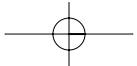
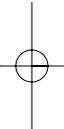
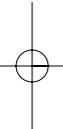


PART 3

PERFORMANCE STRATEGY



chapter 10

REALIZING THE REFLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL

In this chapter we consider the role of teaching within the overall academic context. We explore key issues surrounding the relationship with other academic practices (research, management/service). We suggest that while research, teaching and management/service have traditionally been regarded as conflicting duties and practices (often heightened by institutional and funding practices), a more productive perspective would be to focus on the shared aims/purposes of these practices: the discovery, extension, construction and dissemination of knowledge. In this, we focus on questions of teaching within a research culture, working with colleagues and so on.

INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

In this chapter we address the third component of the 'language' of the reflective professional that we introduced at the beginning of this book. We draw upon the foregoing discussion to propose and describe a general strategy of professional realization – a strategy to engage and master the 'language' of reflective practice.

In a climate of escalating interest in opportunities for the development of teaching and learning for teachers across the global higher education sector (e.g. UK (HEA) and USA (US Department of Education, 2006)), the realization of such a professional language is of increasing importance. The realization of such a language, moreover, draws upon substantive research

developments in our understanding of both teaching (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999; Samulelowicz and Bain, 2001; Ramsden, 2003; Bain, 2004; Light and Calkins, 2008) and the academic or professional development of teaching (Mckenzie, 2003; Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; Booth and Annenberg, 2005; Dall’Alba, 2005; Akerlind, 2005, 2007, 2008; Light and Calkins, 2008).

While the specific models and suggestions for academic development arising from these research projects are rich in diversity and difference, the cumulative thrust of this research is aimed at moving the teaching and learning culture beyond the impoverished paradigms of academic development (Light, 2000) still prevalent in higher education. Teachers working within the *ad hoc paradigm* (paradigm 1, see Introduction) primarily rely on a combination of their own experiences as a student and/or on what they observe as good practice from their colleagues. They cobble together an impoverished language, used more or less skilfully as personal and situational factors permit. And academics working in a *skills paradigm* (paradigm 2) have tended to perceive the development of teaching in terms of the accretion of ‘handy’ performance, communication and associated technical skills. The realization of practice is essentially additive, mechanical and decontextualized, and resides within a rather limited language of skills.

The aim of this chapter is to describe a *professional* (paradigm 3) strategy for the realization of the practice of learning and teaching. We draw evidence from the literature, describing the reflective and critical use of practical skills with the appropriate professional knowledge, an understanding of relevant conceptual frameworks and a command of the central genres of practice. This professional strategy locates the development of learning and teaching within the concrete teaching situation of one’s discipline, department, students and institution. The intention of this strategy is to offer a critical approach for the development of a reflective, evidence-based approach to realizing and improving teaching and learning.

Three descriptive features frame the general structure of this strategy, which we hope we may be forgiven for expressing as *space*, *time* and *matter* (Figure 10.1). The first feature describes the concrete spatial location of the realization. It is not a neutral space – as suggested by generic skill-based programmes – but, rather, is situated within the teacher’s discipline, department and institution. Ideally, it depicts a space in which engagement with students, colleagues and the disciplinary knowledge-base is critical to a full and complete realization of the language.

The second feature reflects the idea that the overall strategy is not simply a one-off programme set within bounded temporal limits but,

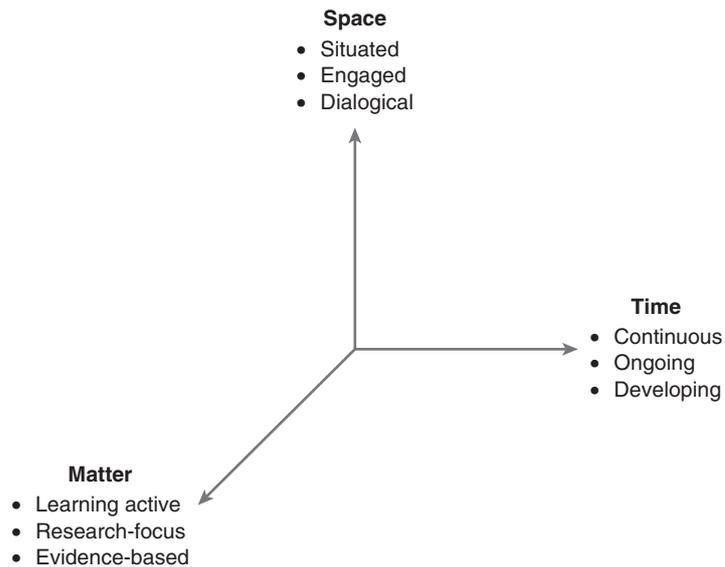


Figure 10.1

rather, draws on past experience and looks forward to ongoing experience and development. The third feature focuses on the nature and character of the matter within the space and time of practice and constitutes the main focus of our discussion. It encompasses the wide range of material, experience, practices, situations, relationships and values with which the academic engages. It suggests that teachers be informed in their relationships with that matter by the conceptual framework of engaged-dialogical learning, and guided by the critical learning matrix, which have been the central themes of this book. It emphasizes ‘learning’ as the underlying concept integrating the worlds of teacher, researcher and student (see Chapter 1). Research and teaching were characterized as the same practice, providing exemplars and models of learning for one another and, notably, for the student. The third feature of our strategy, then, describes an active, research-focused, evidence-based, theory-informed approach to realizing practice within the space–time parameters described above.

