

Investigating the life and work of teachers

Ivor F. Goodson^{a1}

^a University of Brighton, Education Research Centre

The teacher's life and work

Work on teachers' lives has grown exponentially in the last 50 years. As moves to restructure schooling and education have increased, so too have studies on the impact of these changes, or on the teacher's life world. This work allows us to concentrate on some of the complexities and contradictions at the heart of many new school reform initiatives.

Studies of teachers' life and work have increased and improved in recent decades. Writing in 1975, at the end of what Hobsbawm has called a 'golden age' for Western society (Hobsbawm, 1994) and Lortie (1975) summarized the relationship between teachers and educational research studies in the US. Whilst these were very different economic and social times, his judgement stands up well today:

Schooling is long on prescription, short on description. That is nowhere more evident than in the case of the two million persons who teach in the public schools. It is widely conceded that the core transactions of formal education take place where teachers and students meet. ... But although books and articles instructing teachers on how they should behave are legion, empirical studies of teaching work-and the outlook of those who staff the schools – remain rare.
(p. vii)

In general, the point that Lortie makes has continued to be in force in the research discourse as related to teachers with a good deal of prescription and implicit portrayal but very little serious study of, or collaboration with, those prescribed to or portrayed. However, whilst there is continuity, there

¹ Education Research Centre, University of Brighton, Falmer, Brighton;
i.f.goodson@brighton.ac.uk

is also change over time which exists at the intersection of the educational enterprise with social, political and economic history.

A decade after Lortie, in the book *Teachers' Lives and Careers*, Ball and I (writing in 1985) argued that British research on teachers had moved through a number of contemporary phases in the last forty years from the beginning of this period, in the 1960s,

... teachers were shadowy figures on the educational landscape mainly known, or unknown, through large scale surveys or historical analyses of their position in society, the key concept in approaching the practice of the teaching was that of role. (Ball & Goodson, 1985, p. 6)

Thus, in that decade in most research studies, teachers were present in aggregate through imprecise statistics or were viewed as individuals and only as formal role incumbents, mechanistically and unproblematically responding to the powerful expectations of their set role.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s new approaches were well underway which sought to address some of the limitations of these paradigms. Case study researchers began to scrutinize schooling as a social process, focussing their work on the manner through which school pupils were 'processed.' The sympathies of the researchers lay primarily with the pupils and working class and female pupils in particular, who were the 'under dogs' in the classroom. Teachers were the 'villains of the piece' (Ball & Goodson, 1985, p. 7). By the 1980s we saw a further shift where attention began to be directed 'to the constraints within which teachers work Teachers were transformed from villains to 'victims' and in some cases, 'dupes' of the system within which they were required to operate' (p. 7).

Crucially in terms of the orientation of this article, the latter characterization of teachers opened up the question of 'how teachers saw their work and their lives.' Writing in 1981, I argued that researchers had not confronted the complexity of the school teacher as an active agent making his or her own history.

Researchers, even when they had stopped treating the teacher as a numerical aggregate, historical footnote, or unproblematic role incumbent, still treated teachers as interchangeable types unchanged by circumstance or time. As a result new research methods were needed:

The pursuit of personal and biographical data might rapidly challenge the assumption of interchangeability. Likewise, by tracing the teacher's life as it evolved over time - throughout the teacher's career

and through several generations - the assumption of timelessness might also be remedied. *In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching it is critical we know about the person the teacher is.* Our paucity of knowledge in this area is a manifest indictment of the range of our sociological imagination. The life historian pursues the job from his (sic) own perspective, a perspective which emphasizes the value of the person's 'own story.' (Goodson, 1981, p. 69)

Unfortunately, whilst studies of teachers lives and careers now began to be more generally pursued in the educational research community, political and economic changes were moving sharply in the opposite direction, and this was reflected in the kind of studies undertaken. The development of patterns of political and administrative control over teachers became enormous in the 1980s and 1990s. In terms of power and visibility in many ways this represents 'a return to the shadows' for teachers who face new curriculum guidelines (in some countries like New Zealand and Britain, an all-encompassing national curriculum), teacher assessment and accountability, a barrage of new policy edicts, and new patterns of school governance and administration.

