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Introduction

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In this edition of the *Research Journal: International Education Theory and Practice* we continue to reflect explicitly and implicitly on the interconnectedness of educational theory, research and practice and to promote RIPE (Research Informed Practice in Education).

The purpose of the RIPE network is to bring researchers and classroom practitioners into a space of collaboration and exchange with the aim of promoting robust research-informed practice in international education and collectively to construct a deep understanding of dialogic teaching and learning in a plurilingual and pluricultural context.

The contributions to this journal fall into three categories:

- Two MA module essays by classroom practitioners
- Collaborative school-based research in China, and
- Two reflections on the nature and purpose of education past and present.

Together they support the fundamental aim of the RIPE network, to develop deeply engaged international "networked learning communities" whose work will ultimately have a positive impact on student learning.

Can critical and creative thinking complement each other in making purposeful thought productive?

Patrick Jefford explores the complementarity of creative and critical thinking in the context of 21st-century learning and teaching for children in the primary years. Drawing from his experience working with students in an international school in Switzerland, Jefford suggests that the inherently transdisciplinary nature of creative thinking lends itself to concept-based, problem-based and inquiry-based learning. Jefford reminds us that, as educators, we should be purposeful ourselves in determining the balance between teaching for creative and productive thought and traditional learning objectives. Equally important is our reexamination of appropriate tools for assessing creative thought and our stance as reflective practitioners.

Teaching Language across the curriculum

Cris Delataro Barabas' essay takes us across the globe and into the classrooms of an "internationalised" school in mainland China catering principally to Chinese nationals. Whilst the overall aim of the essay is to underline the importance of content and language integrated learning for English language learners, Barabas raises important questions that echo themes in Jefford's piece: the relationship of surface to deep learning, the collaborative nature of learning in a social constructivist space, and the challenges this may pose to teacher identity and beliefs.

A public-private school partnership in China as a model for delivery of educational reform

The fascinating dynamic of intercultural learning and teaching is likewise at the heart of the research by Zhao and Hussain on the integration of formative assessment practices in a remarkable collaborative project blending public and private, East and West, to assess the impact of learning objectives and success criteria on primary maths students. While deepening our understanding of success criteria as a contributing factor to student attainment and motivation, this research project equally opens the way for innovative collaborative partnerships that may enhance the student learning experience in any pluricultural context.

Reaching Beyond Traditional Schema for Professional Learning

Alexander and Perche offer us a new approach to professional learning with an emphasis on creating a space of deep engagement with and questioning of the nature and purpose of education. Breaking with a common thread found so often in current discourse that focuses on providing a toolkit for classroom practitioners, Alexander and Perche suggest that educators should rather engage in "the act of calling forth courage to take heart, to resist, to reassess and to rethink." Their work calls into question the political economy of education and urges us to recognize the broader ethical and political implications of our practice.

Plus ça change…

In the final article, I engage in a historically based reflection on some of the key notions we tend to associate with the current discourse on education: autonomy, agency and the importance of the affective in the learning environment to argue that these have long been present in the heart and aims of educators. Drawing from my research in eighteenth-century French education, I explore the historical origins of the modern concept of childhood as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and suggest that the notion of childhood as a separate stage of development during which families and institutions should encourage the development of the child as a full, autonomous individual was born in the eighteenth century if not before.

If you would like to submit an article to the next edition of the Research Journal: International Education Theory and Practice, we invite you to submit your work to <u>karen.taylor@ecolint.ch</u> by October 15th, 2022.

Principles of Practice: Confidence and Courage in the pursuit of what it means to be a teacher

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Abstract
In this theoretical and reflexive article, we explore the process of developing *principles of practice*, the concept behind a different approach to professional learning for teachers at international schools. The concept of principles of practice was developed in the context of a year-long professional learning programme offering a small group of teachers (25) a space for depth-engagement with research and encouraging radical thinking about the nature of schooling. Engaging seriously with the principles of practice obliges teachers to embrace lack of consensus as a profoundly positive aspect of professional practice, and it demands that teachers rethink schooling, often in ways that are disruptive to received wisdom about what 'works' or what is 'good' about it. Challenge and resistance are important parts of this process, and there is perhaps no better time to be asking uncomfortable questions about the future of international schooling. However, asking such questions is no easy task, which leads to a further pragmatic question: how can such a programme be made sustainable in the broader ecosystem of an international school organisation? Exploring this question reveals the radical promise of the concept underpinning this particular example of professional learning.

