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**Proposal for a paper in the Special Issue of *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*.**

**Special issue title: 'The Village and the World': Research with, for and by Teachers in an Age of Data**

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**Abstract**

In this paper we explore Lawrence Stenhouse's (1981) provocation that too much research has been conducted for the world and not enough for the village. This provocation has taken on additional significance in contemporary global policy contexts where neo-liberal systems of governance incorporate discourses of educational effectiveness, measurement, standards, quality and sustainable development. Reform movements draw attention to what forms of professional development are effective in the complex global-national policy agendas, with diverse cultural-historical and socio-political contexts. Furthermore, teachers' work is changing and intensifying under neo-liberal systems of governance, specifically what they have to do to interpret and not just to implement policies. Drawing on two contrasting case studies of teacher research in England and Kazakhstan, we examine 'outside in' and 'inside out' approaches to teacher development. We problematize the concepts of teacher autonomy, the interpretational work of teachers in the context of policy intensification, and strategic compliance as a pragmatic and necessary response to policy frameworks and their intended and unintended consequences. We conclude by suggesting a hybrid, dialectical

approach to professional development which sustains teacher autonomy and professionalism.

## **‘The Village and the World’: Competing agendas in teacher research – professional autonomy, interpretational work and strategic compliance**

### **Introduction**

In this paper we respond to and explore Lawrence Stenhouse’s (1981) provocation that too much research has been conducted for the world and not enough for the village. This provocation has taken on additional significance in contemporary global policy contexts where supra-national discourses, often influenced by organisations such as the World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, are taken up at country, region and state levels. Influenced by neo-liberal systems of governance, global discourses of educational effectiveness, measurement, standards, quality and sustainable development are intertwined. The technologies of new public management – professional standards for teachers, school improvement plans, benchmarking, accountability and performance management - involve the proliferation of big data, instrumentalist notions of ‘evidence-based practice’, and the influence of human capital theory (Arndt et al, 2018; Tan, 2014). Teachers and teacher educators are positioned central to the achievement of educational reform, via school improvement, and raising quality and outcomes. However, as noted by Cochran-Smith, Keefe and Carney, most reforms have positioned teachers, teacher educators and teacher education institutions/programs as objects rather than agents of reforms (2018: 572). This positioning relies on simplistic assumptions about policy borrowing, travel and transfer and ‘race to the top’ discourses, along with global drivers to improve country-level positions in league tables. Moreover, the contract between policy makers, teacher educators and researchers has changed: policy makers commission, own and in some cases control how research relates to policy, and what parts of the research findings are subsequently cherry-picked for dissemination. Reform movements and discourses draw attention to ‘effective’ forms of professional development in rapidly evolving education environments, in which teachers’ work is changing and intensifying. Furthermore, teachers are held responsible to address or solve the problems that are caused by cultural-historical conditions of development (such as the effects of poverty and disadvantage on children’s life chances), and failures or limitations in related policy arenas such as health and social care.

Stenhouse's image of the world and the village reminds us of the importance of attending to local touchdown of global discourses and their expression through policy levers and drivers, whilst not giving up 'our insistence on multiplicity, diversity and locality' (Arndt et al, 2018, 100). Research with Secondary school teachers in England highlights 'the localized nature of policy actions, that is the 'secondary adjustments' and accommodations and conflicts that inflect and mediate policy' (Perryman, Ball, Braun and Maguire, 2017: 747), which in turn influences the interpretational work of teachers as policy actors. These perspectives highlight the competing agendas in teacher research and call for an understanding of the nature of professional development in contemporary education systems, specifically its role in professional autonomy, interpretational work and strategic compliance. We recognise that professionalisation is increasingly determined by policy agendas, expressed as professional standards, knowledge, skills and competences. However, these standards do not encompass the values and ethos of the teaching profession. Therefore, the ongoing project of professionalism draws attention the importance of teacher development that generates professional knowledge in, through and for practice.

