

Chapter 1

Professional learning of teacher educators, teachers, and student teachers

An introduction

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Educational quality is at the center of debates worldwide. In all these debates, teachers are considered as the critical actor determining to a large extent the quality of our educational systems. At the same time, doubts are expressed related to teachers' quality as well as to the education or training of teachers. In this context, policy debates underline the need for "excellent" teachers and "excellent" teacher education. "Excellence" became the mantra in all educational policy debates. "Excellence of teachers?" as the central theme of the ISATT 2013 conference builds on urgent issues that address practitioners, teacher educators, and researchers. This introductory chapter briefly outlines the context of this book by referring to the debate of "excellence" in education. The chapter further presents a model for teachers' professional development together with the three central themes of the papers assembled in this book: (1) professionalism of teacher educators, (2) professional development of (student) teachers, and (3) (student) teacher practices. The chapter concludes by presenting some general research challenges for the ISATT community.

Introduction: Excellence in education

Teacher education is worldwide in crisis (Vanderlinde, Rots, Tuytens, Rutten, Ruys, Soetaert, & Valcke, 2013) as numerous research (e.g. Cohran-Smith, 2005; TALIS, 2008) and policy papers (e.g. European Union, 2007) describe all kinds of difficulties, such as problems with the quantity and quality of candidates entering teacher education, problems with the extent to which student teachers attain critical competences put forward (Valcke, Struyven, & Rots, 2012), or problems with the preparation of teachers to enter and stay in the profession (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Rots, Kelchtermans & Aelterman, 2012). More concrete problems, for instance, discuss the "theory-practice gap" (Korthagen, Kessels,

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Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2001) referring to the discrepancy beginning teachers encounter between the nature of their teacher preparation program and their experiences as licensed professionals. Overall, it seems that beginning teachers are rather poorly prepared for the teaching job (Tait, 2008), and also experience tensions regarding their professional identity (Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013). Therefore, and not surprisingly, several researchers plea to urgently reconsider teacher training models in such a way that they reflect a congruency with the way teachers are expected to teach (i.e. evidence-based) in their future practice (Valcke, 2013), that they underline the importance of authentic clinical practice (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2006), that they take into account the professional identity of teachers (Beijaard, 2013), and the multiplicity of relations teachers have to establish with all kind of school actors (Vanderlinde & Kelchtermans, 2013). Also policy makers around the world plea to rethink teacher education in order to meet the needs and challenges of the 21st century (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In today's culture and society, teachers are increasingly confronted with the changing conditions under which learning, information transfer and interaction happen. Both teachers and pupils are living in an uncertain world and are confronted with a plurality of languages and cultures that ask for many different roles.

In all these debates, the quality of teachers and teacher education is at the forefront of policy and practice related discussions, and policy makers consider "excellence" in teaching and teacher education as a critical characteristic. At the same time, they put forward new requirements, new competency frameworks, new assessment criteria, and new quality indicators they require to be met. However, the theoretical or ideological frames of reference from which the standards are derived are not always clear or transparent.

One of the current burning questions is whether the field needs standards for excellence? Where does the urge for excellence in actual educational policy come from, what logic or agenda does it speak for, and what are the consequences for how teachers and teacher educators are supposed to think about themselves? Regulation is a commonly found concept in the fora about teacher quality and teacher education. The question is whether teachers and teacher educators have a "grounded" answer to these changing circumstances? Can we build on an evidence-base about our teacher quality, about the excellence in teacher educators, about the "quality" of our teacher education programs? How can school leaders enhance the professional development of teachers within the school? How do school leaders have an impact on teacher commitment and teachers' job satisfaction? Can we counter the debate about regulation of the teaching profession with ways that build on self-regulation? This implies that the teacher and teacher education community should address at least the question about "excellence" themselves. This was one of the many reasons to debate this topic at the ISATT 2013 conference organized in Ghent (Belgium) under the title "Excellence of teachers? Practice, policy, research". Because of the importance of this debate for the whole teacher education community, a number of papers presented at the conference were selected for publication as chapter in the present book. In the following section we present a model for teachers' professional development, which we will use to outline and discuss the different chapters.