This strategy is entirely consistent with the ‘spirit of inquiry’ which defines academic life and practice. In this, it is not new. It is new in helping to bring about a rapprochement between the methods of inquiry which faculty engage in while doing research/scholarship and those methods of inquiry which they are developing with their students. It does so by transforming the process of teaching into a ‘process of inquiry’, into the

'scholarship of teaching' (Boyer, 1990). The spirit of inquiry envisaged in this scholarship elucidates a further feature of the professional 'language' to be realized, a feature recalling the idea of language from Chapter 1: 'language is part of an activity' (Wittgenstein, 1968: 11).

This book has, so far, drawn upon and been informed by a wide range of valuable educational research and theory. Active research with colleagues into learning and teaching is, however, as Zuber-Skerrit reminds us, 'likely to have a more powerful effect on the improvement of learning, teaching and staff development than research (solely) produced by educational theorists' (1992b: 115). This chapter will look at how to initiate and implement such an approach.

In the first instance, it will explore a sequence of four critical ways to understand and develop actively the relationship between research and practice within professional development programmes. This sequence will culminate in a detailed examination of the fourth way – activity or action research – that draws upon and incorporates the first three. This form of action research offers 'ways of investigating professional experience which link practice and the analysis of practice into a single developing sequence and link researchers and research participants into a single community of interested colleagues' (Winter, 1996: 14). It provides us with the principal model and method for realizing the professional language of practice. The rest of the chapter will flesh out the essential aspects of this approach to professional realization.

INTEGRATING PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

In Chapter 1, we saw how the relationship between subject-based research and the practice of teaching in higher education is characterized by a problematic, often deeply uncomfortable relationship. Both research and teaching have traditionally focused on the distinctive nature of the particular subject or discipline, rather than their mutual aspirations in learning and their shared aims in the construction and extension of knowledge. The focus on the common goal of learning and the advancing of knowledge highlights the critical significance of this research-teaching relationship within disciplinary practice.

The following discussion employs the term research in a broad sense, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and incorporating a wide range of empirical, scholarly and creative perspectives drawn from across the range of disciplinary cultures. It also regards research as intrinsically fused with theory in so far as it informs theory, modifies theory,

subverts theory, embodies theory and/or generates new theory. We can broadly group the research and theory regarding the practice of teaching explored in this book into four categories:

- The first concerns research looking at the practice of teaching. See, for example, the research looking at conceptions of teaching in higher education described in Chapter 1.
- The second category draws together the vast reservoir of research on adult and student learning discussed in Chapter 2.
- The third focuses on research of more specific relevance to the individual genres of practice (addressed in Chapters 3–9).
- The fourth category draws upon research concerned with the professional issues facing learning and teaching in higher education (see the Introduction and Chapter 1). It addresses the social and epistemological issues and values of the professional role of teaching within academic practice, higher education institutions and society in general. It challenges academics to reflect upon and think about their teaching in the changing wider social, political and economic contexts in which it is situated.

These categories offer a wide range of research that can be drawn upon in the development of the practice of learning and teaching. They do not describe a practical framework for understanding the different relationships between research and practice in the realization of professional practice.

In the following, we offer a schema for considering and managing these relationships. Again, it is not intended as an authoritative or prescriptive programme but, rather, as a conceptual tool for reflecting upon, developing and improving practice. Figure 10.2 illustrates four ways in which research and practice may be conceptualized in the realization of the professional practice: *practice defined by research*; *practice v. research*; *practice informed by research*; and *practice as research*.

These four ways of conceiving research and practice are four phases or movements in the realization of the reflective professional. They do not describe a necessary sequential order. Realization will always be a recursive process in which teachers will individually and collectively reflect upon and rethink their practice in the light of their various academic and personal experiences. Our discussion, here, will comment briefly on the first three phases. Other chapters in the book have considered the essential issues of these phases in some depth. In the following section, we shall address the fourth phase in some depth.

