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Teacher and Student Teacher Mobility: Learning in Transnational Contexts
Kari Smith
University of Bergen

Introduction

The paper is written within the framework of the theme of the conference, *Teacher Professional Development for the Quality and Equity of Lifelong Learning,* which, in the current paper, is expanded to Teacher and Student Teacher Mobility**.** In the first part of the paper various models of professional development are introduced followed by a brief discussion why professional development is important to all educators, teacher educators, teachers, and students of teaching alike, to improve education at all levels. It is claimed that a clear career ladder for teachers is needed to encourage practitioners who see working with children as their main concern to engage in professional development.

The next part of the paper focuses on professional mobility of teacher educators, teachers and students of teaching. Opportunities for mobility differ for the three groups, and the question is raised if school teachers form a professional group which is less likely to move from one teaching context to another across national and cultural borders.

In the final part of the paper the issue whether teacher education in general prepares teachers for teaching in multi- cultural classes, the reality in many European countries, is discussed.

Models of professional development

The literature offers multiple models of professional development, however, in the current paper two basic ones, Kolb's classical model of experiential learning from 1984 (Kolb, 1984) and a more recent model by Brunstad (Brunstad, 2007) are developed.

Kolb's model is rooted in experience, on which the practitioner reflects from a meta-cognitive perspective, tries to reach a personal abstract understanding of the experience, and in light of this revises future action. The model, as presented by Kolb, reflects an isolated development process which

does not receive input from others, thus neglects to take a socio-cultural view of learning (Vygotsky, 1986; Wenger, 1998) into consideration. The following model agrees with development processes reflected in Kolb's model, but sees external input as essential to initiating professional growth (Smith, 2007).

*Figure 1: Socio-cultural model of professional development*
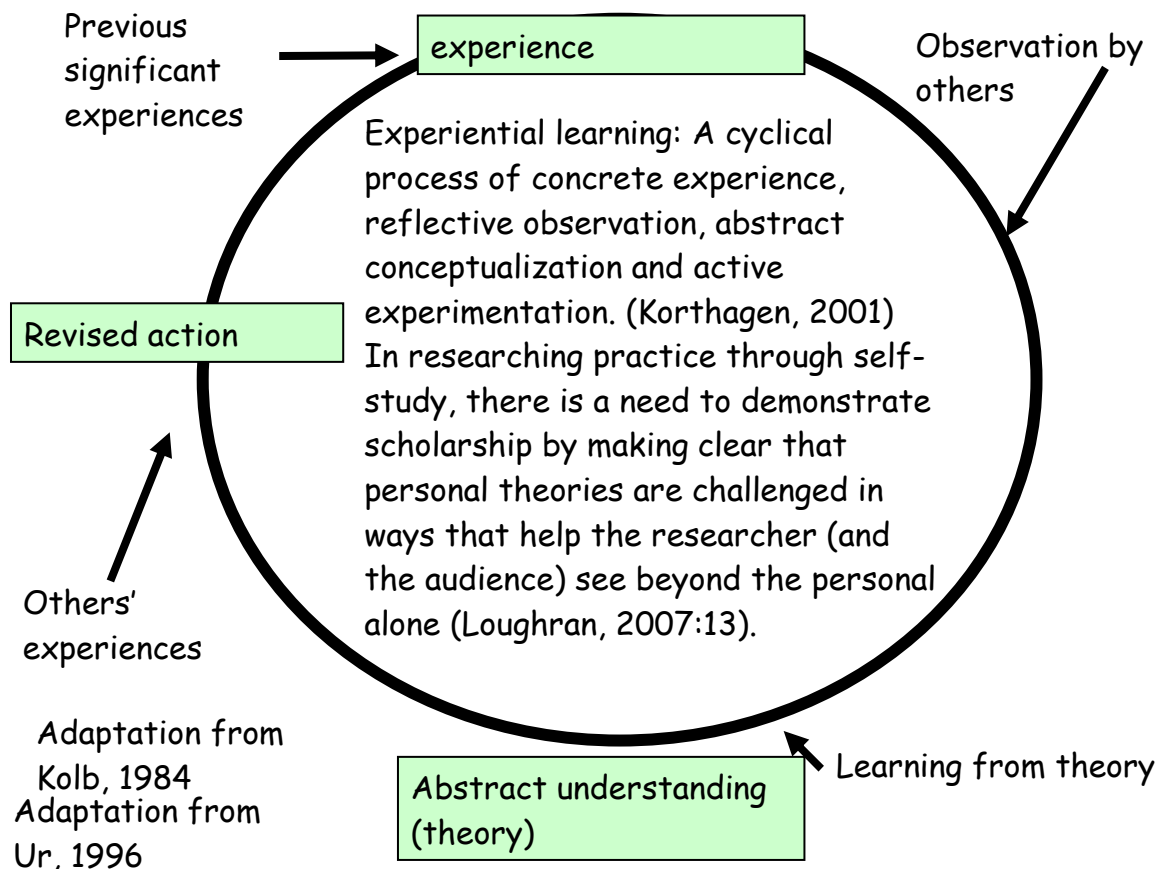
Ur (1996) suggests that reflective processes are influenced by the practitioners' previous experiences feedback from significant others who observed the action, and input from relevant research and literature which enriches the personal theory at which the person arrives. Practical experiences of others are drawn into the reflective process, thus the revised action is formed in light of a dialogue with oneself and with input by external sources.

