Faculty of Education

The University of Hong Kong

June Partnership Forum 2009

Celebration of Encouraging Outcomes of School-University Partnership
Chapter 3

Title:
On Becoming a Member of a Community of Practice

Authors:
Gwyn Edwards and Amy B.M. Tsui
Research Framework

- Student-teachers: Maggie, Claire, Jean

Data Set

- Semi-structured interviews: school experience, beginning and end of practicum

Aspects covered

- relationships with the mentor and other teachers in the school, fellow STs, the UT, and pupils taught
- involvement in curriculum planning and decision-making
- access to facilities and resources
- participation in the wider aspects of school life.
Key Ideas

Learning is first and foremost the ability to negotiate new meanings (Wenger 1998, p. 226).

One can produce affordances for the negotiation of meaning, but not meaning itself (Wenger 1998, p. 229).

The processes of professional learning and identity formation are “constituted reciprocally between the affordance of the social practice and how individuals act and come to know in the social practice” (Billett, 2001, p. 432).
Maggie

- Placement school: co-educational school
- Principal was open-minded and forward looking, school moving to student-centred and collaborative learning
- Given a proper workspace and given access to everything she needed.
- Worked with a team of 5 teachers, including her mentor
- Expected to contribute on equal footing to all aspects of implementation of scheme of work
Suggestions were accepted as “valid”

Felt part of a team, not free labor, i.e., doing “chores that other teachers couldn’t be bothered to do”. Good relationship with mentor, other teachers and fellow student teachers

Subscribed to communicative language teaching

Constrained by testing culture of the school, nervous about “rocking the boat”

Introduced as a student teacher from HKU by some teachers, as Miss Reilly by her mentor, and addressed as Miss Reilly by her students
Claire

- Placement school: a top ability boys school
- Given a workplace in the staff room but a desk stuck right by the door where newspapers and umbrellas were put, surrounded by tape recorders and junk
- Interactions with teachers in the placement school “rarely happened”, did not attend meetings, did not pay much attention to what was happening the school, no sharing of ideas and materials
- Mentor was pleasant and approachable but not interested in how and what Claire was doing
- Adopted different methodology and approaches for S4 and S2. Established a good rapport with S2 students.
Jean

- Placement school: prestigious co-educational school
- Principal had a progressive view of education
- Given a proper desk, a computer account and access to resources and technical assistance
- Treated like “a real teacher”
- Relationship with other teachers “very horizontal”
- “I’m not just teaching, but a teacher”
- Tension with UT supervisor
Key Issues

- Legitimacy of Access to Practice
- Membership, Mutual Engagement and Shared Repertoire
- Membership, Competence and Negotiability of Meanings
- Identities of Peripherality and Marginality
- Multi-membership and Identity Conflicts

\( \Rightarrow \) The work of reconciliation. Successful resolution or constant struggle?
Growth, like any ongoing function, requires adequate objects in the environment to meet the needs and capacities of the growing child, boy, youth, and young man, until he can better choose and make his own environment. It is .... a question of real opportunities for worth-while experience . . . .

Goodman (1960)
Chapter 7

Title: Connecting Communities of Practice

Authors: Albert Wong and Gwyn Edwards
Key Idea

Boundaries are important in that they not only connect communities of practice but also “offer learning experiences in their own right” (Wenger 2003, p. 84).
Key Concepts

- **Boundary objects** – artifacts, documents, terms, concepts and other forms of reification around which communities of practice can organize their interconnections.

- **Brokering** – connections provided by people who can introduce elements of one practice into another.

- **Boundary spanners**
Levina and Vaast (2005) distinguish between:

- **Designated boundary objects** and **boundary-objects-in-use**.
- **Nominated boundary spanners** and **boundary spanners-in-practice**.
- **Collaborative boundary-spanning practices** and **transactive boundary spanning practices**.
Research Framework

- Cohort of 16 teacher fellows (TFs); John Data Set
- Semi-structured interviews with:
  - 16 TFs
  - John
  - John’s principal and colleagues
- Aspects covered
  - Impact of Fellowship Scheme on TF’s learning
  - Impact of Fellowship Scheme on schools
TF’s Learning

- Visions and perspectives were “broadened” or “widened”, thinking “expanded” and values “changed”. The experience was likened by one TF whose vision was very narrow to “opening a door and entering a new world”.
- Most of the TFs were eager to play the role of broker when they returned to their schools.
# John’s Brokering

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-TF Scheme</th>
<th>Post-TF Scheme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative lesson preparation</td>
<td>Lesson study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson observation</td>
<td>Boundary object-in-use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designated boundary objects</td>
<td>Boundary spanners-in-practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nominated boundary spanners</td>
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**Key Issues**

- **Imagination** – “it is through imagination that we conceive of new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures” (Wenger 1998, p. 178).

- **Alignment** – “coordinating our energy and activities to fit with broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises” (Wenger 1998, p. 174).