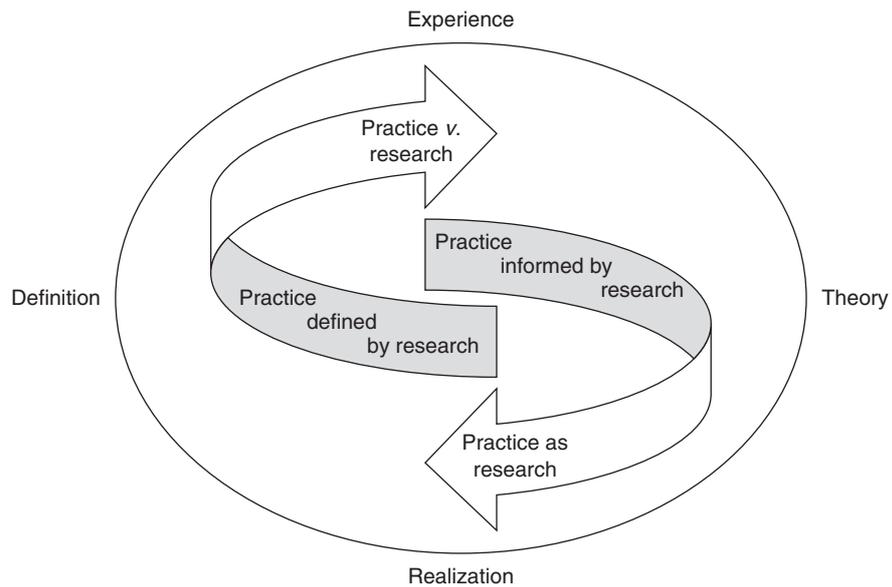


Figure 10.2

Teaching defined by research

The initial movement which may be referred to as the ‘definitional phase’ challenges practitioners to reflect critically upon their own implicit, often unspoken, definition or conception of teaching practice in respect of research and theory. In the first instance, this reflection will most likely consist of the relation of teaching to issues of learning and knowledge. Watkins and Mortimore, for example, define pedagogy or teaching as ‘any conscious activity by one person to enhance learning in another’ (1999: 3). But making the link between teaching and learning is not, of itself, sufficient. It does not take a huge critical leap to recognize such a relationship. What does demand a more critical approach is our personal examination of the nature of that relationship.

It is worth reiterating, however, that this phase challenges us to de-centre teaching and to re-centre learning within our personal definitions of practice. As discussed in Chapter 1, most if not all research on teachers’ understanding of teaching has identified critical differences around this key structural issue – teaching as focused on transmitting information to students *v.* teaching focused on developing students’ conceptual understanding (Akerlind, 2007). The former view of teaching tends to understand its relationship to learning as essentially linear, one in which teaching causes or produces learning. The definitional phase looks for a reversal of this perception in favour

of one which views teaching as an outcome of learning, or as defined by learning.

As Freire (2000) has long maintained, the authenticity of teaching is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student's thinking (learning). If there is a genuine engagement with knowledge such that conceptual development and change are happening, the teacher can be said to be teaching. If, on the other hand, learning is not genuinely occurring, then irrespective of the teacher's efforts, one may legitimately question their right to the use of the term 'teaching'.

Re-centring the practice of teaching does not necessarily mean that teachers need to be schooled in the literature and research on student learning. In a study examining what the best teachers do, Bain (2004: 25-6) found that few had substantive awareness of this literature but all had 'conceptions of human learning that are remarkably similar to some ideas that have emerged in the research and theoretical literature on cognition, motivation and human development'.

There are numerous examples of excellent teaching by teachers who have not studied the literature. Nevertheless, they focused their teaching around the facilitation of student conceptual understanding. Akerlind (2007) and McKenzie (2003) have, moreover, demonstrated that the teacher's understanding of teaching is linked to their understanding of the development of their own teaching. Teacher-focused understandings of development (associated with the skills paradigm, for example) relate to teacher-focused understandings of teaching. Similarly student-learning-focused understandings of development (related to the professional paradigm) are related to similarly focused understandings of teaching.

This first phase, then, challenges both the faculty/academic developer and the not so excellent teacher to redefine teaching for themselves - to centre student learning in their practice - by engaging with the research and re-constructing it in their discipline for both themselves and their students.

Such a redefinition, of course, has implications, particularly with respect to our understanding of the nature and character of learning and knowing. This leads us to the next two phases or movements of the schema, which respectively address the practitioners' experiential and conceptual/theoretical understandings of learning.

Teaching v. research

The juxtaposition of the second and third phases is not a straightforward sequential matter. They do not occur separately or consecutively but are

significantly interlocked in both development and ongoing improvement. The point of their separation here is to emphasize the commonality of learning at the heart of all our academic practices (see Chapter 1). Teachers in higher education bring their own rich experiences of learning to the learning and teaching situation. Through their own academic research and scholarship, they can also bring to the encounter with their students a shared experience of the struggle and exhilaration of learning. This includes considered and proficient exemplars or models of its achievement in an academic environment.

Unfortunately, all too often we leave the potential and richness of this common experience of research and teaching untapped and unexplored. More ominously within academic practice generally, teaching and research are frequently, even habitually, regarded as rivals: time and status pitting the 'learning' of one against the 'learning' of the other.

This phase or movement in realizing practice, then, is characterized by the challenge to examine critically this rivalry of 'learning *v.* learning' and the associated fragmentation of 'learning' more generally which this rivalry causes. The issue is not the academic role of researcher *v.* that of teacher but, rather, of developing practice beyond this partition and establishing an inclusive culture of learning – 'culture of inquiry' (Clark, 1997) – which encourages active engagement in learning by all.

The model focuses, then, on the development of teaching within a broader conception of disciplinary research and scholarship. It includes a more thorough understanding of research as a deeply engaging learning activity with rich lessons for our understanding and practice of teaching. Teachers in higher education are, by definition, master learners in their disciplines and professions. That, probably more than anything else, is what makes them academics. They know how to learn deeply in their chosen field. The language of teaching does not, therefore, simply draw upon generic understandings of teaching/learning but, rather, on profound disciplinary experiences of research and learning:

How do I and my colleagues learn in this discipline? How do we collaborate? What does learning consist of in this subject? How can we improve this learning? What impedes it? How does this learning embrace, engage and extend the learning of our students? How can we collaborate with our students to improve learning (Light, 2003: 158)?

