Teachers are supposed to teach not learn

Exploring the need to support teachers’ professional growth

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This article explores the need to support teachers in their professional growth. The case for such support is set against the backdrop of the need for broad reform of education that will facilitate learning for students to equip them for socially just futures in which lifelong learning and productive response to change are fundamental components. Dominant and inappropriate forms of teacher professional development are analysed, followed by a survey of the literature that provides an indication of the key directions for future work. It is on the basis of this analysis of the literature that learning environments conducive to teachers’ future professional growth are considered. Such environments are based on learners pursuing four key roles, that of collaborative learner, creator of knowledge, designer of purposes, and participant in power sharing.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to explore appropriate environments for professional growth that will support teachers to fulfil increasingly complex and challenging roles with regard to student learning. Students are the most important persons in schools. It is students’ learning that should be at the forefront of all endeavours. On this premise alone, it can be argued that teachers’ professional growth is necessary to bring about reform of schooling practices. A further aspect of the relationship between reform and teachers’ professional growth is that, for reform to be authentic and pervasive, it must characterise teachers’ own learning, as well as that of the students.

In this article a purposeful distinction is made between teacher professional development and professional growth. Professional development is used here to describe a multitude of programs that have been created for teachers with little input from teachers themselves. In contrast, professional growth is used to suggest learning that accommodates teachers’ needs and aspirations, is part of a continuous process, and is one in which teachers exert considerable agency. It is the thesis of this article that such teacher professional growth occurs within environments in which four key roles are valued. These roles include that of collaborative learner, creator of knowledge, designer of purposes,
and participant in power sharing. That teachers, along with students, administrators, parents and other members of the school community, embrace these roles serves to challenge dominant schooling paradigms.

According to Retallick, ‘... teachers are supposed to teach, not learn’ (1996, p.3). This simple statement encapsulates a dominant schooling paradigm that has powerful implications for the nature of teaching, learning and schooling, especially with regard to the possibilities for educational reform. To challenge such a dominant schooling paradigm, that teachers teach and students learn, is to choose the ‘swampy lowlands’:

There are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems. When asked to describe their methods of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition and muddling through. Other professionals opt for the high ground. Hungry for technical rigour, devoted to an image of solid technical competence, or fearful of entering a world in which they feel they do not know what they are doing, they choose to confine themselves to a narrowly technical practice ... (Schon quoted in Day 1993, pp.91-92)

Schon’s remarks are applicable to a range of educational issues for which two very divergent approaches are available. It is possible to adopt a technical, instrumental approach where matters are resolved in expedient and unambiguous ways by drawing on an authorised body of knowledge and a repertoire of accepted and transferable skills. A less straightforward approach to dealing with educational matters is one that involves risk-taking. It also involves accepting and exploring the complexities associated with a particular issue, embedded as it is in a specific context, and constructing appropriate knowledge and skills required to serve the interests of parties involved and to achieve the negotiated purposes. It is argued here that dominant schooling practices are conceived and carried out on the ‘high ground’ (Schon quoted in Day 1993, p.92). What follows is an exploration of the need for reform of schooling practices. This exploration provides a backdrop to the examination of the current malaise within initiatives designed to improve teachers’ learning.

SCHOOLING FOR POSTMODERN TIMES

Writing a report for the National Industry Education Reform in 1994, Ashenden offers a critique of current schooling practices when he said:

The greatest single weakness ... of this present raft of reforms ... is that they stop at the classroom door. The classroom is the student’s workplace. It is, in essence, a nineteenth-century workplace – much more humane and interesting but recognisably the same place. It is an inefficient and inequitable producer of the old basics and simply incompatible with the new. (quoted in Caldwell 1996, p.247)

Such sentiments are reinforced by Dixon when he claims that: ‘world-wide, school is a pufferbilly locomotive chugging incongruously through a high-tech landscape’ (quoted in Caldwell 1996, p.248). Several educators (Cooper and Henderson 1995; Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 1994) highlight the need for reform of schooling to meet increasingly com-
plex and diverse societal contexts in order to deliver outcomes that will equip students for their futures. Aviram (1996) argues that ‘... the current education system in the developed world is an anomalous institution insofar as there are ever-widening gaps between it and the reality in which it is required to act’ (p.427). He argues that the postmodern world is characterised by, among other things, an abandonment of dominantly held views, such as the objectivist religious, scientific, national or socialist ideologies that have previously entrenched particular values, knowledge and broad views of the world. In contrast, the relativistic standpoints that permeate modernity call for a deconstruction of current practices and cultures and reconstruction of practices and cultures that are more likely to bring about sustainable futures. The ‘egg-crate approach’ to education (Hargreaves 1995b) served the modern era in which, for the majority of the population, universal values were held and knowledge was regarded as unproblematic.

