Chapter 3 Professionalism in teaching

Carole Baume with Jo Tait

Overview

This chapter is concerned with ideas of professionalism and what it means to be a professional teacher in higher education. Key ideas in current thinking about professionalism concern the scholarly and ethical practices that underpin our teaching and the critical reflection that supports the personal dimension in our practice. We shall expand on Schön’s account of the vital role of reflection-in-action and the account of Boud et al. on how reflection on action becomes learning (encountered in Chapter 1), and go beyond practical coping strategies and goal planning (offered in Chapter 2). Chapter 4 is focused particularly on the ethical issues that are first introduced here as an integral aspect of professional expertise.

This chapter is designed around the extracts from literature and professional documents that have informed and influenced our current understanding of professional teaching in higher education. In Extract 3.1, Candy introduces the concept of the profession or professions of a teacher. The next two extracts develop the notion of scholarship as particularly applied to teaching. In Extract 3.2, Boyer sets out his thesis of the essential four scholarships for an academic, in an attempt to organise the various roles of an academic and give due weight to teaching. In Extract 3.3, Candy develops Boyer’s ideas further. Extracts 3.4 and 3.5 are concerned with reflection around teaching. In Extract 3.4, Brockbank and McGill relate Schön’s work on reflective practice to teaching and learning in higher education. In Extract 3.5, Cowan gives a very personal view of reflection for himself and for his students. One further essential element for professionalism is its underpinning by a base of values or ethical principles. Examples in Section 3.4 introduce some sets of values or ethical principles that, it is claimed, should inform and influence the professional judgements that are central to our teaching practices.

3.1 Professionalism

In the UK, one of the recommendations of the Dearing Committee (NCIHE, 1997) was to set up an Institute for Learning and Teaching, which would serve as a professional body for teaching in higher education. It is interesting to note that this was intended to be an Institute for Learning and Teaching, not an Institute for Academic Practice: this reflects Dearing’s concern to improve the balance of effort applied to teaching compared with research. By early 2003, the Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee (http://www.hfce.ac.uk/learning/tqec/final.htm) and, to a lesser extent, the DfES White Paper (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/highereducation/ hestra tegy/foreword.shtml) had shown how the sector had adopted and adapted Dearing’s vision to take account of more complex notions of ‘quality enhancement’. Current thinking proposes that institutions need to be able to support changing student needs and acknowledge ‘excellent’ teaching environments, but that individuals need to undertake initial and continuing professional development. The agency now (since Autumn 2004) responsible for the professional development of teachers is the Higher Education Academy, an Academy for the advancement of learning and teaching, reflecting some shift (or expectation of change) in the status of teaching. This changing status is also reflected in attempts to encourage
'excellence' in teaching as an individual activity and as an institutional priority.

The 'scholarship of teaching' is one of the values that are embedded in notions of teacher excellence. The next two extracts provide the background to such ideas, although we should recognise that values have changed considerably over the last fifteen or twenty years.
EXTRACT 3.1
TEACHERS AS SCHOLARS: SCHOLARS AS TEACHERS, PART 1

Philip C. Candy

With all the emphasis on research in universities these days, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that teaching, especially undergraduate teaching, is actually their historic mandate and that research has been a central feature of university life for less than a century, indeed for less than half that time in many cases.

However, for a variety of reasons, the emphasis has swung back on to teaching in recent years. Partly this is a reflection of the ‘massification’ of higher education, and the larger and more diverse student cohorts we have to deal with. Partly, too, it is a reflection of a worldwide agenda for higher education institutions to be more accountable to their ‘stakeholders’ for their ‘products’. It might even be a reflection of the fact that research is increasingly being undertaken outside universities (see Gibbons et al., 1994), and that inside them, research funds are harder to come by. For all these, and probably other, reasons, the spotlight is now shining on university teaching in a way which it hasn’t for many decades, if it ever did.

