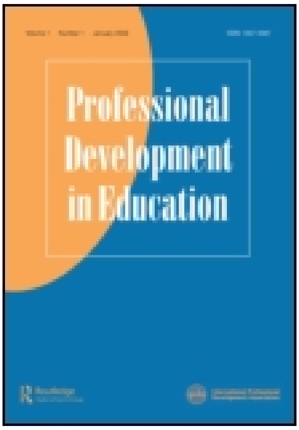
This article was downloaded by: [Hong Kong Baptist University]
On: 09 October 2013, At: 01:43
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Professional Development in Education
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjie20

Autobiographical reflections for teacher professional learning

Tat Heung Choi [a]

[a] Department of Education Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

Published online: 12 Nov 2012.

To cite this article: Tat Heung Choi (2013) Autobiographical reflections for teacher professional learning, Professional Development in Education, 39:5, 822-840, DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2012.737355

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.737355

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Professional Development in Education, 2013
Vol. 39, No. 5, 822–840, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.737355

Autobiographical reflections for teacher professional learning

Tat Heung Choi*

Department of Education Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

(*Received 20 June 2012; final version received 29 September 2012*)

This article is based on the principle that teacher development is a life-long process when seeking to develop professional competencies. With the changing views of teacher education as background, the benefits to teachers associated with practice-oriented knowledge are predicated on a measure of empowerment through narration, self-expression and reflection. A life-story may represent the outward articulation of a teacher's inner scrutiny, and demonstrate the 'we-experience' of a professional learning community arising out of its social structures and processes. Using autobiography as pedagogy, the article focuses on what a particular teacher's narrative is expressing, how it is demonstrating that belief or life value, and why this process is worthwhile for professional learning. Such an autobiographical approach to 'learning to teach' is itself one response challenging the traditional theories of teacher knowledge within the theory–practice dichotomy.

Keywords: experiential pedagogies; autobiographical reflections; teacher professional learning

Introduction

In tune with global educational development guided by performativity agendas, Hong Kong has given top priority to raising the quality of education through fundamental reforms at the turn of the twenty-first century (Chan 2000, Tse 2002). To support the reform measures, the Education Bureau of Hong Kong (formerly the Education Department and the Education and Manpower Bureau) has taken stock in enhancing the professional quality of teachers in the domains of teaching and learning, pupil development, school development, as well as professional relationships and services (Education and Manpower Bureau 2001, Education Commission 2002, Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications [ACTEQ] 2003, 2006, 2009). Deviating from the usual practice in more developed countries, teacher recruitments in Hong Kong had previously put insufficient emphasis on subject specialisation and professional training. The nature of this neglect was then highlighted by an official survey of secondary schools (Education Department 1996), which recorded that whereas 90% of some subjects – history, biology, chemistry and geography – were taught by subject specialists, this percentage fell to 68%, 66% and 55% respectively for the core subjects of mathematics, English and Chinese. This shortage of core subject teachers was made worse by the further

---

*Email: thchoi@hkbu.edu.hk

© 2013 International Professional Development Association (IPDA)

recognition of how few of these core subject teachers were teacher trained (87% for Chinese and 77% for mathematics compared with only 56% for English). Later figures obtained from the 2001 teacher survey on the types of qualifications held by serving language teachers (Standing Committee on Language Education and Research [SCOLAR] 2003) further raised concerns about how teachers without proper preparation in subject knowledge or pedagogy went into a school context without the appropriate pedagogical skills that could make a difference to pupil learning. It was concerning that around 21% of secondary teachers (compared with 43% of primary teachers) held neither an English-major degree nor any teacher training in the relevant language subject.

With these concerns as background, teacher competencies are then emphasised in part by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong, through the formulation of appropriate professional standards – for example, enhancing teachers' language proficiency through mandatory benchmark examinations, and reinforcing the requirements of subject knowledge and training prior to joining the profession (SCOLAR 2003, Education and Manpower Bureau 2004). In effect, the ensuing official statistics showed a large majority of core subject teachers at secondary level being subject trained (91.7% for Chinese, 90.9% for English, and 78.9% for mathematics), as well as teacher trained (92.1% for Chinese, 90.2% for English, and 91.9% for mathematics) (Education and Manpower Bureau 2006). Over the years, the number of secondary teachers who were subject specialists and were teacher trained has increased steadily. The Hong Kong government's concern over the need for front-line teachers to achieve a wide spectrum of competency is clear (SCOLAR 2003), against the issue of subject pedagogical knowledge and skills that some teachers may not possess and how this impinges on the type of atmosphere and context for learning that is created.

Taking a professional development perspective, the ACTEQ (2003, p. i) is favourably disposed to the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers; and teacher-education institutions are 'constructed as learning communities favourable to developing teachers' capacity for lifelong learning'. Such initiatives are aimed at bringing about changes to teaching attitudes and perceptions in general, and at refreshing and upgrading teachers on pedagogical skills and practices in the hope of meeting the rapidly changing needs of pupils. As highlighted in an ACTEQ document:

> Teaching requires a constant commitment to self-reflection and the identification of personal developmental needs. By these means teachers gain experience, establish new contacts, explore new knowledge and contribute directly to the development of the school as a learning community. To meet the challenges brought about by the introduction of new curriculum frameworks, new approaches to instruction and assessment, new school-level reform and so on, teachers need to take as broad a view of professional development as possible. (ACTEQ 2003, p. 16)

In this spirit, a 'soft' target of 150 CPD hours in a three-year cycle is in place, 'within which teachers can deliberate on the direction and content' of the chosen modes of professional learning (ACTEQ 2009, p. 5). Teachers are recommended to spend no less than 50 hours on 'structured learning' (including 'long-term or short-term courses, conferences, symposia, workshops, higher academic studies and offshore study visits') and no less than 50 hours on 'other CPD modes' (including 'job enrichment activities, mentoring, action learning, and service to education and the community') within the cycle in order for them to 'benefit from rich and balanced professional learning opportunities' (ACTEQ 2009, p. 5). According to the ACTEQ's (2006) interim report on the situation of CPD, teachers and schools had been actively involved in all kinds of professional learning activities, and such activities were essentially contributing to the betterment of pupil learning in schools. However, what have been clear are increasing behavioural problems and declining academic standards of pupils (Chan 2003), as well as teacher stress and burnout in coping with school demands and educational change, and in teaching to the test (Ho *et al*. 2003, Luk-Fong 2009). In reality, however, far from 'creating space for teachers' (Education and Manpower Bureau 2001, p. 16), CPD claims time that teachers would like to spend on more individual pursuits, and subsequently it can be a potential stressor. According to a survey conducted by the ACTEQ in 2007, 73% of teachers and 72% of principals considered finding time to be the major hindrance to their participation in CPD (ACTEQ 2009). Beyond nurturing reflective practitioners and identifying teachers' personal developmental needs in these changing and performative times as maintained by the ACTEQ (2003, 2006, 2009), teacher competencies and the adequacy of teacher preparation remain in question, as perceived by school employers (Choi 2008a).