We locate our paper in response to the first question posed for this special edition 'How do teachers currently use and engage in research/inquiry to inform their practice'? Stenhouse saw "*educational action research* as an ethical inquiry in which teachers reflect about how to teach in ways that are consistent with educational aims and values" (Elliott and Norris 2012, p. 146). A focus on ethics and values is also reflected in the various 'close to practice' research approaches identified in a report commissioned by the British Educational Research Association (Wyse, Brown, Oliver, Poblete, 2018). In contemporary policy contexts these values and approaches have been compromised because government-defined standards for initial and continuing training can become a proxy for professional development, focused on policy compliance and delivery, and often reinforced by other levers such as curriculum frameworks with specified goals, pedagogical approaches and assessment and testing regimes. In this changing policy arena, we will also address the question of whether teacher research is there to enquire into the problems policies set for teachers, or to address the problems those policies create in the contexts of practice. We accept that the engagement of teachers in research is almost a given but critical questions need to be asked about what sort of research and for what purposes? In what ways are teachers engaging in and with research? What forms of research are teachers expected to use? Are we in an age of evidence-informed policy, or policy-informed evidence, and what is that doing to the village?

We will explore these questions in light of contemporary policy frameworks and their implications for teachers and teacher educators, drawing on our shared interests in teachers' professional development in the context of change in two education systems at different stages of development. We use illustrative cases of secondary education in Kazakhstan, with a focus on introducing action research to a post-Soviet country, and the impact of policy intensification on teachers' professional development in early childhood education (ECE) in England.

### **1. Global-local discourses**

We are writing this paper during the global crisis of the coronavirus pandemic when many countries are in varying stages and forms of lockdown due to measures adopted to stop its spread and impact. This extraordinary shock to the global and national community has caused debate and questioning of so many taken-for-granted assumptions in our lives. Blogs and articles are headlined 'Goodbye globalisation' (The Economist May 16, 2020); the importance of wellbeing and mental health are foregrounded, and the end of neo-liberal economics and the rise of the local are seemingly a necessity and not just an aspiration. This global shock illustrates how the world and the village are connected in intimate and interdependent ways, aided by the immediacy of digital media. In the last thirty years education policy debates have proliferated around policy borrowing (Nuttall, Thomas and Wood, 2014; Bridges, Kurakbeyev and Kambaterova, 2014), the spread of a global education reform model (Sahlberg, 2016) and the influence of global league tables such as PISA and TIMMs. Although the original aim of TALIS, TIMMS and PISA was to provide diagnostic data to inform educational development, they have become conscripted into comparative league tables used to drive the performance narrative. Policy makers in countries with developing education systems look to the strategies of the 'leaders', typically western and economically developed countries, for securing 'what works' in terms of raising standards and improving outcomes. In spite of the fact that this spurious activity has been questioned even by those who have a part in policy of the leaders of those tables (Sahlberg, 2015), common neo-liberal policy drivers across the world include high accountability and performance measures for schools, teachers and students. Within this shifting landscape, teachers are considered key to achieving policy aspirations. However, although teacher development is implicated in reform movements, there are wider debates about professionalisation via policy-defined standards and competences, teacher autonomy and professionalism, how teachers engage in and with research, and the impact research has on their practice and the development of professional knowledge.

However powerful and distributed these policy drivers are across the world and the village, educational reform and change are always influenced by the local socio-political and cultural-historical contexts (McLaughlin and Ruby, 2020). Focusing on two contrasting contexts - Kazakhstan and England - the following two sections examine these contemporary issues to address the question 'How do teachers currently use and engage in research/inquiry to inform their practice?'. Both countries are at different stages and points in time in their policy development and implementation. In the context of the world and the village, it is often assumed that education systems in the West (notably the USA and Western Europe) drive policy learning and transfer in other regions. However, the deliberate choice of contrasting rather than similar countries draws attention to shared as well as distinctive concerns about professional development, and change processes.