Moreover, it is not simply the amount of teaching that has become a focus of attention, but its quality as well. It is no longer sufficient (if it ever was!) for a university lecturer to be simply a subject-matter expert; today, university lecturers are expected to master a number of pedagogic skills as well. Whether or not we like the language of students as ‘customers’ who demand ‘value for money’, the fact is that university lecturers must have at least two professional identities: one as a practitioner (and expert) in their chosen field of study, and the other as a professional educator. All this comes at a time when more and more is involved in being an effective teacher. In recent years, the body of knowledge about teaching has increased to include not only instructional methodologies, but curriculum design, assessment and evaluation, and even knowledge of information technology and advanced telecommunications. In short, university academics are under pressure to become professional pedagogues (or, perhaps more accurately, professional andragogues since most of the learners are adults).

Clearly this new emphasis brings into question what is, or might be, meant by ‘professionalism’. In his paper entitled ‘Are professors professional?’ (and a book of the same title), Warren-Piper (1992) explored both the impetus towards professionalism in higher education, and the criteria that define professionalism. It is evident that several of the qualities or attributes that have historically been characteristic of professionals are more evident in relation to what lecturers teach, rather than how they teach. As Warren-Piper playfully puts it: ‘professors are not half as professional about their professing as they are about what they profess’ (1992, p. 145). But in more ways than one, this is simply playing with words; there would be few who would deny that academics, however they differ from doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, theologians and other traditional professionals, are in fact professionals. To some extent, the changing definitions and expanding boundaries of what we describe as professionals, including such pursuits as management consulting, software engineering and systems design, have helped with this realisation.

Written for this chapter by Professor Philip C. Candy, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Scholarship), University of Ballarat (1997)
How does this debate sound in the voices of practising teachers? Australian academic Pauline Meemaduma here talks about her work.

I know this sound terrible, but I sense there's almost a need to cover up good teaching at universities. There are lots of good teachers at universities, but it's almost as if it's a secret little club. Individually, you talk to other teachers who you know love teaching and talking about teaching. But in general, nobody's talking about teaching. In social work practice, everybody talks about what we're doing and what's worked and what hasn't worked. Yet here we are in universities in another action discipline - teaching - and it isn't acceptable for us to publicly reflect on our practice.

I don't think universities celebrate good teaching at all. Teaching is a very skilled, very creative process. I find teaching more demanding than social work. I can deal with abused children and violent, chaotic families, but to teach well challenges you at every single level. You have to engage all parts of your being, emotively and intellectually and behaviourally, and I think it's really unfortunate that in many ways you have to downplay this in a university setting. I don't know why. I find universities very strange places. I found them strange places as a student, but I find them even stranger now that I'm on the other side of the fence.

Quoted in Ballantyne et al., 1997, p. 127

It seems to me that Meemaduma is describing having two professions - that of social worker and that of teacher of social work in higher education. She suggests, however, that the two professions aren't given equal weight in her university.

But where does your professionalism in teaching come from? Joy Doherty suggests two main sources.

I believe any teacher, whether at university or school level, has to be conscious of their own growing knowledge base and constantly reflecting on their own learning. I believe that's part of being a good teacher. Scholarship must be a natural part of teaching. Without that, we lose our balance and purpose.

Because I have needed to learn more about Aboriginal Studies in my role as a teacher, my scholarship has really grown in that area. Even though I haven't done any formal work in Aboriginal Studies, I have learned through reading, through experience and through going to conferences. I'm having to further update my knowledge about what's happening internationally in the areas of methodologies and philosophies of teaching Social Studies and Cultural Studies and so on. In preparation for my doctorate, I have been researching the process our students go through as they prepare to be Social Studies educators. This includes the whole area of Aboriginal Studies.

Quoted in Ballantyne et al., 1997, p. 158

Doherty sees reflection on her teaching and scholarship in her subject as two important aspects of her professionalism as a teacher.
Different disciplines may hold different conceptions of professionalism within the discipline. This, in turn, may have implications for their conceptions of professionalism in teaching. For example, the first profession of John Cowan, whose ideas on reflection are included as Extract 3.5 in this chapter, was civil engineering. John has suggested (in conversation) that an essential element of his professionalism as an engineer, and later as a teacher, is performing in accordance with methodologies generally accepted within the profession, on the basis of researched practice. In his engineering profession, John says he is expected to self-evaluate against professional yardsticks; to engage in constant professional development; and to uphold the reputation of the profession, which is not quite the same as ethics but akin to a code of behaviour. This, in turn, affects John’s practice as a teacher.