Keywords: theory, practice, praxis, criticality, confidence; courage

Introduction

The challenge of reconciling the relationship between theory and practice is central to the field of teacher professional learning (Mutton et al, 2021). Historically, this challenge has centred on redressing in one direction or another the balance between practical wisdom, technique or technical skill, and one's ability to articulate what is known about any specific domain (Oancea and Furlong, 2007). Held in the subtle balance between techne, episteme, and phronesis, what counts as 'knowledge' for teachers remains contested and shaped by the practical constraints of everyday life in the classroom – constraints of time, curriculum, career, and the wider demands of audit cultures, 'client' expectations, assessment regimes, and policy shifts. The answer to the corollary question of what it means to be a 'good' teacher is inevitably shaped by how teacher 'knowledge' is conceived and shaped in practice. With these questions in mind, in this theoretical and reflexive paper we explore the process of developing *principles of practice*, the concept behind a programme professional learning by the same name for teachers at English Schools Foundation (ESF) international schools in Hong Kong. The ESF is a well-established, fee-paying group of international schools based solely in Hong Kong and with a long history in the territory, stretching back to 1967. Originally emerging from a government recognition of the need for quality English-language provision in Hong Kong, the ESF has historically catered to a large non-Chinese demographic of 'expatriate' families and students. More recently, this demographic has changed significantly in line with other international school organisations in the region, and now approximately 80% of ESF intake is Hong Kong Chinese. Schools overwhelmingly follow the IB curriculum and across the Foundation academic achievement is considerable, meaning that many students gravitate towards elite university destinations in the UK, US, Canada, and Australia. ESF schools are home to staff from a diversity of backgrounds, but the majority are recruited from Euro-American and Australasian contexts. Because of its history, record of academic success, continued growth, and favourable employment terms (including its professional learning offer), the ESF represents a desirable destination for

teachers seeking to work in the Hong Kong international school sector. The concept of principles of practice was developed in the context of a year-long professional learning programme offering teachers a space for depth-engagement with research and encouraging radical thinking about the nature of schooling. Engaging seriously with principles of practice obliges teachers to embrace lack of consensus as a profoundly positive aspect of professional practice (MacIntyre, 1995), and it demands that teachers rethink schooling, often in ways that are disruptive to received wisdom about what 'works' or what is 'good' about teaching. Challenge and resistance are important parts of this process, and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic there is perhaps no better time to be asking uncomfortable questions about the future of international schooling. However, asking such questions is no easy task, which leads to a further pragmatic question: how can such a programme can be made sustainable in the broader ecosystem of an international school organisation? Exploring this question reveals the radical promise of the concept underpinning this particular example of professional learning. This paper draws heavily on the work of selected principles of practice programme speakers, including Etienne Wenger (1998), Gert Biesta (2005), Trevor Mutton and Katherine Burn (2021), Helen Gunter, (1997) and others.

The Challenge: Reaching Beyond Traditional Schema for Professional Learning

We would like to begin with a story. I[16] was falling asleep on a tram heading for Quarry Bay, on the north side of Hong Kong Island, towards the end of the afternoon on a sunny day in October, 2018. As a lingering vestige of Hong Kong's rickety industrial past, the tram trundled along its slender tracks, shunting at intersections welded by long-forgotten hands. The tram was packed and humid even at this time of year, and I was dozing to the occasional lull of the tram's movement, interspersed by the ding of old-fashioned bell that signalled to the driver of a passenger's intention to alight. Jetlag was taking its toll. With my colleague Roger Dalrymple, I was on my way to a final meeting of the day on a university junket to drum up business for continuing professional development programming. We had just a few days in Hong Kong to justify our limited expenses and complete on some deals. For academics trained respectively in medieval literature and social anthropology, for Roger and me this kind of consultancy work offered a surreal and oddly comforting experience in overlap between the simple rationality of its anticipation (getting the deal), and the complexity of how one navigates to a point of shared intention with relative strangers (the client, and/or their human representative) in the process. These ideas were circulating, inchoate, as we waited in large leather armchairs in the downstairs lobby of the building that housed the offices of the English Schools Foundation (ESF). We were early.