## **2. The case of Kazakhstan 1998-2020**

### **Historical context**

Kazakhstan became independent in 1991 after 75 years as a member of the Soviet Union. On gaining independence the newly elected president led the move to develop the country's education system. The rationale for the changes was economic but also aimed to increase the connections to Europe. The concept of building human capital did and continues to reverberate through policy documents. Prior to 2012, there were many early efforts to change and develop the education system, which were disappointing. So, a new 'modernisation' was proposed which included 'the innovative development of the educational system' as a key element of national development (Shamshidinova et al, 2014, p.71). As part of the strategy, 22 schools, (Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools), were created with the aim of developing innovative, high-quality practices that could subsequently be transferred to the rest of the school system. International partnerships were formed and this was explicitly to learn from other countries (Steiner Kamsi, 2016) although there was clarity about maintaining elements of Kazakhstan's cultural and historical legacy. One partner was the University of Cambridge and work included a major focus on the quality of teacher professional development. One aim was to develop a critically reflective, pedagogically competent and research-informed teaching force in these schools. A two-year action research programme was developed and implemented (McLaughlin and Ayubayeva, 2015), since an early course on the reflexive teacher led to the belief that teacher and school research was a powerful lever to develop practice. Action research and research lesson study are part of the translation of policy and practice from the schools of innovation to the whole system that is currently underway (2015-2020).

## Post-Soviet legacy

Every education system is influenced by cultural and historical aspects of the society it is located in (Vygotsky 1929) and the values and practices of the reform, and action research in particular, would be interacting with the values and practices coming from the Soviet tradition. Alexander (2001) showed that the Russian education system had had a history of borrowing from the Soviet system. In fact, the first decade of reform in Kazakhstan was called 'the post-socialist reform package' or 'travelling policy' (Silova and Steiner Kamsi, 2008). The Soviet tradition had important benefits (cf. Yakavets, 2014) in terms of access to education, well-qualified teachers, a developed infrastructure and a developed research network in universities. The Soviet legacy was one of centralised, state controlled and directed policy and practice. There was a transmission pedagogy and a reliance on the content of the textbook. There had been a deterioration in the quality of teaching and teacher education entrants (Silova, 2009) in the years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Historical understandings and traditions of research also varied. There was little understanding or experience of action research and no conception of the village as the audience, or even that research could be undertaken in the school. Politics and ideology had played a prevailing role during the Soviet time. Mathematics and Sciences were emphasised, while the Humanities and Social Sciences were tested for strict accordance with historical materialism - Marxist-Leninist ideology (Yakavets 2014, p.1; Kavaev and Daun 2002). Overall, during the Soviet time, training did not encourage critical thinking or address such tasks as posing innovative research questions, testing hypotheses, and evaluating alternative interpretation of data. The Soviet school was orientated toward raising the collective, or in other words, a person was a member of a group/collective. Nevertheless, the later socialist period in the mid-1980-s with glasnost and perestroika, created the opportunity to reform and restructure research disciplines and helped formulate new policies in terms of the role of social science research. Therefore, action research was a radical but timely idea in this context.

### Programme of work undertaken - Action research and the reflective team

The aims of the action research programme were to support the innovation and development occurring in the NIS schools. The introduction of action research and critical reflection on practice was intended to facilitate pedagogical and curricular development through developing a cohort of teachers and leaders who could develop and sustain a programme of collaborative action research, as indicated in the Programme document:

This strand will continue work started in 2012 and extends this to the wider preparation of NIS school leaders in the principles and practices of collaborative action research and reflective practice with a view to establishing a culture and infrastructure to support these practices. It extends the scope of the collaborative action research while maintaining a focus on educational values. It also provides a basis for teacher engagement in the processes of curriculum review and evaluation and provides a starting point for more systemic evaluation of the new curriculum. (Programme document 2012).

The programme consisted of teachers engaging in workshops over two years with tutors in the university partnership. The workshops established a theoretical base using the ideas of established thinkers such as Elliott (1991), Carr and Kemmis (1983), Cochran Smith and Liberman (1988) and the participants engaged in two rounds of the action research cycle. In 2013 after a year of the programme an independent evaluation was undertaken (McLaughlin et al, 2014) and showed that the impact upon the teachers was in line with the aims of the programme: there was evidence that the action research was beginning to impact upon ways in which teachers behaved, thought and approached their wider work, beyond the action research settings in which the projects were developed. The teachers had developed 'reflective habits' which had altered the way in which they thought about students and their learning needs, differentiated their teaching and adopting a more holistic view 'of a child's life, recognising the value of observing children in other settings, finding out more about their motivations and preferences and bringing this knowledge into their own planning, delivery and assessment of learning.' (ibid).

