Knowing Me: Knowing You

Auditing the experience and expertise of colleagues

Please note that I have written this in the form of a structured conversation between a leader or facilitator of professional learning and a colleague. The italicised prompts should indicate, however, that conversation does not always go according to plan and when the unexpected crops up it just might be significant.

1. Did your initial education and training equip you for specific subject(s) or area(s) of activity? Can you say what it was or what they were?

Not everyone’s career follows a straightforward trajectory but it can still be useful when establishing a baseline to know how people began.

2. Have you subsequently changed or added to this?

All professional lives involve change. Some of it might look like planned change building upon the past. Some will be unplanned and involve dealing with the unexpected. It may be very useful to get a picture of the extent to which change has been part of colleagues’ professional lives.

3. Have you undertaken any kind of relevant training or professional development?

The problem here is that in order to impress you some colleagues may give you huge lists of events from which it may be very difficult to extract the relevant and the significant. It is also possible that what seemed at the time to be irrelevant and no use might subsequently be found to be valuable. Such lists do, however, tell a story and they can stimulate discussion about the possible difference between attendance at an event and what we may call ‘developing by doing’.

4. Have you been responsible for specific subject(s) or area(s) of activity?

It is important to remember that colleagues can sometimes undertake responsibility on an informal basis. They can also work outside the boundaries set by national standards. The point that should mostly concern the leader of professional learning here is not so much the formal roles that people have held but the experience they have had and the expertise they have developed.

http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/
5. Have you worked with others to, for example, develop schemes of work, implement national strategies or develop policies for the school?

This question helps to make the point that professional learning is not confined to events or courses and that collaborative or partnered working can play a significant role in professional learning.

6. Have you taken part in moderation, standardising or agreement trailing within and/or outside school or any other kind of inter-school or college activity?

Colleagues do not always realise that they are learning as professionals when they undertake such activity.

7. Have you worked in other schools or undergone any re-organisation?

The professional learning point here is that such experience provides perspective. Even experiences thought to be bad can lead to development. Schools are not uniform and so provide an angle to help make sense of current or planned change.

8. Have you held or do you hold any responsible position connected with public examinations?

Most moderators, chief moderators, examiners and chief examiners are teachers. So, are schools and colleges making use of their experience and expertise? It is possible that such experts have things of value to say for many subjects, not merely their own. They can also help a school or college to prepare for change because they often have advanced notice of developments.

9. Have you undertaken any accredited professional learning?

This applies for all staff but for teachers this could include the programmes of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), the GTCEs Teacher Learning Academy (TLA) and postgraduate professional development (PPD).

10. Have you undertaken any research that is relevant to the school’s or college’s or your own professional learning?

In the past teachers often undertook action research, wrote essays and dissertations without this integrating with or complementing the strategic
plans of the school. Or, to put forward another way of looking at this, schools have often ignored valuable research being undertaken within their walls. Given the need to ensure that anything claimed within an SEF can be supported by evidence it will be important to know when this kind of work is taking place.

11. Anything else?

Task

This activity may have been done by an individual, a group or on behalf of a whole school or college or network of schools and colleges. For the leader or facilitator of professional learning, however, the only task for this section is, now that you have a good description of the key features and factors of the professional context, to pull together all relevant information and state what, on behalf of your school or college, you have learned from the activity. Be sure, however, to have evidence to back up any statement.