

Book Review

What it is to be a Teacher: Roles, Expectations, Relationships, and Contexts

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Vicki Zack, Judith Mousley, and Chris Breen (Eds.). (1997).
Developing Practice: Teachers' Inquiry and Educational Change.

Geelong, VIC: Deakin University, Centre for Studies in Mathematics, Science
and Environmental Education.

202 pp. ISBN 0 7300 2707 4

This monograph will be of interest to at least six different groups of readers: pre-service teachers, practising teachers, teacher educators, postgraduate research students, their supervisors, and school administrators. Such a widespread audience can be explained by the fact that the 19 chapters of the monograph originated from the deliberations of the members of the Teachers as Researchers Working Group at the Psychology of Mathematics Education (PME) conference in Spain in 1996. The PME conference is now regarded worldwide as the premier research conference in the mathematics education calendar, and the reader groups mentioned above represent the range of delegates to the conference and regular members of this particular Working Group.

Mousley tells us in her opening chapter that the monograph title was selected to emphasise the relationship between teacher research and teacher practice as well as educational change, and that the more inclusive term *inquiry* was introduced into the title as a replacement for "research." The need for this distinction becomes clear as one reads the variety of experiences described in the monograph—not all of which can be classed as research. Chapters have been contributed by authors from the UK (5), the USA (4), Australia (4), Canada (2), South Africa, Portugal, Brazil, and Columbia. Most chapters have something to say to each of the various reader groups, while others focus on one or another of them.

In her introductory chapter, Mousley also provides the reader with an advance organiser. She describes the monograph's conception, establishes a context, summarises the monograph's contents, cleverly provides a link between the various chapters, and passes on to the reader some personal insights on the authors and on the content. For example, her thoughts on the evolving nature of research which makes its definition difficult, and on the difference between teacher research and teacher experience, would be worthy topics for discussion in any research methodology course.

Twelve of the other 18 chapters describe research projects undertaken by various authors: individual teachers, university educators, or both acting as a team.

The details of these projects—for instance, their objectives, research questions, methodologies, results and implications for teaching and learning, and relationship to the monograph's thrust—will be of general interest. Five other chapters might be classed as reflective, personal statements regarding issues related to teacher inquiry. These are the chapters by Phillips, Hanley and Hardy, Mason, Laurinda Brown, and Zack.

In separate chapters, Phillips, an elementary school teacher working in Vancouver, and Zack, also in an elementary school but in Montreal, each recount their transition from teacher to teacher-researcher. Their descriptions of the highs and tensions involved in their quest for professional improvement will, I believe, be quite inspirational for those practitioners considering how they might make their teaching life more personally rewarding. It makes an impact on one to read Zack saying that she now could not possibly engage in a teaching situation which did not include a classroom research component. So too for authors Hanley and Hardy, both teacher educators in the UK Midlands. For them, "practising theory" and "theorising practice" are the key elements in any teacher's professional development. Their approach has been to assume that the improvement of practice lies in the closer examination of what teachers do in the classroom, and to broaden these perceptions by taking on board the theoretical frameworks and activities of successful others. One has to realise though, that taking on new ideas usually involves modifying one's own pedagogical actions, a point that Mason, from the Open University, takes up in his chapter. He focuses on how reflective practitioners can come to recognise the potential for improvement of acting in non-idiosyncratic ways—that is, by deconstructing their classroom behaviour and remodelling it on some desired alternative. Laurinda Brown, who works at the University of Bristol, also examines in her chapter the deconstruction of classroom incidents as she collaborates with a practitioner-colleague. Together they identify central teaching and learning strategies and themes, and indicate how these factors are used for the purpose of teacher change. The five chapters just described complement the others in the book, relating as they do the thoughtful comments of these individual practitioners and researcher/practitioner teams as they endeavour to pass onto others the wisdom they have gained through personal experience.

The final chapter of this monograph, on the history of the teacher-as-researcher movement by Dawn Brown, is a "must read" for all who are engaged in this activity or involved in teaching others about it. Again, it would be a worthy inclusion as a discussion topic in a research methods program.

Mousley ends her opening chapter with the comment that "compiling [the book] has been an enjoyable and enlightening process for the editors ... and an opportunity to glimpse the future." The reader groups mentioned at the beginning of this review will enjoy dipping into this monograph, and are certain to appreciate the opportunity to share the editor's view.

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