Other issues were noted too: the problems with competition between teachers, and the 'tendency to seek constant reassurance that everything is 'right'. The tutors also noted the tendency to give criticism rather than feedback and considerable time was spent on developing critical friendship rather than criticism. The research too often took the form of scientific experiments and focused upon improving examination results, with instrumental teaching approaches. These elements were interpreted as the influence of the past and the present context e.g. the competitive climate of the new Kazakhstan where the teacher of the year is awarded a very large amount of money (4 million tenge). As time has progressed these elements are less evident but not wholly absent. Currently the Mayor of a large city is keen to use action research as a major form of school improvement. However, there are tensions between the accountability measures and the open processes of action research.

In summary, although there have been significant developments in the use of action



research for the village, many key stakeholders in the context are not fully cognisant of the detailed values and processes of action research so fit their understandings to the post-soviet context while supporting the general aims of increased critical thinking and reflection on practice. Nevertheless, the next State Plan for Education for the next five years, includes the use of action research and lesson study as key policy elements for the development of education.

### **3. The case of Early Childhood Education in England 1997-2020**

Early childhood education (defined internationally as birth to 8 years) has become the focus of international attention and investment, fuelled by a combination of strong advocacy within the field, and research evidence that has asserted the positive impacts on children, both immediate and longer-term, of high quality pre-school education (OECD, 2017). Research evidence on the effects and effectiveness of ECE has influenced global and national policies, so that the world and the village are intimately connected. Economic investment has to be justified in terms of 'returns' – specifically higher standards, quality and outcomes, and ensuring children are 'school ready'. Common international policy trends include ECE frameworks that incorporate curriculum guidance, goals and outcomes for children, professional standards and codes of conduct for teachers, and varying degrees of accountability through government regulation and inspection. In common with teachers in compulsory education, these policy technologies are associated with economic and educational effectiveness, as measured through datafication and 'dataveillance' of children's outcomes and teachers' performance (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018; Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury, 2016; 2017). As in the case of Kazakhstan, the contemporary dynamic in research is not just between theory and practice, but between theory, practice and policy. This dynamic requires consideration of the policy context and policy as context for professional development and practice.

The case study of ECE in England exemplifies how the contract between policy makers, teacher educators, teachers and researchers has changed, based on policy intensification and control. The following analysis illuminates the tensions within the teaching profession as a whole, between policy-led professionalization, and the professionalism from within. A contrasting 'inside-out' position is offered, whereby teachers generate knowledge that is close to practice, and addresses the challenges created by policies.

The ECE policy context in England

Workforce development in ECE is a core strategy to improve quality, specifically having a graduate or graduate leader in every setting (OECD, 2017; Nutbrown, 2012). ECE is

dominated by the persuasive power of policy discourses (Kay, Wood, Nuttall and Henderson, 2019; Wild, Silberfeld and Nightingale, 2015) that influence all aspects of teachers' work, including professional standards, a statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (birth to five), and an assessment profile for children on transition to compulsory education. Policy intensification thus incorporates professional acculturation. Fidelity of policy implementation is overseen by the government inspection regime – the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) – who report on the quality of education, and overall effectiveness. School improvement is oriented towards high fidelity to curriculum goals and outcomes, with OFSTED as the 'sole arbiter of quality' (Wood, 2019). Taken together, these policies produce the auditable child and the auditable teacher, based on normative constructs of what children are, or should be like at different ages and stages, and what teachers must do to demonstrate quality and effectiveness.

Payler and Wood (2017) draw attention to the quality and independence of research that is influencing teachers' knowledge and practice, and the lack of the sustainable structures for initial and continuing professional development, and career progression. In response to the government's teacher standards, which construct professionalisation 'from without', there are ongoing debates about the technocratic aims of the policy assemblage, and the need for professionalism and professional knowledge to be defined 'from within' (Campbell-Barr, 2018). These debates highlight the role of teacher autonomy in developing broader democratic and transformational possibilities (Hattam and Zipin, 2009), and how teachers engage in research to inform their practice.

How do teachers use and engage in research/inquiry to inform their practice,?

