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Editorial

Teaching and developing as a teacher in contradictory times

Teaching has become a more and more complex activity. Existing literature suggests, amongst other issues, fragmentation of teachers' work, increasing accountability, bureaucracy and public scrutiny (Esteve, 2000; Estrela, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001). Over the last years, massive school reform initiatives to increase teaching standards and student attainment have been put into place in many countries setting more pressure on schools and teachers. However, if greater demands are placed upon schools and teachers to face the challenges of today's society and the diversity of expectations of today's students, in general, their working conditions and opportunities to learn and develop professionally have not been congruent with their needs. In the digital era, lack of resources and equipment, disparities in the access to education from the part of students and their families and different pathways and opportunities for (student) teachers to learn how to teach and to develop as professionals co-exist in various parts of the world. These scenarios present different kinds of challenges for teachers in different countries.

What has become apparent is the need for teachers to be prepared to deal with a diverse student population, with different needs and expectations, and to be able to teach them in ways that are more interactive and aligned with the demands of the 21st century education. In many countries, however, intensification and bureaucratisation, increased forms of managerialism, and greater accountability and public scrutiny are but a few examples of the changes to the teaching profession (Helsby, 2000; Estrela, 2001; Day et al, 2005; Flores, 2012) which have led to a decrease in teacher motivation, job satisfaction and increased levels of fatigue and burnout (Esteve, 1991; Flores, 2014). Discussing the opportunities and threats in teaching, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, pp. 43-44) noted that 'more interactive professionalism among teachers' exists but they also warn that it 'can turn into hyperactive professionalism as teachers are thrown into hurried meetings to devise quick-fix solutions that will lead to instantaneous gains in student achievement results'.

The papers included in this issue focus, in one way or another, on the complexities and demands of teaching and of developing as a teacher in different, and challenging, contexts with implications for professional development. Issues such as the quality of teacher-student interaction, the opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful professional development opportunities in a climate of performativity and accountability, the motivations and expectations of teachers with regard to their complex and demanding professional world are examined.

The issue begins with 'Culture-Specificity of Teacher Demotivation: Iranian Junior High School Teachers Caught in the Newly-Introduced Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Trap', by Hadi Yaghoubinezhad, Nourollah Zarrinabadi and Dariush Nejadansari. The authors conducted a mixed-method study to investigate the demotivating factors for Iranian junior high school teachers. Questionnaires were completed by 105 teachers and 10 teachers volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews. Findings show that lack of social recognition and respect, few adequate rewards, lack of support or understanding regarding English education, and a large number of students per class were identified by the participants as the most demotivating factors. Other factors include low payment and insufficient or ineffective educational equipment and resources. The authors argue that attention needs to be paid to teachers' working conditions to enhance quality teaching and learning in schools and classrooms.

In the second paper, 'Sickness Presenteeism of German Teachers: Prevalence and Influencing Factors', Sarah Dudenhöffer, Matthias Claus, Klaus Schöne, Stephan Letzel, and Dirk-Matthias Rose look at issues of prevalence of sickness presenteeism and of the work-related and health-related influencing factors of teachers in Germany. The authors used a cross-sectional study design involving teachers working in different types of schools through an online survey. In total, 924 participants working at 42 different schools completed the questionnaire. Results indicate that the prevalence of sickness presenteeism was 57.1%. They also show less support by supervisors, inappropriate administration efforts, and inappropriate recognition of performance, as well as exhaustion/fatigue as main predictors of teachers' sickness presenteeism. The authors conclude that it is important to develop strategies to reduce sickness presenteeism such as a climate of support and cooperation as well as assistance for ill teachers to deal with work missed due to absence.

The third paper, 'Special Education Trainee Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional World: Motives, Roles, and Expectations from Teacher Training', by Bella Gavish, from Israel, deals with the professional world of special education teacher trainees, particularly in regard to their motivations for choosing special education, their role as teachers, and their expectations in regard to their training. Data were collected through questionnaires with open-ended questions. In total 98 special education teacher trainees participated in the study. Findings suggest that the participants chose special education because they wanted to belong to a group of teachers perceived as the most ethical whose mission is to help "vulnerable" individuals, to help develop them, and to "have an impact on society." They perceived their role mainly as caring for students and their parents. Gavish concludes that the world of special education was perceived as having a high moral standing in which relations are limited to teacher, child, and parents, but with a spiritual dimension. The author states that the participants aspire to act as role models and during their training they want to become familiar with the types of disabilities they will encounter, and ways of coping with them. Therefore, their training is seen as an opportunity for self-discovery and validation of the choice of profession.