Teaching, here, is characterized by the idea of an inclusive, critical language of practice and the overcoming of the rivalry of learning. Indeed, in a study

of academics' understanding of learning across academic practice, Light and Calkins (2006) reported that some faculty maintained connected or integrated understandings with respect to both themselves in their research and scholarship, and their undergraduate students' learning in their teaching.

Unfortunately the study reported a much higher number of faculty with disconnected understandings of learning across these two aspects of their practice. The latter faculty had effectively internalized the rivalry of learning. The point of this aspect of the developmental model presented here is to assist faculty to become aware of the disconnection between the two understandings of learning which they hold in their different practices, with the goal of drawing their attention to different ways they may understand teaching (Akerlind, 2008), especially in terms of learning as conceptual development or change.

Teaching informed by research

The theory phase of integrating research and teaching has sometimes been referred to as scholarly teaching. Hutchings and Shulman (1999) distinguish it from excellent teaching, on the one hand, and the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990), on the other. Excellent teaching is essentially best practice in which teachers focus on student learning but do not formally draw upon the literature on learning and teaching although, as Bain suggests above, they may have a deep but tacit understanding of learning. The scholarship of teaching suggests an inquiry into 'some or all of the full act of teaching... in a manner susceptible to critical review by the teacher's professional peers and amenable to productive employment in future work by members of that same community' (Shulman, 1998: 6).

Scholarly teaching 'is informed not only by the latest ideas in the field but by current ideas about teaching the field' (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999: 48). The development of individual and collective practice is not limited to any one or two categories of research and theory. It will draw upon all the main categories we have been primarily concerned with in this book. It will also inquire into others, particularly those from other disciplines, other practices and other professions that are of special significance and relevance to the individual practitioner.

Teaching informed by relevant research, by theory, by specialized knowledge, by expert and critical ways of understanding is a vital ingredient of reflective and professional practice. It provides the knowledge and the conceptual frameworks for reflecting upon and 'critiquing' one's knowledge, practice and common experience as a learner. In this, it describes a movement of educational and professional *literacy*.

Such literacy, as we have attempted to show throughout this book, embodies the development and practice of a common and comprehensive *language* of learning and teaching. Characterized and informed by research, theory and scholarship, such a language offers opportunities for:

- sharing a common understanding with colleagues and students;
- moving beyond the mere acquisition of a series of communication and performance skills, tips or specialized teaching competencies;
- re-positioning teaching within a deeper and more critical understanding of professional life, practical engagement, reflective skill development, 'genre' refinement and continuing professional development, etc.;
- conducting personal micro-research – or even larger-scale collective research – as part of professional and academic development;
- reconciling academic practice, both through common experiences of learning and through a shared academic discourse of theory, evidence, argument and notions of rigour;
- managing uncertainty and change; and
- improving personal scholarship on practice.

TEACHING AS RESEARCH

The movement towards understanding teaching as research is not an end result so much as the bringing together of the cycle into a process/method of practical realization. It articulates a strategy for professional realization that incorporates and integrates the other three. In this, it describes a process of becoming critically engaged in practice through action research. It aims at professional realization by transforming academic practice as habitual or customary action into 'academic praxis' (Zuber-Skerrit, 1992a, 1992b, 1997), into informed, critical and committed academic action.

In its simplest formulation, 'action research is about promoting successful, sustainable and liberating change' (Greenwood, 2007). It differs from more traditional forms of educational research to the degree in which it involves issues such as critical practice, improvement, participation and the actual environment or situation of practice. Kember (2000: 24) describes the key features of action research as being:

- concerned with social practice;
- aimed towards improvement;
- a cyclical process;
- pursued by systematic inquiry;

- a reflective process;
- participative; and
- determined by the practitioners.

Action research has been employed as a method of developing learning and teaching across many regions of the world. Elton (2008), for example, notes professional development MA and certificate courses based on action research in London, Oxford, Dublin and Hong Kong. In the USA, several authors link the development of learning and teaching practices through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) projects with action research (Raubenheimer and Myka, 2005; Hubball and Burt, 2006; Gray et al., 2007). The theoretical relationship to action research has, moreover, been discussed in some detail by Zuber-Skerrit (1992a, 1992b, 1997), Kember (2000) and Brew (2006).

Zuber-Skerrit (1992a, 1992b, 1997) emphasizes the power of action research to encourage the critical attitude we wish to foster in our students but also in ourselves – personally and as exemplars for students. It incorporates the integration of educational theory with personal *research into teaching*. It provides a rigorous research basis from which to understand and contribute to the debate concerning academic *accountability* to society, giving academic staff a professionally grounded voice with respect to academic policies, future curriculum decisions and so on. It offers practitioners a robust and critical method of *self-evaluation* for ongoing development. Finally, it sustains the capacity to contribute to the development of professionalism in higher education.