Margaret Barrett adds to Doherty’s view by moving from reflection on teaching to research into teaching.

I’ve done, and am doing, a fair amount of research. I have researched my own teaching to an extent. With the pressure on university staff to research, when you have come from a teacher training background, the obvious first thing to research is your own practice. Contact hours are being cut in a lot of universities and it’s necessary to make a decision about what’s going to be most useful in the diminishing time. What can you develop with that group of students that would be useful to them and effective in schools? So, I do continual research into my own teaching and learning. Being involved in research keeps your mind active and it keeps the dialogue going with other colleagues. The research findings inform what I do with students and I discuss the results with them in terms of their own teaching.

Quoted in Ballantyne et al., 1997, p. 136

Barrett feels that teaching becomes a profession rather than a set of techniques when she engages in research into her teaching.

3.2 The scholarship of teaching

What does scholarship consist of? Is it simply the same as research?

There is some evidence (Feldman, 1987) to suggest that students do not rate teachers who are research-active any differently from those who are not. An accessible and succinct summary can be found in Terenzini and Pascarella (1994). The safe conclusion is:

...it is not the case that the best teachers are simply the best researchers. Studies generally find that there is no relationship: a good researcher is as likely to be a bad teacher as a good teacher (and a good teacher is as likely to be a bad researcher as a good researcher). The pressure on academics nowadays makes it increasingly difficult to be outstanding at both as they compete for time and attention. If we want to understand the nature of this relationship we have to understand more about the nature of what underpins them both: scholarship.

Terenzini and Pascarella, 1994
Ernest Boyer was concerned about the unhealthy split between teaching and research, which had become evident in most higher education systems in the previous 30 years or so. Boyer proposed an integration of all of academic life through the unifying concept of scholarship. In 1990, in his report for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 'Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate', Boyer (1990) suggested that scholarship is not a single path: there are, he suggests, four scholarships in higher education. He identified these as the scholarship of discovery (pure research), the scholarship of integration (interdisciplinarity), the scholarship of application (relating theory to practice), and the scholarship of teaching (of which much more below). This idea has become very influential in our thinking about the development of professional teachers in higher education, as we can see from the values and outcomes of the Canadian national-membership body STLHE (see Extract 3.6 at the end of this chapter).

Extract 3.2 is taken from a speech that Boyer made to the annual meeting of the American Accounting Association in Nashville in August 1991. In this, he describes the four interlocking scholarships. He also proposes how these scholarships might be undertaken in different proportions, in what he calls the 'seasons' of the career of an academic. Although Boyer was writing in and for an American context, his key ideas have been influential in most higher education settings outside America.
EXTRACT 3.2
SCHOLARSHIP RECONSIDERED: PRIORITIES OF THE PROFESSORiate

Ernest Boyer
In Extract 3.3, specially written for this chapter, Philip Candy further applies Boyer's ideas to the relationships between scholarship and teaching. He argues:

It is only when educators problematise their practice, and when it becomes a respectable topic of discussion and debate at conferences, in tea rooms and in staff meetings that teaching will be fully acceptable as a legitimate object of scholarly discourse.
EXTRACT 3.3
TEACHERS AS SCHOLARS: SCHOLARS AS TEACHERS, PART 2

Philip C. Candy

The response to the demand for greater professionalism in teaching has been multi-faceted. Most universities have introduced a variety of schemes for evaluating the effectiveness of their staff and providing them with feedback, and many have introduced prizes and awards for teaching excellence. The provision of courses in teaching – ranging from a few hours right through to several years and leading to formal academic awards – is also commonplace in many universities nowadays. Both national and international organisations have been formed to enhance the professional development of academic faculty and indeed the professional credentials of those doing the developing. All in all there can be little doubt that teaching in higher education is rapidly professionalising worldwide.