New directions for studying: the life and work of teaching

The work by qualitative researchers suggests innovative and interesting ways to address the goal of understanding teachers' *personal practical knowledge* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1989). The addition of the personal aspect in this formulation is a positive development, hinting as it does at the importance of biographical and personal perspectives. Other traditions have focussed on the reflective practitioner, on teachers as researchers of their own practice, and on phenomenological approaches to practice. Personal experiences thus are linked irrevocably to practice. It is as if the teacher *is* her or his practice. For teacher educators, such specificity of focus is understandable, but broader perspectives might achieve even more, not solely in terms of understandings, but ultimately in ways that feed back into changes in practical knowledge, public policy, and intimately broader theoretical understandings.

There are similar reservations about the 'reflective teacher' or the 'teacher as a researcher' mode of teacher education. The 'teacher as researcher' approach suggests a number of problems. Stressing that the teacher becomes the researcher of his or her own practice appears to free the researcher in the academy from a clear responsibility in this process. But in my view,

such researchers have a primary but somewhat neglected responsibility for sponsoring and sustaining the teacher as researcher. Hence, new traditions are developing which oppose the notion that the focus of the teacher as researcher should be mainly upon practice. In some ways, this focus on practice is the logical outcome of the 'teacher as researcher,' for its converse is the 'researcher as teacher.'

The work of teachers is politically and socially constructed. The parameters of what constitutes practice, whether biographical or political, range over a wide terrain. To narrow the focus to 'practice as defined' is to make the focus of research a victim of historical circumstances, particularly political forces. In many ways, 'the forces of the market,' as articulated by the politicians of the New Right, is seeking to turn the teacher's practice into that of a technician, a routinised and trivialized deliverer of a pre-designed package. To accept those definitions and to focus on 'practice' so defined is tantamount to accepting this ideology. By focussing on practice in a narrow way, the initiative for defining the research agenda passes to politicians and bureaucrats. Far more autonomous and critical research will be generated if the research community adopts wider lenses of inquiry for the teacher as researcher. We need then to move well beyond the grasp of what I have called elsewhere the 'practical fundamentalists' (Goodson, 1995b, p. 145).

The traditions that seek to broaden the focus of work with teachers ranges from life history and biographical studies (Goodson 1981, 1988, 1992; Goodson & Walker, 1991), to collaborative biography (Butt, Raymond, McCue, & Yamagishi, 1992), to teacher's professional and micro political knowledge (Goodson & Cole, 1993; Russell & Munby, 1992), and through a wide range of interesting and innovative feminist work (Acker, 1989, 1994; Delhi, 1994; Smith, 1990). This work seeks to broaden the focus of teacher education and development to include the social and political, the contextual, and the collective.

In particular, life history studies seek to broaden the focus of work with teachers. This work takes the 'teacher as researcher' and 'action research' modes as valuable entry points, but it moves to broaden the immediate focus on practice and on individual classrooms. Life history work is *par excellence* qualitative work. The pioneering work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) and other proponents at the Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s is part of the qualitative legacy. Subsequent work, notably by Dollard (1949) and Klockars (1975) has continued the tradition of American scholarship. In Britain, the work of Paul Thompson (1988) and his use of life histories to study aging has continued to rehabilitate and develop the life history tradition.

In teacher education and teacher development, much pioneering work has been undertaken. The work of Sikes, Measor, and Woods (1985) is helpful in developing our understanding of teachers' careers, as is the study, *Teachers Lives and Careers* (Ball & Goodson, 1985). More recent work focusses on new changes to teachers' professional lives (Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996). New reform initiatives are scrutinised in the book *Professional Knowledge, Professional Lives*, 2003.