Model for professional development

The ISATT 2013 theme on “Excellence in education” is closely related to an important research area of the ISATT community: the study of the complex process of teacher learning and teacher professional development (Avalos, 2011). Teachers play a crucial role in education (Borko, 2004), and their learning and professional development improves the quality of schools (Thompson & Zeuli, 1999), as well as students’ learning and their achievement (Desimone, Smith, Hayes, & Frisvold, 2005). This crucial role is also evident from recent meta-analysis studies (e.g. Hattie, 2009). Therefore, discussing “excellence” or “quality” in education means at the same time discussing how to prepare the next generation of teachers, and how to efficiently support teachers in their induction phase and throughout their whole career. Professional learning and professional development is thus inherently linked with the debate on “excellence” and refers to initial teacher training, induction of beginning teachers, as well as in-service teacher learning.

The literature presents many definitions of teachers’ professional development. These definitions are for instance referring to specific activities, content, dimensions, or to specific distinctions such as formal versus informal or individual versus collective (van Veen, et al., 2010). In this wide pallet of definitions, the conceptual framework of Desimone (2009) is an interesting model to both conceptualise and to study teachers’ professional development. Desimone’s model presents an operational theory of how professional development influences both teacher and student outcomes. It further encompasses variables or features that mediate or moderate professional development in education. Desimone (2009) underlines that her model represents interactive relationships between the critical elements or features of professional development, teacher knowledge and beliefs, classroom practice, and student outcomes. Figure 1 (p. 12) presents an adaptation of Desimone’s conceptual framework and illustrates that professional development comprises a number of consecutive steps:

1. Teachers experience effective professional development through interventions.
2. The professional development increases teachers’ knowledge and skills and/or changes their attitudes and beliefs.
3. Teachers use their new knowledge and skills, attitudes, and beliefs to improve the content of their instruction or their approach to pedagogy, or both.
4. The instructional changes foster increased student learning.

Figure 1 is the model of Desimone (2009) slightly adapted by van Veen et al. (2010) in the context of a review study on effective characteristics of teachers’ professional development initiatives, and extended for this chapter. “Teacher identity” was added as an extra teacher feature as “teacher identity” plays an important role in professional development activities (Johannes & Seidel, 2012), and also forms an important research area in the ISATT community (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2013).

Desimone (2009) argues that her model implies research questions that can be understood as testing a “theory of change” or a “theory of instruction”. The “*theory of change*” refers to the relations between characteristics of professional development activities and

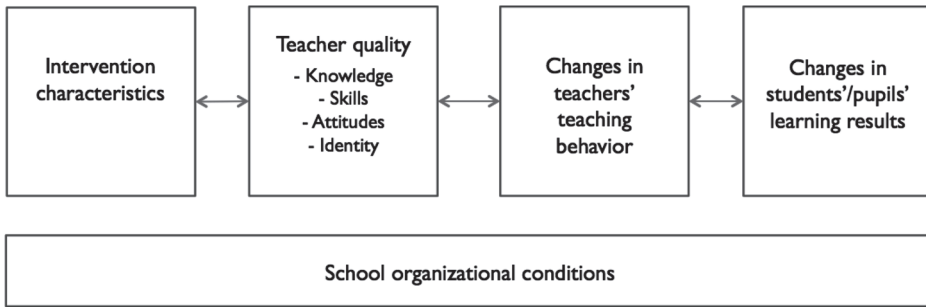


Figure 1: Teachers' Professional Development framework (based on Desimone, 2009; Van Veen, et al., 2010).

teachers knowledge, beliefs, identity, and practice. The “*theory of instruction*” refers to the influences of changed teacher practices on students’ learning and achievement. Van Veen et al. (2010) adds to those two areas of research questions, the “*theory of improvement*” referring to the influence of school organizational conditions on successful learning of teachers.

The model is interesting to conceptualize and study professional development activities as it presents a set of core features. To put differently, the model gives insight in how to best shape and implement teacher learning opportunities for the maximum benefit of both teachers and students. As such, the model is also interesting for the context of the “*excellence in education*” theme as it illustrates that “excellence” is much more complex than commonly assumed by policy makers. Questions raised by policy makers on “excellence”, “evidence”, and “quality” need to take into account the different relations presented by Desimone (2009), and the underlying “theory of change”, “theory of instruction”, and “theory of improvement” (Van Veen, et al., 2010). For the debate on “excellence” and its translation in requirements, competency frameworks, quality indicators or standards this means that (1) “excellent” teachers need to be studied from a holistic perspective while paying attention to the relation between professional development activities and teachers’ thinking and instructional practices, (2) “excellent” teachers have an impact on students’ learning, and (3) “excellent” teachers are always situated in (excellent?) school organizational contexts.