Into this fast-changing situation, the late Professor Ernest Boyer – former President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching – ventured with a fresh conceptualisation of the place of teaching in higher education (Boyer, 1990). He began by placing teaching into the context of all the activities in which academics engage. He argued that academics do more than simply teach and research – in addition, their work involves both the application of their knowledge to the solution of real-world problems – and that increasingly they have to draw together insights both from various disciplines and from various traditions and paradigms within their disciplines. To describe these four dimensions of academic work he used the words ‘teaching’, ‘discovery’, ‘application’ and ‘integration’, respectively. However, he went further than this. He argued that all four of these activities deserve parity of esteem in our processes of selection, of promotion and of recognition and reward. This is because all four are scholarly activities, a term which we usually associate with research because of its high levels of independence, innovation and intellectual activity. For many people engaged in consulting, in cross-disciplinary synthesis, and in teaching, the formulation of their work as ‘scholarly’ has come as a pleasant surprise, but also as a challenge.

The recognition of teaching as a scholarly activity has been something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it has signalled the realisation that there is a distinct body of knowledge about teaching that potentially puts it on a par with research in terms of complexity and institutional regard. At the same time, however, it has increased the pressure on academics to master this additional, and frequently unfamiliar, body of concepts and new language, which for many is an unwelcome imposition in addition to their existing roles and responsibilities. Central to this situation is the question of whether or not knowledge about teaching is directly analogous, for instance, to knowledge about jurisprudence, or quantum mechanics, or medieval history. In fact, those who endorse the idea of a scholarship of teaching are divided between those who argue that there is a body of knowledge, and an associated set of practices, that can be mastered and demonstrated in a relatively context-free way, and those who believe that the scholarship of teaching is much more subtle and contextualised than this; that one learns about teaching through doing it, and through thinking about (or, in the argot of the field, ‘reflecting on’) it.

There is, therefore, an intriguing convergence between the discourses of scholarship, on the one hand, and those of ‘reflective practice’ (Schön, 1983, 1987) on the other. To rescue scholarship from the tyranny of abstract theorisation, it has to include some practical element; and at the same time, to rescue reflection from the stigma of solipsism, it needs to be scholarly, or in other words, to connect to some experiences and insights from outside the self. Accordingly, to be scholarly about teaching involves a judicious blend of learning what is already known about educational theory and good educational practice, while at the same time valuing and learning from one’s own experience as an educator, which Schön has labelled ‘the epistemology of practice’. How do teachers
develop as scholars of their fields? The answer is: as anyone becomes a scholar in his or her field. Certainly intensive intellectual effort is involved, and so too is a familiarity with the best that is already known in the field; one does not become a scholar as a neophyte, but rather through long exposure to the thinking and writing of others operating in the domain. Finally, one becomes a scholar through reflection, informed critical debate and openness to new insights. There are many ways in which the scholarship of teaching may be pursued. One way is through the time-honoured practice of apprenticeship, with a valued mentor. Another is through the prolonged and intensive study of the field such as that undertaken in a higher degree. A third is through approaching practice itself as a potential locus for learning; through reflecting, maintaining a diary or journal, through discussions with other practitioners to hone and refine one’s views and insights. And any of these approaches may themselves be augmented by electronically mediated intervention by a tutor or other external agent. It is only when educators problematise their practice, and when it becomes a respectable topic of discussion and debate at conferences, in tea rooms and in staff meetings, that teaching will be fully acceptable as a legitimate object of scholarly discourse.

There is another dimension to all this. As we enter the knowledge era, with most if not all graduates destined to work in ‘information-rich’ workplaces, it is likely that all graduates, and not only those who seek to pursue an academic career, will themselves be involved in scholarly activities. I have argued elsewhere (Candy, 1998) that, although they might not use the same language to describe it, all professionals engage, to some extent, in teaching (usually their clients, customers or colleagues), in application (of their professional knowledge to solving work-based problems), in discovery (of new ways of doing things or solutions to unforeseen and non-reoccurring problems), and in integration (as real-world problems, by their very nature, cut across disciplinary boundaries, and most ‘knowledge workers’ span several fields of practice on a day-to-day basis). Accordingly, there is a symmetry between the scholarly work of academics and practice in the fields and professions for which they are preparing graduates. This insight should give added encouragement for us to engage with the language and the practice of the ‘scholarship of teaching’.