Lawn (1990) has written powerfully about teachers' biographies and of how teachers' work has been rapidly restructured in England and Wales. The teacher, he argues, has moved from 'moral responsibility' - particularly with regard to curricular matters - to a narrow technical competence. Teaching in short has had its area of moral and professional judgment severely reduced and he summarizes recent changes in this way:

In the biographies of many teachers is an experience of, and an expectation of, curriculum responsibility not as part of a job description, a task, but as part of the moral craft of teaching, the real duty. The post-war tradition of gradual involvement in curriculum responsibility at primary and second level was the result of the wartime breakdown of education, the welfare aspects of schooling and the post-war reconstruction in which teachers played a pivotal, democratic role. The role of teaching expanded as the teachers expanded the role. In its ideological form within this period, professional autonomy was created as an idea. As the post-war consensus finally collapsed and corporatism was demolished by Thatcherism, teaching was again to be reduced, shorn of its involvement in policy and managed more tightly. Teaching is to be reduced to 'skills,' attending planning meetings, supervising others, preparing courses and reviewing the curriculum. It is to be 'managed' to be more 'effective.' In effect the intention is to depoliticize teaching and to turn the teacher into an educational worker. Curriculum responsibility now means supervising competencies. (p. 389)

Likewise Susan Robertson (1993) has analysed teachers' work in the context of post-Fordist economies (see also Robertson, 2000, for a more extended analysis). She argues that again the teachers' professionalism has been drastically reconstructed and replaced by a wholly 'new professionalism.'

The new professionalism framework is one where the teacher as worker is integrated into a system where there is

- (i) no room to negotiate,

- (ii) reduced room for autonomy, and
- (iii) the commodity value of flexible specialism defines the very nature of the task.

In essence, teachers have been severed from those processes which would involve them in deliberations about the future shape of their work. And while many teachers are aware that change is taking place and talk of the 'good old days,' few are aware of the potential profundity of that change even when it is happening in their midst. Clearly educators have been eclipsed by a core of interests from the corporate sector and selected interests co-opted in the corporate settlement. (Robertson, 1993)

These major restructurings of the work and life of teachers highlight the limitations of those methods which focus on the practical and personal worlds of teachers. Teachers' personal and practical reminiscences and commentaries relate to their work and practice. So such data in the new domain described by Lawn and Robertson will be primarily about work where moral and professional judgement plays less and less of a role. By focussing on the personal and practical, teacher data and stories are encouraged which forgo the chance to speak of other ways, other people, other times, and other forms of being a teacher. The focus of research methods solely on the personal and practical is then an abdication of the right to speak on matters of social and political construction. By speaking in this voice about personal and practical matters, the researcher and teacher both lose a voice at the moment of speaking. For the voice that has been encouraged and granted space in the public domain, in the realm of personal and practical, is the voice of technical competency, the voice of the isolated classroom practitioner, the voice of the worker whose work has been restructured and reconstructed.

In studying the teacher's life and work in a fuller social context, the intention is to develop insights, often in a grounded and collaborative manner, into the social construction of teaching. In this way, teachers' stories of action can be reconnected with 'histories of context.' Hence teacher stories, rather than passively celebrating the continual reconstruction of teaching, will move to develop understandings of social and political construction. It is a move from commentary on what *is* to cognition of what *might be*.

Studying the teacher's life and work as social construction provides a valuable lens for viewing the new moves to restructure and reform schooling. Butt et al. (1992) have talked about the 'crisis of reform' when so much of the restructuring and reformist initiatives depend on prescriptions imported into the classroom but developed as political imperatives elsewhere. These

patterns of intervention develop from a particular view of the teacher, a view which practical genres of study often work to confirm.

All their lives teachers have to confront the negative stereotypes 'teacher as robot, devil, angel, nervous Nellie' - foisted upon them by the American culture. Descriptions of teaching as a 'flat occupation with no career structure, low pay, salary increments unrelated to merit' have been paralleled with portrayals of teaching as 'one great plateau' where 'it appears that the annual cycle of the school year lulls teachers into a repetitious professional cycle of their own.'