Book overview

This book brings together some of the best research papers presented at the ISATT 2013 meeting. It is focusing on the professional learning of teacher educators, teachers, and student teachers and is organized in three sections: professionalism of teacher educators, professional development of (student) teachers, and (student) teacher practices. All chapters can be – some very clear, other more implicit – related to the presented model above. A critical reflection on the relation between the different chapters and the presented model is provided in the epilogue of the book.

Section 1: Professionalism of Teacher Educators

The first section has a specific focus on professionalism and professional development of teacher educators. Although everyone agrees that teacher educators have a crucial role to fulfill in the preparation of the next generation of teachers, it is surprising to observe that from a policy and research perspective, teacher educators have been neglected for a long time (Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014). Only recently, the specific profession of teacher educators (Smith, 2003) has received some attention. Research on teacher educators emerged in the late nineties, and currently studies are conducted on, for instance, teacher educators' professional development, identity building, or professional roles. This attention for the work of teacher educators is also noticeable from a policy perspective. Some countries, for instance, developed standards or frameworks for teacher educators. These standards or frameworks represent the ideal image of the competencies teacher educators need to possess in order to function effectively. Both in research and policy literature, authors agree on why teacher educators have such a unique profession by underlying that teacher educators are in the first place "teachers of teachers" (Murray, Swennen, & Shagrir, 2008). In this section, three chapters are presented that handle the complexity of teacher educators' professionalism.

The first section begins with Chapter 2 "*Policy driven reforms and the role of teacher educators in professionalising teacher education*" of Diane Mayer from The University of Sydney (Australia) which has a direct link with the overall theme of "excellence" as this paper focuses on teacher quality reforms that are debated and enacted as a response to the political positioning of teacher, teaching and teacher educators as a policy problem. Mayer's paper, more specifically, interrogates current policy movements that question the value of teacher education. She warns for a potential deprofessionalization of teacher education practitioners and researchers when teacher education is considered from an "entrepreneurial" or "market-oriented" perspective. Mayer argues that teacher educator practitioners and researchers must address and take control of the quality assurance agenda. She pleads for research-informed and validated professional standards for beginning teachers that capture the complexity and content specific dimensions of quality teaching including professional judgement to provide appropriate learning opportunities for every student in every setting. She further argues that teacher educators must frame their own accountability by developing authentic assessments of beginning teachers to demonstrate their professional knowledge, judgment and practice in diverse authentic school contexts. Mayer ends her paper with clear suggestions for teacher educator researchers in general and the ISATT community in particular. In her opinion, teacher education research must directly respond to the challenges of "effectiveness", and researchers should study the value of teacher education and lead national policy discussions about the quality of teaching.

Chapter 3 of Amanda Berry from Leiden University (The Netherlands) has a specific focus on teacher educators' professional learning. In her chapter "*Teacher educators' professional learning: A necessary case of 'on your own'*", Berry argues that teacher educators' professional preparation is typically characterized by experiences of isolation,

loneliness, and neglect. She illustrates that these feelings represent a strange discrepancy. She sees, on the one hand, a pressing need to prepare high-quality teachers, and on the other hand, she observes a relative lack of organized preparation for those responsible to prepare these future teachers. In the context of this discrepancy, Berry addresses the need of teacher educators' professional learning. She argues that answers to this need could be divided into two types: systemic responses and local responses. She draws on her own experiences as a teacher educator to present an alternate framing of teacher educators' professional preparation and growth. Her main argument is that an essential professional task of teacher educators is in learning how to draw from and restructure their existing knowledge in ways that enable them to facilitate the learning about teaching of others, and to be able to articulate this knowledge and its process of development. This is necessary so it can be made clear to themselves, other teacher educators, the public and, most importantly, to the prospective teachers with whom they work. She concludes her paper by going back to her main starting point when describing teacher educators professional learning as an "isolated or lonely enterprise". She re-frames the notions of "isolation and disempowerment" to "autonomy with agency", and asserts that being "left alone" is a necessary condition for promoting teacher educators' professional learning.