But the implications of Boyer’s concept of scholarship don’t end there. One of the most neglected, yet richest insights in Boyer’s work is his conceptualisation of what he terms ‘seasons’. In brief, it is his argument that academics do not characteristically wish to spend their entire working lives locked into a specific role. Thus, a person does not wish to be always a researcher, or always a teacher or always a consultant, but rather, as their careers unfold, most people seek the enrichment of expanding their professional horizons through working in other aspects of Academe. A simple example might suffice. Most young academics, either through choice or by demand, do a lot of teaching early in their careers (this notwithstanding the fact that they have typically just finished a higher degree and are often keen to publish from their theses!). After a few years, they might progress to working with research students, and may be encouraged to apply for research grants and to be part of a research team. A few years later, their reputation might enable them to work as consultants, undertaking high-level ‘application’ for government or corporate clients. After all this, many people might seek to write a definitive textbook in their field, or in any case might choose to return to teaching with the benefit of greater maturity and a more robust sense of their professional identity. At each stage – and this is simply one pattern rather than an invariant trajectory – there is or may be the need for staff development. Even a person who enjoys teaching, and who is good at it, might nevertheless find that changes in teaching technologies, institutional policies or student expectations demand that they undertake new learning. If they have developed a scholarly mind-set, it is likely that these ‘seasons’ will be marked by a more committed and dedicated approach to the development and refinement of their academic persona, including to the work of teaching.

Unfortunately, teaching is viewed, in the eyes of many, as a lower form of academic life than, say, research. However, it is argued here that true scholars can scarcely hold back from the desire to share the love of their subject with their students. Conversely, the habit of inquiry, the tendency to speculate, experiment and
theorise, will spill over from the laboratory to the classroom. In short and in conclusion, teaching is by no means a poor relation in the panoply of scholarship; whilst it might be possible to be professional without being scholarly, it is impossible to be scholarly without, at the same time, being thoroughly professional.

Written for this chapter by Professor Philip C. Candy, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Scholarship), University of Ballarat (1997)
Activity 3.1

What have you done in each of Boyer’s four ‘scholarships’ over the past two years? What are your main strengths and weaknesses in each of these scholarships?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarship Activities</th>
<th>Your Strengths in This Scholarship</th>
<th>Your Weaknesses in This Scholarship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

of discovery
of integration
of application
of teaching

In what additional ways could you manifest a scholarship of teaching in your work?

The answers to these questions could provide additional material for the building of your professional development plan. You might show your scholarship of teaching in your work by researching and publishing on your course design, teaching and assessment. For example, you might start with a concern about poor student engagement with your seminar programme. You might identify reasons for this by interviewing students, talking to colleagues who run similar seminars, and reading articles about course design and student motivation. Then you might develop and test new approaches; and write up your explorations, solutions, evaluations and theorising for the teaching and learning journal in your profession or discipline.

Or you might begin by reading about the teaching and learning of your subject, and then apply or evaluate selected ideas from your reading in your teaching.

In editing and updating these materials, we have noticed that Boyer’s and Candy’s visions of different futures and career trajectories are still focused on the academic life. The increasing numbers of practitioners from outside ‘the academy’ who provide teaching input to university courses or programmes have enriched our understanding of ‘scholarship’, and courses like this have probably helped to create the space for such changes.

3.3 Reflection

As we suggested in Chapter 1, experience alone does not lead to learning, and experienced teachers are not automatically better teachers, nor do they automatically display more scholarship of teaching. We have probably all known teachers who are equally bad year after year and who appear not to notice. Reflection can be the process that helps turn experience into learning.