Using critical discourse and rhetorical analysis of OFSTED 'research' and reports in ECE, Wood (2019) and Kay et al (2019) identify the persuasive/coercive features of policy discourses and the limited evidence base for the claims and recommendations made in their practice guidance reports (including play, pedagogy, curriculum, reading and school readiness). Notions of evidence-based practice within policy discourses determine what research findings are cherry-picked for dissemination, whose evidence is approved, and how this is used to persuade audiences of particular actions (Kay et al, 2019). Wood (2019) argues that OFSTED 'practice guidance' reports rely on a circular discourse to promote policy-led evidence, drawing mainly on data from inspections and annual reports, and approved research findings from government-funded studies. Because OFSTED is the sole arbiter of quality, it exerts considerable power in driving fidelity to policy implementation. And fidelity in any context, whether at global, national or local levels, is problematic when policies

are not always consistent with the wider research and professional knowledge base. Although strategic compliance is a pragmatic and necessary response to policy frameworks, teachers may lack the knowledge and confidence to address intended and unintended consequences. As a result, being 'faithful' or 'unfaithful' to policies may produce diminished professionalism and constrain the capability of ECE teachers to engage in the interpretational work that is needed to address the challenges they encounter. This interpretational work is critical in order to respond to children and families in diverse communities in super-diverse societies, and requires 'inside-out' approaches to professional development, in which teachers are agents of change and not merely objects of reforms.

In a review of research, Payler and Davis (2017) identify a range of approaches to initial and continuing professional development, including professional dialogue, critical reflection, action research and learning communities. However, the projects they reviewed were typically small-scale, local and focused on generating knowledge 'from within' the ECE village. Fisher (2010; 2016) exemplifies these characteristics in two action research projects in ECE settings that were designed to address the impact of government policies on teachers' practice. Both projects involved a partnership between a teacher educator and the participating teachers. The first project focussed on children's transitions to primary school and involved over 40 schools in one local authority. The second project spanned a four year period (2010-2014), and involved twenty practitioners working in ECE and primary schools. This project explored practitioners' perspectives about what makes an 'effective' interaction between young children and their educators and examined how 'effectiveness' is influenced by whose purposes are being served within a given learning situation (Fisher 2016). This close to practice research generated teachers' contextually situated definitions of effective interactions, and revealed the ethical, emotional and relational qualities of their work which, as Osgood (2010) has argued are a missing dimension in policy discourses. Similar concerns have been identified in research in the context of travelling policy reforms. Nuttall, Thomas and Wood (2014: 367) studied the work of early childhood educational leaders in Australia, based on the designation of a new leadership role, formulated in ECE policy in England. They found that a key element of the newly reconfigured 'educational leader' was to navigate the tensions between 'imagined' and 'actual' policy effects, with leaders identifying the need for major shifts in their own professional knowledge and practice, and their expectations of colleagues. In a subsequent project, Martin, Nuttall, Henderson and Wood (2020) identified a significant gap between government policy orientation towards quality improvement in Australia, and the work of educational leaders in developing professionalization of the field, specifically through raising the status, capacity and professional knowledge of their colleagues. Thus, whether we look at the world or the

village, the desired relationship between qualifications, quality provision and improved outcomes remains elusive where 'from without' policy drivers dominate, and raises questions relevant across the teaching community about the need for professional knowledge and autonomy to address the problems and challenges within the policies themselves.

Similar to the case study of Kazakhstan, the following principles linked these action research and professional development projects

- the systematic use of an action research model to support inquiry;
- the presence of a researcher to act as guide, mentor, and critical friend;
- the development of contextually situated theoretical frameworks;
- recursive and incremental processes of critical reflection in and on action;
- consideration of values, beliefs, ethos, professional knowledge and expertise
- development over time (not a quick-fix solution)
- building research capacity in teachers and systems through engagement and communication.

Although we have taken two contrasting country-level examples of professional development, the cases nevertheless exemplify the significance of the interpretational work of teachers as policy actors within complex reform movements, and how their work can be supported through close to practice research in collaboration with teacher educators and researchers. We turn now to a discussion of professional development in the context of global reform movements, and the dynamic relationship between theory, practice and policy.

**Discussion: Are we in an age of evidence-informed policy, or policy-informed evidence, and what is that doing to the village?**

Whether we look at the world or at the village, reform movements have different effects on teachers, on constructs of professionalization and professionalism, and on what, or whose, professional knowledge is valued. These contrasting case studies illuminate the complexities and limitations of strategic compliance to global discourses, and highlight the critical role of teacher development programmes in building the capacity of teachers to solve the problems that arise in local contexts of policy and practice. Therefore, we argue for a hybrid, dialectical approach to professional development that connects professionalization and

professionalism, from within/from without approaches, and close to practice/close to policy research.