In the last chapter of this section, Linor Hador from the University of Haifa and David Brody from the Efrata College of Education (Israel) present research on a professional development community for teacher educators. Their chapter "*Professional development for teacher educators in the communal context: Factors which promote and hinder learning*" aims to understand factors that influence learning among teacher educators in the communal context. Hador and Brody present five years of research on professional learning in a community for teacher educators to offer an overview of how their professionalism develops in community, described as a broad range of collaborative professional development models. They examined individual and group learning and development processes using a variety of data collection methods. In their data analysis, Hador and Brody identified important factors, which enable teacher educators to grow professionally on the one hand, and those that hold back such growth on the other hand. In their professional development community the main features supporting teaching development included "creating safe environments for learning", "talk about student learning", "group reflection and feedback", "engaging teachers in research", and "continuity". A main factor preventing professional growth is receding from the project's goals, a phenomenon which Hador and Brody termed as "withdrawal". "Breaking of isolation" was identified as a factor that can either promote or hinder development. By identifying enabling and hindering factors, Hador and Brody provide insight in how communities work to promote professional growth and change, and how new professional development initiatives can be designed and initiated.

Section 2: Professional Development of (Student) Teachers

This section focuses on professional development. Although it is generally accepted by researchers, policy makers, and practitioners that professional development is essential to improve our schools, the same actors also report a lot of dissatisfaction with professional

development (e.g. Desimone, Smith & Ueno, 2006; Odden, Archibald, Fermanich & Gallagher, 2002). The main issues reported are that professional development is not always aligned with the needs of teachers and the transfer from professional development activities to teachers' practices is proven to be difficult (Guskey, 2002). In this regard, more research in the field of professional development of teachers should provide us with insights to resolve the current problems. Teachers themselves should not be forgotten during this endeavor. If we want professional development to be effective, individual characteristics of teachers, such as their affective reactions (e.g. commitment, motivation), their beliefs and their biographies, and organizational characteristics of schools (e.g. leadership) should be taken into account. In this section on "professional development of (student) teachers", an overview is provided of several studies which offer us insights in the essential characteristics for teachers' professional development that works.

The section on *professional development of (student) teachers* begins with Chapter 5 "*Commitment crisis: voices of secondary teachers*" in which Odile de Comarmond, Jane Abbiss, and Susan Lovett of the University of Canterbury (New Zealand) provide an exploration of teacher commitment as perceived by secondary school teachers. De Comarmond et al. explain the importance of teacher commitment for teacher retention in schools and argue how important it is to study teacher commitment during the different career stages which teachers evolve in. By utilizing phenomenography and multiple case studies, the authors give insight in the perceptions of teachers regarding their own commitment. Three cases are described, namely newly qualified, mid-career, and experienced teachers. Four categories of teacher commitment were identified in the study, namely teacher commitment as altruism, as personal attributes, as pedagogical content knowledge and as connectedness. The first category emerged the most in all stages of teachers' careers. However, this study also points out that teacher commitment is not a stable characteristic of a teacher during the career. In the discussion, the authors hence emphasize the importance of taking into account contextual and personal factors that influence teacher commitment. More specifically, they found it to be crucial to shift focus to beginning teachers in order to better understand how these teachers can be stimulated to stay in the teaching profession, as the drop-out of these teachers has been identified as an international problem.

