

A personal response to the idea of research-informed teacher learning

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It was not until late in my teaching career that I recognised and acknowledged that I was actually a teacher and a researcher. I had never really considered the amount of data I handled as anything significant, even though my analyses informed my professional decisions. Reviewing assessments and grades was accepted as “daily practice” or just what the job entailed. It took my further study to fully grasp that my role as a classroom teacher had never been positioned nor discussed as that of a researcher, and that teaching was far more complex than I had first imagined. It is no simple matter collaborating with peers and colleagues; providing guidance and advice to mentees and student teachers on the profession as a whole; and provoking critical insight into behaviour management and cultural understandings, for example. Perhaps, as I reflect now, that was the issue. If the link between teaching and research is not made explicit within Initial Teacher Education programmes, it is likely that we disconnect from the student life of research-informed teacher learning in the transition from pre-service in university into the practical settings of the school. Then, in the process of enacting the pre-requisite standards and what-not prescribed by government, it is possible to lose sight of the theories that inform our practice and validate our professional decision making. Without conscious effort to uphold that which makes teaching an intellectual pursuit, it is plausible we could unconsciously diminish our role, ultimately becoming “only a teacher”. Then consistently under policy- and time pressures, we are “running” to prepare not only for the upcoming year, creating lesson plans, units of work and resources, but also incessant inspections, eventually operating in survival mode. And when we get to a place where we think we can finally breathe, the government changes direction, new policies are imposed, and we are back to “running” simply to meet the changing environment and policy expectations.

A vignette