Editorial

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Published online: 28 January 2011
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Advanced evaluation tools and techniques can never replace professional judgments! So concludes Guri Skedsmo's opening paper from Norway. Evaluation tools and techniques are very much the stuff of this journal and in each of the papers presented here tools, toolboxes, instruments and their uses (and misuses) loom large. On what then does professional judgment rest? What do teachers, school leaders, and indeed students, need to evaluate learning, teaching and the values that going to school adds to the lives of those parties all pursuing a common goal?

Guri Skedsmo's paper draws on background study for her doctoral dissertation examining some of the tensions and paradoxes in the interface of national policy and classroom practice. These are characterized as the *context of formulation*, and the *context of practice*, and the *context of realization*. How to distinguish between the use of assessment and evaluation's internal formative purposes and the use of the same, or similar, instruments for external control and legitimization?

The context for the discussion in this paper is the introduction of the national evaluation system in Norway, a shift in educational policy from the use of input oriented policy instruments towards a more output oriented policy. The tools described in this paper are tailored to the needs of policy makers who, in common with other countries, caught up in the comparative OECD and PISA concourse, demand measured attainment outcomes to inform monitoring and political decision making. The way in which purposes of the evaluation tools are formulated means that the national evaluation system does not, in terms of providing as well as using information, differentiate sufficiently between the needs of the individual student and the needs of the system.

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The essential question this raises is whether the nature of data on student performance provides adequate grounds for policy making or for improving worthwhile educational outcomes. These evaluations do not, it is argued, provide objective data, but implicitly attach value to statistics, which do not speak for themselves and so deserve close professional scrutiny, unpacking, problematisation and discussion. So the role of professional perspectives in the processes of analysing and interpreting evaluation results, together with judgments related to implications for policy and practice, are brought sharply into focus.

Professional judgment does not come within the genes but presupposes an informed and rigorous professional cadre of knowledge and skills. But do current teacher preparation programs equip teachers with the kind of knowledge and skills that help them to function well in the real world of classrooms and as colleagues in schools policy and development? Policy makers in many countries, together with student teachers and teachers themselves would be inclined to give a less than encouraging response. Bahous and Nabani, however, provide a more encouraging narrative. Writing in the Lebanon context they report on a study of a pre-service education program at a private university in Lebanon. Questionnaires, pre and post surveys, and reflective journals were used to analyze perceptions of what it means to be an effective teacher. Administering these before and after training helped to track the developments in thinking of 55 student-teachers enrolled in senior practicum classes during the scholastic year when the study was conducted. This was complemented by analysis of 15 students' journal entries reflecting on attitudinal and behavioural changes after training.

All 15 student teachers found journal writing to be an effective strategy, encouraging a more analytic focus on one's own behaviour, mistakes, success and growth in understanding of what it means to be a teacher, serving to 'etch in the mind' (in one student teacher's words) seminal principles of pedagogy. This reflective practice was instrumental in providing a bridge for theoretical and practical traffic between classrooms and university sites.

Describing gains from the programme as learning 'to see things through a new perspective' is perhaps at the core of every teacher educator's hopes for their students but often runs up against the apprenticeship model in which the neophyte teacher's first induction lesson is to 'forget all that theory they taught you in college. You are now in the real world'. One of the most interesting aspects of the paper are the before and after descriptors of what it means to be a teacher. From a range of often contradictory initial descriptors such as 'tough', 'mean', 'strict', 'caring', 'patient' and 'friendly', students were required to assess and re-assess their own preconceptions in light of observational evidence of other teachers' behaviour as well as their own. This captures and gives meaning to what may too easily become a cliché - reflective practice. In the absence of national standards and formal studies in Lebanon of existing teacher preparation programmes, the authors hope is that the findings of this study will make a significant contribution both to research in the field and to informing policy.

For policy makers in many jurisdictions effectiveness of teachers can be reduced to one salient measure—commonly described as student 'outcomes', referring to student performance on tests and exams. In Elaine Mangiante's paper we enter this highly contentious, and much politicised, territory. The issues are particularly acute

because of the focus on schools serving low-income neighbourhoods. Setting the context for her study Mangiante discusses prior research on low income schools showing that these schools face difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced and effective teachers. A compounding factor is the greater likelihood for African American students to be ineffective teachers than white students and for those less advantaged schools to have more underqualified staff.

These systemic factors go some way to explaining the persisting gap between student achievement in low and high SES schools. “Few Americans realize that the U.S. educational system is one of the most unequal in the industrialized world, and students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status” (Darling-Hammond and Post, 2000).