In 'Professional Responsibility, Accountability and Performativity among Teachers: The Leavening Influence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)?', Ciaran Sugrue and Sefika Mertkan examine the ways in which teachers in England look at CPD provision in a climate of accountability and performativity. The authors carried out a qualitative study of five secondary schools in order to explore the experiences of teachers and the extent to which their CPD realities may be perceived as enhancing their sense of professional responsibility or are shaped by performativity and are seen as an externally imposed demand for conformity and compliance. Data were collected through document analysis, in-depth semi-structured interviews and observations. Inspection reports, self-evaluation reports, and school policies and procedures such as performance management policy, rewards and sanctions policy, and staff disciplinary policy were also analysed. The authors discuss the language and logics of professional responsibility and accountability, used as analytical tools. The former relates, amongst other aspects, to issues of commitment and trust, and the latter pertains to compliance, conformity to a set of predetermined measures or outcomes, and to control. Sugrue and Mertkan advocate a strong preference for professional responsibility, the necessity for relative autonomy and discretionary judgement that cannot be pre-determined. In their words, CPD should contribute to the sense of agency and expertise necessary to continue to cope with degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty in the processes of decision-making and discretionary judgement. The authors conclude that, within the limits of their study, the language and logic of accountability is pervasive in the lives and work of teachers in the English secondary schools and that the language of professional responsibility is considerably less evident. They argue that CPD, in and out of schools, should entail opportunities for alternative discourses, of dissent, and of more open-ended possibilities for professional wellbeing.

Similarly, in the fifth paper, 'Identifying Pathways of Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge Development', Dirk Wongsopawiro, Rosanne Zwart and Jan H. van Driel look at teacher growth in science education by identifying pathways in the development of secondary school teachers' pedagogical content knowledge through the use of the interconnected model of teachers' professional growth. Twelve middle and high school science teachers in the USA participated in a one-year action research project which focused on their concerns related to teaching science. Findings suggest that teachers' use different pathways of learning to develop different aspects of their pedagogical content knowledge. The authors found distinct pathways for each pedagogical content knowledge component: teachers learned about new instructional strategies and assessment methods mostly through literature reviews and discussions with peers; and teachers who analysed and reflected on student learning as it happened in their classrooms developed understandings that helped them to select and apply instructional strategies to further promote student learning. The authors highlight the relevance of action research as a successful strategy to stimulate teachers to change their practice and to foster their professional growth.

In the sixth paper, 'Question Types and Wait-Time during Science Related Activities in Turkish Preschools', Raziye Günay Bilaloğlu, Yaşare Aktaş Arnas and Mustafa Yaşar report on a study carried out in Turkey aimed at investigating the types of questions that pre-school teachers used during the science related activities and pre-school teachers' behaviours in terms of wait-time. Drawing on existing literature, the authors argue that asking questions helps teachers qualify, probe, and challenge students' ideas and expose their misconceptions. Thus, it is essential to ask questions effectively in order to provide teachers with opportunities to motivate their students to think, and to guide their thinking as well as to encourage them to express themselves. Based on classroom observation, the study involved six teachers working with six-year old children in pre-school institutions in Turkey. Findings suggest that, in general, teachers used low-level questions more often than high-level questions. In addition, they were not able to make use of wait-time efficiently. Bilaloğlu, Aktaş and Yaşar conclude that teachers' reactions varied depending on pupils' responses to questions, allowing active pupils to participate more in the activities.

In the final paper in this Issue, 'Re-entering my Space: A Narrative Inquiry into Teaching English as a Foreign Language in an Imagined Third Space', Bin Ai and Lifei Wang, from China, provide readers with an account of an experience of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a Chinese university within the context of a new model of teaching. The authors report on the lived experience in teaching EFL within the third space and hybrid identity theoretical framework. The challenges and difficulties along with the outcomes and implications of a new pedagogical approach in teaching EFL are presented. The authors also analyse Chinese EFL learners' reactions to the new EFL teaching model. Some students admitted that they had experienced a sense of different identity and they admit that they had been influenced by the new model of teaching. Although some students accepted their own identity being transformed from a listener within a teacher-centred approach to an active participant, not all of the

students accepted such a transition. The authors stress that the transition from a Chinese cultural space to an imagined third space is complex and challenging.

Each paper is illustrative of the challenges and struggles of teaching and developing as a teacher in various contexts. Each provides the readers with evidence that may be helpful to better understand and develop ways to promote teacher learning and quality teaching in classrooms.

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