The above model is supported by Korthagen (2001) who presented a similar reflective cycle, the ALACT model, and by Loughran (2007) who emphasises the need to go beyond the personal reflection. Kolb himself started to use the term "the reflective dialogue" in an interview he gave to the journal LifeLong Learning in Europe (LLinE) in 1998 (Kolb, 1998).

A second professional development model is adapted from Brunstad, (2007) who examines professional practice in light of the relationship between practical skills (techne), abstract understanding (episteme) and practical wisdom (phronesis).

Figure 2: Brunstad's(2007) liminal model
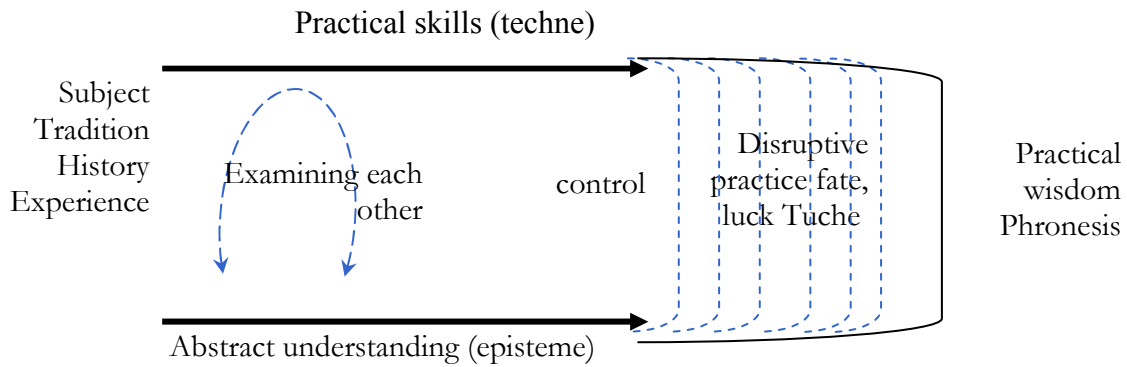
Professions are rooted in a subject tradition built on a long history and record of experiences. Professional learning includes studying the theory of the profession (episteme) as well as practicing the technical skills (techne) of the profession. The two constantly examine each other, they monitor each other so the two lines are parallel, and the practitioner is in full control as long as this occurs. However, the reality of many professions cannot be fully controlled by carefully planning. There is a space of disruptive practice where fate and luck (tuche) play a major role, and it is within this space decisions are made and actions are taken in light of the practical wisdom (phronesis) of the professional. Practical wisdom reflects, according to Brunstad (2007), three main features: 1.memory, learning from past experiences, 2.open-mindedness, listening to advice and counsel from others, 3. imagination, the ability to foresee possible consequences of actions taken.