According to Aviram (1996), educational leaders must examine the current aims of schooling, given the plurality of purposes and viewpoints within society. He also calls into question many other entrenched aspects of schooling, such as the inappropriateness of what is taught, how it is taught, and the organisational structures of modern schools. Aviram sums up the ‘anomalous’ feature of today’s schools when he claims that they need to change for two main reasons: such schools create a discrepancy between the culture of school and that which surrounds it, and as a consequence such institutions cannot prepare students for their futures (1996, p.433).

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The increasing inappropriateness of many aspects of dominant schooling practices provides a useful context within which to consider the preparedness of teachers as postmodern educators. The pivotal role that teachers must play in schooling and the reform that is required is highlighted by writers who claim that teachers should be regarded as the most important learners in the school (Barth quoted in National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1994). Additionally, it is claimed that the school should be regarded as an ‘educative workplace’ for teachers (National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1994).

The need for teacher professional growth to be intimately associated with educational reform is widely articulated in the literature (Fullan 1990; Little and McLaughlin 1993; National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1994; Sykes 1996). This article is underpinned by the notion that, if student learning in schools is to be reformed, teachers must play a key role. The pivotal role that teachers’ professional growth must have in reform efforts is suggested by Hargreaves (1995a, p.149) when he says that professional development is ‘increasingly viewed as vital to restructuring and reform’, rather than of peripheral influence as it has been perceived in the past. It is teachers, after all, whose energies and abilities exert a strong influence on students’ learning in schools. As well as teachers’ professional growth being an integral component leading to school reform, the strategies involved in such growth should reflect reformed learning and
teaching practices. In the words of Sykes (1996, p.466), professional development should 'recast teacher learning in ways that parallel the teaching reforms themselves'.

THE CURRENT MALAISE WITHIN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Before outlining some directions offered within the literature with regard to purposeful professional development for teachers, it is useful to survey the dominant practices that exist currently. Goodman (1995) encapsulates much criticism of current methods of teacher professional development when he outlines his reasons for rejecting models he labels the 'medical model' and the 'purchase model' (p.67). He claims that the medical model is based on a consultant 'diagnosing' the school's illness, followed by a recommendation for 'treatment', while the purchase model involves the delivery of decontextualised 'one-off' learning experiences for teachers by outside agents.

The deprofessionalising impacts of limited teacher agency in their own learning is explored by Hargreaves (1994, p.189) when he argues:

If teachers are told what to be professional about, how, where and with whom to collaborate, and what blueprint of professional conduct to follow, then the culture that evolves will be foreign to the setting. They will once again have 'received' a culture.

The medical and purchase models often involve what Butler (1992, p.221) describes as the 'teacher as technician' model. Such a model is underpinned by the notion that teaching competence is based on possession of a discrete set of skills that can be acquired and honed during isolated and decontextualised professional development sessions. This article is underpinned by a radically different notion of teaching, that is, of a complex human activity that requires highly sophisticated problem-solving skills, fuelled by collaboration and negotiation with a range of stakeholders to continuously evaluate and reevaluate what is required to achieve the negotiated purposes and outcomes.

In summary, Butler (1996, p.266) succinctly defines the malaise that typifies dominant professional development forms when he says that '... the training solution has within it the seeds of its own limited effectiveness because it is an externally prescribed skilling process rather than a problem-correcting process focusing on personal beliefs, values and experiential knowledge'. Butler (1996, p.268) further captures themes related to dominant forms of professional development pervasive in the literature when he says that such professional development models take place outside the workplace, requiring educators to return to the workplace and to implement the knowledge and skills gained at the training.

The inappropriateness of such professional development practices to meet current and future schooling needs is summed up well by Lieberman (1995, p.591), who claims that what is seen as useful for students - 'a wide array of learning opportunities ... in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems, using their own experiences, and working with others' - is not made available to teachers.
DESIRABLE QUALITIES FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The question then arises: what are the characteristics of learning that must be embedded in any initiatives designed to improve teacher learning? A definition of learning developed by the American Psychological Association in 1993, which was used by the Teaching Learning Project conducted by the Flinders Institute for the Study of Teaching (Lawson, Hattam, McInerney and Smyth 1997), provides a sound base. Drawing on this definition, learning is constructed as active and constructive, goal-seeking and meaning-generating, directed by learners according to their beliefs, affective states and motivations, facilitated by collaboration and influenced by context (quoted in Lawson et al 1997). With this definition of learning at the forefront, what follows is a survey of the proposed approaches to teacher professional development espoused in the literature. Following this overview is an exploration of environments conducive to teachers’ professional growth.