‘Reflective practice’ is a feature of professional development that was, even when these materials were first written, well established in nursing, social work and, surprisingly, engineering. As a personal process of inquiry, reflection allows us to expand notions of scholarship from a literature-
based study or a scientific research project to a personal examination of my teaching in my particular context.

In Extract 3.4, Ann Brockbank and Ian McGill give a general account of the uses of reflective practice in teaching. In Extract 3.5, John Cowan gives a very personal response to Brockbank and McGill, specially written for this chapter, answering the question: ‘Why do I encourage reflection by myself and my students?’
EXTRACT 3.4
REFLECTION AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Ann Brockbank and Ian McGill

Copyright material removed

OpenLearn

EXTRACT 3.5
WHY DO I ENCOURAGE REFLECTION – BY MYSELF AND MY STUDENTS?

John Cowan

I'm not very good at formulating definitions and general statements which will prove helpful to those who read them, or listen to them. I need to use examples, and non-examples, to illustrate what I mean. Please bear with me, then, as I do that – while first trying to explain what I mean by reflection, in the educational context.

I reflect when I ask myself questions and try to find answers to them which will leave me further forward when I'm finished reflecting than I was when I began.

This week, in a video-conferenced workshop, I noticed that I was making more eye contact with the students at the remote site than with those in the conference room beside me. It was reflection in the midst of the action when I noted that behaviour, wondered why it was happening, found the reason in the seating arrangement, and asked myself if I should do anything to make changes, and if so, what. It would not have been reflection-in-action, for me at least, if I had merely noticed my behaviour and found it interesting or even lamentable.

A few weeks ago, I was about to attend a formal course on PowerPoint to make good my woeful deficiencies in the use of that software. On that occasion it was reflection-for-action when I thought about what I wanted to get from the course in the future, and how I might best use the opportunity to maximise its usefulness for me. It would not have been reflection-for-action (for me, in my terms) had I merely summed up what I already knew, and could do, with PowerPoint. Reflection must take me a step forward, even if only in preparing me to use an opportunity in a thoughtful and purposeful way.

This week, our undergraduate students evaluated their first-semester experience by identifying what abilities they had developed, what evidence of them that they could table for validation, and what advice they would offer us in the form of a Stop/Start/Continue feedback. My colleague and I (naturally) engaged in the same type of reflection, focusing on much the same questions. When we received the students' summary, we compared it with our own, and asked ourselves what differences were significant, why that might be so, and what the analysis and comparison said to us about next semester, and about possible revisions to the course for the benefit of the next cohort. It would scarcely have been reflection-on-action, for me at least, if it had merely been a summarising of what learning had happened, and what facilitative teaching had, and had not, been effective. I need to see progress, or the prospect of progress, emerging from my reflection.

I reflect, then, when I ask myself questions – about what is happening at the moment (reflection-in-action), what has just been completed (reflection-on-action) and what lies immediately ahead (reflection-for-action).

Everyone asks themselves questions like that, my students tell me; and I cannot but agree. So why am I making a fuss about them, by giving them special and separate emphasis? I suppose I can rationalise by identifying a number of watershed points in my life, when someone has asked me a good question, and I have seen the importance of that question, and have profited from seeking an answer in terms of my own development. I recall that in 1971 I was pouring out my ideas for resource-based learning to an American who was running an EdTech workshop for the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals. He listened patiently to my plans in which, in effect, I proposed to record instruction. He asked me gently: 'What is the least effective part of the experience that your engineering students have?' I replied immediately: 'The worked example classes.' ‘Why are you not starting with helping students to learn from that problem-solving, then?’ he asked – and for the next 15 years I wrestled to find satisfactory answers to the proliferation of questions which stemmed from that beginning. I still keep coming back to the basic question: 'What are my students' main learning needs in the face of these desired learning outcomes – and how can I best support learning?'