Figure 3, Model of professional autonomy
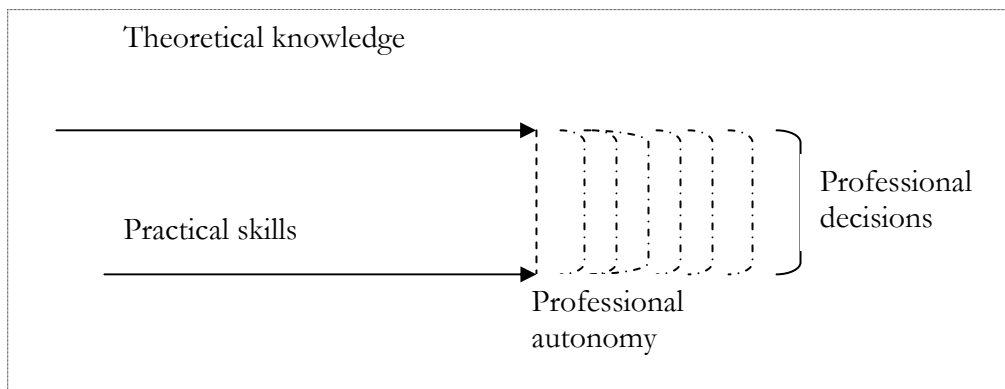
(Adaption of Brunstad's model from 2007)

The above model is an adaptation of Brunstad's model (2007). It discusses the space where the practitioner needs to exercise professional autonomy which goes beyond knowledge and skills acquired within a formal education program. Within this space practitioners draw upon theoretical and practical information acquired during formal education when deciding on how to act in particular situations. It is, however, the context that not only creates the situation, it is the analysis of the context that determines professional actions taken. Thus, formal education is an essential basic requirement for practitioners, but it is not sufficient when professional decisions have to be taken to handle unique situations in unique contexts. It is professional wisdom (phronesis) which determines the quality of professional actions within the autonomous space. It is within this space that most professional development takes place.

Teaching is a vocation which by nature engages practitioners in ongoing professional development as long as they remain in the profession. Moreover, teachers at all levels have a professional responsibility to engage in continuous professional development activities due to the function of modelling which is inherit in the profession. Teachers model to students how they constantly question and reflect on their own work with the purpose of learning and development, they engage in lifelong learning. Teacher educators model continuous professional development through self-study to student teachers who then will be better equipped to act likewise and serve as models for lifelong learners as teachers to their students in school.

Teachers' career development

Whereas recently teacher educators' professional development as academics is frequently documented in presentations at national and international conferences and in publications, teachers' professional development is, to a large extent, tacit and unknown to the external professional community. This might serve as a demotivating factor for teachers who want to engage in continuous professional development (OECD, 2005). What is the purpose when there is no recognition of time and effort teachers put into becoming better teachers, when there is no career ladder for teachers who want to continue teaching in school, working with children, instead of becoming principals or university based teacher educators?

Research has found that there are clear stages for teacher development (Berliner, 1992), and some countries have developed a progressive career route for teachers, e.g. USA with National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and Scotland with the Chartered Teacher certificate (Scottish Executive, 2002). In both examples teachers with experience in schools are invited to document

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formal and informal development processes in a professional portfolio, and hand it in for examination for an advanced diploma of teaching which guarantees a higher professional status as well as economic benefits. The American model also requires a written exam of core knowledge for teachers. Similar models are, however, missing in most countries.

Below is a model for a five stage professional career ladder for teachers, which is likely to serve as an incentive and encourages teachers to engage in professional development activities.