Carr and Kemmis (1983) describe three kinds of action research which address these issues, albeit at different levels of practitioner engagement. They are differentiated by the relationship between the educational researcher and the practitioners: by the degree to which the practitioners are or become the principal researcher. In the first, *technical action research*, the researcher who facilitates the process establishes and judges the standards for improving the effectiveness of educational practice. The practitioner is mainly engaged in the process at a technical level. The second, *practical action research*, also aims to improve the effectiveness of practice but encourages the practitioner to engage more fully and self-reflectively in the research process to develop their practical understanding and professional development.

The third type, *emancipatory action research*, encourages the full participation of practitioner-as-researcher to explore critically the effectiveness of practice and its practical understanding within the social and organizational constraints that enclose practice. Improvement, here, encompasses

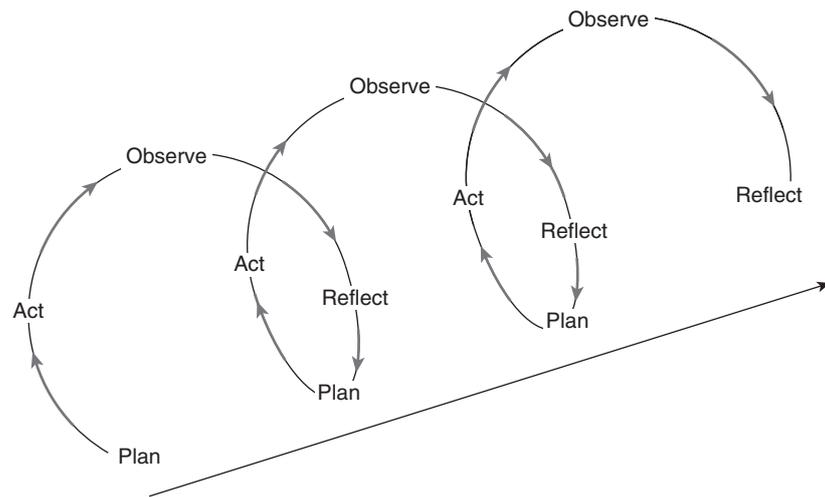


Figure 10.3

organizational enlightenment. It is characterized by a more complete engagement and critical dialogue, essential to the full realization of practice (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

Action research in this more inclusive guise is characterized by strategic action in its design, methods and realization. It consciously and deliberately sets out to improve, enhance and realize practice through actions informed, but not constrained, by research and theory. It is flexible, open to change necessitated by experience and circumstance, and it is subject to the practitioner's critical and rational practical judgements. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988: 7) describe the implementation of this strategic action as a continuous cycle of four moments:

- a plan of action to improve what is already happening;
- action to implement the plan;
- observation of the effects of the action in the context in which it is occurs; and
- reflection on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and so on, through a succession of cycles.

The implementation of action research is often presented in the form of a spiral composed of numerous iterations of this cycle (Figure 10.3). In the next section, we examine a practical way of reconstructing the ideas and methods of action research in professional realization.

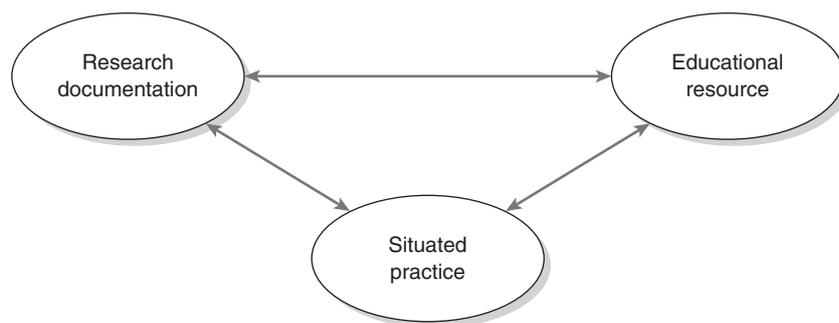


Figure 10.4

THE REFLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

The following discussion presents a tripartite framework for thinking about and engaging in action research with the aim of realizing professional practice. As a method of professional development, one of its essential outcomes is the degree to which it integrates the issues of learning apparent in research and scholarship with those of learning and teaching. It views professional development as moving beyond learning and teaching practice to embrace all academic practice (see Chapter 1) – one of the key aspects of our third paradigm of learning and teaching (see the Introduction). It is not a one-off event but, rather, an ongoing progression arising out of the unfolding developments in one's practice.

It is possible to use the general approach within a formal programme of training or to engage with it more informally. Categories of programmes might include:

- *institutional*: programme provided by an institution;
- *disciplinary*: programme provided by discipline associations;
- *peer*: programme established within parameters agreed with peers; and
- *individual*: programme individually constructed.

As the basis for action research, however, programmes require a systematic and strategically planned approach. Figure 10.4 illustrates three broad areas that such an approach would embrace: situated practice, educational resource and research documentation. We shall look at these features individually below, but it is worth briefly expanding on them here.

Teaching practice does not exist in a vacuum. It is *situated practice* and, in so far as the practitioner/researcher is researching their own practice within

their particular department and institution, both the research project and the associated research documentation will also be concretely situated and grounded in their own academic discipline(s). Development programmes and projects are not, therefore, focused on helping practitioners to compile evidence of generic skills and competencies *in vacuo*. They are aimed at helping them to identify, examine critically and develop expertise and skills in relevant practices embedded within their own discipline, department and institution.