Within the educational community, the image of teachers as semi-professionals who lack control and autonomy over their own work and as persons who do not contribute to the creation of knowledge has permeated and congealed the whole educational enterprise. Researchers have torn the teacher out of the context of classroom, plagued her with various insidious effects (Hawthorne, novelty, Rosenthal, halo), parcelled out into discrete skills the unity of intention and action present in teaching practices. (p. 55)

In some ways the crisis of reform is a crisis of prescriptive optimism – a belief that what is politically pronounced and backed with armouries of accountability tests will actually happen (see later). But the data which will challenge these simplifications (data rooted in the teacher's life and work) will have to move beyond the currently popular 'practical' viewpoints to develop a broader counter-culture of commentary.

Developing a counter-culture: rationales for studying the teacher's life and work

The project of analysing the teacher's life and work grows from a belief that there is a need for a counter culture which will resist the tendency common in research studies to leave teachers 'in the shadows.' This counter culture could arise from a research mode that places the study of teachers and the sponsorship of 'teachers' voices' at the centre of the research action.

The proposal I am recommending is essentially one of reconceptualising educational research so as to assure that the teacher's voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately. (Goodson, 1991, p. 36)

Of course the sponsorship of teacher voices is a somewhat pious incantation and can be a perilous one if too selectively appropriated and employed. Hargreaves (1994 and 1996) has cogently inveighed against the dangers of researchers choosing teacher voices that they are sympathetic with and silencing other voices. This is always, of course, a danger in research and nowhere more so than with a research modality that seeks to empower other voices. Nonetheless, the argument of Butt et al. (1992) carries the important aspiration of employing teachers' voices so that the danger of selectivity and appropriation can be faced:

The notion of the teacher's voice is important in that it carries the tone, the language, the quality, the feelings, that are conveyed by the way a teacher speaks or writes. In a political sense the notion of the teacher's voice addresses the right to speak and be represented. It can represent both the unique individual and the collective voice; one that is characteristic of teachers as compared to other groups. (p. 57)

The important point in this quote is the counter-cultural potential of teachers' knowledge standing against the grain of power and knowledge as held, produced, and promulgated by the politicians and administrators who control the educational systems.

Whilst it may seem to some that the current dominance of the New Right provides an unhealthy climate, and indeed seems unlikely to provide support for long-subordinated voices, on the other side, the postmodernist movement provides a series of supports for such development. Carol Gilligan's excellent work, *In a Different Voice*, shows the power of representing the voices of women previously unheard. Above all, new post-modern syntagmas sponsor 'the idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate' (Harvey, 1989, p. 48).

As well as the general sponsorship of teachers' voices, there are a number of specific rationales for studying the teacher's life and work. Firstly, these kinds of studies provide a wide range of insights into the new moves to restructure and reform schooling. These new initiatives have been widely promoted, but they have seldom been viewed through the lens of the teacher's life and work. From this point of view, it is often meaningful to talk about a crisis of reform – or more specifically a crisis of prescription – for the new reforms and prescriptions often work, against the history and context of the teacher's life and work and by not listening to these concerns, new crises are generated. I have recently examined the salience of the belief in curriculum

as prescription, but these comments could so easily be generalized into a more serious concern about new reform initiatives.

Curriculum as prescription (CAP) supports the mystique that expertise and control reside within central governments, educational bureaucracies or the university community. Providing nobody exposes this mystique, the two words of 'prescriptive rhetoric' and 'schooling as practice' can co-exist. Both sides benefit from such peaceful coexistence. The agencies of CAP are seen to be 'in control' and the schools are seen to be 'delivering' (and can carve out a good degree of autonomy if they accept the rules).

However there is a substantial downside to this 'historic compromise' which has a vital implication for the questions associated with teachers' voices.

There are costs of complicity in accepting the myth of prescription: above all these involve, in various ways, acceptance of established modes of power relations. Perhaps most importantly the people intimately connected with the day-to-day social construction of curriculum and schooling – teachers – are thereby effectively disenfranchised in the 'discourse of schooling.' To continue to exist, teachers' day-to-day power must remain unspoken and unrecorded. This is one price of complicity: day-to-day power and autonomy for schools and for teachers are dependent on continuing to accept the fundamental lie. (Goodson, 1990, p. 300)

In addressing the crisis of prescription and reform, it becomes imperative that we find new ways to sponsor teachers' voices.

