

CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION [CH]

In their 1969 book *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner noted that the latter half of the twentieth century appeared to be changing more rapidly than during all preceding periods of human history. In short, change was changing. They cited rapid developments in technology, human connectedness, developments in social values and human movement. They pointed out that it was becoming increasingly difficult for people to keep up with the rate of change. In short, change was changing. This process has continued (and may be intensifying) into the twenty-first century where change continues to accelerate at a dizzying pace. At the same time as many of the activities and processes which govern our lives are becoming increasingly routinised, automated and instant through new technologies, many of the challenges which current school pupils will face when they reach adulthood are shaping up to be seemingly intractable, interconnected and extremely complex. This places considerable responsibility on education systems which will need to prepare young people to develop new approaches to problem solving, system thinking habits and increasing comfort with uncertainty. Their teachers too will need to possess these skills and dispositions because, despite impressive developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning, one activity that will never become automated (at least where human learning is concerned) is teaching.

Human learning, particularly in groups or classrooms (and perhaps especially where children and young people are concerned) is simply too complex to be reliably routinised to the extent that artificial intelligence could manage the task. To that end, we will always need teachers. Not only that, but those teachers will need to be capable and comfortable operating within increasing complexity. Like many professions, teachers do not simply repeat the same tasks in the same ways moment by moment, day by day because, as Tom (1980, p.317) eloquently put it:

‘educational phenomena are not the kind of natural phenomena which under careful study reveal law-like relationships among variables’

and because of this,

‘there are no logical [...] reasons for believing that every educational problem has one best solution’.

Teaching and learning situations are comprised of complex, uniquely configured events which demand continual expert, context-sensitive responses. In short, they require expert professional judgement.

According to Berliner (2004) experts are self-regulatory, whereas novices (who are the focus of this book) require degrees of external regulation in the form of questioning, reflection and reality checks to encourage the development of professional judgement. This book is predicated on the assumption that the skills and dispositions associated with professional judgement do not simply develop on their own, they are elicited and gradually transformed through a combination of reflection, coaching, challenge, guidance and modelling. This book focuses attention on the ways teacher educators and school-based mentors can facilitate these opportunities for pre-service and novice teachers to help them achieve this. In the book I argue that developing professional judgement is developing as a teacher because sound judgement, expert teaching and successful learning go hand-in-hand. I posit that there is virtually no distinction between what it means to become an expert teacher and what it means to become expert at making classroom and learning-

related judgements. Expert teachers are necessarily accomplished at making judgements about their work and their pupils' learning. The reason for this, I argue, is that there is no facet of teachers' work which, done well, does not rely on exercising judgement. It follows therefore that pre-service and novice teachers who take steps to improve their judgements will also be improving their overall teaching expertise.

How can novices set about developing the repertoire of skills and attributes associated with the development of teacher judgement? Reflective individuals will, to a minimal extent, build capacities for judgement through their everyday practice, not quite by osmosis, but perhaps with little deliberate effort. Residual developments in many skills and dispositions can be expected to occur to varying degrees unconsciously through action. I argue that to be more deliberate, and surer, about developing professional judgement however, expert teacher education and classroom mentoring should become more explicitly judgement focussed. This would accelerate developments in professional practice by bringing into relief processes, skills and dispositions which may otherwise remain largely tacit. In the book I present frameworks for thinking about and interpreting classroom incidents as well as guidance for teacher educators and school mentors about ways of supporting novices in becoming consciously competent in their judgements.

Contents of this book [A]

The book begins by exploring and defining the key concepts associated with the development of teacher judgement. Following this it wrestles with the reasons why judgement is such an integral part of successful teaching. This centres around the inherent complexity of classrooms and the complex relationship between teaching and learning. Next, I explore ways in which teacher educators and school-based mentors might support novice teachers to grapple with that complexity, develop some comfort with uncertainty and learn to make useful and productive judgements about their teaching and pupils' learning. I present a range of case studies drawn from the experiences of real pre-service teachers, novice teachers, university tutors and school-based mentors and analyse their struggles and successes in building and supporting the development of professional judgement.