Professional learning as active and constructive as well as goal-seeking and meaning-generating

There are numerous calls throughout the literature for teachers’ professional development to be ‘active and constructive’ (Lawson et al 1997, p.11). Such calls are accompanied with descriptions of what forms this might take in practice. Lieberman (1995), for example, highlights the need for teachers to be actively involved in their learning, with the possibility of building new roles, such as teacher leader, peer coach or teacher researcher, or creating new structures, such as problem-solving groups. She also proposes active professional learning through teachers working on new tasks, such as journal writing or preparation of case studies. A fourth example of active learning by teachers recommended by Lieberman involves the creation of a culture of inquiry, in which ‘professional learning is expected, sought after, and an ongoing part of teaching and school life’ (1995, p.593). Many writers take up the challenge to propose processes for developing such a culture of inquiry.

The case for teachers to make meaning for themselves is cogently articulated by Lieberman (1995, p.592):

Teachers have been told often enough (or it has been taken for granted) that other people’s understandings of teaching and learning are more important than their own and that their knowledge – gained from the dalliness of work with students – is of far less value. Outside experts have often viewed teaching as technical, learning as packaged, and teachers as passive recipients of the findings of ‘objective research’.

Reflection, in a variety of formats, is widely valued in the literature as offering a potentially powerful approach to professional growth. It is argued here that reflective activity supports learning that is active and constructive, as well as goal-seeking and meaning-generating. Many of the proposals for embedding reflection as an integral part of teacher learning draw on the Schon’s (1983) work on ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’. Reflection in action supports teachers to modify actions and learn while carrying out those actions, while reflection on action refers to evaluation and learning after the
actions have taken place. Such reflection, whether it be during, before, or after the event, immediately provides a meaningful context for learning.

Butler (1996) builds on the work of Schon by suggesting a third form of reflection, 'reflection to action' (p.272). Butler claims that such a process, which can take several moments or months leading up to a performance, is both a learning or self-enriching action and a design or self-expressing action. Butler (1992) outlines a process for reflection that details the way in which it acts to connect the outside with the inside or 'public knowledge' with 'personal practical knowledge' (p.223).

Butler's (1992) thesis is that successful professional learning is built on a model for human agency that contains four key elements: public knowledge and professional practice, which belong to the realm of social context, and personal knowledge and world view, which belong to the context of the self. According to Butler, public knowledge includes educational theories, formal knowledge and policy documents, as well as hints and teaching folklore. In Butler's view, public knowledge 'attempts to mould and control the professional practice of the teacher' (p.225). Professional practice, the other key aspect of the social context in which the teacher works, includes the actions the teacher takes. Butler's model is based on the notion that such professional practice is 'more deeply expressive of the self than of external public knowledge' (p.225).

The components of the self context defined by Butler (1992) include the world view, that is, what the self values and believes, and the personal practical knowledge, what the self knows and understands. Within the collaborative research project Butler conducted with science teachers, he described the process of joint inquiry into the science expertise of the group, the processes by which the group operated, and the knowledge of teaching as a 'metaphor for the individual's scrutiny of all public knowledge and their own platform [values, beliefs and assumptions]' (p.232). Butler's model of human agency maintains that teachers had to 'engage in a conversation that included their newly discovered personal practical knowledge and their world views as well as public knowledge before they could act to learn' (p.234). Further, Butler claimed that this process of reflection ('reflection to action') must 'take place prior to the formulation of the action that leads to the Schon processes' (p.234).

Butler (1992) claims that the strength of his model is that teachers are supported to address the inner 'selves', arguing that '[o]f all the judgements and beliefs that each teacher owns, none is more important than the ones they have about their "selves"' (p.235). The thesis is that it is the 'self that needs to be renewed and enhanced in in-service programs' (p.235). Butler's work explores in detail the ways in which reflection can be carried out and the elements of the self and social contexts that interact for such a process to occur. The literature also offers key directions with regard to the scope of such reflection.