As a generative example, Casey's (1992) work provides an illustration of studying teachers' lives to understand the much discussed question of 'teacher drop-out.' She notes that a certain set of taken-for-granted assumptions control the way in which the problem of teacher attrition has normally been defined – one which presumes managerial solutions – and how the language confirms this direction by referring to 'teacher defection,' 'teacher turnover,' and 'supply and demand.' Hence, the question of teacher dropout is pushed into certain investigative cul-de-sacs through both the taken-for-granted assumptions and the linguistic phrasing which helps constitute the problem.

This capacity to direct investigations in particular directions and in ways that underpin managerialism and prescription is often confirmed by the research methods employed within the academy. Casey, for example, finds

that former members of the teaching profession have often been traced statistically, rather than in person, and that information has typically been collected from sources such as district files, state departments of public instruction, or through researcher-conceived surveys. These strategies often work with the grain of power and knowledge as held by managers and the elites which surround the educational systems. Casey argues that,

the particular configuration of selectivities and omissions which has been built into this research frame slants the shape of its findings. By systematically failing to record the voices of ordinary teachers, the literature on educators' careers actually silences them. Methodologically, this means that even while investigating an issue where decision making is paramount, researchers speculate on teachers' motivations, or at best, survey them with a set of forced-choice options. Theoretically, what emerges is an instrumental view of teachers, one in which they are reduced to objects which can be manipulated for particular ends.

Politically, the results are educational policies constructed around institutionally convenient systems of rewards and punishments, rather than in congruence with teachers' desires to create significance in their lives. (Casey, 1992, p. 188)

Thus, a vital importance of teachers' voices and testimonies is that they expose the shallowness, not to say falsify, the managerial, prescriptive view of schooling. Hence, it is simple to see why it is that teachers' voices have been so long suppressed and in whose interests some academics have embraced certain research modes.

Secondly, another rationale for studying the life and work of teaching relates to the literature on teacher socialization. A major research theme in this literature has designated the period of pre-service teaching training and early phases of in-service training as the most formative socializing influence in the life and work of teaching. However, an alternative research tradition has insisted with accelerating force that the matter is far more complex. Many studies in the 1970s through to the 1990s have focused on teachers' own experiences as pupils.

Such early experiences are seen not only as important as the training periods but, in many cases, far more important. Dan Lortie (1975) has referred to this pupil period as an 'apprenticeship of observation' with teachers' observation and internalization of many future role possibilities. Teacher socialization in this manner occurs through the observation and

internalization of particular models of teaching experienced as the recipient people. Dan Lortie argues that these models, what he calls 'latent models,' are activated, not implanted, during the training period having often been 'carried in suspension,' so to speak, through the interim period of time. To explore seriously this alternative view of teacher socialization requires that we do more life history work covering the pattern of socialization of teachers over the full span of their life and work in teaching.

Yet another vital reason for studying the life and work of teaching arises from feminist studies, most particularly the exciting work of Acker and Middleton. Their work and other feminist studies provide vital and insightful studies into teaching as a gendered profession (Acker, 1989, 1994; Middleton, 1992). Other specific studies have pursued the issue of women's life and work in teaching: for instance, Margaret Nelson's (1992) attempt to reconstruct the work experiences of women teachers in Vermont in the early twentieth century is a particularly important indication of the life history approach to studying the teacher's life and work. She notes:

Numerous studies have shown that there is a gap between what we can discover when we rely on published accounts of some historical event and what we can discover when we ask questions of the on-site participants of those same events. This gap looms larger when we are looking at women's history because of the private nature of so much of women's lives. (Nelson, 1992, p. 168)

She adds later, 'Public history often ignores minority views. But women's lives are further hidden because important information is overlooked, consciously avoided, or distorted' (Nelson, 1992, p. 185).