An hour later, we had met with Jacques-Olivier Perche, an ebullient, vital person in charge of professional learning, among other things, at the ESF. We discussed potential programmes, 'easy wins' in terms of collaboration, and next steps towards delivering a traditional suite of CPD sessions. We seemed to have reached, in our vanishingly short meeting, a gathering of intention that would allow me to return to the UK quietly triumphant that the long journey to Hong Kong had been worthwhile, an anticipated deal sealed in lieu of future work agreed. What *actually* transpired in that meeting, however, was much more significant, and far less predictable, than what we may have anticipated as that tram lumbered down old tracks towards Quarry Bay. The meeting was in fact a coming together of intentions that over the next two years would develop into a novel way of conceptualising professional learning for international schoolteachers. Principles of Practice emerged, therefore, first as a concept derived from an unintended exercise in professional anticipation. As the philosopher Jay Lampert (2018) among others (Alexander, 2020) have argued, the predominant cultural orientation towards the future in contemporary late capitalist societies is one framed by the ideology of rational choice: that is, we anticipate future outcomes based on decisions in the present that are oriented towards certainty. This same orientation underpins the inclination,

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[16] The first-person pronoun in this article refers to Patrick Alexander.

in current educational discourse as elsewhere, towards evidence-based practice (Nelson and Campbell 2017), or the notion that practice underpinned by previous action proving an outcome (as in some empirical research) will produce, *a priori*, the very same outcome as that previously recorded elsewhere. Past action becomes a still pool mirroring the future, as much in the identification of 'best practice' in classroom pedagogy as in the profane business of devising professional learning that will inculcate said 'best practice'. The framing of 'what works' (Davis, 2017) in education becomes in this sense a question of anticipating a taken-for-granted or doxic (Zipin et al, 2015) relationship between intended activity and intended outcome. Broadly speaking, this logic underpins a traditional approach to professional *development*, whereby skills are honed through discrete sessions – skills, for example, for mastering behaviour management, for inculcating growth mindset, for managing meetings, and so on – in linear anticipation of future contexts where these skills may be applied or reproduced. While such a proposition is increasingly difficult to sustain in a world characterised principally by rapacious future uncertainty (Facer 2013), the logic of future certainty prevails in many professional domains, not least education, and certainly not least in professional learning for teachers.

In our conversations between 2018 and 2020, we slowly circled this paradox in our discussions about what work we should do together, all the while watching the world around us change in strange, unexpected, and disturbing ways. Ultimately, it was through an engagement with the foundational proposition of the *principles of practice* – through engagement with trust, risk, uncertainty, and judgement– that the concept itself was derived. In our conversations, in partial, incomplete ways, we eventually asked the important questions: what, together, do we really want to do? What do we stand for? What is our professional judgement about what counts as worthy professional learning, and how, in practice, do we make this happen beyond existing schema for what professional development looks like and produces? What, to paraphrase Biesta (2013), might be the beautiful or productive risk in our approach to professional learning? The fact that these questions were only partially articulated, and still only remain partially answered, was part of the way forward: finding a way, in a world of presumed certainty, to champion the value of a lack of consensus as central to principled professional judgement (MacIntyre 1993; 1995). Principles of practice, in this sense, is not an easily packageable concept because is not a thing to do or an approach to adopt – it is emphatically not a schema for practice - and therefore not a product easily marketed. It is, rather – and perhaps quite simply – a disposition, or a restatement of a commitment to attentiveness of action, and an interrogation of action in dialogue with theory. As we argue later, in the process of enacting principles of practice we would find that this also required a critical framing of the tension between *confidence* – the process of becoming 'literate' and feeling 'agentic' in the world of educational research and educational theory - and *encouragement* – the act of calling forth courage to take heart, to resist, to re-assess, rethink and to refuse ideas and practices that may otherwise seem 'good', including those most deeply held, and including those most deeply held about educational research.