Day (1993) presents an overview of a range of reflective approaches, claiming that reflection is a 'necessary but not sufficient condition for professional development' to occur. Specifically, Day claims that reflection must be accompanied by confrontation if professional growth is to occur. Day cites research conducted by Handal, who claims that

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teachers in Norway were used to discussing their work with others, formulating plans regarding timeframes and approaches to be used, but rarely moved beyond planning of action. It was rare that teachers explicitly stated their reasons for that action or justification for the work itself (quoted in Day 1993, p.85).

Day argues with Smyth (quoted in Day 1993, p.86) that in order to 'develop and sustain a critical form of teaching', reflective processes need to incorporate four key questions:

1. What do I do? (describing)
2. What does this description mean? (informing)
3. How did I come to be like this? (confronting)

Processes such as those suggested by Smyth give agency to teachers themselves to actively construct meaning through rigorous self-examination of their own practice, with the opportunity to acknowledge the wider social and political contexts that impact on that practice. At the same time, Smyth, Hattam, McInerney and Lawson (1997) acknowledge the difficulties for teachers attempting to find 'enunciative space' for their learning in schools. Drawing on the work of Rose and Miller (quoted in Smyth et al 1997, p.4), who refer to the results of increasingly limited opportunities for teachers to explore pedagogical practice as 'impoverished enclosures', Smyth et al cite those agendas and issues that are privileged currently in schools. Such privileged agendas include 'vocationalism, accountability, testing, performance appraisal, devolved responsibility, school charters, league tables, re-centralised curriculum frameworks, and other extraneous limitations on teachers' work and students' learning' (1997, p.4).

**Professional learning as directed by learners according to their beliefs, affective states and motivations**

A pivotal aspect of many proposals for future teacher learning is the need for the teacher as learner to know her or his own beliefs, affective states and motivations. A strategy used by Butler (1992) to support teachers' explorations of their own beliefs and attitudes was the development of professional lifelines made up of achievements, constraints and setbacks. According to Butler, '... most teachers found that their lifelines portrayed a person who knew a lot, who would go on learning and who should exercise the power and responsibility that the knowledge conferred ...' (Butler 1992, p.229). Butler claims that 'The greatest leverage in the development of professional practice is the reading of one's own actions' (Butler 1992, p.269). The contention here is that dominant forms of teacher professional development, packaged as they are in episodic, 'one-size-fits-all' formats, neglect these crucial aspects of learning, that it be active and constructive, as well as goal-seeking and meaning-generating.

**Professional learning as facilitated by collaboration**

Traditional forms of teacher professional development do not incorporate or contribute to any meaningful or sustained collaboration. According to Hargreaves (1995a, p.150),
collaboration is ‘one of the emergent and most promising metaparadigms of the post-modern age’ in which ‘problems are unpredictable, solutions are unclear, and demands and expectations are intensifying’. Rubin claims that teachers are the best possible trainers of teachers (quoted in Hickcox and Musella 1992, p.160). Furthermore, Ponticell (1995, p.14) notes that, of the 14 sources of learning about teaching that were identified by the National Educational Association in 1985, respondents named direct experiences as a teacher, consultation with other teachers and observation of other teachers as three of the four most efficacious methods. ‘Other professional conferences, workshops’ and ‘inservice training provided by the school district’ were ranked eighth and fourteenth respectively.

The authentic nature of collaboration among teachers is a strong theme within the literature (Grimmett and Crehan 1992; Hargreaves 1994; Hickcox and Musella 1992). Hargreaves (1994) conveys the nature and the outcomes of ‘contrived collegiality’ when he describes the phenomenon as ‘... administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space and predictable in outcomes’ (pp.195-196). Grimmett and Crehan (1992, p.70) make a valuable contribution to productive ways forward when they propose that contrived collegiality exists in two forms: that of ‘administratively imposed collegiality’ and ‘organisationally induced collegiality’. They claim that the first form is based on ‘top-down’ approaches that are designed to manipulate directly the practices of teachers as professional educators. The latter form consists of ‘problem-solving approaches to school improvement through careful manipulation, not of teachers’ practices and behaviours, but of the environment within which teachers live and work and have their professional being’ (p.70).

While there is a strong focus on teachers as collaborators, the potential helpful role of external agents, such as researchers and consultants, is acknowledged. Hargreaves (1997, p.100) explores the role of outside agents when he claims that even though teachers often learn more from working with each other, ‘external expertise’ still has a significant role in introducing new ideas and providing a safe forum for exchange of ideas. Goodman (1995) contributes to the debate regarding the role of the external agent in teachers’ collaborative efforts, especially with regard to the power issues involved, when he advocates the open articulation of the consultant’s ideological stance. Such explicitness, he argues, challenges a dominant approach that involves the presentation of ‘value-neutral’ positions (p.69).