Postman and Weingartner (1971) suggested that we should judge education not by what graduates know, but by the quality of the questions which they ask. That, too, rang a
bell with me, as soon as I read it. For I felt that I wanted to be a question-asking person, and I wanted to encourage question-asking on the part of my students. But even as I enthused, I began to hear the follow-up question in my head: 'What can I do, to bring that about?' I have spent 20 years seeking answers to that question, and testing out possibilities, and reflecting on possibilities and on what my experiences have to tell me about what to retain in my plans, and what to change.

So the answer to my title question is fairly simple. I value reflection, as I have described it here — in myself and in my students — because it has been my experience that it is through purposeful and conscious reflection that much personal and professional development has occurred for me, and for my students. But how is this questioning habit to be encouraged, and how is the ability to ask good questions nurtured?

Since we were children, we have asked questions about things which puzzled us. So, of course, we have all always been question-asking people. But most of us have the potential, I believe, to ask more questions and to do so more pertinently than we do at the moment, if and when we encounter situations in which questioning is encouraged and promoted — and used. I have already given some examples in which someone else's question registered with me as relevant, and provoked me to seek answers, and in so doing, to find more questions. That's one type of stimulus — the questioning from others.

But at the heart of reflection is a continued questioning, where — no matter the source of the original question — the productive follow-up questions come from me, or at least are mainly from me. Ten years ago, I studied an Open University course in which the assignments were written in dialogue. I thought that this was a somewhat artificial format. I sat down one Sunday to write my first such assignment, with the kind of notes that I would have had for an essay. For the first thousand words, it was an imitation of all that is artificial in much so-called Socratic dialogue. My listener, whom I had called Ian, murmured 'Yes, John', supportively; he asked 'So what next, John?' acting the stooge perfectly. But then, at about 1500 words, he lost patience with me. In some mysterious way, my fingers had him asking me 'But do you really believe that, John?' And when I admitted, somewhat shamefacedly, that I didn't, he then asked bluntly 'Why are you keying that in, then?' By 2000 words Ian had me up against the wall, challenging all the points in my neat essay summary, and making me reflect — and feel glad when it was time to go downstairs for my evening meal and a respite from this relentless and totally valid questioning. A clever structure for an assignment had made me ask myself new and searching questions.

We can learn from the prompting of appropriate structures to ask questions of ourselves consciously and productively. Each week I receive electronic journals from students on two separate courses in two universities. We provide them with a structure which encourages them to reflect. Usually they begin with a good question, and make progress reflectively towards an answer. Usually, in the early journals, they do not see, or at least ask, the follow-up questions which their thoughts might well provoke. So, in my comments, I simply suggest such questions as worthy of consideration. There is no assumption that they will tell me if they have considered the questions, or — if they have done so — what the outcome was. I seldom receive any feedback of that type. As the weeks go by, the student journal writers ask such questions of themselves naturally and productively. There is then little need for that type of input in the comments I offer. And the incisiveness of the opening questions develops similarly. We learn from the empathic questioning of others who have unconditional positive regard for us how to question more effectively and to ends which we value.

What makes me believe that all of this is worthwhile? Every time I have encouraged this kind of reflection in an undergraduate group, I have seen those who reflect around good questions move up in the class ranking order. This is true even in subjects which I do not teach. When students are in the midst of the development of the habit to reflect, in strange and demanding new learning activities such as journalling, they are mostly conscious of the difficulties. Their positive judgement tends to be formed once reflective activity in class has been completed and is then proven in practice.

Written for this chapter by Professor John Cowan, former Director of The Open University in Scotland (1997)
Cowan's enthusiasm for reflective questions obviously drives his own learning and his work with students. Are there ways in which you use reflective processes, whether or not you consciously label them as such?

Remember that you may be reflecting:

- *for* action – planning to make the most of a future experience or activity;
- *in* action – taking a moment to ask yourself a searching question about the activity that you are undertaking right now;
- *on* action – making sure that you record, in some way, the learning from an experience for the future.

You may have noticed that these activities can form a cycle.