The Proposition: Interrogating the Principles of Teaching Practice

The challenge of engaging teachers in the ethical and theoretical aspects of their working lives is not a new one (Alexander, 1984; Ellis 2010). A recent renewal of interest in MacIntyre's (1995) concept of practical theorizing, for example (Mutton et al 2021), demonstrates the continued importance of interrogating the relationship between research, theory, and practice in teacher professional learning. MacIntyre's original conceptualising of practical theorizing was to champion the importance of theory in the nascent professional lives of initial teachers, so that they might continue to engage with theory and theorization not as supplementary to but rather as an essential part of everyday practice in the classroom. Others have proposed different ways of illuminating the interplay between theory

and practice in the professional lives of teachers, from calls to research literacy (BERA-RSA 2014), to calls to enact critical praxis (Francisco et al 2021), to the less wieldy but increasingly popular domain of the 'pracademic' (Posner 2009), to the broader, more pragmatic (and problematic) teacher-led ResearchEd movement in countries like the United Kingdom.

In many ways, the balancing of theory and practice in teacher professional learning is linked to even older questions about how knowledge production has been shaped as an aspect of schooling for students and teachers alike over the last 150 years. The broad history of mass state education reflects a drive towards standardisation and a technical framing of teaching as the means by which society can achieve an increasingly predictable outcome from the input of time and resources that shape schooling. Imagining teachers as the transmitters of knowledge casts teachers as the guardians of the light, the technicians who maintain the machinery, but not the light itself. A focus on the techne of teaching is evident in the trajectory of education policy where significance is placed on education as the engine for other areas of future economic and political change. Education remains, for example, at the very centre of the neoliberal public policy agenda because education allegedly represents one of the main indicators of future economic growth and individual well-being. Education, as Stephen Ball accentuates, has become 'a crucial factor in ensuring economic productivity and competitiveness in the context of "informational capitalism"' (Ball, 2008:1). In this somewhat dystopian but accurate vision of education as an investment based on the [deterministic] assumption that 'better educational outcomes are a strong predictor of economic growth' (OECD, 2010: 3), pupils' achievements are said to represent an indicator of 'future talent pools' (OECD, 2012: 26) and should therefore be a valid indicator of one's future [economic] success. This assumption of the translatability of learning achievements into economic performance – most visible in studies discussing international large-scale student assessments such as PISA – places the teacher in the difficult position of attending to just and ethical practice for the children and young people in front of her at any given time, while always feeling the chill of a long and looming shadow of expectation to yield some greater political or economic harvest.

The framing of schooling as the nurturing or 'banking' (Freire 2000 [1970]) of future human capital is certainly familiar also in the history of international schooling. Bunnell and Poole (2021), among others, have pointed to the ways in which historically international schools have served to reproduce forms of capital that privilege the interests of elite global communities already in positions of economic and political power and privilege. In the present, fee-paying international schools are regularly marketed, whether implicitly or explicitly, on the promise of the high quality of their educational provision, on the socially exclusive nature of their intake, and on the future returns on family investment in education. Bunnell and Poole (2021) argue that there is a well-established discourse across the sector that the project of schooling is oriented towards future gain in the form of attendance at elite universities and the concurrent benefits that this may confer on students in terms of future employment and new or continued membership as part of a global elite. This discourse is underpinned by a neoliberal framing of aspiration towards individual success through competition in a way that tragically and ironically reveals how the success of the view reproduces inequity for many. In the crudest logic of such discourse, the mark of a 'good' teacher is one's capacity to deliver the highest return on investment in the form of success in high stakes summative assessments that represent the access point to elite Higher Education. It is not surprising, therefore, that professional learning for teachers in international schools is at times framed also in relation to 'transmission', or the nurturing of the kinds of skills that will allow teachers to maximise strategies for student success at examination – and often provided by the very same organisations that produce and reproduce regimes of examination, such as the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