**Professional learning as influenced by context**

A study of the literature associated with purposeful professional development suggests that the American Psychological Association’s phrasing that learning is ‘influenced’ by context (quoted in Lawson et al 1997, p.11) underrates the significance of context in learning. Indeed, a report commissioned by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (Workplace Learning in the Professional Development of Teachers, 1994) claims that none of approaches canvassed in the report’s literature review ‘... adequately focuses on the extent to which teaching might be improved through greater recognition and facilita-
tion of teacher learning in the workplace of schools’ (p.10). Drawing on the work of Resnick (1987) and Scribner (1986), the report concludes that learning in the workplace has features that may distinguish it from other sites. Workplace learning is task focused, occurs in a social context, is collaborative, often grows out of an experience or problem for which there is no known knowledge base, occurs in a political and economic context, and is cognitively different from the learning that occurs in schools (p.11).

ENVIRONMENTS CONDUCIVE TO TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

There can be no prescriptive recipe for desirable formats for initiatives designed to foster teacher learning. However, calls can be made to create environments that will support teachers to determine and secure what they need in order to grow professionally. The literature abounds with calls for new structures and cultures to promote learning among all members of the educational community (Aviram 1996; Cooper and Henderson 1995; Kofman and Senge 1993; Senge 1990). Varying descriptors are used. Senge (1990), for example, advocates ‘learning organisations’, Cooper and Henderson (1995) explore the nature of ‘collaborative learning communities’ and Costa and Garmston (1994) aspire towards ‘renaissance schools’. According to Sergiovanni (1992, p.205), ‘the metaphor for schooling must change from organisation, instructional delivery system, processing plant, clinical setting, market garden, and so on to community’.

What can be distilled from this range of proposed contexts is that learning is the ascendant feature. What also can be claimed is that it is important to resist the temptation to construct ‘learning organisations’ or ‘learning communities’ as the universal panacea for education’s ills. Hence, the approach here is to suggest that four key roles be rigorously ‘spoken into existence’ (Alloway 1995, p.9) at individual and organisational levels for all learners. Costa and Garmston’s (1994) term ‘holonomy’ is useful here to convey notions about the simultaneous work at individual and organisational levels required to produce such environments. Holonomous activity is described as that which involves individuals working independently while simultaneously acting interdependently with the group in order to produce changes at a broad organisational level. In practical ways, drawing on the notions of holonomy with regard to teacher professional growth means that teachers would be invited to consider themselves in terms of these roles, as well as receiving organisational support in order to cast themselves in these roles.

Four key roles at individual and organisational levels are seen as contributing to environments conducive to teacher professional growth. These roles are that of collaborative learner, creator of knowledge, designer of purposes, and participant in power sharing. The ‘speaking into existence’ (Alloway 1995, p.9) in such ways, of both the individuals and the organisations to which they belong, provides a vehicle for synthesising the purposeful directions for teacher learning reviewed throughout this article.

Firstly, it is argued that professional growth occurs within environments in which teachers collaborate with their peers and others to learn. The efficacy of teacher learning in collaborative environments has been referred to in this article (Hargreaves 1997; Lieberman 1995; Ponticell 1995). This role is elucidated by Lieberman’s (1995) work in
which she proposes the collaborative activities around which teachers’ professional growth might focus. Teachers’ involvement in new roles, such as peer coach, in new tasks, such as preparation of case studies, and in new structures, such as problem-solving groups, all within a culture of inquiry (Lieberman 1995) epitomises the role of collaborative learner advocated here. Such collaborative effort among teachers must inevitably lead to the assumption that there is no universal truth, but that knowledge is contextually significant in particular places and times for particular groups.

Secondly then, teacher professional growth occurs in environments in which learners, including teachers, are creators of knowledge. The literature reviewed in this article with regard to the importance of reflection in teachers’ learning (Butler 1992, 1996; Day 1993; Schon 1983) is underpinned by the notion of the teacher as a creator of knowledge. For example, Butler’s (1992, 1996) work highlights the importance of teachers’ engagement in a process in which they interrogate their uncovered personal practical knowledge, world views and public knowledge before learning can occur. Butler (1992, 1996) and Ponticell (1995), among others, flag the importance of teachers’ own beliefs and values, a cornerstone of knowledge creation, as an integral component of professional growth. Given the need for teachers to collaborate in ways that accommodate their needs and aspirations, as well as the diversity of the knowledge they continuously create, environments in which professional growth can thrive also rely on participants as designers of purposes.