Taking a cognitive psychological perspective, it is suggested that, 'how teachers cognitively construe the working environment could substantially influence occupational stress above and beyond the actual working environment' (Ho *et al*. 2003, pp. 41–42). With the different dimensions of early professional learning in mind, whether emotional, relational, structural, material, cognitive, ethical or temporal (Curwen *et al*. 2007), it would seem important to refocus attention on the changing views of teacher education, and to redress teacher development as personal and professional development. Within that context, this article considers it worthwhile to discuss the present emphasis on professional learning and competencies through an autobiographical approach to teacher development. The purpose of the inquiry is to provide an additional dimension to the conceptualisation of teacher education within the theory–practice dichotomy. The findings will enable providers of teacher-education programmes to better understand teacher development, and to support beginning teachers through their induction year and beyond.

Literature review

Considerable government investment in the professional development of teachers in the form of CPD, with a view to raising standards and pupil achievement, can be identified in the international literature (Forde and O'Brien 2011). Continuous development of teachers, as a process and a product, is perceived as 'the cornerstone for meaning, improvement and reform' (Fullan 1991, p. 123). This is premised on the inextricable links among teachers' personal development, professional development and school development. As Friedman and Phillips (2004, pp. 362–363) observe: 'CPD promises to deliver strategies of learning that will be of benefit to individuals, foster personal development, and produce professionals who are flexible, self-reflective and empowered to take control of their own learning' to attain more effective schools. However, the personal dimension of CPD could contradict the organisational aspect of professional learning, 'as a means of training professionals to fulfil specific work roles and as a guarantee of individual, professional competence' (Friedman and Phillips 2004, pp. 362–363). What is more, major curricular and pedagogical innovations are often connected with a CPD programme for classroom practitioners, who are sometimes positioned as uncritical and unreflective implementers of external education policies, as in England (Dadds 1997, O'Brien 2011). In this regard, the initial emphasis of CPD on the personal may well be jeopardised through policy intervention to improve teachers' professionalism and practice. This jeopardy of teachers' personal development is incongruous with the changing conceptualisation of teacher education.

Changing conceptualisation of teacher education

Professional competencies generally encompass the abilities, knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of teachers to accomplish professional goals efficiently. 'Learning to teach' is thus entwined with epistemological issues about teacher knowledge and modes of knowing (Chan 2003). The distinction between paradigmatic and narrative ways of knowing the world, as termed by Bruner (1985), represents the tension between rationalist and pragmatist positions within traditional theories of knowledge. Turning to the theory–practice dichotomy, theory has often held an esteemed position over experience among academics. Teacher-educators in teacher training, however, have long valued practical knowledge and skilled applications through experiential learning, 'denoting the act of trying' (Abbs 1974, p. 5). It is believed that, 'no one should be permitted to teach until he or she has been told how to perform, and has developed practical or professional knowledge based on field experiences in the unique school and classroom contexts' (Chan 2003, p. 4).

The current approaches to teacher education move towards a, 'social view of knowledge creation that emphasises its situated, relational, active, and experiential nature' (Graham 1991, p. 4). In other words, knowledge comes to be seen as 'contextualised, part of quite specific relationships, cultures, and situations' (Graham 1991, p. 112). This social constructionist view of teacher knowledge expects practitioners to bring their previous knowledge and experience to new learning situations, and 'to ground experience in theory' (Chan 2003, p. 5). This follows that it no longer suffices for prospective teachers to receive a one-time process of training, or for serving teachers to engage in intermittent staff development. Rather, professional learning should be akin to active life-long development, which requires opportunities for teachers to link prior knowledge to new understandings through reflective practice. The understanding of reflective teaching, 'has to be imbued with ideas of self-evaluation, inquiry into practice and critical exploration of practice and experience set against theoretically sound principles, in order to make judgements about teaching and learning' (Forde 2011, p. 19).

Teacher narratives and professional learning

With the changing views of teacher education as background, the benefits to teachers associated with practice-oriented knowledge are predicated on a measure of empowerment through narration, self-expression and reflection. The growing popularity of experiential pedagogies in teacher education suggests that, 'what is important in the development of professional practice is largely "experience"' (Forde 2011, p. 18). A life-story may represent the outward articulation of a teacher's inner scrutiny, and demonstrate the 'we-experience' of a professional learning community arising out of its social structures and processes. The research literature on teacher narratives and autobiographical discourses has indicated the benefits associated with social constructionist processes of professional learning.

Firstly, the temporal dimension of narratives and teacher development. According to White and Epston (1990), narrative writing has, ‘a temporal dimension that emphasises order and sequence, and is appropriate for the study of change, the life cycle, or any developmental process through time’ (Chan 2003, p. 9). In this light, the very nature of narrative writing shares the temporal dimension of professional learning (Curwen *et al*. 2007), which denies ‘the fixed, the absolutely permanent’ (Graham 1991, p. 10). In other words, the temporary aspect of narrative writing echoes the changing view of teacher knowledge and of the teacher self, which comes to be seen as ‘pragmatic in character’ and as ‘provisional, changing, and socially constructed’ (Graham 1991, p. 11).

Secondly, the personal dimension of autobiographical narratives and experiential knowledge. Under the influence of Dewey’s (1938) pragmatic and instrumental view of knowledge, Britton (1981) claims that people shape their lives into a kind of narrative in order to possess their experiences more fully. According to Graham (1991, p. 9), ‘writing autobiographically engages a conception of knowledge as a function of reflective self-consciousness and of the active construction and reconstruction of personal experience’. Considering teacher education from a narrative perspective, teacher development can be seen as ‘a process of rethinking and rebuilding the past’ (Connelly and Clandinin 1994, p. 149), through which we may make sense of the experiential knowledge that is personified in teachers, and of the practical knowledge that is acted out in their pedagogical practices and in their lives. It is by mapping out the relation of their pre-conceptions of learning and teaching to their own educational histories that teachers will be able to come to terms with their present situations in which they find themselves. Further, by telling the stories of their own education, teachers will be better able to appreciate the power of story in individual pupils’ lives (Connelly and Clandinin 1994).