Figure 4. Model for career development of teachers (Smith, 2005)
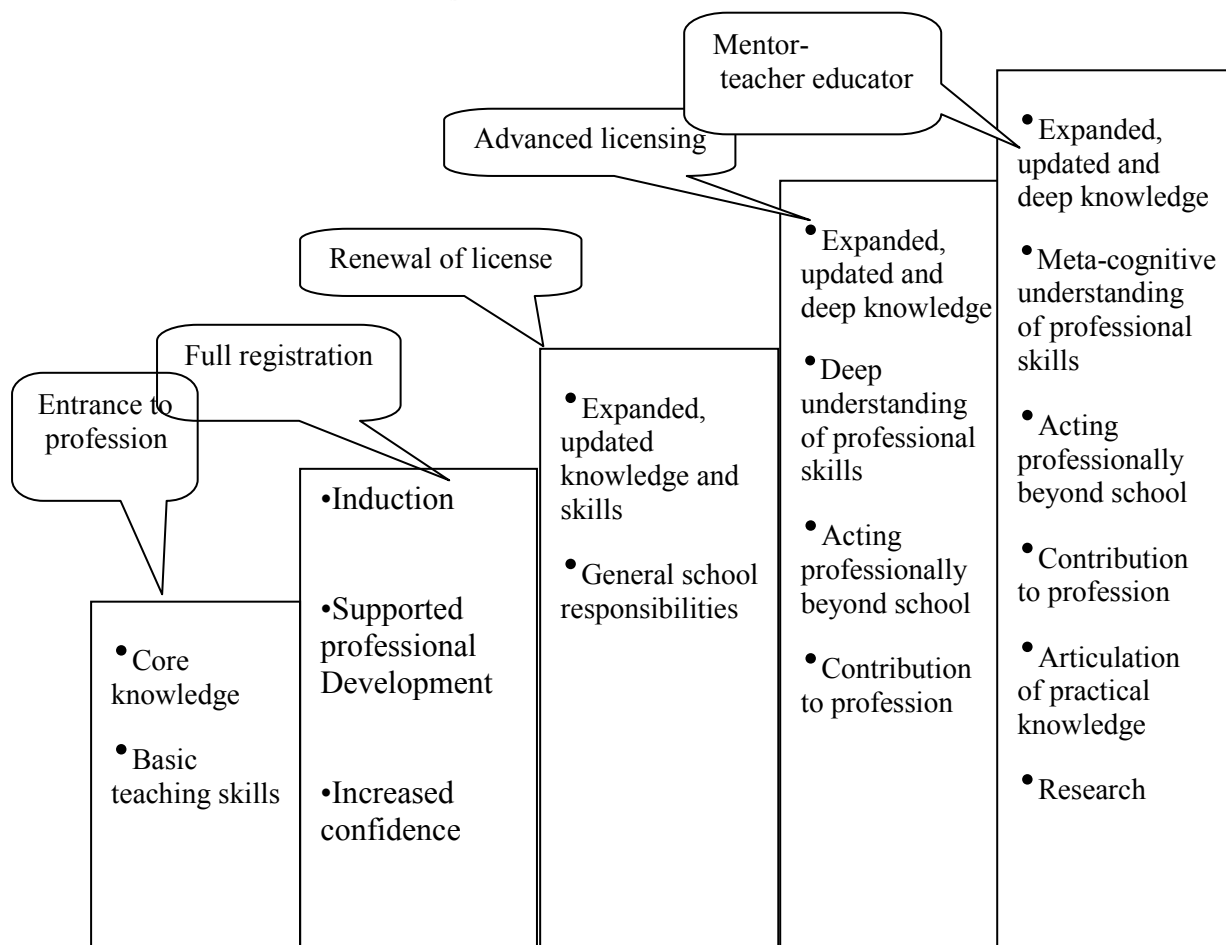
In the above model novice teacher enters the profession with essential basic theoretical as well as practical knowledge required of a qualified teacher. They are being mentored and supported during the induction period, and upon completing this stage the novice teacher is fully registered as a member of the profession. The recommendation in the current model is that the licence needs to be renewed after a few years (e.g. 3) , and for renewal the teacher is required to document expanded professional knowledge as well as taking on responsibilities in school beyond personal teaching responsibilities. A suggested fourth stage offers advanced licensing similar to certificates offered within the American

and Scottish systems as described above. Updated and rich professional knowledge is required, as well as documentation of professional understanding and analysis of   personal activities within the autonomous space. At this stage, the teacher is also required to undertake professional responsibilities beyond the school level, such as being active in professional associations, being involved with creating teaching materials, and engaging in other activities for which the teacher receives professional and financial acknowledgement. The final stage in the current career model suggests that school teachers act as school-based teacher educators in addition to teaching children in school. Experienced and coursed teachers become mentors for students of teaching during the Practicum as well as mentors for novice teachers in their school. The added requirements are of a high professional level in which teachers are not only expected to have a deep understanding of professional practice in general, as well as of their own, but they are required to articulate their professional wisdom (phronesis) so it becomes accessible to students of teaching and teachers at the very beginning of their careers. Teachers who act as mentors are expected to document formal (mentor training) as well as informal professional development. Their working time is divided between teaching children and mentoring responsibilities, the latter cannot be expected to be done as a supplement to full teaching responsibilities. Also at this stage the professional and financial status needs to be enhanced.

