The Future of the Teaching Profession:
a summary of issues from the 2012 Cambridge seminar

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These Cambridge seminars bring together practitioners, researchers and policy-makers who are committed to enhancing the development of the teaching profession. The planning group of Open Society Foundation, The University of Cambridge, Education International, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has this year included representatives from the Netherlands Ministry, hosts of the 2013 Annual Summit on the teaching profession.

The 2013 seminar on *Sustaining Teachers' Professional Growth* is intended to complement areas explored at last year's seminar on the *Future of the Teaching Profession*. The full report on this event can be found at:
www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/lfl/researchanddevelopment/policy/futureteachingprofession

A summary of the issues raised are offered here for easy reference.

Satisfiers and dissatisfiers: finding the balance
It is understanding and managing the balance between the 'dissatisfiers' and 'satisfiers' that keeps teachers resilient and optimistic in an increasingly demanding and increasingly vital job. Any scenario or programme for the future of the teaching profession has to begin with an understanding of this 'force field', its profound impact on the lives of teachers as a prelude to identifying where the levers of change may lie.

For national governments, the policy imperative is to strike a balance between the short-term need to get teachers into classrooms and the longer term goal of building up a high-quality professional teaching force. There is an urgent need to take back the definitions of good teaching and good schools from those who have misappropriated them.

Responding to challenge and change
'If the way we think of change is limited by imagining things very much like the ones we know (even if 'better'), or by confining ourselves to doing what we know how to implement, then we deprive ourselves of participation in the evolution of the future. It will creep up on us and take us unawares' (Papert, 2004).

Responding to challenge and change, pressures on teachers, union associations, and increasing privatisation, brings us back to the essential purpose of school. What happens to the high expectations that new teachers bring with them when entering the profession? While we might be able to recruit talented people into the teaching profession, to what extent does 'the system' act as a constraint, casting teachers as service-delivery providers? To what extent are the constraints and obstacles systemic, embedded in political priorities, limiting our thinking to what we think is 'realistic' or politically acceptable?

Teaching and schooling need to focus on the social aspects of the teachers' role, without which there is a danger of losing the holistic essence of what it means to be a teacher.

Agency and locus of control

Agency and locus of control are salient factors, distinguishing systems in which things are done to teachers as against systems in which teachers decide for themselves and shape the profession for themselves. Politicisation and privatisation present particular challenges for schools and evaluation of school effects.

> *Unlike many accounts of teacher leadership, the one promoted by the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) project is non-positional, that is, it supports the capacity of all teachers to exercise leadership and embrace 'extended professionality'. The ITL approach promotes voice, influence, autonomous judgement and choice – enhancement of teachers' agency. This is done through enabling teachers to act strategically, leading development projects in their schools.* (David Frost)

> *ITL has provided teachers with support and the tools to develop the necessary skills and knowledge, which increased their self-esteem and confidence in leading school development. The continuation of ITL beyond its lifetime, growing numbers of schools, and possible mainstreaming indicates the importance of the research-based approach working WITH all concerned – not for them.* (Gordana Miljevic)

Accountability, uses and misuses of data

As the demands for accountability increase, it begs the question as to the nature and uses of data. To what extent do these act as a force for improvement? The extent to which the profession can use this data is limited. The right to hold a view on teaching is everybody's business and since politicians have been to school, they claim expertise as to what is right for children growing up in the year 2012.

> *The nightmare is government instruments in the form of tests, indicators, league tables, etc. that take professional discretion away from teachers. The dream is that alternative forms of QAE, such as collaborative, reflexive, responsive, and participatory forms of evaluation will pave the way for a self-reflexive, self-evaluating profession* (Peter Dahler Larsen).

What opportunities exist within an accountability framework for creating an accountability system whose focus is formative, capacity building and forward looking? Are there inevitable tensions between accountability and improvement or can they be reconciled within a single set of protocols?

Initiatives need to be taken if we are to move from an instrumental view of improvement to one in which teacher-led strategies, collaboration and quality assurance are centre stage? How can teachers be encouraged to assume ownership of this? As a profession, teachers have to be skilled enough to make judgments about the quality of their professional ethics and practice.

> *A hallmark of a profession is its capacity for self-evaluation, developing and owning the criteria for judgments of quality and the nature of evidence. In the early days of OECD, when indictors were being developed, they were talked about as hard measures, dashboard warning lights, and tin openers. The last of these describes the way in which teachers can use data to open issues, explore meanings and follow the differing pathways in which data may lead inquiry.* (John MacBeath)

A question of trust

As capacity-building relies on professional trust, what can be done to engender trust? And if trust has broken down, how do you move ahead or rekindle trust? Can the profession itself be

trusted to work within its own frame of reference and its own quality assurance processes? While teachers must have autonomy, mastery and purpose in their work, what is the nature of oversight and accountability that is viable without diminishing the trust?