Sue Middleton has cogently argued that 'writing one's autobiography becomes, in this framework, in part a process of deconstructing the discursive practices through which one's subjectivity has been constituted' (Middleton, 1992, p. 20). In this sense, her argument leads into a further rationale for studying the life and work of teaching, which in a sense is associated with the earlier section about managerialism and prescription. Our studies of the life and work of teaching should help produce a wider range of teacher-centred professional knowledge. I have pursued this argument at length elsewhere but, put briefly, the issue is how to develop a modality of educational research which speaks both of, and to, the teacher (Goodson, 1991, 1992, Goodson and Sikes 2001, Goodson 2005). To move our educational research study in this direction we will require a major upheaval and reconceptualising of educational research paradigms. However, the

emerging work in a range of genres from teacher thinking through to teacher journaling the teacher's professional knowledge, as well as the emerging corpus of work on reflective practitioners and action research, is a solid starting point for a newly reconceptualized mode of educational research, as well as a basis for a new form of teacher professionalism (see Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996).

Studying teachers' lives and careers

Studies of the teacher's life and work develop structural insights which locate the teacher's life within the deeply structured and embedded environments of schooling. The arguments for employing data on teachers' lives are substantial, but given the predominance of existing paradigms should be spelt out:

In the research on schools in which I have been involved – covering a wide range of different research foci and conceptual matrixes – the consistency² of teachers talking about their own lives in the process of explaining their policies and practices has been striking. Were this only a personal observation it would be worthless, but again and again in talking to other researchers they have echoed their point. To give one example, David Hargreaves (Hargreaves, Hester, & Mellor, 1975), in researching for *Deviance in Classrooms*, noted that again and again teachers had imported autobiographical comments into their explanations. He was much concerned in retrospect by the speed with which such data had been excised when writing up the research. The assumption, very much the conventional wisdom, was that such data was too 'personal', too 'idiosyncratic', too 'soft' for a fully-fledged piece of social science research. (Goodson, 1981)

Of course in the first instance (and in some cases the last instance) it is true that personal data can be irrelevant, eccentric, and essentially redundant. But the point that needs to be grasped is that these features are not the inevitable corollary of that which is personal. Moreover that which is personal at the point of collection may not remain personal. After all a good deal of social science is concerned with the collection of a range of often personal

² The question of whether to use 'the teacher's voice' as a generic category or 'teachers' voices' is of more than semantic import. For any voice is multi-faceted whilst singularly embodied and embedded.

insights and events and the elucidation of more collective and generalizable profferings and processes.

The respect for the autobiographical, for 'the life,' is but one side of a concern to elicit the teachers' voice. In some senses, like other forms of good ethnographic investigation, this form of qualitative educational research is concerned to listen to what the teacher says and to respect and deal seriously with that data which the teacher imports into accounts. This, then, inverts the balance of proof. Conventionally those data which do not service the researcher's interests and foci are junked. In this model, the data the teacher provides has a more sacred property and is only dispensed with after painstaking proof of irrelevance and redundancy.

Listening to the teacher's voice should teach us that the autobiographic, 'the life,' is of substantial concern when teachers talk of their work. And at a commonsensical level, I find this essentially unsurprising. What I do find surprising, if not frankly unconscionable, is that for so long some researchers have ruled this part of the teacher's account out as irrelevant data.

Life experiences and background are obviously key ingredients of the person that we are, of our sense of self. To the degree that we invest our 'self' in our teaching, experience and background therefore shape our practice.

A common feature in many teachers' accounts of their background is the appearance of a favourite teacher who substantially influenced the person as a young school pupil. Such teachers often report that 'it was this person who first sold me on teaching' or that 'I was sitting in her classroom when I first decided I wanted to be a teacher.' In short, such people provide a 'role model' and presumably influence the subsequent vision of desirable pedagogy as well as possible choice of subject specialism.

Many other ingredients of background are important in the teacher's life and practice. An upbringing in a working class environment may, for instance, provide valuable insights and experience when teaching pupils from a similar background. I once observed a teacher with a working class background teach a class of comprehensive pupils in a school in the East End of London. He taught using the local cockney vernacular, and his affinity was a quite startling aspect of his success as a teacher. In my interview I spoke about his affinity, and he noted that it was 'coz I come from round 'ere, don't I?' Background and life experience were, then, a major aspect of his practice. But so they would be in the case of middle class teachers teaching children from the working class or teachers of working class origins teaching middle class children. Background is an important ingredient in the dynamic of practice (see Lortie, 1975).