Thirdly, the social dimension of teacher narratives and professional learning. As the narrative inquiry of Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 2000) suggests, the ‘(re)telling and (re)writing of teachers’ stories … might lead to awakenings, transformations, and changes in teachers’ school and classroom practice’ (Chan 2003, p. 8). By authoring their own personal and professional development in the form of narrative, teachers may experience a sense of agency that, according to Wenger (2003), refers to ‘the extent to which individuals can use, modify and claim as their own the meanings that matter to them’ (Trent 2011, p. 628). The circulation of experiences and ideas mediated through personal agency within a learning community in effect contributes to, ‘a collective enterprise of meaning making about the complexities of school and classroom practices’ (Chan 2003, p. 7).

Finally, collaborative reflection, inquiry and critique for teacher professional learning. The use of narratives as descriptive accounts of school experiences may initiate the kind of dialogue that is necessary for teacher development in their struggles against societal and institutional constraints. Moreover, the ‘interplay of multiple and often conflicting narratives of professional and personal history may stimulate reflection and critique’ (Chan 2003, p. 14), which are essential features of the professional learning process. To foster a dialogical relationship between teacher-educators and teacher-learners, the former may take up a co-author role with the latter, who need the theoretical language for unmasking and articulating the competing and conflicting narratives of learning and teaching. To encourage this dialogical relationship further, teacher-educators may guide teacher-learners to re-story alternative experiences, 'against those forces that make for conformity and unthinking acceptance of reality' (Graham 1991, p. 101).

Drawing on these established connections through a review of the literature on CPD from a personal and professional perspective, the subsequent sections discuss the methodological aspects of the investigation and present the research findings within the light of a constructionist approach to teacher professional learning through narration, self-expression and reflection.

Methodology

A methodological framework may be defined as a distinct way of approaching research with particular understanding of purposes, foci, data, analysis and, more fundamentally, the relationship between data and what they refer to. The present study falls into the paradigm of qualitative research as it seeks to acquire a deeper understanding of how a beginning teacher (re)constructs his narrative of transitions, and perceives his paramount reality in a given social world in times of change. A qualitative case-study approach was adopted to gain insights into the relevance of autobiographical reflections to teacher professional learning. It is commonly understood that a qualitative case study is essentially 'particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive' (Merriam 1988, pp. 10–11). The conceptual shortcomings of case-study research are taken up by Atkinson and Delamont:

> The proponents of case-study research often distinguish their enterprise from other research styles and approaches through a stress upon the unique, the particular, the 'instance' … it is simply not true that the traditions of qualitative research from which case-study research draws inspiration eschews generalisation. We are certainly not dealing only with a series of self-contained, one-off studies which bear no systematic relationship to each other … If studies are not explicitly developed into more general frameworks, then they will be doomed to remain isolated one-off affairs, with no sense of cumulative knowledge or developing theoretical insight. (1985, pp. 38–39)

In clarifying the criticism of case-study research as a 'self-proclaimed "paradigm"', Atkinson and Delamont (1985, pp. 38–39) argue that case studies are not 'one-off', 'self-contained' or 'de-contextualised' activities, which 'bear no systematic relationship to each other' or exist 'with no sense of cumulative knowledge'. The status and existence of 'cases' are associated with methodological and theoretical concerns – there is a continual interplay among theory, method and findings; a denial of theory and method is 'a denial of responsibility for one's research activities and conclusions' (Atkinson and Delamont 1985, p. 37). These clarifications of case study as a contentious area in educational research are fundamental to framing the present autobiographical research.

Using narrative inquiry as a research method, it is believed that we all have an essential need for story, for arranging our experiences into tales of important events (Dyson and Genishi 1994), and that 'we evidence cultural membership both through our ways of crafting stories and through the very content of these stories' (Webster and Mertova 2007, p. 2). Using autobiography as pedagogy with beginning teachers, Miller contends that:

> … they start by telling the story of their interest in the question, and that they then begin to map out the relation of their own developing sense of the question's interest

> to the history of more public kinds of attention to it. We justify this to our students, who are teachers, as a way of historicising the questions they are addressing, and of setting their lives and educational history within contexts more capacious than their own. (1995, p. 23)

Far from 'an incitement to self-indulgent introspection' (Miller 1995, p. 23), autobiographical reflections enable teachers, 'to put their own lives and development into the argument, and to set their knowledge and experience [narrative knowing] as teachers alongside the authorities we all study and quote [paradigmatic knowing]' (Miller 1995, p. 23). This broader construction of teaching and development, 'raises questions about the place of theory and knowledge building side by side with experiential pedagogies' (Forde 2011, p. 19). Based on a social constructionist view of teacher education, the collection and analysis of data was guided by the following research question:

- How might autobiographical reflections carry a beneficial potential for teacher professional learning?

In keeping with the exploratory nature of this venture, a purposive approach was adopted to the recruitment of participants. This article, as part of a fuller study, reports the relevance of autobiographical reflections to professional learning based on an ethnic Chinese, male, secondary school teacher of English, who spoke Cantonese as his mother tongue. The teacher-learner graduated from a top-ranked boys' school and matriculated at an international college in Hong Kong, with restrictive admissions criteria and a highly selective reputation to match. He held a Bachelor's degree in visual arts from Boston University, USA. Contrasting his prestigious educational backgrounds, he began his teaching career in a less academically able school in September 2009. Being neither subject-trained nor teacher-trained at the time of joining the profession, the novice teacher resolved to pursue a part-time postgraduate diploma in education (2009–2011) at the time of this investigation.[1] The author of this article, a teacher-educator, taught the teacher-learner two English-language instruction courses (with one focused on pedagogy and the other on reflective practice) and supervised his practicum. Although the teacher-learner successfully met the benchmark requirements for English-language teachers through examinations in his first year of teaching, his lack of formal qualifications appeared to have some bearing on the trials and tribulations that he experienced, as the results below suggest.

To capitalise on the developmental and reflective nature of professional learning, the teacher-learner's autobiographical account as well as relevant written discourse between the teacher-learner and the teacher-educator are extracted for discussion. The analysis focuses on the beginning teacher's professional learning process through autobiographical reflections, dialogue and support, against the issue of subject pedagogical knowledge and skills that some teachers may lack. While a single case study by no means indicates a wider general tendency, the findings point up how teacher knowledge can lead to knowledge inquiry and critique that allow for professional growth.

Results

The reporting of findings is guided by the research question, with a focus on how autobiographical reflections (Extracts 1–5) afford the teacher-learner space to consider what initiates him to teach, how he learns to teach against his own educational history and why this process is worthwhile for professional learning. The interpretations are supplemented by the teacher-educator's considerable insight into the lived experiences of teachers in Hong Kong. The ensuing written discourse between the teacher-learner and the teacher-educator around relevant 'Kodak moments' (Extracts 6–8) suggests the possibility of turning inarticulate, untheorised and wholly experiential teacher knowledge into inquiry and critique beyond paradigmatic knowing.