The case of Ontario is cited as a useful model. A relatively low-level trust within the system overcame the issues by working with the unions and setting the road for positive change. With evaluation carried out ethically, teachers are most likely to participate willingly.

Public good and human right

Education International is defending the paradigm of public education as public good and human right and the status of teaching as a profession. There are international agreements of what teaching profession is and should be. 'ILO/UNESCO 1966 Recommendation on Status of Teachers' and 'UNESCO 1997 Recommendation on Higher Education' outline broad consensus about the status and role of teachers, including rights to favourable working conditions, stable employment, decent salaries and social security, pedagogical autonomy/academic freedom, organizing and representing themselves collectively.

The teaching profession is in the midst of profound changes. Social and institutional environments for teaching are changing, expectations regarding the outcomes of learning are rapidly changing and research on learning is also changing the established 'truths' and belief systems. A renewal of the professional knowledge base of teachers - in a generally more knowledge-intensive education system - seems to be the best way to strengthen and promote the professionalization of teachers (Dirk Van Damme).

If standards within the profession have been changing in different countries over the last twenty-year period it is important to have a better grasp of ways in which professionalism has changed and why. Only through an understanding of cultural context will such shifts become apparent and explicable.

What holds us back is the inability to set meaningful standards in the profession; another mode of operation fills the vacuum that is outside and relies on standardised one-size-fits-all evaluation.

Some of the issues for teachers and their professional bodies lie, in part, in the way they are portrayed by politicians and the media. Teachers' organisations tend to be seen only as fighting for wages and are depicted as constantly complaining. They are often used by governments to score political points and charges of 'a lack of professionalism' is a weapon used against teachers. The case for greater professional autonomy then becomes marginalised and more difficult to substantiate.

Six questions

- *Why is there such resistance to teachers taking responsibility over their profession in a context where managerialism has become a dominant approach across the public sector?*
- *At the root of the problem, is it that teachers are not a homogenous group and do not always, or cannot always, speak with one voice?*
- *To what extent, in different settings, are teachers less motivated by the pay they get, than by the esteem they have within their community?*
- *How far is the economic imperative predominant over the moral one when one chooses whether or not to become or stay as a teacher?*

- *Research that originates in schools is valid and important but does it ever reach discussion at the policy table?*
- *What measures need to be taken for externally imposed accountability schemes to be changed into internally developed accountability schemes, developed by teachers themselves?*

Evaluating teachers and teaching

How to achieve the balance between evaluations which discourage teachers from entering or continuing in the profession and governments' need to ensure a quality education for all its citizens? The need for national indicators may be justified by reference to both of these assumptions. Following from this, the evaluation environment may be either punitive or supportive. Stricter forms of accountability may take the form of discriminating amongst teachers and applying sanctions, or alternatively as serving professional development strategies which support teachers professional enhancement.

What are teachers being evaluated against and what access would they have to the evaluation results in order to improve their teaching? What is the power relationship between teacher and evaluator and the nature of the underlying environment - punitive or supportive toward the teacher? TALIS data support these concerns in showing that most teachers believe they will not receive rewards or recognition for being more innovative in their teaching or even for improving the quality of their teaching. (Kristen Weatherby)

A Belgian Case

In many systems, teachers may never have been consulted about external review, inspection or school self-evaluation. It comes with the job. Nonetheless, it is often attended by frustration, particularly where teachers feel that there is a lack of 'deep understanding of dynamics inside the classroom', rarely perceived or taken into account during the evaluation process. How much depends on the quality of school leadership, mediating the quality assurance process?

In Ireland

Resistance to evaluation was driven by a concern that the English precedent - league tables and a performance-driven culture, would be imposed there. The exemplar is cited of curriculum change in Ireland which took ten years to develop. The development was 'messy' and took time but teachers, as part of the development team, did have ownership and as a consequence they did have trust in what was developed.

The U.S.A

Evaluation, where it occurs, relies on narrow measures, or is made by inexperienced evaluators, searching for the quick and easy ('drivebys'). Alternatively, formative evaluation can promote a more collaborative environment among teachers. It is multidimensional, not threatening and creates standards by and with teachers. Teachers want and need more 'actionable' feedback. Formative evaluation is rich, multidimensional but requires resourcing. Hence this is where the conversation ends and often, instead, the quickest, cheapest forms of evaluation are sought. For a quality evaluation system to be useful teachers must know that something will be changed by it. This will not happen if its high stakes, punitive effects are higher when the support systems are poor. The poorer the support system, the higher the punitive assessment.