They shall do so, of course, with respect to a broad range of *educational resources*. While these are often associated and drawn from generic or cross-disciplinary aspects of a programme, they are not regarded here as answers to teaching and learning problems so much as tools for critically reflecting on situated practice.

Finally, the realization of practice will need to proceed towards the production of *research documentation*, for the provision of evidence of professional realization, for sharing with colleagues in the best tradition of peer review and for informing and developing ongoing development. The documentation most commonly associated with programmes for the development of learning and teaching practice has mainly consisted of a portfolio of evidence related to a number of carefully selected outcomes. In the UK, many of the programmes accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) require such portfolios as providing evidence of achievement.

Such portfolios are, however, not generally explicitly regarded as a research document so much as a professional record of achievement. In the USA, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) projects often require a sharing of results through publication in peer-reviewed journals and/or presentations at peer-reviewed conferences. The approach taken here reinterprets the professional parameters of the portfolio – its outcomes, evidence, professional requirements, etc. – in research terms. In this way, the portfolio may be conceived as a research document or research report informed by situated practice and educational resource. It provides critical, practical evidence and theoretically informed analysis of those areas of teaching and learning relevant to the teacher's practice (see below for a more concrete discussion of portfolios).

Situated practice

The disciplinary situation of practice is at the heart of professional realization through action-research approaches. It provides the vital context of the practitioner's investigations and explorations. It is, ultimately, the space in which the research is embedded – where the plans are designed,

interventions constructed, methods identified and developed. Within the situation, the multiplicity of the designs, interventions and methods available needs to be understood in terms of the overall realization of the objectives of the research. These will be dependent on the general parameters of the research (e.g. national professional requirements, institutional criteria, programme objectives) as well as the initial questions and the outcomes (e.g. improving learning, teaching development and improvement, evaluation of learning and teaching).

Action research of this sort is not aiming at wide-scale generalization or application but, rather, at individual development. Essentially it employs case-study methodology in which the case is related to the researcher's own practice within their own concrete academic situation. Such cases might range, for example, from exploring a single, specific teaching innovation or specific use of course material, to broader redesigns of an entire course or curriculum. In their project-based approach to faculty development, Calkins and Light (2007b), for example, ask early career faculty to tackle a significant and professionally relevant teaching challenge, which they research and share with colleagues, and formally write up.

Case-situated action research will work with and draw from concrete categories of experience, evidence and activities, including:

- learning and teaching practices and resources, etc.;
- programme, course, module and session materials and documentation;
- relevant departmental and institutional documents;
- disciplinary and syllabus subject matter – texts, readings, techniques, etc.;
- disciplinary research and scholarship; and
- students, colleagues, mentors/advisers.

While not exhaustive categories, each offers significant research potential employing a broad range of methods and techniques of data collection and analysis. It is not possible to elaborate on the character and scope of these methods and techniques in any detail, but it is worth noting examples that might be effectively used (see also Chapter 9). These will include, for example, *document* or *textual analysis*: not only of the kind of institutional and programme/course documentation listed above but also, crucially, of student essays, papers, online discussion, project and lab reports (including drafts), etc. It may also include the systematic collection and analysis of both formative and summative written comments given to students.

Practitioners may also employ techniques and methods of observation, particularly with respect to classroom practice. This might include formal peer

observation conducted with colleagues on your and/or on your colleagues' teaching practice. It could also include planned observation of student interactions between the students, with the teacher and so on.

Interviews with students also offer an invaluable source of data for analysis, reflection and further development. These might be structured and/or semi-structured. They might aim, for example, at coming to a better understanding of student experiences and/or conceptions of learning within the practitioner's particular teaching and learning situation. They might focus on a particular aspect of learning or be used across the learning matrix.

Strategic questionnaires and *surveys* of students, including but also extending beyond standard course evaluation and/or rating instruments, might also be effectively used. The use of interviews and surveys could also extend to other members of appropriate and relevant faculty and staff members. In addition, practitioners might wish to ask students – and colleagues for that matter – to participate in exercises utilizing a range of *focus-group* techniques.

Depending on permission, time and resources, practitioners might also find methods of cognitive experimentation valuable. The point here, however, is not to elaborate the diversity of methods, techniques or instruments that can be employed fully, but to suggest the scope of the research that can be strategically and creatively employed for the improvement of practice.

Educational resource

Realizing professional practice through action research and the development of research documentation will normally need to be grounded in the learning and teaching situation of the teacher's discipline, but also drawing upon material and resources from other disciplines concerned with understanding higher education. The tension between these two is often uneven and uncomfortable, and successfully managing it becomes an indispensable ingredient to realization. It is best managed if one accepts that professional realization is not generic but disciplinary. While it draws upon a range of different sorts of educational resources – which we shall look at in a moment – it takes place for the most part in the practitioner's discipline(s). The research is disciplinary research – albeit drawing on research approaches and methods from other disciplines as well those of its own.