Autobiographical reflections and inquiry into practice

The autobiography 'All along the ivory tower' is presented in themes ('childhood', 'growing pains', 'around the world' and 'falling off the tower') and in the chronological order of events (from 1985 to the present). The narrative text of transitions (the signifier) is progressive and heuristic, and is organised into a connecting plot (rather than self-contained episodes). Life – a temporal journey – is set out in a coherent and purposeful manner. Turning to the act of narrating (the voice), Extract 1 – a preface to the studied life – is written in the first person; whereas in Extracts 2–5 the narrator (as teacher-learner) turns out to be someone else who speaks of (as prince) in the third person. The analysis henceforth focuses on the story and narrative content (the signified) that is illustrative of the developmental process of professional learning – what the text means rather than how it means.

> *Extract 1: preface*
>
> Being such a lucky person to be able to travel across continents and make friends worldwide, I am also burdened with an urgency to teach [English to] our next generation. As globalisation is already an overused cliché, it is inevitable that English is the global language that will unite all cultures. Without a good grasp of English, it will be way more difficult for a person to make friends around the world, let alone succeed as a global citizen. English also opens a window to the outside world, and builds our understanding and sympathy towards other cultures, reduces clashes through communication, and builds a peaceful future. As I teach, I will be immersed in positive enthusiasm from eager pupils, and discovering new strategies and knowledge throughout my career. Where can I find a better job than this?

Extract 1 prefaces the teacher-learner's motivation to teach in connection with altruism (the perceived worth of teaching in terms of being infused with 'positive enthusiasm from eager pupils') and with intellectual stimulation (a love of learning in terms of 'discovering new strategies and knowledge' throughout a teaching career) (Sinclair 2009). He is also driven to teaching by a 'calling' (feeling 'burdened with an urgency to teach') in relation to the discourse of globalisation and English as an international language. His inclination to teaching unmasks the spread of English as neutral, natural and beneficial (Pennycook 1994), and a confident assumption that English-language learning is intrinsically 'good' (in terms of building 'understanding', 'sympathy' and 'a peaceful future', of uniting 'all cultures' and of reducing 'clashes' through 'communication'). English language competency is perceived as a form of social capital as it brings advantages to certain groups over others (relational position) and extends personal connections (social networks) across the globe. The teacher-learner, however, appears to be rather uncritical and unreflective about the dominant discourse of English as a global language, in that it neglects the unequal basis and consequences of differential access to English, as well as the local struggles around English in its local contexts (Choi 2008b).

Extract 2: childhood

> Like any old tale is told, a prince was born – not in the Bethlehem manger but in a hospital of Hong Kong. This young lad was given a name with the meaning 'God's promise'. Indeed, he was blessed with many riches; he was born into a well-off, middle-class Christian family. He was fortunate enough to secure a seat in a reputable kindergarten, hence he was promoted to an esteemed English primary school where proper vocabulary and grammar were taught at an early age. Pupils seemed to be perfectly comfortable with learning from foreign imported textbooks, all written in English. Above all, he had wise, caring parents who read stories to him every night, and teachers who supplied him with countless free Enid Blyton storybooks for his diet. One of his fond learning memories was sitting up in bed reading a book describing a stormy scene while listening to the pitter-pattering raindrops on the window. He was thankful to his teachers, who treated him as the apple of their eye and taught him life skills (such as switching the lamps with a dry hand, and chewing food properly with minimal noises). He did not recall spending much time on homework, but mostly watching the acclaimed television programme 'Lightning fax machine', and loitering around with his bicycle.

Extract 2 provides a glimpse of the teacher-learner's childhood against the socialisation of family (being 'born into a well-off, middle-class Christian family', with 'wise, caring parents' reading him bedtime stories) and school (progressing from 'a reputable kindergarten' to 'an esteemed English primary school', with teachers supplying him with 'countless … storybooks for his diet', teaching him 'life skills' and cultivating his manners). Home and school seamlessly provided him with favourable cultural environments and with motivational resources that whetted his appetite for more knowledge and learning (in the form of 'proper vocabulary and grammar') in a foreign tongue. As Miller (1995, p. 26) puts it: 'one guarantee of good teaching is its capacity to stimulate an appetite for more'. His earlier literacy experience with 'foreign imported textbooks' and 'acclaimed television programmes', with which he felt 'perfectly comfortable', enabled him to develop cumulative advantage in the form of cultural capital for the next stages of learning, and defined his social trajectory (life-chances). Such autobiographical input might shed some light on how the teacher-learner in this article managed to get a position without formal qualifications.

Extract 3: growing pains

> Even for the prince, the happy days did not last for long. No sooner he had to face a deep frustration for mathematics, a subject he never seemed to be good at. His teacher was boring, if not uninspiring, and explained many simple concepts in a convoluted manner. He attributed his failure to his teacher – not being able to help him at all, but strangling the last bit of interest he had in mathematics. He never seemed to pick up the subject again, and failed miserably in school. With his lack of motivation, he was tagged as one of the 'fallen' lost youths who had no hope of getting a place in university. […] He learnt to accept the dire fact that teachers were utterly useless, and following their rigid teaching schedules would only ruin him. […] He finally knew what hard work meant, and dug himself deep down into the fields and piles of books. […] He was thirsty for success. His goals were focused – only to bring glory to his school with good results in athletics and public examinations. […] Finally having tasted the sweetness of the fruit he bore, his confidence came back, with an egoistic formula of success: diligence and the absence of lousy teachers.

Extract 3 unveils a period of trials and tribulations for the teacher-learner as 'a "fallen" lost youth'. One of the painful recollections of his formative years was his miserable experience of falling behind in academic work (or, rather, ‘a deep frustration for mathematics’) in connection with a ‘boring’, ‘uninspiring’ and ‘lousy’ teacher. Nevertheless, he was able to emerge from his time-worn struggles with a thirst for success, and to regain his confidence with inner resources and diligent efforts. Notably, there was a strong identification of the teacher-learner with his respectable school (a reputation for competency) in the form of symbolic capital (by bringing ‘glory to his school with good results’). His educational history had sown the seeds of his pre-conceptions of learning and teaching, with which he had to come to terms as beginning teacher. The power of pre-conceptions echoes a cognitive psychological perspective on teacher professional learning, as mentioned earlier. Pre-conceptions, in part governed by the family and education effects on the underlying values held by an individual and a profession, can serve as the mental apparatus with which a teacher perceives pupil learning and conducts classroom activities, as subsequent extracts show.

