

Editorial

David Frost

University of Cambridge Faculty of Education

Welcome to the third issue of *Teacher Leadership*. This completes the first volume of this new journal established to showcase enquiry-based development work undertaken by teachers in the UK and elsewhere.

This issue of *Teacher Leadership* is a particularly rich collection of articles and stories all of which illustrate the huge untapped potential within the teaching profession to engage in transformative action. The projects discussed here address issues fundamental to learning. While these are recognisable as recurring issues in classrooms across the world, the accounts published here give us invaluable insights into the ‘how’ of improvement as well as the ‘what’. Inquiry is a major feature of these projects but they were not constructed as research aimed at generating general claims about learning and the factors affecting it. Rather each one exemplifies the process of development. What these accounts show us are the ways in which ordinary teachers might intervene to make a difference to the situation they encounter in their own schools. Take for example the question of the importance of self-esteem to learning: this link has already been established in the research literature and in any case it could be said to be as much a matter of professional judgement as a matter of what research tells us. Janet Ollerenshaw’s article describes the evaluation of a helpful innovation – the development of a learning journal to enable students to build their self-concept through structured reflection. In contrast, Nicole Burman’s project focuses on how classroom activities can be designed to address self-esteem. The title of the story in this case points to an important link between self-esteem and engagement in learning, supporting the view that perhaps personal development should be tackled not separately from but as integral to the process of learning on the grounds that successful learning of itself raises self-esteem.

Engagement in learning – the very opposite of passivity, defeatism and resignation – is a thread picked up in several pieces in this issue. Patti Outen’s project for example is entirely focussed on engagement

which she has addressed by developing strategies to enable her students to reflect more critically on their learning. The theme is echoed in Louise Farrell's article although the context is different. In her project we see the evaluation of different strategies for building pupils' capacity for critical thinking which we hope will help them to avoid the dangers of the descent into the passivity that Patti has struggled to counter in her project. Lorna Newbrook has also found herself having to tackle the related problem of teacher dependence with her 16-17 year old students.

Projects focused on assessment have been presented in this journal before. This is perhaps unsurprising given its centrality in classroom practice and its high profile in both academic research and government policy, but Sue Lyons' project takes the subject further than most. Her article describes a particularly thorough exploration of how 'assessment for learning' practices are actually experienced by students. The idea of enabling students to express their views about their experiences in the classroom is gathering momentum. It recognises the power of student voice not only to inform teaching but to promote students' participation with all the attendant benefits of raised self-esteem and engagement in learning. Student voice was also addressed by Jennifer Atkinson's project where she worked with a consultant to the school to support a group of students who undertook 'research' projects focused on aspects of teaching and learning.

In this issue we also have accounts of development projects that feature creative approaches to learning that make good use of modern technology and visual techniques. Nadine Stone's story is about an art teacher trying to build her students' capacity for creativity by giving them more open-ended tasks that demand creative thinking and helping them to reflect on the value of creativity. Bristi Chatterjee's story is about helping her young students to use video cameras to make films about their learning. Both of these projects raise the level of excitement in the classroom and put the learners in the driving seat. The use of technology such as video cameras connects the world of the classroom to the media world that children inhabit beyond the classroom. Similarly Luke Sweetland drew upon his experience in the television industry to develop exciting techniques and materials for use in tutor time activities. It is interesting that, having been creative himself in designing materials, he discovered that one of the most powerful

ways to develop the curriculum is to draw the students themselves into the process, casting them as leaders of learning.

It is easy to see how these articles and stories address important pedagogical issues but there is also another thread running throughout. They are all accounts of the leadership of development work. They draw, to a greater or lesser extent, on the tradition of inquiry that is used increasingly to help teachers address their professional learning needs, but they go beyond that to illuminate how teachers can act strategically to manage change and draw colleagues into the process of development. This demands that teachers develop the skills and dispositions of leadership. If they want to embed their innovative practices in the fabric of their institutions, they have to develop the capacity to think strategically, planning their development projects with the maximum degree of influence in mind.

The guest article from Greg Elliot in Australia highlights the power of collaboration for school transformation. His account of adapting the ‘lesson study’ approach to such good effect in his school is rich with insight into the leadership dimension. He has the advantage of his position as Deputy Principal of course, but this does not mean to say that having such a position is a prerequisite for exercising leadership. Greg’s account also highlights the benefits of networking and we are proud to be making a fraternal link with the Coalition of Knowledge Creating Schools by including an article from a member of that network.

We look forward in future issues to publishing more accounts of the development work of teachers from other networks around the world and to continue to build our understanding of the ways in which teachers can lead change. These cases enable us to clarify a methodology for what we have called ‘teacher-led development work’ and, in subsequent issues of *Teacher Leadership*, we will say more about our plans for a research project designed to take this endeavour forward.

Readers will have noticed that the first three issues have been rather slow in coming. So far we have fallen short of our goal to produce a full volume of three issues each year. This perhaps reflects the fact that we lack the expertise of commercial publishers and are therefore having to learn the art of publishing as we go. Nevertheless we hope that our readers will think it worth the wait. Having now produced

our third issue and refined the process of editing and publishing, we are confident that the rate of production in the future will be considerably more rapid. We are also aware that, although the journal has been advertised as being available online as well as in the traditional hard copy format, this has not yet materialised. We have therefore decided to make all of the material in this journal available through free online access. From January 2008, all of the articles and stories from Volume 1 will be available as downloadable pdf files from our website teacherleadership.org.uk.

Publishing these accounts is a very satisfying and joyful business. As editors and publishers we are proud to be able to present these articles and stories as a celebration of the remarkable achievements of the teachers who have committed themselves to improving the quality of education in our schools.