The underpinning logic of this transmission discourse is familiar across most forms of mass schooling, and relates directly to the orientation of school practice towards a particular modernist imagining of the future (Facer 2013). Facer (2013; 2016; see also Alexander 2020) suggests that schooling is profoundly oriented towards a modernist future in its very structure and organisation. Much activity in schools (even activities that are explicitly focused on the present, such as mindfulness) is oriented towards future outcomes, as in the neoliberal logic of transmission outlined above. This applies as much to student experiences of high stakes assessment as it does to teacher professional learning oriented towards 'good' teaching evidenced through student success. The logic of action in the present conducted methodically in relation to clear and inevitable outcomes in the future is challenged directly by the rapacious uncertainty of the present where we regularly see shocks and unpredictable events as part of a 'new normal' – from economic and political upheaval, to climate crisis, pandemic, and all of the concurrent disturbances wrought during Pandemic Times. Schools may socialise both teachers and students into practices that privilege the certainty of future outcomes, but teachers and students are living, like the rest of us, in times where such certainty rarely occurs, whether in the present or in the swiftly unravelling future. This raises an obvious and pressing question about how professional learning may in some way account for the fluid, uncertain nature of the present in a way that is productive and emancipatory for both teachers and students alike.

A historical view of teaching as the 'transmission' of educational capital to other forms of capital rests, then, in tension with the broader progressive tradition in the philosophy of education, seen in the work of Dewey (1910) and others (for example, Freire, 2000 [1970]), which instead focuses on transmission as a fundamentally communal and humanistic pursuit that in its emancipatory power is much more than the sum of its parts. Dewey's notion of transmission, not unlike Friere's concept of *conscientização,* draws our attention to educative practice better seen as praxis, as a process of recognising existing schema or ways of ordering the world, of recognising their ethical and political implications, and in so doing to transcend said schema by creating new knowledge and understanding that can only emerge, often fleetingly, in the conversation *between* student and teacher. Through this process, all actors are changed. In a fundamentally relational reckoning of the role of the teacher, knowledge is shaped in the process of *trans*mission; and yet schooling is a context that at the same time requires that knowledge be *schooled,* disciplined, categorised, and made tractable through a more clinical, technical mode of transmission (Foucault 1975; Alexander 2020). Our intention was to progress to a position where teachers were not only aware of this distinction, through developing a confident, critical praxis, but also had the will to take courageous steps to act on this knowledge. Principles of practice was to be a space in which teachers could remain attentive to the light and shade of the broader political economy of education, and in so doing to see it, to recognise themselves as part of it, and to change it, in small ways, in their own classrooms.

The Risk: Nurturing Critical Habitual Dispositions

Having established a shared intention in this call to praxis, our next challenge was to devise a practical means through which this conceptual position could be articulated in a way that would make it practicable. Fortunately, Jacques was successful in proving that the ESF demonstrated the organisational foresight to facilitate a programme of professional learning that would privilege a challenging, depth engagement with educational research and engagement with the more troubling, exciting theoretical and philosophical questions of what it means to be a teacher. This was, and remains, the unsurprising key ingredient in the success of this kind of programme: the ability of senior management to also engage to some degree in the risk of professional learning that is not only not tied to discrete, prescribed measures of value or impact, but which promotes as its principle (and principled) outcome a benefit to the organisation that is lasting partly because it is largely intangible and unpredictable. More fortunate still, we were able to find a cohort of teachers who were willing

to take on the intellectual and professional challenge of the programme in spite of the mounting complexities of the global pandemic and concurrent economic and political changes troubling the fabric of Hong Kong society.