Such a career ladder for teachers serves as milestones for professional development, there is a purpose in making the effort to engage in continuous learning, and it is likely to retain good and experienced practitioners who want to work with children in the profession because of an increased acknowledgement of the professional as well as the financial status of the teacher. Moreover, it is a cyclical process for the profession itself, in which professional knowledge is not lost when experienced teachers retire, and the older generation takes on responsibility for educating new members of the profession.

Professional mobility

The next part of the paper discusses issues related to mobility, mobility of teacher educators, teachers, as well as that of student teachers. The claim made is that there are unequal possibilities for trans-national mobility for teacher educators, teachers and students of teaching.

Teacher educators are expected to be internationally oriented in their own learning by being engaged in professional national and cross-national networks, meeting colleagues from other countries at conferences, through publishing research, and by reading professional literature published in international journals. In order to enjoy academic promotion, most teacher educators are required to be active in trans-national learning contexts, engaging in virtual and face- to- face development activities.

Academic teacher educators are often offered opportunities to spend sabbaticals in foreign institutions as visiting lecturers, researchers or just as observers of different teacher education programs. Some universities encourage faculty members to take on a part-time position in a foreign institution to strengthen the professional dialogue across borders. Thus teacher educators' mobility is, to a certain extent, an integrated part of their professional responsibility.

School teachers face a different reality, as their professional learning is to a large extent local, to a lesser extent, national, and to a very little, if at all, extent, international. Effective school teaching is related to a unique context reflecting a specific pedagogic and cultural tradition, national and local educational policy which dictates what to teach, sometimes also how to teach, and very much how assessment is to be carried out. Teaching is evaluated within the contexts in which it takes place. Research points at some core-elements in teaching which are the same across national and cultural borders, mainly aspects of teaching related to the ethics of the profession (Christie & Smith, 2005), however, cultural and language differences are limitations to teachers' professional mobility and trans- national learning. Other barriers are heavy teaching loads, lack of time and opportunities for internationalisation, and the pressure caused by numerous educational reforms which dictate teachers' professional development activities. Practicing school teachers are not expected to act internationally, and mobility opportunities are limited.

Student teachers are in a different position as many countries not only encourage students to take part of their education abroad, but some programmes require that students spend a semester or more in a foreign country. The advantages of this are numerous, however, there are equity issues related to accepting foreign students into an academic program that need to be addressed.

There are various reasons why academic institutions have a multi-national and cultural student population. Beyond the vast financial aspects for the universities which are not discussed in this paper, student mobility has become part of European academic education. Smith (2004) describes this as follows:

 "Students from other countries who study for a shorter period in a foreign country participate in exchange programmes or in programmes such as the "Erasmus" and "Socrates". Gordon and Jallade (1996) call these students of *organized mobility students* (p. 4). Another group of students are students who have chosen to take all their higher education in a foreign country. The reasons vary, they may not have been accepted into the chosen field of study in their home country, such as Dutch students studying medicine in Belgium (Gordon and Jallade, 1996). The requested field of study may not exist in their home country (Israeli students of veterinary studying in Europe), or the quality of the desired field of study is not sufficiently high in their home country (the attractiveness of

engineering and business studies in UK). These are students of *spontaneous mobility* (Gordon and Jallade, 1996, p.3) " (Smith, 2004, pp. 78-79).

International experiences offer students a wide range of intellectual endeavours and opportunities to develop international competencies (Stier, 2003), both of which lead to acceptance of differences (Maundeni, 2001) and enhanced understanding of own culture when seen in light of other cultures (Myburgh et al., 2002). What students gain by going international is more than what they feel they lose (Smith, 2004), however, challenges foreign students meet when undertaking studies in a foreign university cannot be minimised and deserve special attention. Research points at foreign students experiencing that language is an obstacle to achievement (Myburgh et al., 2002), and so are cultural differences reflected in values and morals as well as in educational background (Maundeni, 2001). European universities have welcomed foreign students for a long time, however, there has not been sufficient acknowledgement of difficulties these students might meet and not enough initiatives taken to support foreign students. Universities need to pay attention to the fact that studying in a foreign language is an equity issue, and assessment needs to be adapted accordingly. Moreover, foreign students often feel socially isolated, at least in the beginning, and a well- organised support net-work is necessary for any university which opens its gates to students from other countries. Universities which have formally coursed members of faculty in the cultures, norms and customs of foreign cultures to work with foreign students, take the responsibility of going international seriously, and are likely to provide international students with a rewarding experience.