Of course, whilst class, gender, and ethnicity are but part of the larger picture, teachers' backgrounds and life experiences are idiosyncratic, unique, and must be explored therefore in their full complexity. Treatment of gender issues has often been historically inadequate (see Sikes et al, 1985). Other work is more encouraging – see Nelson (1992), Smith (1990), Casey (1992), and Middleton (1992).

The teacher's *life style*, both in and outside school, his or her latent identities and cultures, impact on views of teaching and on practice. Becker and Geer's (1971) work on latent identities and cultures provide a valuable theoretical basis.

Life style is of course often a characteristic element in certain cohorts; for instance, work on the generation of 1960s teachers would be of great value in studying professionals who came in with profound and particular commitments to education as a vehicle for social change and social justice. In a recent study of a teacher focussing on his life style, Walker and I stated:

How the connections between youth culture and the curriculum reform movement of the sixties is more complex than we first thought. For Ron Fisher there definitely is a connection, he identifies strongly with youth culture and feels that to be important in his teaching. But despite his attraction to rock music and teenage life styles it is the school he has become committed to, almost against his own sense of direction. Involvement in innovation, for Ron at least, is not simply a question of technical involvement, but touches significant facets of his personal identity. This raises the question for the curriculum developer, what would a project look like if it explicitly set out to change the teachers rather than the curriculum? How would you design a project to appeal to the teacher-as-person rather than to the teacher-as-educator? What would be the effects and consequences of implementing such a design? (Goodson & Walker, 1991, p. 145)

This I think shows how work in this area begins to force a reconceptualization of models of teacher development. We move in short from the teacher-as practice to the teacher-as-person as our starting point for development.

The teachers' *life cycle* is an important aspect of professional life and development. This is a unique feature of teaching. For the teacher essentially confronts 'ageless' cohorts. This intensifies the importance of the life cycle for perceptions and practices.

Focus on the *life cycle* will generate insights into many of the unique elements of teaching. Indeed so unique a characteristic would seem an obvious starting point for reflection about the teachers' world. Yet our research paradigms face so frankly in other directions that there has been little work to date in this area.

Fortunately work in other areas provides a very valuable framework. Some of Gail Sheehy's somewhat populist work in *Passages* (1976), *Pathfinders* (1981) and *New Passages* (1995) is I think important. So also is the research work on which some of her publications are based carried out by Levinson. His work, whilst regrettably focussed only on men, does provide some generative insights into how our perspectives at particular stages in our life crucially affect our professional work. (For women's lives see new work published by Levinson, 1996.)

Take for instance the case study of John Barnes, a university biologist. Levinson is writing about his 'dream' of himself as a front-rank prize-winning biological researcher:

Barnes's Dream assumed greater urgency as he approached 40. He believed that most creative work in science is done before then. A conversation with his father's lifelong friend around this time made a lasting impression on him. The older man confided that he had by now accepted his failure to become a 'legal star' and was content to be a competent and respected tax lawyer. He had decided that stardom is not synonymous with the good life; it was 'perfectly all right to be second best.' At the time, however, Barnes was not ready to scale down his own ambition. Instead, he decided to give up the chairmanship and devote himself fully to his research.

He stepped down from the chairmanship as he approached 41, and his project moved into its final phase. This was a crucial time for him, the culmination of years of striving. For several months, one distraction after another claimed his attention and heightened the suspense. He became the father of a little boy, and that same week was offered a prestigious chair at Yale. Flattered and excited, he felt that this was his 'last chance for a big offer.' But in the end Barnes said no. He found that he could not make a change at this stage of his work. Also, their ties to family and friends, and their love of place, were now of much greater importance to him and Ann. She said: 'The kudos almost got him, but now we are both glad we stayed.' (Levinson, 1979, p. 267)

This quotation I think shows how definitions of our professional location and of our career direction can only be arrived at by detailed understanding of people's lives. Studies of professional life and patterns of professional development must address these dimensions of the personal.