Unions should be part of constructing a self-evaluation process. Mainstreaming self-assessment and self-evaluation is an important priority, being careful not to confine evaluation and data-collection processes but to complement these with more careful integration of data and founded on clear visions of the future of education.

What teachers should be able to do

> In the US, 25 years ago, teachers spent six years developing a document called 'what teachers should be able to do'. They developed standards and a certification process whereby part of the scoring is done by other teachers. Teachers must provide two video submissions of their teaching with contrasting groups accompanied by an analytical paper explaining and justifying their classroom strategies. Such videos and papers are now going to be collated and put into a searchable database for teacher preparation. Last year 6,200 teachers were certified so there are, at a minimum, 12,000 videos. (Ron Thorpe)

Many teachers who fail in their first year become great teachers later on. However, when not supported they leave the profession very quickly. When the purpose of the system is formative it opens more space for collaboration, and teachers themselves do want clear feedback to improve, as it helps them to make their work better and to develop professionally.

Border crossings

> The need now is to push the agenda forward with initiative, flexibility and responsiveness to the voices of the profession. This implies more border-crossing, bringing together how universities think, how governments think. And the role of the vital few - the influential few. (David Edwards)

Questions of leadership

How is leadership defined? To what extent does it change over time? Do different schools need different kinds of leaders? Is there a stage theory for leadership? Do leaders need to re-invent themselves from time to time to avoid 'a dip' in vitality and commitment? Is there a process by which school leaders go from mistrust of colleagues to having enough confidence to distribute leadership?

Questions of partnership

> As the OECD says, successful education reform cannot be embedded unless it has been developed in partnership with teachers and their organisations. The opportunity now exists, more strongly than it has done for years, for Unions to provide the sites for their members and for all teachers in which they can develop professionally. The risk of 'producer capture' is far outweighed by the risk of a 'balkanised' and demoralised teaching profession. (John Bangs)

> The priority is to persuade the public, and government, to support rather than undermines teachers' role in shaping educational policy and practice. These characteristics include the development of an alternative educational paradigm that articulates a coherent understanding of the positive relationships between conditions of teaching and quality of student learning and between policy and practice - and the ability to persuade not only their teacher members but also others of the legitimacy of this new paradigm. (Nina Bascia)

A systemic approach should entail the creation of structures in which teachers can develop, such as learning networks, pedagogic 'banks' of successful practice and professional councils for self-regulation.

> *Promoting and modelling professional learning is the single most effective contribution school leaders make to pupil learning: observing the power of structured peer support, professional dialogue, focusing on why as well as how things work, sustained enquiry-oriented learning, learning to learn from observing the practice of others with access to tools which make evidence collection and analysis manageable and useful.* (Phillipa Cordingley)

The implications suggest a combination of high levels of knowledge and pedagogical expertise together with an informed awareness of the nature of learning and of students' wider lives and the world outside the school, and the ability to work collaboratively with a strong focus on design and leadership.

Making professional practice visible and progressive
How much has changed in the period between the OECD six scenarios for the future by their chief architect, David Istance? How much of teacher expertise and capacity for leadership still remains hidden?

> *There is a lot of invisibility in what teachers do, complex and hidden strengths which various strands of OECD research are attempting to make visible, so as to develop a stronger evidence base. TALIS has focused on leadership while CERI (the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation) has been researching forms and formats for practitioners, not to genuflect to current practice but to take it forward.* (David Istance)

Shifting the discourse
Shifting the discourse means a move from outcomes to learning which is valued for its own sake. Much of the public discourse about education is presented as improving student learning outcomes, while the resource side has been sidelined. Improving teaching effectiveness has become a proxy almost by default, when addressing all issues in contemporary education – from student dropout to stagnating test scores. It is the profession itself which needs to play the lead role in a revitalised and shared narrative, beyond compliance.

A revitalised shared narrative

> *The notion of teachers as 'citizens' suggests a role beyond compliance to a moral and civic purpose. It challenges the instrumental nature of accountability and the paradigms which currently predominate in policy-thinking and language. The agenda which is set in the publication 'Future of the Teaching Profession' and has been the seminal strand through the conference has been to engage and sustain a commitment to professional values and practice which establish a revitalised shared narrative, one which is held in common and goes beyond current conceptions of accountability and improvement.* (Mary Metcalfe)

Leadership for Learning: the Cambridge network
www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/lfl

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