A further key role for learners in producing environments in which professional growth can thrive is that of designer of purposes. Evidence cited already in this article points to the failure of the medical and purchase models designed and implemented by others (Goodman 1995). The work of the Teaching Learning Project at Flinders University (Lawson et al 1997) highlights the important ways that teachers can grow professionally through designing purposes for themselves. Drawing on a model of self-regulated learning for teaching proposed by Paris and Ayres (cited in Lawson et al 1997), Lawson et al provided scaffolding for teachers that was based on ‘learner choice of goals and plans, learner control, relevance to the immediate situation of the learner, a degree of risk ...’ (p.13). The importance of everyday contexts as opportunities for teachers’ professional growth (Lawson et al 1997; Lieberman 1995) represents an important justification for teachers’ roles as designers of purposes regarding their own learning. Determination of the nature of professional development programs has been intimately connected to issues of power within and beyond school sites. Thus a further key role for learners in producing environments conducive to teacher professional growth is that of participant in power sharing.

The fourth key role for learners in producing environments in which teacher professional growth can occur, that of participant in power sharing, builds on and is essential to other key roles. For members of organisations to be collaborative learners, creators of knowledge, and designers of purposes there must be sharing of power. There is a multitude of ways in which learners need to share power in order to create environments conducive to professional learning. The notion of power from postmodern perspectives is
useful here. Postmodern theories have eroded the view that power is centrally located and dispersed downwards. Gunew (1990, p.22), drawing on the work of Foucault, claims that '[p]ower is reproduced in discursive networks at every point where someone who "knows" is instructing someone who doesn't know'. A significant theme in this article with regard to what produces professional growth is teacher agency – that is to say, that teachers' professional growth is related to teachers being able to collaborate with their peers in activities they value as relevant to their needs and aspirations. Teacher involvement in their own learning requires sharing of power with regard to the organisational structures needed for collaboration, the time required and so on. Such day-to-day sharing of power is related to a more fundamental sharing of power connected to the understanding that teachers are creators of their own useful knowledge. This role for teachers as participants in power sharing constructs teachers in very different ways from those in traditional paradigms in which teachers receive the learning deemed by others as appropriate.

A key aspect of such power sharing involves the scope of the reflection in which teachers participate. As Smyth et al so cogently point out, there are privileged agendas, such as recentralised curriculum frameworks, accountability and testing in schools (1997, p.4). A fundamental aspect of power sharing then involves the claiming of 'enunciative space' (Smyth et al 1997, p.4) or the power to collaborate on the issues associated with learning and teaching that are viewed as important by teachers themselves.

CONCLUSION

This article has presented the need for a renewed focus on teacher professional growth within the context of the requirements for general educational reform, as well as the inappropriateness of traditional forms of professional development experienced by teachers. It has been argued that the pursuit of four key roles can pave the way for the integration of many productive possibilities for future professional growth gleaned from the literature. Teachers as collaborative learners, creators of knowledge, designers of purposes, and participants in power sharing would be positioned favourably to exert their professionalism in order to secure learning appropriate to their needs and aspirations. Given the complexity of this professional context, the words of Andy Hargreaves encapsulate the challenges for the future:

So we are on the edge of postmodern professionalism where teachers deal with a diverse and complex clientele, in conditions of increasing moral uncertainty, where many methods of approach are possible, and where more and more social groups have an influence and a say. Whether this postmodern age will see exciting and positive new partnerships being created with groups and institutions beyond the schools, and teachers learning to work effectively, openly and authoritatively with those partners; or whether it will witness the deprofessionalisation of teaching as teachers crumble under multiple pressures, intensified work demands and reduced opportunities to learn from colleagues is something that is still to be decided. That decision should not be left to 'fate' but should be shaped by the active intervention of all educators who really
understand the principle that if we want better classroom learning for students, we
have to create superb professional learning for those who teach them. (1997, p.108)

NOTES

1. While the intention here is that students, teachers and their classroom should be a focus for
educational reform, the claim is made with caution. The need for support from personnel in
other strategic locations, such as those in administrative positions, is acknowledged. To place
responsibility of reform on teachers alone is to impose enormous responsibility upon them
and to ignore the huge structural and cultural reform required across the organisation.

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