Once assembled, we aimed from the outset to create a promise of uncomfortable challenge in the programme – to engage in what Ball (2019) and others, channelling Foucault, have articulated as a 'pedagogy of discomfort'. This was achieved partly through a direct engagement with this and similarly unsettling framings of the educative process, as in Biesta's articulation of the 'transcendental violence' in education (2005). Biesta's argument, in crude summary, is that transactional models of learning are particularly limited where the assumption is made that the student exists in a customer-provider relationship with the teacher, and where the correlative assumption is made that the customer has not only a clear sense of what they demand from their education but also that this demand is an accurate reflection of what they need. The initial point made in this article about the limits of certain anticipation in professional practice echo Biesta's concern that a rational-choice, neoliberal framing of learning, particularly in schools, runs the serious risk of eliding the most important aspects of education in its pursuit of consensus about what is transacted between teachers and students. By establishing learning objectives at the start of a lesson, for example, teachers may clearly define what is expected of students, invoking the distant but persistent shadows of summative assessment, associated curricula, and the association, via parental investment, with future success articulated, for example, in university attendance. However, in the process this action may be limiting the articulation of learning within a simplistic (and often unrealistic) framing of objectives that lead, without distraction, to anticipated outcomes. There is a symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1990 [1970]) in this broader strategic approach to learning principally because it encourages a conflation between a rational choice mode of learning through schooling, and education: it becomes easy to assume that schooling *is* education. This involves a distortion, to use Biesta's term (2005), of the neoliberal business of schooling and the more radical promise for unpredictable enchantment and encouragement that education might offer (Ingold 2018). An alternative is an approach to education that instead privileges risk, uncertainty, uncomfortable or even transcendentally violent moments of discovery (Biesta 2005) that are valuable partly because they are jarring to one's taken for granted or doxic assumptions (Zipin 2015) about how the world works -including assumptions about learning. Dividing things into parts, to paraphrase Bateson (1972), is largely a practice of convenience, or at its worst, a practice of obfuscation, of masking what are the implications of the whole - in this case, the limiting of the educational prospect of schooling and teacher professional learning through the rhetoric of objectives, outcomes, and outputs.

Our intention with *principles of practice,* then, was to encourage uncertainty, undoing, transgression, critique, resistance, vulnerability, lack of consensus, attention to practice, sensibility, and humility. This was not a simple task that occurred overnight but rather required the nurturing of a community of practice (Wenger 1998) quietly committed to these goals. In practice, the pedagogy was not radical: we met regularly to speak with invited speakers who were also often the authors of the reading that teachers were encouraged to engage with. The programme was organised around three core themes: practical theorizing, communities of practice, and cultural complexity. The remaining talks focused in turn on: the concept of the future in education; the political economy of education; nurturing cultures of research; teacher agency; academic knowledge production; and critical perspectives on educational research in schools. The process of normalising the voices of academics helped to create a more even footing for teachers to engage critically with texts not as 'sacred' offerings from an abstracted academic world, but as 'profane' products of the messy process of academic knowledge production, typed into computers by the hands of the people they were talking to. Seminars were followed up with small group tutorial discussions where teachers could share thoughts and reflections in more intimate groupings. Online forum discussions kept the discussion moving in between sessions. Teachers were encouraged to

pen and share short ethnographic self-portraits that would reveal the relevance of theoretical discussions to their own past narratives or present practice as teachers. At the same time, we challenged one another to critique the framing of these narratives and to evade simple stories of 'redemption' or unproblematic professional 'growth' through engagement with research (and linking to the critical points made above about the future-orientation of schooling).

