

Professional Development of Teachers in a Lifelong Perspective

- Teacher Education, Knowledge Production and Institutional Reform

Jørgen Thorslund

Conference proceedings

The conference was organised by Centre for Higher Education Greater Copenhagen in agreement with OECD as a follow-up activity based on the large scale project Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers OECD 2004. The conference took place in Elsinore, Denmark November 17-18. 2005 with participants from 12 countries.

Departing from Teachers Matter and a lifelong perspective, the focus was on how to improve the interconnection between initial teacher education, induction and professional development: "(G)iven the rapid changes in schools, the potentially long careers that many teachers have, and the need for updating and professional development, teachers' development must be viewed in life-long learning terms, with initial teacher education conceived as providing the foundations for on-going learning, rather than producing ready-made professionals. (...) The stages of initial teacher education, induction and professional development need to be much better interconnected to create a more coherent learning and development system for teachers." (#352-353) (Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers. OECD 2004)

An important aspect of the lifelong learning is related to the learning of teachers and schools: "Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. A key strategy involves finding ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically. There is growing interest in ways to

build cumulative knowledge across the profession, for example by strengthening connections between research and practice and encouraging schools to develop as learning organisations.”(#373)

Although Teachers Matter during the period 2002-4 came to analyse many aspects of the teaching profession, it didn't cover it all. Restructuring higher education was an important aspect of Teachers Matter that only partly was reflected: "Structural issues in teacher education currently have a particular urgency in European countries. The 1999 agreement to make higher education qualifications across European countries more compatible (the "Bologna process") has triggered a process of restructuring higher education degree structures. Teacher education is particularly affected as the structure, length and location (university or non-university) of teacher qualifications varies so much within Europe. The broad implications are that all teacher education will eventually be provided in university-level institutions (e.g. in Austria the teacher training colleges are being replaced by new pedagogical universities), and that more countries will introduce consecutive models of teacher education (with a Bachelor's and Master's degree structure). (#264).

More than one university model is at stake

As the University college in charge of the Danish participation in Teachers Matter, Centre for Higher Education Greater Copenhagen, itself was part of a national institutional reform interlinking initial teacher education, in-service training and continuous professional development, we were very much aware of the complexity and differentiation in institutional reforms. Particularly as new type of university.

"Rectors' conferences and associations representing Fachhochschulen from Austria, Germany and Switzerland, Ammattikorkeakoulu from Finland, Hogescholen from the Netherlands, CVU's from Denmark, and Institutes of Technology from Ireland, discussed the Bologna reforms in higher education and decided to present a contribution to the debate focusing on professional higher education. These institutes

all have in common that they offer professionally oriented higher education, in first, second, and sometimes third cycle, and contribute to innovation, particularly in their respective regions, by carrying out applied research. It was felt important to come together because the current Bologna process is not articulating clearly enough the importance of professionally oriented higher education and is therefore not performing well enough in the support of

- First cycle degrees having a real meaning in the labour market
- The main aims of the Lisbon process, namely of increasing the number of students and graduates in higher education
- The life long learning agenda, for example by offering non-traditional students access to schemes of further and continuing higher education and by upgrading competences of mid-career professionals
- The link between education and applied research
- Equal treatment of graduates with a first cycle degree in professional higher education and graduates with a first cycle degree from other programmes in higher education.”

(Declaration on professional oriented higher education. To the ministers of Higher Education, present in Bergen (Norway) May. 19-20. 2005)

The institutional framework, education, research and development

Institutional reforms are taking place in several countries, but discussions on how reforms may provide professional development of teachers in a life long perspective calls for further consideration of the institutional framework and links between education, research and development:

“Traditionally, models of R&D have tended to be linear. That is, research is initiated by academics in higher education institutions which can later, and separately, be usefully applied by others in an educational context. In many sectors, such linear models have been found wanting: the research does not, in fact, get usefully applied. More recent models have focused on interactions between the participants with an orientation to problem solving. This fits a knowledge management perspective, since in these models the participants have to agree the problem that has to be solved and work together to provide the knowledge to solve it, which requires many interactions and feedback loops”.

(National review on Educational R&D: Examiners' report on Denmark, OECD, October 2004)

The conference did focus on institutional reforms relating to teacher education and continuously professional development. Thus sharing knowledge of both consecutive and concurrent models at classical universities and more recent models at professional oriented higher education interlinking initial training, professional development and R&D on education.

The conference was divided into two parts; keynote speeches and workshops giving participants an opportunity to discuss and combine perspectives. The keynotes departed from three OECD activities: "Schooling for tomorrow" (2001), "Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers" (2004), and, "Innovations in the Knowledge Economy: Implications for education and learning" (2004). By combining the Teachers Matter with perspectives of schooling and of transformations in knowledge production we hoped to gain new understanding and ensure a broad perspective of the challenges facing the policy of professional development of teaching. The three perspectives were supported by three keynote speeches.

First a broad perspective of teaching from the recent OECD activity, published as "Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers" (2005), maybe the largest comparative analysis ever made on teaching. The Main findings and recommendations on teacher education from the OECD activity 2002-4 were presented by Anne Sliwka, Professor of Education, University of Trier/Germany, and OECD Consultant.

Second we looked at schooling for tomorrow as a starting point of teaching today. It was presented in Scenarios for school and teacher development by Brian Caldwell, Managing Director of Educational Transformations Pty Ltd. Professor Emeritus

at the University of Melbourne, Australia, in collaboration with Jessica Harris.

Third we focused on knowledge production and knowledge management – how can educational institutions learn or facilitate learning? This perspective was presented in Knowledge Society and Educational Institutions - Towards a Sociological Theory of Knowledge. The Keynote speech were given by Professor Lars Qvortrup, Director of Knowledge Lab, University of Southern Denmark.

The conference hosted workshop discussions, which as point of departure involved experiences gained in Nordic welfare models. Each of four workshops had focus on what may be crucial aspects of institutional reforms and their linkage to the content of professional development:

1. Evidence based practice in teaching and teacher education presented by Professor Christer Brusling, Centre for the Study of Professions, Oslo University College, Norway
2. Applied research in development of teaching presented by Jørgen Thorslund, Director of R & D, Centre for Higher Education Greater Copenhagen
3. Partnership between school and university presented by Olle Holmberg, Head of the School of Teacher Education, Malmö University, Sweden
4. Subject didactics as a central knowledge base for teachers presented by Pertti Kansanen, Professor of Education, University of Helsinki, Finland (not presented in these proceedings)

By publishing the conference proceedings in this form, the organizers hope both participants and others may take further advantage of our work in Elsinore, November 2005. We wish to express our gratitude to the keynote speakers, workshop presenters and all participants.

Jørgen Thorslund

February 2006