No Teacher Development without Curriculum Development

In misquoting Stenhouse[1] I encapsulate the approach to teaching and research that I have adopted over the past three years. During this time I have taught at two schools, as well as study part-time for a MPhil/PhD in Musicology at the University of East Anglia. My research investigates innovative uses of information and communication technologies within the Key Stage 3 and 4 music curriculum. The role of teacher researcher has enabled me to establish a network of relationships between my teaching and research beneficial for my own continuing professional development, as well as provide an imaginative curriculum for my students.

I have been fortunate to receive support in this venture from a number of sources:

- The schools in which I have taught have provide me with a small amount of extra free time (an hour a week) and the opportunity to try out new ideas;
- My current school's Beacon status enables me to share research findings in this country and abroad;
- My LEA is funding the cost of my university fees.

In the early years of my research, I benefited from formal and informal supervision in two schools at the university: the School of Music and the Centre for Applied Research in Education. Ideas relating to the nature of musical composition and performance with new technologies merged with theoretical and practical applications of action research, qualitative research techniques and naturalistic evaluation. I was encouraged to reflect and document the relationships between myself, as a teacher researcher, and my pupils; also between my pupils and the variety of technologies that I was seeking to use within the classroom environment. These reflections take many shapes: diaries and journals, commentaries, interviews, etc.

The adoption of these research methodologies within my teaching practice has enabled me to reflect on key educational events with a degree of intimacy seldom achieved previously. They have facilitated an increased awareness of the intricacies of classroom events and interactions. 'We need to portray complexity', argues Stake, a leading advocate of such approaches to evaluation. 'We need to convey holistic impression, the mood, even the mystery of the experience' (Kushner, 1991, pp.2-3).

As a result of these reflections, I have been able to construct and implement a variety of innovative schemes of work that exploit the educational potential of new technologies for artistic practice. The evaluation of these, through a range of naturalistic evaluation techniques, has been written up in a variety of published papers and conference submissions. These case studies reflect the interdependence of my teaching and research activities. It would be impossible to imagine one without the other. The power of action research lies in my involvement as a researcher, 'while *at the same time*, the main focus of my energy continues to be ensuring effective teaching and learning' (Somekh & Davis, 1997, p. 115).

The benefits of this integrated approach to teaching and research were highlighted and contrasted recently through my school's participation in the NOF ICT training for teachers' initiative. Initially, relationships between the school's training provider and staff were fraught, with a series

of widely mismatched expectations as to what the training might deliver. Having completed questionnaires identifying our training needs, the provider seemed to be reluctant or unable to address the specific demands that we made. For many staff, the prescriptive, even formulaic and undifferentiated, approach that the provider offered resulted in little perceived benefit to them. A key concern seemed to be the failure to address the implementation of technology within the classroom context in any meaningful way. In contrast, action research aims to feed 'practical judgements in concrete situations' (Elliott, 1991, p.69). The validity of its theories are found in their application in the real context of the classroom, in enabling teachers to act more skilfully. 'In action research 'theories' are not validated independently and then applied to practice. *They are validated through practice*' (ibid.).

In my experience, the most effective model for continuing professional development is to empower teachers with these tools to study their own teaching practice. A number of factors are crucial in achieving this:

- To give teachers the flexibility and means (through resources and time) to establish their own networks of support. I have learnt and applied lessons from staff within my own and other schools, through supervision sessions with university staff and through contacts with composers, artists and musicians working with new technologies outside of the direct educational context of my research;
- To encourage teachers to adopt an ongoing, cyclical process of action research. A six year, part-time research course may be a little extreme for most teachers, but it has given me the time and space to initiate, develop and extend ideas through several 'spirals' of research activity. Having tried these methods of teaching and research, I would find it hard to teach in any other way;
- To ensure that any research findings describe the contextual basis of that research. The sharing of practical day-to-day aspects of teaching and research seems to have been of most help for other teachers;
- To develop platforms for sharing one's ideas and findings with others. A process of negotiation with others (whether they be pupils, teachers or artists) continually informs my professional development. This has happened in a variety of ways, but wherever and whenever it takes place it always results in streams of ideas that are fed back into the educational cycle of action research and evaluation.

In a curious way it seems appropriate that I am a teacher of the 'arts'. For in many ways, developing such an approach to teaching and research resembles artistic practice. Elliott Eisner puts it succinctly when he talks about the relationship between curriculum and evaluation:

> In both the construction of educational means (the curriculum) and the appraisal of its consequences, the teacher would become an artist, for criticism itself when carried to its height is an art. (Eisner, 1985, p. 37)

Jonathan Savage is Head of Music at Debenham CEVC High School in Suffolk. He is also a part-time research student at the University of East Anglia. From September 2001 he will be Senior Lecturer in Music Education at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Email: j.savage@mmu.ac.uk

Bibliography

Eisner, E. (1985) *The Art of Educational Evaluation: A personal view* (London & Philadelphia, The Falmer Press).
Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change* (Milton Keynes & Philadelphia, Open University Press).
Kushner, S. (1991) *The Children's Music Book: Performing Musicians in School* (London, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation).
Kushner, S. (1999) 'Fringe Benefits: music education out of the National Curriculum, *Music Education Research* 1:2
Somekh, B. & Davis, L. (1997) *Using Information Technology Effectively in Teaching and Learning* (New York & London, Routledge).

[1] The phrase 'No curriculum development without teacher development' was supposedly written on a sign over Stenhouse's desk (see Kushner, S. (1999) 'Fringe Benefits: music education out of the National Curriculum, *Music Education Research* 1:2, p.212).