### 3.4 Values and ethical principles

Finally, common to many accounts of what makes a profession is the idea of 'a professional code of conduct' (Millerson, 1964) or 'self-controlled behaviour through codes of ethics' (Barber, 1963). Below, we provide examples of the values that underpin most accredited teaching courses in the UK. Extract 3.6 invites you to explore the questions and 'prompts for good practice' that are valued by Canada's STLHE (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education http://www.stlhe.ca). Chapter 4 will look in more detail at the ethical and legal issues that drive and challenge our teaching.

Why are values important in a profession – and more particularly in the profession of teaching in higher education? Values provide a purpose and direction for teaching. The values of quality enhancement and professional standards that the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) has developed make clear that it is not enough for a teacher to know the subject matter or content of a body of knowledge and be able to articulate it clearly. Good teachers also structure their material in a way that helps students to develop their understanding and skills, and monitor their teaching with reference to how far students do develop their understanding and skills. The values and ethical principles that are important to you and underpin your practice are not necessarily the same as those developed by professional bodies. We invite you to critique these values and amend them to your own particular value system, while recognising that accredited programmes (such as the Postgraduate Certificate for which these materials are written) have an expectation that you will be working towards demonstrating how your teaching works within their values.

ILTHE, the membership organisation for teachers in UK higher education, lists its professional values as shown below. You will find more details on the membership website at http://www.ilt.ac.uk/membership.html
Members and Associates of the Institute will be expected to adhere to the following professional values:

- a commitment to scholarship in teaching, both generally and within their own discipline;
- respect for individual learners and for their development and empowerment;
- a commitment to the development of learning communities, including students, teachers and all those engaged in learning support;
- a commitment to encouraging participation in higher education and to equality of educational opportunity;
- a commitment to continued reflection and evaluation and consequent improvement of their own practice.

You will recognise the spirit if not the words of these values, since the principles are at the heart of this course. To achieve accredited status, these values clearly anticipate that teachers will do more than demonstrate skills such as course planning, teaching and assessment. They must additionally show how their work as a teacher is informed by, for example, an understanding of how students learn and a commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.

Another example from the UK is provided by the recently updated core values that SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) has developed to underpin its professional development framework (PDF) for teachers and other staff working in higher education.

Underpinning each SEDA-PDF award are commitments to the following:

- An understanding of how people learn
- Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice
- Working in and developing learning communities
- Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity
- Continued reflection on professional practice
- The development of both people and educational processes and systems

You may want to compare the wording and the implications of this professional development framework with the values of ILTHE, above. For further comparison, we offer an extract from the ethical code of a Canadian professional organisation for teachers in higher education.
EXTRACT 3.6
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
Principle 9  Respect for institution

One final example of an international standard for teachers’ professional practice can be found at http://www.herokuapp.org.au/CCT.htm. The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) published a Checklist on Valuing Teaching, which developed from an initial focus on the responsibilities of institutions to a checklist of questions that encourage individual teachers (or groups of peers) to interrogate the principles of their practice. Is this activity-oriented approach to values more useful than the open values statements that we have provided as examples?

You may find that different values and principles are manifest to different extents and at different levels in your teaching and your organisation or institution. You may find them (or not, or only in part), for example, in your own classroom practice, in your course and programme design work, in your professional practice outside education, and in the culture of your organisation, faculty or institution as a whole. You may have found that some principles are important to you in ways that you will strive to uphold, develop and promulgate. Other values and principles may concern you simply in order that you don’t contravene them.

Summary

In this chapter, we have invited you to consider our account of what it means to be a professional teacher, without reference to the practical realm of teaching techniques and methods. We suggest that, using this frame of reference, there are three essential aspects to professionalism:

- undertaking scholarship in teaching, searching out and applying new ideas and new understandings about how students learn and how you could better help that process;

- continuing to reflect in, on and for action in your teaching, ensuring that you continue to learn from your teaching and apply this learning to your future teaching; and

- applying a code of values or ethics in your work.

There may be others. Our professional practice also includes conversations with colleagues on teaching, learning, assessment and staff development topics at work, and membership of professional associations. The emerging literature on professional development suggests that informal learning through professional conversation is as valuable as the formal processes associated with training and accreditation.
References


Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources for permission to reproduce material in this chapter.