Extract 4: around the world

> Then the prince packed his suitcase and boarded the plane, heading to Boston, USA, a place that he could only vaguely associate with lobsters, and where he earned his university degree. […] Every day he was inspired by renowned scholars giving out introductory lectures, and challenged by questions beyond his ken. To him, learning was an unceasing attempt to blend in the crowd of fair hair and blue eyes who seemed to be aware of his Cantonese accent and thick-rimmed glasses. […]

Extract 4 provides contextual information about the teacher-learner’s acquired discourse of English as a global language in connection with his overseas education. He was depicted as a young scholar who was endowed with a learning spirit (being ‘inspired by renowned scholars giving out introductory lectures, and challenged by questions beyond his ken’). This disposition of a love of knowledge during his years abroad wonderfully chimes with his subsequent motivation to teach for altruism (immersing in ‘positive enthusiasm from eager pupils’) and for intellectual stimulation (‘discovering new strategies and knowledge’ throughout a teaching career). He was conscious of the social and psychological distance that languages might create, and of the communicative and integrative functions that languages serve. He seemed to see his in-group (Asians) as culturally and linguistically separate from the out-group (Americans); yet he was keen to integrate himself into the target learning community (with ‘an unceasing attempt to blend in the crowd of fair hair and blue eyes’). The teacher-learner’s earlier experience of cultural immersion in Boston clearly comes in to highlight meanings established in his confident supposition that English-language learning is intrinsically ‘good’ (in that it ‘unites all cultures’, ‘reduces clashes through communication’ and brings ‘friends worldwide’).

Extract 5: falling off the tower

> Back in the hometown where he was born and raised, the prince wanted to share his discoveries with the young minds. To him, teaching was almost like a divine calling. His sincerity won him a teaching job offer, despite not having a diploma in education, nor any proven records in the English language proficiency test [for teachers]. But the real test began – his first day in the classroom shattered all his wild dreams about teaching, when all his ‘insights’ in education seemed to have no hope of application. […] Every day he woke up with a heavy back and a burning heart to teach, but the unmotivated pupils only fell asleep or fooled around. The whole class was like a zoo with animals roaming all over the place. He felt downright trodden – all the time and energy he had spent was simply discarded as boring. The prince began to doubt his

> ability while trying hard to avoid being the mathematics teacher whom he loathed and despised.
>
> The prince realised that his past twenty years were all too romantic – he was merely hanging out with other princes and princesses who became doctors, lawyers, or investment bankers. They feasted at the tip of the ivory tower, blinded by the glittering sunlight. Plunging from a high spot, his fall was painful. But only when everything fell apart, was he humbled again to re-evaluate the importance of a teacher's role. How much did the pupils rely on the teacher to build scaffolds for them to write a complete sentence by their own trembling hands.

Extract 5 directs attention to the reality of the teacher-learner (with 'unmotivated pupils' fooling and roaming around, and with no hope of applying his educational insights, amid afflictions and self-doubts) against a higher purpose to learn and to serve ('a divine calling' and 'a burning heart to teach'). The teacher-learner was lost and found through his humbling experience as beginning teacher in a less academically able school. Notably, significant aspects of his lived experience as teacher (feeling 'downright trodden' and 'shattered') contradicted the privileging of his childhood schooling experience ('all along the ivory tower' with other princes and princesses), as well as the dominant discourse of globalisation and English-language learning. Nevertheless, he is enabled through narratives to author his trajectory ('trying hard to avoid being the mathematics teacher whom he loathed and despised') and to re-evaluate his role as teacher (building 'scaffolds' for struggling learners). He has gradually gained a critical insight into the discourse of English as an international language with its flawed assumption of equality in access to English within a particular group or country (Choi 2008b).

From this summary overview of the teacher-learner's educational trajectory based on his autobiographical reflections, it is possible to appreciate the limits of a teacher's motivation and inner resources for meeting the demands of performativity. While serving teachers might not necessarily benefit from their accumulated classroom experience in times of educational change, novice teachers with minimal classroom experience have yet to conceptualise an educative view of pupil learning. This follows that those beginning teachers who lack formal qualifications are more likely to be confronted with unrealised hope and defeated expectations, as the above extracts show. Beyond teaching by experience alone, the dispiriting early professional learning journey of the teacher-learner reinstates the importance of initial teacher preparation, through which teacher candidates are prepared to integrate 'a diversity of experiences, perspectives and material' (Reynolds and Brown 2010, p. 408) into the subject curricula.

'Kodak moments' through reflection and critical exploration of practice

While autobiographical writing gives the teacher-learner a voice (in that it brings his inner thoughts out of his sub-consciousness and challenges his instructional decisions and strategies), the 'Kodak moments' and reflections highlighted below (Extracts 6–8) through the constructionist lens well support the argument that situated and transformational learning through time, 'offers more than skills development to address the personal and social aspects of professional learning' (Varga-Atkins *et al.* 2009, p. 336).

Extract 6: 'Kodak moments' and reflective practice

> As I read from Bartlett's (1990) 'Teacher development through reflective teaching', I realised how the ability to reflect could refine our teaching and thinking to a new level. Occasionally I indulge in contemplating what 'worked' for my pupils, and what captured their attention. Then I turn these thoughts into anecdotes for my friends like something below:
>
> I think one part of my summer training in Oxford, England, was particularly inspiring when we were taught entirely in French. It put my planning in perspective. As I read my teaching materials, I try to consider how to make my pupils understand despite having near zero vocabulary.
>
> Sometimes understanding pupils' background helps me teach better. I was grateful that I didn't lose my patience when I tried to ask a pupil to spell 'May'. A moment ago I was chatting with the pupil about how he learnt English. He said he hadn't really followed much since he was six. I only focused on getting him to listen to the sound and shape of 'M', then splicing 'ay' together, and giving him all the praise he needed for remembering it. To me, it wasn't just another word on the list but a paradigm shift from 'I can't' to 'I can eventually'. I just hope this kid can learn a handful of words to help him with his future bicycle-repairing career.
>
> I quite enjoy this form of reflection because I get to put down some 'Kodak moments' into words – and my friends can understand my thoughts. I think I would like to keep more of these stories running. I definitely like your reflective account – 'An observer's diary' – and I wish to read a wider range of other reflections.

Extract 6 is initially motivated by the teacher-learner's reading of 'An observer's diary' from the teacher-educator's supervision of practicum. The idea of teacher development through reflective practice is realised in the neophyte teacher's response to relevant theoretical and research-based material, and is rendered into relevant 'Kodak moments' in connection with his school and classroom experiences. Through (re)articulation, (re)interpretation, and (re)evaluation of relevant anecdotes, the teacher-learner is enabled to 'interrogate, trial and reform' his pedagogical practice, and to generalise 'contextualised bodies of knowledge about learning and teaching' within his own setting (Forde 2011, p. 31). The tension of learning and teaching is employed as the basis of inquiry and critical reflection, leading to awakenings, transformations and changes in practice (Connelly and Clandinin 1994, 2000, Chan 2003). The teacher-learner's initiation of putting the 'Kodak moments' into circulation among his friends, or within his professional learning community, also usefully contributes to, 'a collective enterprise of meaning making about the complexities of school and classroom experiences' (Chan 2003, p. 7). This mode of narrative knowing, facilitated through its interaction with paradigmatic knowing, resonates with the nature of professional learning which is 'participative', 'relational', 'social' as well as 'individual' (Trent 2011, p. 631). His indication of a keen appetite for 'a wider range of other reflections' is reassuring.