We shall not describe in detail the nature of the education resources available to practitioners in conducting action research. This book itself is intended as an essential resource. It is worth noting, however, the extent of the resources available for use. Three factors organize educational resource here: location, resource and activity (Table 10.1). They

Table 10.1 *Educational resources*

Location	Resource	Activity
International	Development programmes	Workshops/seminars
National	Sessions and workshops	Peer consultancy
Institutional	Educational literature	Supervising/mentoring
Departmental	Tutors/consultants	Appraisal
Programme	Fellow participants	Project groups
Course	Students	Evaluations

do not describe an exhaustive list of potential resource but, rather, constructive and useful dimensions for the design of development/improvement programmes and personal initiatives/projects undertaken within such programmes.

While sometimes located in disciplinary learning and teaching situations, the professional realization of practice frequently draws upon the support structures of institutional programmes of staff development. Such programmes normally expect participants to draw upon learning and teaching experiences and resources within the actual disciplinary teaching situation and require, for example, portfolios of evidence centred around such teaching. While the course–department–institution provide the main loci of action-research approaches to teaching development, educational resources from other locations can supplement it.

The expansion of national and international organizations for the support of learning and teaching can provide a wealth of information, materials and assistance. The HEA, for example, oversees 24 subject centres within the UK, which provide materials for practitioners focused on issues that are more discipline specific. And in the USA, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has provided disciplinary pedagogies related to the scholarship of teaching and learning (Huber and Morreale, 2002). In addition, most disciplinary societies and conferences have educational components with substantive resources available.

There are also a growing number of national and international courses, workshops and programmes focused on particular disciplines or on specific issues and/or genres of learning and teaching. They will normally provide access to the kind of educational literature and materials covered in this book as well as sessions and workshops for exploring this literature with respect to individual genres, sub-genres and/or combinations of genres. Such literature and materials will be available from a range of sources, including books, teaching materials, video, the Internet, academic and professional journals, conference papers and so on.

The provision of sessions – workshops, conferences and seminars – is not the preserve of integrated development programmes. An increasing number of organizations – regional, national and international – are providing valuable and specialized sessions outside institutional programmes. These are provided both in face-to-face modes and increasingly through distance and online education technologies. These sessions do not simply provide access to the expertise of the tutors and consultants facilitating them; they also provide invaluable access to the experience, knowledge and skills of the other participants.

The shared experience of fellow participants provides personal and social support as well as invaluable intellectual and practical help. They permit the scrutiny of one's knowledge and understanding of practical issues in a shared discipline and intellectual culture as well as the exploration of new possibilities across disciplines and other academic cultures.

Students are also a rich resource. Many will bring articulate and critically constructive accounts of their learning within and across disciplines. Practitioners will also have their own personal resources to tap, not the least of which may be their own encounters with education through children, community groups, volunteer and charity work, etc.

We have noted some of the activities – workshops, seminars, lunchtime sessions, etc. – through which resources become available but the very processes of these activities are themselves often a significant resource (Sorcinelli, 2006). Other useful activities – many of which are becoming more widespread in university staff and management processes – include mentoring activities with senior or more experienced colleagues with regard to learning and teaching within the discipline and department (Mullen and Forbes, 2000; Levy et al., 2004; Calkins and Kelley, 2005). This can be extremely useful in contextualizing teaching as well as helping to develop effective communities of shared and constructive practice.

In the same vein, peer-mentoring and consultancy activities with colleagues exploring a range of learning and teaching genres can provide a useful resource for both personal and collective action research aimed at improvement. Peer observation has, for example, become a more widespread tool for examining practice – mainly focused on classroom performance but can be extended to considerations of activities central to other genres, such as supervision, assessment, evaluation, curriculum design.

Many institutions also provide appraisal schemes for faculty, which offer another potentially rich source of evidence and data for reflection and critical analysis. Informal support groups with colleagues sharing similar concerns and issues are also a promising resource upon which to draw. While

many of these activities may be institutional or departmental, others have a much wider remit.

Finally, it should be restated that the staff development perspective emphasized here does not view these resources as ends in themselves but, rather, as means by which professional practice might be realized through strategically planned and implemented research initiatives.

Research documentation: portfolio of practice

Informed in part by Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*, higher education in the UK and the USA has increasingly emphasized portfolios of assessment to show evidence of strong teaching practice. Such evidence might include descriptions of learning intentions and activities, detailed learning outcomes and critical reflections on the part of the teacher or the students (Brockbank and McGill, 1998). Collecting this information may become even easier with the use of electronic or digital portfolios – software programs that allow teachers to enter evidence (teaching activities, reflections, etc.) for continuing reflective development (Dornan et al., 2002).

Teaching portfolios, generally, also have the virtue of allowing teachers to work at their own pace and to control what they do and display as teachers. Thus, the teacher is the learner, meaning 'the learner is in control and feels more highly valued' (Tisani, 2008). Yet, while the mechanics of putting such a portfolio together are fairly well known and described in a variety of handbooks and how-to guides, the necessary critical reflection and knowledge of basic pedagogical theory may still be lacking (Tisani, 2008).

As suggested above, the portfolio as research document goes beyond such a reflective reportage of evidence to embody the idea of critical and strategic action. It will need to incorporate into its design a strategic plan related to and embedded in the situation in which the investigation(s) will be taking place and the educational resources on which it will be drawing.