Likewise, *career stages* and *career decisions* can be analysed in their own right. Work on teachers' lives and careers is increasingly commanding attention in professional development workshops and courses. For instance, the Open University in England now uses our *Teachers Lives and Careers* (Ball & Goodson, 1985) book as one of its course set book. This is a small indication yet symptomatic of important changes in the way that professional courses are being reorganized to allow concentration on the perspective of teachers' careers.

Besides the selection of career studies in *Teachers Lives and Careers*, a range of new research is beginning to examine this neglected aspect of teachers' professional lives. The work of Sikes et al., (1985) has provided valuable new insights into how teachers construct and view their careers in teaching. More recent work on women's lifestyles to add to earlier work on men's life stages will help new studies in this area (see Levinson, 1979, 1996).

Moreover, work on teachers' careers points to the fact that there are *critical incidents* in teacher's lives and specifically in their work which may crucially affect perception and practice. Certainly work on beginning teachers has pointed to the importance of certain incidents in moulding teachers' styles and practices (see Lortie, 1975).

Other work on critical incidents in teachers' lives can confront important themes contextualised within a full life perspective. David Tripp's (1994) recent work provides a range of elegant examples of critical incident studies. Also, Kathleen Casey has employed 'life history narratives' to understand the phenomenon of teacher drop-out, specifically female and activist teacher dropout (Casey, 1988, 1992; Casey & Apple, 1989). Her work helps to understand this phenomenon which is currently receiving a great deal of essentially uncritical attention given the problem of teacher shortages. Yet few of the countries at the hard edge of teacher shortages have bothered to fund serious study of teachers' lives to examine and extend our understanding of the phenomenon of teacher drop-outs.

Likewise with many other major themes in teachers' work. The question of teacher stress and burn-out would, I believe, be best studied through life history perspectives. Similarly the issue of effective teaching and the question of the take-up innovations and new managerial initiatives. Above all, in the study of teachers' working conditions, this approach has a great deal to offer.

Studies of teachers' lives might allow us to see the individual in relation to the history of her or his time, allowing us to view the intersection of the life history with the history of society thus illuminating the choices, contingencies, and options open to the individual. 'Life histories' of schools, subjects, and the teaching profession would provide vital contextual background in this respect. The initial focus on teachers' lives, therefore, would reconceptualise our studies of schooling and curriculum in quite basic ways (see Goodson, 1991, 1995a, 2014).

These different approaches to studying teachers' lives may seem too linear and logical for some current post-modern fashions. They might then be attacked from one of the more fashionable post-modern positions for their desire to provide coherence and closure to disparate and diverse lives in teaching. Such fashionable post-modernisms flow easily from the pens of some academics who study teachers, especially those who have never taught in school. But such persons look in the wrong place for the 'closure' of teachers' lives – our academic discourses are not the main place that closure takes place, much as we might want to believe in their centrality.

Teachers' lives are subject to degrees of closure because they take place in one of the most historically circumscribed of social spaces. Schools are subject to a battery of government regulations, edicts, tests, accountabilities, and assessments – these provide parameters for the actions of teachers. Further, teachers are subject to systematic and invasive socialization during their education as well as pre-service and in-service training. The circumscription of space and the systemic nature of socialization are what predominantly 'frame' and 'close' teachers' lives.

These changes in the 'spaces' of teachers' lives are much affected by political and economic change. The new study to be conducted at the University of Tallinn in Estonia will focus on the effects of the transition from communism to free markets as it affects teachers' life and work.

So to follow post-modern fashion and see teachers as having 'selves' that are free-floating and multiple, subject to constant flux and change, ignores the circumscribed spaces and socialized trajectories of teachers' lives. Strategies for self-formation therefore take place in juxtaposition to the institutionalized and socialized practices of schooling. By focussing our study on the teacher's life and work in such closely patrolled institutional arenas, the intention, far from seeking academic closure, is on the contrary to create space for reflexivity. Such work aims to develop strategies for teachers to scrutinize and analyse their world of work – their lives in teaching – in ways that offer as flexible and informed a response to the socially constructed world of schooling as is possible.

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