Extract 7: reflection on reflections

> 'Reflection' has been a vogue word in teacher education; admittedly, it was not quite my repertoire of vocabulary before my landing this field.
>
> Your art of capturing relevant 'Kodak moments', and of turning them into well-meaning anecdotes, is exemplary. To contrast your envisaging the kid in want of 'a handful of

> words' for 'his future bicycle-repairing career', here is an excerpt (which chimes with your French experience in Oxford) for thought:
>
> 'As you say, my good knight! There ought to be laws to protect the body of acquired knowledge. Take one of our pupils, for example: modest and diligent, from his earliest grammar classes he's kept a little notebook full of phrases. After hanging on the lips of his teachers for twenty years, he's managed to build up an intellectual stock in trade: doesn't it belong to him as if it were a house, or money?' (Claude in Bourdieu 1991, p. 43)
>
> Looks like you could be that admirable grammar boy. To enable their pupils to turn 'a handful of words' (learnt knowledge) into 'an intellectual stock' (acquired knowledge) does sound a daunting enterprise for teachers. An essential starting-point is to make the target language accessible, meaningful, relevant and less alienating for those struggling pupils with limited resource support. In your case, teaching the modal 'may' with the aid of phonics (letter-sound relationships) certainly made learning more accessible and less alienating for the struggling learner; but only when the communicative functions of the modal 'may' are taught in meaningful contexts would such comprehensible input become relevant. What barriers, both inward and outward, that lower-band learners face in attempting to produce legitimate texts might well be the direction for future investigation (or, rather, an object of reflection).

Extract 8: epilogue

> Reflecting on my course instructor's reflection on my earlier reflections [now as a learning teacher with formal qualifications], I should like to clarify that her taking 'May' as a modal was actually not my intended meaning in the classroom context. To recount the scenario, I was checking my pupils' spelling of the twelve months in view of their poor foundation in vocabulary. To my surprise, a pupil failed to spell any of the months correctly. I was then determined to help him with the May month, and there I recorded the 'Kodak moment' in Extract 6. One year on (from my earning a postgraduate diploma in education), these instances of exchange with my instructor still haunt me as useful afterthoughts, especially on the note of accumulating 'an intellectual stock' through learning vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Having searchingly reflected upon my classroom encounters through dialogical and constructionist processes, I was able to build usable pedagogical skills for my own purposes. The pedagogical concepts that were bestowed upon me through in-service teacher training and CPD are fundamental to effective classroom practices, but the reflective self-consciousness that I had realised through autobiographical writing was singular to my early professional learning.
>
> Looking back nostalgically at my daunting, draining and trying first year [then as a frustrating teacher-learner], my unpleasant looks and uncontrollable anger were obviously not conducive to pupil learning. I simply demonstrated unreasonable expectations of 'the weaker than weak pupils' in measuring them against 'the admirable grammar boy' in me. My pupils with their ability years behind the 'normal' average would be unjustly seen as 'uneducable' from that prospect. Still and all, there should be something worth my while to teach these academically weak pupils, no matter how hopeless their outlook appeared to be.

Extracts 7 and 8 expand the repertoire of professional learning – turning 'from individualised or dyadic experiences to more collaborative approaches' – for informing and improving practice (Forde 2011, p. 26). Beyond phonology, behaviourism and the monitor (getting the pupil 'to listen to the sound and shape of "M", then splicing "ay" together, and giving him all the praise he needed for remembering it'), the co-author role of the teacher-educator directs the teacher-learner to re-story an alternative approach to teaching pronunciation with an emphasis on communication and contextualisation for improving practice (Extract 7). The learning teacher's sense of voice (now in possession of formal qualifications) has pleasingly emerged from the then frustrating teacher-learner (in want of subject pedagogical knowledge and skills) in the form of an epilogue to professional learning (Extract 8). His afterthoughts through the passage of time, so brimful of evaluative ideas and emotions, indicate that the 'intellectual and affective processes' of professional learning are 'set in motion' (Dadds 1997, p. 35). While his earlier inquiry into practice is more descriptive in nature, his latter evaluative account displays signs of reflexivity and criticality beyond skills development in professional learning. Having learnt the hard way, the emerging teacher is able to achieve reflective self-consciousness, question his own unformed view of pupil learning, explore into alternatives and make reasonable expectations of his lowly pupils. The clarification about his intended meaning in the classroom context being mistaken by the teacher-educator provides an interesting twist to situated learning, adding greater depth and substance to the dialogical and constructionist processes.

In a positive light, collaborative reflection provides the kind of dialogue that is essential for inspiring improvements in professional learning (Chan 2003, Forde and O'Brien 2011). However, it is necessary to temper this positive evaluation of collaborative reflection with a note of caution. It may be argued that it is the views of the teacher-educator that appear to be at the forefront of the instances of exchange in her attempt to foster 'good practice'. The natural assumption that 'powerful' professional learning comes from interacting with a 'knowledgeable' facilitator needs some mitigation – and this is where greater criticality is required of the teacher-learner in the dialogical relationship. To counteract 'delivery' models of CPD (Dadds 1997, Varga-Atkins *et al.* 2009), and to avoid faithful renderings of a teacher-educator's observations by an impressionable teacher-learner, it would seem important for both to maintain some semblance of balance between inquiry and critique in collaborative reflective practice, in order that the 'inner voice' of the practitioner can be 'cultivated' and 'personal theories … evolved' (Dadds 1997, p. 33).

Discussion

Autobiography, personal narratives, life-histories and auto-ethnography are gaining greater credence among practitioners and academics alike as a key CPD tool to help in terms of reflection, improving practice and getting to know oneself better, as this article highlights. Before any implications can be drawn about the study, it is necessary to admit the limitations of the engagement with autobiographical reflections for teacher professional learning. The results of this case study were limited to the narrative data (a plurality of events and a unified story) gathered and analysed from one teacher-learner in the Hong Kong education context, and to the singular education effect on the underlying values (or, rather, pre-conceptions of learning and teaching) held by an individual and a profession. Against these constraints, this article adds an exemplar to the literature of teacher professional learning through the lens of social constructionists, who come to see knowledge creation as 'contextualised, part of quite specific relationships, cultures, and situations' (Graham 1991, p. 112). There are useful implications from this present study for teacher professional learning in its locality.