Educating teachers for the multi-cultural school

It is especially important that students of teaching, future teachers, are mobile and experience foreign cultures. Numerous classrooms in a number of European countries consist of multi-cultural pupil populations representing cultures from within and beyond Europe. However, most teachers represent the main culture of the respective country as frequently documented in the international research literature(Mentor et al., 2006, Scotland; Santoro & Reid, 2006, Australia; Leeman, 2006, The Netherlands; Magos, 2006, Greece; Lesar et al., 2006, Slovenia). There is a lack of understanding of "the other" among teachers, a fact that causes difficulties for all stakeholders of education, however, mainly for pupils and teachers.

The claim put forward in the current paper is that teacher education does not adequately prepare teachers to face the many challenges of inclusive education and multicultural classrooms, in brief, teachers are not sufficiently prepared to work with heterogeneous student populations. Teachers admit to the fact that they do not feel qualified to work with multi-cultural pupil populations (Humphrey et

al. 2006; Tomlinson, 2003), and the feeling of not doing enough for all children is intensified by the requirements of teachers in educational contexts driven by an accountability policy to ensure that "no child is left behind". In such contexts teachers' professional autonomy is minimized resulting in a reductive teaching typology.

 A plausible explanation for the failure of many teacher education programs to adequately prepare novice teachers to work with diverse student populations is that teacher education itself enjoys a rather homogeneous student population and student teachers are not exposed to how teacher educators model working with students of high diversity. However, if quality and equity are on the educational agenda, then this has to be prioritised in professional development activities at all levels. If not, Europe will face an increasing number of pupils who are left behind, and just raising the standards for learning and criteria for achievement does not solve the problem, on the contrary, it makes it worse. Teacher education institutions are recommended to revisit their programmes with the purpose of preparing teachers to work in the reality of European schools today, the multi-cultural school.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to highlight the importance for continuous professional development for three main groups of practitioners in education, teacher educators, teachers and students of teaching. Professional growth is dependent on creating a wider professional knowledge-base, but this, in itself, does not guarantee professional growth. Professional growth is reflected in decisions made and actions taken within an autonomous space which is inherent in the work of practitioners. The wider the autonomy practitioners are given by the educational system, the more seriously are practitioners likely to exercise professional responsibility, taken that the professional knowledge base is solid. The danger is that reforms and directives made by politicians and decision-makers effect teachers' professional space, and as a result a reductive typology of teaching takes over (Stronach et al., 2002; Cochran Smith, 2001).

To maintain teachers' enthusiasm for engaging in professional development activities, it is suggested that a career ladder for teachers is designed. An acknowledged linear professional development process is believed not only to serve as an incentive for teachers to become career long learners, but also to provide public recognition of teachers who invest in their personal professional growth to satisfy themselves and also to contribute to an increasing improvement of the teaching profession.

The last part of the paper discusses mobility of the three practitioner groups which are the focus of the current discussion. Whereas teacher educators and students of teaching enjoy extensive opportunities for mobility across borders as inherent in their professional responsibilities, the situation differs for

school teachers. Quality of teaching is determined by the context in which it takes place (Smith, 2005), and it is therefore not expected of teachers that they gain experience across nations. However, such a view needs to be revisited when looking at European schools today. Numerous schools serve multi-cultural pupil populations, and teachers will benefit from getting insights into foreign educational settings and teaching experience in other contexts. It is therefore of imperative importance that students of teaching are encouraged to gain international experience by learning about other cultures and by being "different" before entering the teaching profession in their own country. Familiarity with other countries and awareness of challenges foreign pupils experience in schools need to become an integrated component of any teacher education program in Europe.

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