Throughout the book I have distinguished between two different categories of judgement and refer to these as *judgement 1* and *judgement 2*. *Judgement 1* relates to the reasoning and decision-making in which teachers engage before and after teaching events, typically whilst planning for or evaluating lessons and learning. *Judgement 1* occurs away from the live moment of teaching where there is more time for reflection and contemplation on prior (and possible future) classroom events. *Judgement 1* maps loosely onto Schön's (1983) well-known concept of reflection *on* action. *Judgement 2* occurs whilst immersed in the moment of teaching. *Judgement 2* judgements are quicker, more instinctive and more intuitive than *judgement 1* judgements and map loosely onto Schön's notion of reflection *in* action. Like all complex activities, teaching is not easily compartmentalisable and therefore the line between *in* and *on* the moment is not always clear. However, a useful way of thinking about these two manifestations of judgement is firstly decisions made whilst away from learners (*judgement 1*) and secondly whilst with learners (*judgement 2*). Reflection plays a pivotal mediating role in the exercising of sound professional judgement, however I have tried to separate this from judgement itself. In this book, professional judgement refers to the decisions and decisional capacity, both *on* and *in* the moment of teaching which result from, among other things, reflection. Models for *judgements 1* and *2* are presented in Chapters 2 and 4, then discussed together in Chapter 5.

Judgement in teaching requires the collision and integration of propositional and procedural knowledge. That is, knowledge (or at least a priori assumptions) that something is the case and knowledge (or at least reasonable predictions) about what is required to do or achieve something. Ultimately, teaching is about doing, however knowledge about how to teach, what to do and how best to do it in the service of learning relies on the phenomenological experience of operating, reasoning, and deciding in the classroom *and* on statistically and theoretically derived knowledge about how learning emerges and the likely consequences of particular teacher actions. Teachers can, and should, draw reasonable inferences from the wealth of theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning to inform their judgements. They can, and should, also reflect on their teaching experiences, including the successes and the failures. This means that, as Winch, Oancea and Orchard (2015) note, teachers must develop a constructive view of educational research and its products, aiming for what they describe as a '*research-based textured notion of professional judgement*' (p.202).

My starting point when writing this book was that debates about the supremacy of different conceptions of teaching as a craft (Rogers, 2016; Grimmer, and MacKinnon, 1992), art (Fraher, 1984) or applied science (Tomlinson, 1997; Thorndike, 1910) are largely unavailing. Convincing arguments can be made for each, because teaching is all these things. This is perhaps the main reason why it is so difficult to determine what good teaching looks like. Should we judge it as art, craft or science? Should we assess its values-base and moral outcomes, its creativity, its processes or its products? Add to this the contextual uniqueness of every classroom and the interactions within them and it is not difficult to see why Jordan, Kleinsasser and Roe (2014) describe teaching as '*complicated*'. In fact, (as they also acknowledge) it is more than just complicated, it is complex (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the difference) and complex phenomena are resistant to simple breakdown, description or standardisation. The unpredictable, indeterminate and contingent nature of learning means that teachers cannot simply follow a script or duplicate procedures. The praxis at the heart of teaching demands that they draw on multiple sources of propositional and procedural knowledge in order to judge what is best. This idea lies at the heart of this book.

Who is this book for? [A]

The audience for the book is university-based teacher educators and school-based mentors who guide novices during early career stages. However, I hope its insights will also appeal to trainee and novice teachers to whom it regularly refers. In places, the content of the book is directed specifically to those preparing pre-service teachers, at other times it is aimed specifically at those mentoring new teachers, and sometimes it is for both. When writing about pre-service teachers I often use the term 'trainee' for ease (though I see teacher education as so much more than merely 'training') and when referring to early career teachers I tend to use the term 'novice'. Occasionally, for grammatical succinctness I use the term 'novice' to refer to both pre-service and early career teachers and I hope the context makes the distinction clear.

In over 25 years as firstly a classroom teacher, school senior leader and subsequently a teacher educator and educational researcher, I have had the distinct pleasure of nurturing the professional

judgement of numerous new and aspiring teachers. I'm not sure I have always performed this role perfectly, I hope I have done it well more often than not; however it has always been immensely satisfying to support young professionals on that important journey towards teacher expertise, the process of which has convinced me that teaching is essentially about making judgements. Sometimes these are quick and instinctive, sometimes slow and reasoned, but either way the capacity to make useful and productive judgements in teaching requires time, rehearsal, space for mistakes and missteps, professional dialogue and most crucially reflection. As facilitators of all these opportunities, teacher educators and early career mentors play a pivotal role in creating the conditions in which judgement can emerge, blossom productively and become habitual.

One of the obstacles to achieving this, and perhaps a reason why this book feels necessary, is that in England and comparable education systems) professional judgement is conspicuous by its near complete absence from policies governing teacher education and early career development. The top-down nature of educational change at national levels means that anything out of sight in policy frameworks remains frustratingly out of mind too. I elaborate on this theme in Chapter 5 and suggest some practical, and reasonably minor, changes to teacher education policy and curriculum, as well as early career frameworks, which would bring judgement more into relief in teacher development. Whilst the primary audiences for the book are teacher educators, early career mentors, trainee and novice teachers, it also makes overtures to policymakers to consider the benefits of a subtle shift away from outcomes towards more process-driven policy.

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