Firstly, the narrative analysis provides a way forward in appreciating the dilemma between the development needs of teachers and ongoing professional learning as something natural and desirably sought by the individual, against the view that CPD is mandated in the 'delivery culture' of education reforms (Dadds 1997, Varga-Atkins *et al*. 2009). Ironically, no CPD can *actually* empower teachers if it is directive in nature, assuming mistakenly 'that "good practice" will come about from those outside schools making judgements for, and on, those inside' (Dadds 1997, p. 32). Rather, effective CPD should attend, 'to the development of teachers' understanding of learning, to their sense of voice, their judgement and their confidence to cultivate inner expertise as a basis for teaching and for judging outsider initiatives' (Dadds 1997, p. 31). The importance behind narration, self-expression and reflection for transformational learning and professional growth suggests that we cannot lose sight of the predicament that teachers encounter in the fluid context of change, and of the turbulence that they face in the reform processes that many countries may be going through.

Secondly, the exploration redresses the seeming irreducibility of paradigmatic knowing to narrative knowing in teacher preparation. As a narrative journey 'begins and ends with what is given in experience' (Abbs 1974, p. 13), the writing of autobiography can be turned into an object of inquiry – or 'a conceptual instrument of cognition' (Graham 1991, p. 11) – for teacher professional learning. The analysis shows the possibility of grounding experience (the seriality of events through an ensemble of themes) in theory (a social view of knowledge creation).

Thirdly, the investigation demonstrates the relevance of refining sociological explanations of teachers' pre-suppositions of learning and teaching, rather than subordinating them to largely psychological orientations. Teacher-learners are endowed with their own histories, experiences and socio-economic conditions, which inevitably result in their divergent beliefs, particular attitudes and preferred pedagogy as well as stereotypes towards different communities of learning. The 'distinctiveness' ('person "X" can never be person "Y"') and 'connectedness' ('person "X" can "recognise" the narrative of person "Y"') of the individual life (Erben 1996, p. 164) suggest the possibility of cultivating 'a collaborative learning-enriched school community' (Jones 2012, p. 6).

Fourthly, autobiographical reflections, inquiry and critique are made possible by language, which has a role to play in terms of, 'enriching and extending co-operative behaviour, cumulatively reaping the harvest of earlier understandings, organising memory into narrative form' (Britton 1981, p. 1). As the analysis supports, 'the charting of a narrative by way of an engagement with the temporal' (Erben 1996, p. 163) enables the teacher-learner to 'forge an inner sequence of meanings where the outer ones have collapsed' (Abbs 1974, p. 16), to reflect on the formative influences in his life and to achieve, 'an increased knowledge of human variety and a deepened appreciation of the lives of others' (Erben 1996, p. 162).

Finally, educational change through situated professional learning, 'is more about idiosyncratic change processes rather than ritualised symbolic practices' (Edwards 2012, p. 45). Teachers who are strong in formalised contexts may turn out to be uncritical and unreflective implementers of externally generated initiatives. This, following the argument of Wilkins *et al*. (2012) in their research into 'new teachers co-constructing professional identity in performative times' in the English context, may lead to 'the discourse of professionalism becoming homogenised, emotionality being denied and inauthentic teacher relationships being fostered'

(Jones 2012, p. 5). Seeing that 'performative discourses can be constructed as denying personal agency through their emphasis on instrumentality' (Wilkins *et al.* 2012, p. 68), narrative as a form of critical inquiry into the promotion of teacher agency may have a new meaning in store for professional learning.

Conclusion

It was the perceived dilemma between the development needs of individual teachers and mandated professional learning, as well as the dissonance between two modes of knowing in teacher preparation, that provided a good cause for this exploration. Drawing from the literature of CPD for teachers, this article focuses on the relevance of autobiographical reflections, dialogue and support to professional learning. Using autobiography as pedagogy, the study focuses on what a particular teacher's narrative is expressing, how it is demonstrating that belief or life value and why this process is worthwhile for professional learning. Such an autobiographical approach to 'learning to teach' is itself one response challenging the traditional theories of teacher knowledge within the theory–practice dichotomy. In this exploration, the teacher-learner's autobiographical account should be understood as illustrative rather than definitive. The case study provides the basis for the observations and arguments presented in the literature, and the extracts are used to illustrate, support and challenge the points made. Certain issues are raised concerning the generalisability of case-study research and its findings.

Firstly, the relevance of engaging case studies in comparative perspectives for developing more general frameworks. As in the present study, the importance of autobiographical reflections for teacher professional learning needs to be probed in broader perspectives or in wider contextual relations. It is useful to consider whether contextual specificities are at least as significant as any broader cross-national developments. Presumably Hong Kong's education is situationally unique, but not completely different from other national education contexts.

Secondly, the usefulness of engaging discussions of cases with relevant concepts for developing generic analytic categories, or theoretical insights, in connection with features, problems and issues in other similar settings. Comparisons, for example, can be made to generate a better understanding of 'the ways in which professional development reinforces performance perspectives' (Jones 2012, p. 5) – that is itself a response to the enabling and constraining effects of CPD, possibly turning teacher-learners into proficiently instinctive but uncritical and unreflective implementers of external policies, and subordinating their inspiration or creative potential to the demands of performativity.

Admittedly, greater criticality of the analysis of autobiographical reflections in a more robust nature is required, and more research will be needed to shed light on the larger picture of teacher development in Hong Kong through reflection, inquiry and critique. The claim, however, rests on autobiographical reflections as a progressive, cumulative enterprise for teacher professional learning. The particular orientation of this study, and the more general arguments of teacher professional learning through a social constructionist lens, might prove of interest and value well beyond the specific case at the centre of the discussion. The general perspective indicated by the adopted approach to the subject under exploration may reveal underlying processes for future interpretations.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Tinnok Ng for his autobiographical input, which helps her (as teacher-educator) achieve a deepened appreciation of the lives of teachers, and illuminates the social constructionist process of her own professional learning.

Note

1. According to the new requirements specified by the SCOLAR, starting from the 2004/05 school year, 'new Chinese and English language teachers in primary and secondary schools should hold at least a Bachelor of Education degree majoring in the relevant language subject, or both a first/higher degree majoring in the relevant language subject and a recognised teacher training qualification majoring in the relevant language subject' (Education and Manpower Bureau 2004, p. 1). It is also possible for 'new language teachers holding a first degree in a subject not relevant to the language they teach' to pursue a postgraduate diploma or certificate in education majoring in the relevant language subject, and 'a postgraduate programme focusing on the subject knowledge of that particular language within five years of taking up the employment' (Education and Manpower Bureau 2004, p. 2). Schools are advised to set conditions in the employment contracts and prepare professional development plans for those newly recruited language teachers without the required qualifications.