It is fairly well established that teacher effects are larger in low-SES schools because, with less social capital outside of schools in family and community, a high quality teacher will have a greater impact in a low SES school than in a high SES school. Replacing less effective teachers with more effective teachers is therefore likely to have a greater effect in low-SES schools than in high-SES schools. Therein lies the challenge for the twin national U.S. policies of *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*.

Can the persisting, and sometimes widening, gap be mitigated by these twin policies, (the curious metaphors of race in which no one is left behind!)? Not until more complex and fine-grained instruments are used to make judgments about teacher effects, concludes Mangiante. While value-added measures are clearly an advance on mean attainment in assessing student ‘outcomes’, they are insufficient and indeed misleading given the particular sets of circumstances in low-income schools, which this study illuminates. While the argument is for observational evaluations needed to complement such data, observation can also be problematic and require expertise, reliable tools and repeated observations in differing contexts. The greatest danger of all is that without sensitive strategies and deep understanding of the challenging nature of teaching in low SES schools uninformed high-stakes accountability may result in teachers seeking transfers away from schools serving the very schools that need them most.

This is the nub of the recruitment and retention ‘crisis’ affecting many countries including the U.S. In Stephane Huber’s paper the focus is not so much on teachers as on school leadership, which relies on a supply ‘pipeline’ of qualified, committed and properly ambitious staff. While the ‘crisis’ is explained by numerous contributory factors such as the loneliness of the role, the pressures of meeting differing expectations and strain on family life, often it can be put down to the lack of ‘fit’ between the nature of the task and competencies and predispositions of the applicant. Issues of selection, qualification and continuing support and professional development are also becoming increasingly urgent.

Stephan Huber’s contribution to this volume is to consider the applications of an instrument which addresses these issues and appears to have been extremely well received by its users. The Competence Profile School Management (CPSM) is an online-based self-assessment which allows prospective school leaders to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, to plot these against the various requirements of the job and to compare their individual profiles with peers. This has, he argues, proved beneficial in planning their professional development and career progression.

Huber's article examines the potential for further development of the instrument. What forms of adaptation and modifications may be needed to give it wider currency? Given its Germanic origins how might it travel across contextual and cultural boundaries? What are potential linguistic nuances that need to be taken into account?

Using CPSM will, it is suggested, provide the possibility of exploring the range of different "types" of school leadership, to determine to what extent there are systematic differences and to what extent differing profiles may be explained by factors such as teaching subject, age, professional experience, gender, educational values, or social context variables such as school size or with urban versus rural schools. Using CPSM at multiple stages also offers the possibility of charting differing kinds of changes over time and how one's profile may change in prospect and retrospect as the realities of job kick in and as one is both shaped by, and shapes, the leadership role. While Huber is careful to add a health warning as to potential misuses and overclaiming there are clearly implications for this as a valuable research tool.

It is perhaps fitting that the final paper in this volume comes from a Scottish primary school head teacher confronted with many of the accountability addressed in the preceding papers and attempting, in David Hargreaves metaphor, to 'fly below the radar'. Plockton in the West Highlands could not be further removed from the archetypal American inner city. Plockton, the scene for the TV series *Hamish Macbeth*, is possibly one of the most remote and beautiful sites on earth for a school but this does not guarantee immunity from global performativity pressures.

In this edition we introduce for the first time what we have, perhaps ambiguously, termed 'practitioner papers'. These are intended to deal with the core issues of the journal but with a personal account from 'the front line', exploring the relationship between policy and school and classroom practice. The paper by Niall Mackinnon is not a dispassionate account of that contentious relationship ('inundated by a sort of audit oblivion') but it is hugely well grounded in the research and policy literature.

Niall Mackinnon's primary focus is on an accountability culture in which he depicts school inspection as increasingly tightly coupled with standards, indicators, together with a 'dirigiste' self evaluation framework which, he contends, has lost much of the vitality and spontaneity of what once was.

His argument is not for less accountability but for what schools need to do to become '*account able*', that is, furnished with the tools, frameworks, courage and resilience to compose their own script, to tell their own story. These would be, not formulaic responses to predetermined criteria but a holistic approach to Scotland's new Curriculum for Excellence, allied with authentic pupil assessment and a developmental review system. Intelligently conjoined these would offer a formative approach, drawn from the same set values and priorities, grounded in the day-to-day lives of teachers and their students.

Mackinnon ends pithily with a postscript to this edition of the journal.

There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all. (Peter Drucker, 2003:67)