In the case of professional accreditation programmes – such as those nationally accredited in the UK by the HEA – portfolio design will need to consider and incorporate strategically requirements to show a command of a range of 'genres of practice' (Chapters 3–9). These will need to be informed by the relevant educational literature (Chapter 2) and by academic values and principles (Chapter 1). In addition, portfolios may need to meet institutional requirements such as those for appointment and promotion. This does not preclude – indeed may entail – a critique of the parameters and criteria of such programmes.

Table 10.2 *Action research cycle: illustrative activities*

Illustrative activities	Diverse examples
<i>Plan</i>	
Determine relevant research question(s)	Do my teaching methods achieve the optimum balance of learning activities?
Identify 'genres' of learning and teaching for research	Lecturing, facilitating, innovating, assessing
Design a teaching innovation	Construct a method of peer assessment
Explore and establish research methods	Interviews with staff and students, follow-up questionnaires, etc.
<i>Action</i>	
Employ strategies and methods of evaluation	Conduct interviews with students, focus groups with past students, etc.
Engage and/or test educational resources	Attend a conference or workshop on methods for assessing students' practical skills
Introduce changes, innovations	Introduce 'group activities' into a lecture context
<i>Observe</i>	
Collect/interpret empirical evidence/data	Observe student classroom responses and interpret survey of attitudes to using online materials in class
Examine and interpret educational resources	Conduct a statistical analysis on student questionnaires concerning their motivation in a particular course
Map evidence to relevant areas of practice	Map research evidence on course design to a particular course in a subject discipline
<i>Reflect</i>	
Critically analyse outcomes	Critically analyse grade and exam data on the impact of using problem-based curriculum design in a single course
Draw conclusions	Draw conclusions and evaluate the implications of the survey data looking at the provision of feedback on student assignments online
Develop new plans/strategies	Modify and extend a new design for the evaluation of the impact of one's lecturing on learning to other courses

The portfolio is, nevertheless, a research document providing evidence of the process and results of personal scholarship and empirical research into teaching and learning practice. In this respect, it requires identification of relevant research questions and methods, the appropriate discovery, development and generation of a variety of evidence of personal practice and the critical analysis, assessment and presentation of this evidence within a substantive theoretical context. It calls for the practical development of reflective skills of self-assessment and self-evaluation. It will, ideally, be characterized by a form of the action research cycle of plan-action-observe-reflect described above. Such a cycle might include the kinds of activities as given in Table 10.2.

The presentation of portfolios will require a scholarly format, including appropriate table of contents, referencing, bibliography, relevant appendices, accuracy of presentation and so on. Indeed, the overlap of research and teaching practices might, as noted above, extend to academic publication.

The results of the action research supporting professional development may also be written up for publication in appropriate academic and professional journals. As well as contributing to the research and scholarship of teaching, it may have the added benefit, in some cases, of furthering professional careers. The general publication of personal or collective action research on issues of learning and teaching in one's discipline(s) as a commonplace activity for faculty would go some distance towards integrating academic practices.

On the other hand, we must sound a note of caution. Publication confining itself to the research results can distort the professional developmental nature of the research. As Donald Kennedy, the past president of Stanford suggests, writing 'in a portfolio devoted to forms of scholarship related to teaching [is]... scholarship beyond that reported in peer reviewed journals' (1997: 65).

CONCLUSION

It is important to recall at this point that the main idea that has been driving this book forward is that of a 'professional language of practice'. The realization of this language is critically inter-related with the two other aspects of the language that we have been examining throughout the book: its overall conceptual framework (Chapters 1 and 2) and its main genres (Chapters 3-9). Fluency in the language and practice is characterised by a reflective use of the practical skills, informed by an appropriate professional knowledge, a critical understanding of the relevant conceptual frameworks and a command of the key teaching genres.

In many ways, however, the themes and content of this chapter must remain incomplete. This is due, in great part, to the critical 'openness' that must inevitably characterize realization. Realization must sustain this 'openness' with respect to its creative potential but also with respect to the diversity, multiplicity, complexity and uncertainty of the students, the university and the future with which it must continually and fully engage. It is also due to the prevailing way in which the university is primarily understood: as contrasting practices, research and teaching, and not as unifying goal, knowledge and learning (Chapter 1).

Ultimately, the realization of reflective practice is grounded in the realization of student learning. The goal of ‘teaching-as-research’ is legitimated only in so far as that research explores and documents theoretical, empirical and methodological advances in the development of student learning at the ‘cutting edge’ (Chapter 1) and/or documents actual results of the development of student learning at the ‘cutting edge’. The former describes ‘teaching-as-research’ in terms of more traditional forms of faculty learning, research and scholarship (SOTL), while the latter characterizes teaching-as-research in terms of building research capacity through the learning of one’s students. In the latter formulation, the teacher’s research resides in the research capacities developed by their students and is, or should be recognized as, a critical part of the academic’s contribution to the university’s research mission. Such recognition requires new forms of documentation for which the kinds of portfolio of evidence described above provide a solid foundation. The implications of the latter formulation, however, are even more radical, raising the opportunity for a thorough rethinking and integration of research and teaching through the central idea of learning.