It would be unrealistic and unhelpful to the argument of this article to suggest that engagement and participation in the programme was without its issues. This is, of course, part of the risk of deploying principles of practice in the first place. Participation was eager but not always consistent, and regularly interrupted by the realities of life as a teacher. Not all felt comfortable or able to engage in as much depth as others with the process, and the divide between academic and professional knowledge production proved at times as difficult as it has always been to bridge. Others articulated disquiet where the programme content appeared to diverge from institutional positions about pedagogy or curriculum; and again, this was partly our intention. However, the net impact was considerable, and as the programme developed we saw evidence that participants were gathering confidence about their engagement with research. In tutorial discussions in particular, participants began to signal that yet-smaller, teacher-led pockets of dialogue were emerging about research, beyond the limits of the programme. Taxi rides to school, for example, proved an unexpected context where fellow participants would reflect on our more formal discussions and link more viscerally back to the realities of life in their particular settings. Participants who were friends and colleagues were starting to talk and debate how they would take their experience of the programme into their practice beyond it. Following Bourdieu (1970), this signalled an emerging professional capital leading to a more confident engagement with the discourse of research – or an easier disposition to navigate the field of educational research as part of the broader professional portfolio of the teacher. In framing research 'literacy' as a form of capital here, however, we are also signalling the risk that, when re-articulated in formal contexts, research knowledge can be deployed as a means of reinforcing the doxa of schooling as an educational field. By engaging with research, teachers and leaders could be encouraged simply to adopt a kind of connoissieurship of research and its representations – the archetypal 'well-read' bookshelf in the principal's office, for example – as a means of establishing one's capacity to act strategically and to the benefit of one's own interests by demonstrating one's research credentials. Or, at a more complex level, the net result of this kind of programme could be simply to reproduce the established academic wisdom about what kinds of educational research are valuable for teachers to engage with. While it is perhaps impossible not to reproduce some existing doxic understandings of the value of educational research, our intention was to transcend this limiting engagement through the facilitation of 'critical habitual dispositions'. This rather unwieldy term we devised to articulate the ideal position of having as one's starting point a critical stance that is confident in its constructive scepticism about research knowledge even when one is not necessarily well-versed in the theoretical positions underpinning this knowledge. This is the critical confidence of the experienced teacher presented with a 'new' way of doing things, and the confidence of the experienced researcher presented with a 'new' theory the proposes to replace those that have come before it. That is, it is a critical confidence brought about through habituated experience. However, in the absence of said experience (for example, experience of engaging with a specific writer or field of research), how does one establish this stance of confidence? Through regular engagement with academics and their ideas – and with each other – the programme sought to overcome the temporal tension between practice and theory (that one must always precede or come after the other, in terms of experience) through engagement with both as inextricable parts of the same whole. The expectation for engagement with speakers, texts, and one another was high, but this did not mean that we were privileging a polished rehearsal of the ideas being explored. Rather, we aimed to emphasise contention, to draw out competing or conflicting points of theoretical development, and to lay bare as much as possible the process of academic knowledge

production. We hoped that by the end of the process, this would lead to teachers feeling not only confident in their engagement with research but also confident in their position as experienced, intellectual practitioners more than capable of initiating engagement with research with a critical disposition. For some, but not all, this process was transformational. As one participant suggested, *"the course has fundamentally changed how I view the purpose of education and therefore has had an impact on most areas of my practice"*. Another participant put it this way: *"I really enjoyed the change in thinking that I experienced. It was very significant in helping me to see the bigger picture of what I do every day"*. Others were less sure of the impact of the programme on them, and to an extent this was also the point. As the programme leaders, the process of pursuing this approach required confidence of a similar kind, as it demanded of us the cultivating of a willingness to be more vulnerable, to tread uncarefully outside of established boundaries, and to be attentive to moments when necessary to admit shortcomings or dead ends of discussion in the immediate and unforgiving light of a Zoom call. This was a humanising process that requited humility and honesty. Years of carefully practiced and performed boundary-keeping, of due attention to meeting 'client needs' and presentation or representation of established knowledge makes such work difficult, but extremely rewarding.

