional colleagues.

If continuing professional development can be collaborative what type of professional knowledge is being articulated, both for self and for others and can it be critical and contextual? Coffield and Edwards (2009: 386) questioning what is 'good', 'best' and 'excellent' practice provide a useful frame for thinking about the elements of [professional] practice that need to be acknowledged and then transferred in post-sixteen learning. The elements in summary include:

- Context, accounting for the localities teachers and students come from.
- Knowledge, how official knowledge relates to situated work based knowledge.
- Curriculum, what knowledge should be presented to students?
- Pedagogy, does teaching methods match the subject?
- Assessment, what is the impact of assessment on students?
- Management, what are the policy and institutional constraints upon teaching?
- Students, what are their needs and understandings?
- CPD, what do teachers need to know about teaching and learning?
- Society, how does national and local employment impact upon students and college?

The thinking, talking and writing of the book in one way or another covered each of these aspects. The authors took account of teaching and learning localities from large ethnically diverse populations to those that were rural mono-industrial townscapes with rising unemployment. Many translated and questioned what counts as 'official knowledge' using examples from their own histories and experience. Several explored what knowledge should be presented to students and critically questioned how this knowledge should be assessed fairly. Almost all questioned their own teaching with instances of honest reflection about what didn't work despite good intentions. In all chapters students and their learning were central to the purpose of what was produced. Most authors reflected upon the 'bigger picture' of policy and the link to their practices in the classroom or in teacher education more generally.

Coffield and Edward's frame of good [professional] practice matches closely the content of the book suggesting that collaborative talking and thinking produced a critical space which is reflected textually in the book. Moreover the articulation of the authors' collective knowledge supported not only their development, as teachers and writers, but also the development of the intended audience whether trainees or experienced teachers. Is it not simply the type of knowledge itself that is significant but the collaborative process which allows a richer and more diverse set of knowledges and pedagogies to be shared illuminating a greater range of practices and dilemmas from the 'real' world of teaching.

The last part of my question considers if this type of collaboration within a learning culture can support critical and relevant continuing professional development through reflective practice. Here I will use Brookfield's (1995) work on critical reflection where he uses four critically reflective lenses to view teaching. The first lens, our autobiographies as learners and teachers enables us to imagine what it feels to be a learner by remembering our own learning experiences. Several of the teacher educators, as authors, took this as their starting point using imagined dairies to express and share the fears and resistances they heard from student teachers in their classes. The second lens, our students' eyes, asks that we see ourselves as students see us. Several chapters of the book took the students' experience as the main focus using action research methods to look more closely at student feedback and responses to pedagogical or assessment changes. The third lens, our colleague's experiences, suggests that we engage in critical conversation and take account of colleagues reading of situations. Nearly all the thinking, talking and writing for the book was based upon critical conversation and peer-collaboration. This provided ongoing reflective dialogues becoming the basis for individual chapters and the book as a whole. The fourth lens, theoretical literature, provides multiple interpretations and naming of both differences and commonalities. Whilst authors were not required to write a highly theoretical academic piece it was expected that the writing be rigorous and informed. This meant reading widely, locating experiences within current research or writing and referencing clearly to signpost readers to significant and interesting material. Although seen as somewhat daunting each author reflected this was an important aspect of their professional development which they would not have gained elsewhere.

Rather than simply providing a recipe book of 'how to do reflection' Brookfield explores what critical reflection means for teaching. For him it has the potential to explore the ideological base of teaching and to find strategies to be effective whilst being critical. It supports the idea that we are in continual formation and that our teaching can be both dynamic as well as democratic. All are aspects of critical reflection that the individual authors and the book touch upon. One of the most significant outcomes of reflection which he mentions in

relation to our writing project is discovering voice. Brookfield suggests that: "In becoming critically reflective, we also learn to speak about our practice in a way that is authentic and consistent" (p. 43). In writing many of the authors did find their voice and speak with authenticity and commitment to their practice as teachers.

The project of collaborative writing I believe has provided an alternative to individualistic models of professionalisation that use CPD loosely based on reflective practice. It has been rigorous and sustained with support from other members of the group and the editors. The types of professional knowledge articulated through discussions and shared in the pages of the book are relevant and relate to 'real contexts' and the 'real people' who occupy them. They have come from practice and relate to complexities and challenges of those practices. They are based on authenticity and commitment not to compliance with an externally imposed regulatory framework. The reason and purpose of the project was shared and developed by those involved allowing it to grow and accommodate both the passions and politics of the authors. The content of the book shows that collaborative writing supports critical, relevant reflective practice for those engaged in the process. It provides a place for counter narratives (Giroux et al, 1993) to be heard more widely and taken into different public or policy domains. Also, publishing those who are more often readers than authors can be a transgressive act (hooks, 1994) that challenges the power and ownership of the written word. It is hoped this will stimulate a similar empowering response for those who read the book.

Concluding Remarks

Whilst writing collaboratively offers a useful method to support continuing professional development, particularly for busy educators, there are also limitations. The first is resources. In the project a small sum of money was available for directly buying time out for all the participants, for travel and for publication costs. Additional indirect university resources also included accommodation and the ongoing partnership network. Although limited this was described by the authors as significant but relied upon good will and much work in private time. The second limitation is the need for an experienced facilitator to ensure that any thinking and talking space is productive, equitable and respectful. Structure and support are important features of successful collaboration and need to be planned in. It may also be helpful to have someone who has experience of supporting the writing of others'. Crossing the boundary between FE and HE is however sometimes difficult as different skills are used or required in each, which may make finding facilitators who have the necessary skills and experience difficult.

These concerns raise for us the issue of sustainability – we have produced something worthwhile for continuing professional development can we keep it going? We are exploring this question looking at ways of publishing on the web, of gaining continued support from the university and of dovetailing aspects of this work into our developing master's programmes. Whilst resources are finite we have seen how the developing learning culture has created other opportunities. The confidence gained by the authors has enabled the formation of an editorial group, from across the partnership, to manage and edit the journal *Through the Looking Glass*. In terms of professional development by creating a critical space to think, talk and write some of these authors have moved from teacher to author and from author to editor suggesting that there are collaborative and flexible ways to support sustainability not previously anticipated.

The project worked on several levels, as outlined in the paper, but I recognise is not easily replicable or sustainable. Perhaps however this is not a negative thing as the discussions above show that once a reflective process becomes imposed or applied out of context, becoming a product, it loses much of the meanings that make it a value learning tool. The project provides, at best, an example of what is possible from a critical perspective of current professionalisation and continuing professional development debates.

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About the Author

Dr. Yvon Appleby

I have worked as a community educator and as a full time researcher, both which support my current work in teacher education. In community education I used a variety of teaching and learning methods to engage learners who were often marginalised. Many of these teaching insights were turned into 'evidence' as a full time researcher working in the field of adult literacy. A social practice approach enabled a connection to be made between what people learn in class and what they learn and use in their everday lives. Much of this reserach has been used to support teachers in this field. These insights and experiences underpin my work in teacher education particularly looking at teachers as learners.

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