References

Abbs, P., 1974. *Autobiography in education*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ), 2003. *Towards a learning profession: the teacher competencies framework and the continuing professional development of teachers*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ), 2006. *Towards a learning profession: interim report on teachers' continuing professional development*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ), 2009. *Third report on teachers' continuing professional development* [online]. Available from: http://www.acteq.hk/
category.asp?lang=en&cid=384&pid=41 [Accessed 18 September 2012].

Atkinson, P. and Delamont, S., 1985. Bread and dreams or bread and circuses? A critique of 'case study' research in education. *In*: M. Shipman, ed. *Educational research: principles, policies and practices*. London: Falmer Press, 26–55.

Bartlett, L., 1990. Teacher development through reflective teaching. *In*: J.C. Richards and D. Nunan, eds. *Second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 202–214.

Bourdieu, P., 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Britton, J., 1981. English teaching: retrospect and prospect. *English in education*, 15 (2), 1–10.

Bruner, J., 1985. Narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought. *In*: E. Eisner, ed. *Learning and teaching the ways of knowing*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 97–115.

Chan, D.W., 2000. Vision, task, and hope: the Hong Kong education reform movement in the 21st century. *Educational research journal*, 15 (1), 1–18.

Chan, D.W., 2003. 'Learning to teach' and teacher development: insights from the narrative therapy approach. *Educational research journal*, 18 (1), 1–16.

Choi, T.H., 2008a. Secondary school principals' expectations of beginning teachers in Hong Kong. *Journal of the international society for teacher education*, 12 (1), 15–21.

Choi, T.H., 2008b. On struggles and resistance: English-medium education as intrinsically 'good'? *Educational research journal*, 23 (1), 45–70.

Connelly, F.M. and Clandinin, D.J., 1994. Telling teaching stories. *Teacher education quarterly*, 21 (1), 145–158.

Connelly, F.M. and Clandinin, D.J., 2000. *Narrative inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Curwen, K., *et al*., 2007. *Early professional learning project* [online]. Available from: http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/research/projects/epl [Accessed 15 November 2007].

Dadds, M., 1997. Continuing professional development: nurturing the expert within. *Journal of in-service education*, 23 (1), 31–38.

Dewey, J., 1938. *Experience and education*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Dyson, A.H. and Genishi, C., 1994. *The need for story: cultural diversity in classroom and community*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Education Commission, 2002. *Progress report on the education reform (1): learning for life, learning through life*. Hong Kong: Printing Department.

Education Department, 1996. *Teacher survey*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Education and Manpower Bureau, 2001. *Reform of the education system in Hong Kong (summary): learning for life, learning through life*. Hong Kong: Printing Department.

Education and Manpower Bureau, 2004. *Circular memorandum number 54/2004* [online]. Available from: http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_697/circular-%20eng%20(revised)%20(as%20at%2018.7.2007).pdf [Accessed 18 September 2012].

Education and Manpower Bureau, 2006. *Statistics on primary and secondary school teachers*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Edwards, F., 2012. Learning communities for curriculum change: key factors in an educational change process in New Zealand. *Professional development in education*, 38 (1), 25–47.

Erben, M., 1996. The purposes and processes of biographical method. *In*: D. Scott and R. Usher, eds. *Understanding educational research*. London: Routledge, 159–174.

Forde, C., 2011. Approaches to professional learning: coaching, mentoring and building collaboration. *In*: C. Forde and J. O'Brien, eds. *Coaching and mentoring: developing teachers and leaders. Policy and practice in education 29*. Edinburgh: Dunedin, 17–31.

Forde, C. and O'Brien, J., 2011. Taking continuing teacher education forward. In: C. Forde and J. O'Brien, eds. *Coaching and mentoring: developing teachers and leaders. Policy and practice in education 29*. Edinburgh: Dunedin, 82–90.

Friedman, A. and Phillips, M., 2004. Continuing professional development: developing a vision. *Journal of education and work*, 17 (3), 361–376.

Fullan, M., 1991. *The new meaning of educational change*. 2nd ed. London: Cassell.

Graham, R.J., 1991. *Reading and writing the self: autobiography in education and the curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ho, C.L., Leung, J.P., and Fung, H.H., 2003. Teacher expectation of higher disciplinary problems and stress among Hong Kong secondary school teachers. *Educational research journal*, 18 (1), 41–55.

Jones, K., 2012. What's the point of an editorial? *Professional development in education*, 38 (1), 1–8.

Luk-Fong, P., 2009. Teachers' stress and a teachers' development course in Hong Kong: turning 'deficits' into 'opportunities'. *Professional development in education*, 35 (4), 613–634.

Merriam, S.B., 1988. *Case study research in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, J., 1995. Trick or treat? The autobiography of the question. *English quarterly*, 27 (3), 22–26.

O'Brien, J., 2011. Teacher professional development: purpose, policy and practice. *In*: C. Forde and J. O'Brien, eds. *Coaching and mentoring: developing teachers and leaders. Policy and practice in education 29*. Edinburgh: Dunedin, 1–16.

Pennycook, A., 1994. *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.

Reynolds, R. and Brown, J., 2010. Social justice and school linkages in teacher education programmes. *European journal of teacher education*, 33 (4), 405–419.

Sinclair, C., 2009. Towards a teaching career: how initial teacher education affects motivation to teach. *Journal of the international society for teacher education*, 13 (1), 54–67.

Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR), 2003. *Action plan to raise language standards in Hong Kong* [online]. Available from: http://www.language-education.com/eng/doc/Download_ActionPlan-Final_Report(E).pdf [Accessed 18 September 2012].

Trent, J., 2011. The professional development of teacher identities in Hong Kong: can a short-term course make a difference? *Professional development in education*, 37 (4), 613–632.

Tse, T., 2002. A critical review of the quality education movement in Hong Kong. *In*: K.H. Mok and K.K. Chan, eds. *Globalisation and education: the quest for quality education in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 143–169.

Varga-Atkins, T., Qualter, A., and O'Brien, M., 2009. School professionals' attitudes to professional development in a networked context: developing the model of 'believers, seekers and sceptics'. *Professional development in education*, 35 (3), 321–340.

Webster, L. and Mertova, P., 2007. *Using narrative inquiry as a research method*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Wenger, E., 2003. *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

White, M. and Epston, D., 1990. *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: Norton.

Wilkins, C., *et al*., 2012. Crossing borders: new teachers co-constructing professional identity in performative times. *Professional development in education*, 38 (1), 65–78.