In Chapter 6 "*Conditions for teacher leadership and professional development in challenging circumstances*" by Maria Assunção Flores, Eva Fernandes (both University of Minho, Portugal), Manuel Flores and Ana Forte (both practitioners in Portuguese education), a large scale study on teacher leadership is presented. Flores et al. point at the important role of teacher leaders in promoting teachers' professional development. The authors perceive teacher leadership as grounded in interaction and influence, rather than in power and authority, hence taking into account informal ways in which teachers can make a difference in their school. Their uptake of professional development similarly also includes both formal as informal professional development activities. By linking teacher leadership and professional development, the authors wish to explore how teacher leadership is developed and practiced within schools and how it may be influenced by the professional development within schools. They also pay attention to the challenging

circumstances teachers are experiencing. Utilizing a national teacher survey combined with teacher focus groups, Flores et al. found that the job motivation of teachers decreased due to challenging circumstances such as salary cuts and increase of workload. However, their commitment did not decrease. The authors refer to teachers' sense of professionalism and resilience to explain this. These findings are relevant to explain the perceptions of professional development and teacher leadership which teachers demonstrate in this study. Teachers do value the opportunities to develop themselves professionally, but identify contextual conditions that enable or constrain this professional development. In this regard, the authors provide implications to enhance professional development and teacher leadership.

In Chapter 7, Isabel Rots (Christian Teachers' Union and formerly Ghent University, Belgium) and Antonia Aelterman (Ghent University, Belgium) provide insight in "*An empirical typology of student teachers and its relation with motivation for teaching*". Based on the FIT (factors influencing teaching)-choice theory, the authors of this study provide arguments for the importance of teacher motivation, especially in a context of teacher shortage. By using cluster analysis, this study wants to gain insights in the different types of student teachers according to their professional engagement at the beginning of their study, consisting of their planned effort during teacher education and their planned entry in the teaching profession. A second research question focuses on the difference in motivation for teaching among these types of student teachers. Five profiles of teacher students were identified based on their professional engagement: namely (1) highly engaged persisters (high planned effort and high planned entry), (2) highly engaged switchers (high planned effort and medium planned entry), (3) lower engaged persisters (medium planned effort and high planned entry), (4) low engaged switchers (low planned effort and low planned entry), and (5) disengaged desisters (very low planned effort and very low planned entry). The findings show a difference between all profiles for several motivational factors (e.g. ability, job security and intrinsic career value). The authors elaborate on the importance of their findings for further research and for practice, especially in a context where many governments struggle to solve teacher shortage and where teacher education is challenged to provide high quality professional development to student teachers.

The final chapter of this section is Chapter 8 "*Analysing Plots of Student Teachers' Narratives to Identify Teacher Identity. A rhetorical approach*" by Ietje Pauw, Wenckje Jongstra (both KPZ University of Applied Sciences, Zwolle, the Netherlands) and Peter van Lint (University of Groningen, the Netherlands). In this chapter, Pauw et al. use narratives to provide insights into the image that the student teacher creates of himself in his story, by linking the plot of a student's story to one of seven basic literary plots of Booker (2004): (1) Overcoming the Monster; (2) Rags to Riches; (3) The Quest; (4) Voyage and Return; (5) Comedy; (6) Tragedy; (7) Rebirth. In this study, 47 pre-service first year students enrolled in primary teacher education participate. The authors assume that the narration of the students must lead to reflection on self and situation and the reflection must lead to awareness and growth of personal and professional identity. Hence, students write a narrative reflection report that contains the following: (1) Story; (2) Comment; (3)

Scenario; (4) New practice. The plot patterns that emerged in the study include “Overcoming the Monster”, “The Quest”, “Voyage and Return” and “Rebirth”. “Overcoming the Monster” is the most frequent occurring narrative motive. The authors found that first year student teachers often take up the role of heroes struggling with uncooperative pupils, unfamiliar school subjects and students, classroom expectations and rules. They provide arguments about how relating student teachers plots to the archetypes of Booker can help to discover general patterns in one’s identity at a certain point in the teacher’s development. The authors also provide practical implications of their study for teacher education.

Section 3: (Student) teacher practices

This section focuses on specific practices that address (student) teachers’ learning. Although the main aim of individual papers may be to show how specific approaches or practices were organized and have led to specific results, it is also interesting to relate these practices and their specific approaches to the “excellence in education” theme of the conference book. Studying such practices is important in view of building an evidence-based collection of researched approaches (National Research Council, 2010). This is not only important for researchers, but also for practitioners and policy makers. It provides them concrete descriptions of how to design and implement, for instance, specific support (chapter 9) and curriculum changes (chapter 10).