The Challenge of Encouragement

But was this enough? As suggested above, we reflected during the programme on the risk that we would simply reproduce forms of professional capital that would reproduce research discourse as a means of effectively 'working' the field of schooling. In encouraging the critical habitual dispositions of participants, we were obliged to think again about the importance not only of the confidence to move in the field of educational research – of what might be termed 'research literacy' – but also of the *courage* required to remain critical and reflexive in this process. To return to Biesta, we were reminded of the need to seek out moments of transcendental violence (2005), to create opportunities for productive dissent, and to lay ourselves open to critique in the process. The practice of *encouragement* – in the literal (and French) sense of creating the space where courage can grow – required a re-engagement with the programme's foundational interest in the relationship between principles and practice. In giving heart, and hope, the process of encouragement involved recognising the participants' confidence or literacy in the field of research, their capacity to productively resist and adopt a critical, principled stance, and, crucially, to do so from a hopeful position about the possibility for positive, productive change (Tillich 2000 [1952]; Nixon 2017; hooks xxx). Courage, as the willingness to challenge, be honest, open, willing to fail to succeed in the pursuit of something more meaningful, comes with considerable risk, especially within the architecture of a system where success and failure are so clearly demarcated and so highly valued in more concrete terms linked to performance. The act of encouragement therefore demands courage on the part of those with systemic power. A serious engagement with notions of cultural complexity (Hannerz 1992; Dervin 2016) also demanded challenge on the part of invited speakers and facilitators attentive to the changing sands in Hong Kong. Engagement with research or calls to resistance can themselves represent a form of disciplining or even disempowerment when such calls are made from the safe distance of what passes for liberal democracy in, for example, contemporary Britain. It is much less easy, and indeed perhaps even less productive, to hammer one's colours to the mast in the context of creeping authoritarianism and the growth of explicit state surveillance cultures. Participants engaged in the difficult process of exploring politically complex questions while doing so in a way that spoke to the realities of their experiences in a rapidly changing context. A nuanced and respectful approach to local context was important to the encouragement of participants. This focus on courage and encouragement may also be considered a complication of what counts as 'agency' in the professional lives of teachers - that is, an understanding of agency that is not only linked to the greater self-efficacy borne of research literacy, but also agency as a process of heartfelt ethical practice in the present that may also involve productive dissent, critique, and dissonance.

Conclusions

We would like to conclude by returning to our story – or rather, to the admission that the story itself is an artifice of temporal coherence. The details likely never happened as we have said so here. There is no clear starting point or statement of intention that established the parameters of what would become principles of practice. To suggest this would be to negate the central value of a dialogue about the ethical and theoretical parameters of educative practice that is useful so long as it is never finished (Ingold 2018). Somewhere, presumably, the tram to Quarry Bay trundles on, shunting along a line, collecting fares and distributing people to known locations, places they knew they were going to. While we continue to hear and response to the fond and certain ringing of a bell that signals the certain and inevitable counterpoint of departure and destination, fortunately, a principles of practice approach to professional learning does not encourage us to imagine that we are currently on that tram, or that the tramlines are the only means of travel through the landscape.

To resist a coherent sense of theoretical boundary, or of a simple articulation of the usefulness in application of this approach to professional learning, is in itself an articulation of the approach adopted in the programme. That said, some conceptual, ethical, and practical steps proved productive in allowing principles of practice to serve as a thinking space for teachers. We recognise the importance of creating time for initial dialogue about what really matters about a professional learning experience. We emphasise the importance of institutional vision and a willingness to embrace the risk of professional learning that privileges uncertain outcomes through certain and unchanging intentions. Such vision also needs to be sustained, to allow the fruits of encouragement to emerge, slowly. We celebrate the value of engaging directly with scholars and authors as a way of diffusing the boundary between the seemingly discrete worlds of practice and research. However, we also recognise that it is all well and good making a bold statement to resistance against consensus; it is entirely another challenge to do so while dwelling in contexts that tend towards order and taxonomy. In the more extreme of such settings, essentially moral judgements about whether or not one is a 'good' teacher will be framed in ways incommensurate with a theoretically or philosophically more complex reckoning of teaching practice. Technical knowledge may lead to an effective management of assessment in the context of a prescriptive curriculum, and in this frame a 'good' teacher would *only ever* be one who is able to harness her technical knowledge to shepherd the best results in examination. Theoretical knowledge is less valuable, and therefore less valued. The theoretically disposed teacher, in such a context, may even become a 'bad' teacher. How then, do we reconcile this call to courage with the everyday challenges of doing so in a system that is fundamentally organised around certainty? In the current ordering of things, this may simply be about establishing the demand for a different kind of schooling that champions the value of teachers as public intellectuals who inspire children and young people to think in the same quietly radical ways that they do. A first step towards this may be the process of encouragement – of providing simple spaces for dialogue and dissonance that recognise teachers as empowered intellectuals who shape and wield knowledge in ways that change lives, often in unpredictable and wonderful ways.

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