In a hybrid, dialectical approach, action research, and other forms of participatory and close to practice research are valued, including research partnerships with teacher educators and researchers in universities. Building capacity implies building professional knowledge that is valued in communities of practice, extending the remit of policy-led professionalisation beyond policy-defined constructs of 'what works', and positioning teachers as policy actors (Datnow, 2006 and 2020). A hybrid approach is informed by research evidence that indicates scope for professional agency and autonomy within policy contexts of increased performativity (Cochran-Smith et al, 2018), and highlights the importance of the interpretational work of teachers and teacher educators as policy actors (Perryman et al, 2017). We argue that a hybrid approach also addresses the tensions between 'close to policy' and 'close to practice' research because the former is unlikely to build the capacity needed by teachers to generate and sustain change over time. Even within contemporary global education reform movements, policy discourses are not universal truths: teachers make contextual and cultural adaptations to make policies work, and to mediate unintended consequences. A hybrid approach does not deny the relevance of 'big data', but uses this as originally intended for diagnostic purposes to identify problems and areas for improvement, with local contextualisation. This is because big data on its own does not improve practice because it does not fit every purpose nor meet some of the demands that are being placed on teachers, as noted above. Similarly, (as exemplified in England) compliance with inspection regimes and quality standards as the drivers for 'school improvement' is a poor substitute for the professional autonomy and knowledge needed for sustainable change and collective commitment to change.

Policy travel, transfer and borrowing will continue to connect the world and the village, but country-level systems may move in different directions and at different time scales in order to do the contextually situated and adaptational work that is required (McLaughlin and Ruby, 2020) The power of the village lies in its connectedness to human contexts, and reflects the argument made by Arndt et al (2018: 100) that we cannot give up our insistence on multiplicity, diversity and locality. Education cannot be purely instrumental, because it is engaged in with, by and for people and is essentially a human endeavour. In contrast, policies are abstract and decontextualized, and rely on teachers to do substantial interpretational work in order to navigate complexities in their own school and community contexts. The two cases presented here demonstrate that processes of change are complex

and culturally situated: beliefs and cultural practices may need to be addressed before sustainable changes are identified.

We argue for the possibility of considering the total experience of professional development in which generative and transformative teacher research sits alongside structures and cultures of professional compliance. This is consistent with Perryman et al who argue that teachers do the work of policy by making policy work (2017: 751), which implies both strategic compliance and strategic autonomy. In close to practice research, 'from within' approaches offer possibilities for generating theoretically-informed and values-driven foundations for a programme of change, as opposed to quick-fix (and possibly short-lived) policy solutions (especially where policy-informed evidence is prioritized). Therefore, a hybrid approach to professional development is not only timely but necessary in light of contemporary concerns about teacher retention, job satisfaction and autonomy. A recent large-scale quantitative study in England focused on those issues, and the findings indicate that

...teacher autonomy is strongly correlated with job satisfaction, perceptions of workload manageability, and intention to stay in the profession...Teachers' autonomy over their professional goal-setting is particularly low, and is the most associated with higher job satisfaction. Increasing teachers' autonomy, particularly over their professional development goals, therefore has great potential for improving teacher job satisfaction and retention. (Worth and van den Brande, 2020: 3).

The recommendations made by Worth and van den Brande indicate that professional development is not only needed to generate sustainable changes in practice, but is also related to the sustainability of professionalism. We propose that a hybrid approach acknowledges the development of situated professional knowledge, which may act a counterbalance to short-term and ideologically driven policy goals, and to their unintended outcomes. Teachers are charged with addressing global issues of equity and interdependence, and wider problems in society such as mental health and well-being, suicide prevention, and the effects of social and economic disadvantage, migration and displacement. Therefore, it is timely to question what forms of professional knowledge are needed, in what contexts is knowledge generated, by whom and for what purposes?