In Chapter 9 “*Inclusive classroom practices in secondary education*”, Annet De Vroey and Katrien Roelandts from Leuven University College (Belgium), together with Elke Struyf from the University of Antwerp (Belgium) and Katja Petry from the University of Leuven (Belgium), focus on teachers’ practices in inclusive settings. They conducted 55 classroom observations as part of a multiple case study, in order to identify best classroom practices when dealing with students with specific demands or needs. The study aimed to identify the main strategies and interactions in inclusive classroom practice in secondary schools. Both actions and interactions of teachers and students in inclusive secondary classrooms that support student learning at the group level were focused on, as well as actions and interactions of teachers and students that allow students with special educational needs to participate in learning activities in secondary classrooms. Based on these observations of best practices, the authors designed a framework for inclusive classroom practices in secondary education. This framework is focusing on three dimensions: (1) emotional climate, (2) accessibility and classroom organization, and (3) quality of instruction. Moreover, it is distinguishing between (a) strategies at the group level on the one hand, and (b) strategies at the individual level on the other hand. The authors furthermore emphasize in their conclusions that this framework of strategies and interactions that are effective in diverse groups, can be used to support teaching education practices. In this way, the framework can serve as an instrument for student teacher practice in inclusive classrooms.

In the last chapter, Roland Happ, Christiane Kuhn and Olga Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Germany) studied the “*Effects of the Structural*

and Curricular Changes Following the Bologna Reform in Germany on the Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Student Teachers of Business and Economics". They focus both on the content knowledge and, given the importance for the teaching profession, on the pedagogical content knowledge of students when comparing students from the old to-be-discontinued Diplom study model with students from the newly implemented bachelor/master (BA/MA) study model. With respect to content knowledge, the authors describe the objectives of the BA/MA reform and conclude that in the new study programmes, the focus has shifted from teaching to learning, indicating an orientation towards competence development during university studies. They were however not able to find empirical evidence that students' level of content knowledge of business and economics differed according to the study model. With respect to the pedagogical content knowledge, the effect of the structural and curricular changes, consisting of the introduction of an additional module on teaching methodology and an increase of the number of practical teaching phases within the new BA/MA study model, was studied. In this case, the authors were able to conclude that these changes can enhance the acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge. The authors conclude that empirical evaluation of reform processes such as the Bologna reform, can help to qualify effects of associated structural and curricular changes on the competence development of future teachers.

Conclusion

When comparing all the chapters of this book with the presented model on professional development, it is clear that almost all chapters have a focus on teachers' and teacher educators' quality. All authors of this book stress the importance of looking at teachers' and teacher educators' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and identity in research studies. Furthermore, teacher quality should be at the heart of policy reforms and policy initiatives, especially in the context of the debate on "excellence" in education. Excellence cannot be conceived in a vacuum without paying attention to the voices of teachers and teacher educators situated in concrete schools and institutions. All authors in this book stress this idea and underline the importance of teachers and teacher educators as key players in our educational system as a whole. Through the different chapters presented in this book, the authors make clear that teachers' and teacher educators' quality is a complex phenomenon related to other conditions and elements. The presented model (Desimone, 2009; van Veen, et al., 2010) is in this context helpful and useful for policy, research and practice. The model also makes clear that within the papers presented at the ISATT conference and selected for this book, little attention is paid to research studies that focus on the impact of concrete professionalization interventions on teachers; and to research studies that look for relations between teacher quality and behavior on the one hand, and learning results on the other hand. To put differently, first, when it comes to the "theory of change", relationships between characteristics of professional development activities and teachers knowledge, beliefs, identity, and practice can be made more explicit. This is a clear challenge for the research community and further nourished by the fact that research on teacher education seldom uses intervention studies on the effects of specific instructional strategies on teachers' behavior and their professional development

(Cochran-Smith, 2003; National Research Council, 2010). In other words, teacher education research needs also quantitative research in general and intervention studies in particular (Lunenburg et al., 2014). Secondly, when it comes to the “*theory of instruction*”, or the study on the influences of changed teacher practices on students’ learning and achievement, little studies that tackle these questions are presented at conferences. Answering these questions can strengthen the research community on teaching and teacher education. The ISATT community can take the lead in this context given its long-standing history. As such, ISATT as a research community would be able to present all broad elements – and their mutual interrelationships – of teachers’ professional development. The epilogue of this book further explores these ideas.

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