A helpful aid to our thinking about what is essential in a hybrid model takes us back to Stenhouse and his distinction between the objectives model and the process model of curriculum design. He was writing in 1975 in reaction to the objectives rational planning

model, one which we are familiar with today. The objectives model saw education as a means towards ends and it supposed that careful articulation of the ends and the scientific evaluation of controlled interventions were the best routes to attaining the ends, which should be evaluated by scientific controlled interventions (James, 2012). In contrast Stenhouse articulated a process model of curriculum design, teaching and learning. It involved beginning with the establishment of values and worthwhileness, moving to principles of procedure which were essential if there was to be understanding by pupils and teachers. It involved constant enquiry and research by teachers, often in partnership with universities. The process model was in fact 'systematic enquiry made public' and by 'public' Stenhouse (1981) meant discussed and critically reviewed in public by other practitioners and professionals. Our reflections on Stenhouse's conceptualization is not merely nostalgic, because it continues to have relevance in contemporary contexts. Recent work on the intellectual basis for teacher education by the Universities Council for Teachers in the UK (2020, [www.ucet.ac.uk](http://www.ucet.ac.uk)) articulates similar principles, and understands teachers as

**competent and confident professionals** who recognise and understand that educating is a professional, thoughtful and intellectual endeavour. They learn from research, direct experience, their peers and other sources of knowledge.

**epistemic agents**, who act as independent thinkers, recognising that knowledge, policy and practice are contestable, provisional and contingent. As such, teachers search for theories and research that can underpin, challenge or illuminate their practice. They are able to analyse and interrogate evidence and arguments, drawing critically and self-critically from a wide range of evidence to make informed decisions in the course of their practice.

**able to engage in enquiry-rich practice** and have a predisposition to be continually intellectually curious about their work with the capacity to be innovative, creative and receptive to new ideas emerging from their individual or collaborative practitioner enquiries.

**responsible professionals** who embody high standards of professional ethics. They act with integrity and recognise the social responsibilities of education, working towards a socially just and sustainable world.

The work of Stenhouse and UCET supports the use of the hybrid model proposed here, and reflects the complexity of teachers' roles and responsibilities. As the two contrasting case studies illustrate, there can be educational development and reform within policy parameters which uses action research or other forms of teacher research as authentic enquiry into

practice and policy, but it must contain the key elements of the process model, specifically criticality, and must be guided by criticality and worthwhile educational aims.

Moreover, close to practice research should not be subsumed by close to policy research, not least because of the interpretational and meditational work that teachers need to engage in, specifically in light of their social responsibilities in superdiverse societies. Thus, a hybrid model is highly relevant in contemporary policy contexts and reform movements, as a counterbalance both to pervasive neoliberal discourse, and the danger of quick-fix solutions and policy fads. Therefore, in contrast to standards-based approaches to professionalization, we argue that the ongoing project of professionalism draws attention the importance of teacher development that generates professional knowledge in, through and for practice.

A growing body of research indicates that close to practice approaches allow for collective inquiry, with critical attention to whose, and what values are prioritized, and to the role of teachers in securing lasting improvements in the quality of education (McLaughlin and Ruby 2020). In contrast to 'quick-fix' solutions, close to practice research is time-intensive and often expensive because it requires school-university partnerships in order to build the research skills required for rigorous and systematic inquiry. We propose that such approaches can be recursive and incremental and ultimately self-sustaining because they allow for collective critical reflection, evaluation and fine tuning, as well as generating theory and evidence from within the contexts of practice. Moreover, professional reflection can incorporate critical engagement with the policy agenda of 'effectiveness' or 'what works', where strategies may only work in the context of achieving policy goals and desired outcomes. Such discourses may serve to limit the agency of teachers, and their capacity and capability for building local and contextualized knowledge to inform change processes.

We have presented common threads across two different countries and policy contexts, and have argued that professional development for teachers should enable them to respond to a broad range of educational purposes and contemporary challenges. Therefore, the concept of teachers and teacher educators as policy actors needs to sit alongside the concept of teachers as professional agents, with moral obligations and commitments to the broader democratic and transformational possibilities of education (Hattam and Zipin, 2009). If professional development is central to the policy agendas of the world and the village, it follows that further understanding is needed of teachers' work and professional knowledge, particularly in how they manage the complex dynamics of professional autonomy, interpretational work and strategic compliance.



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