



RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES – 2012/2013
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Dr Ann Childs is a university lecturer in science education at Oxford University Department of Education. Her key research interests are in science education and the professional development of science teachers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). In primary education this has involved work with primary teachers in developing the teaching of sustainable development in collaboration with geography education colleagues at Oxford. In secondary education this has involved work with student teachers on their uses of the internet in science teaching in collaboration with colleagues from Nottingham and Loughborough. Current research has focused learning of subject content knowledge (SCK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in secondary subject departments (science, geography and history) in collaboration with a colleague at Oxford and a colleague at the Institute of Education. This research was prompted by a small scale interview study in 2007 which showed science teachers reporting that they learned SCK and PCK from experienced colleagues particularly when they taught outside their subject specialism, a common occurrence in science education. In order to explore further the nature and scale of the teacher learning reported in our 2007 study we investigated what was actually going on the ground and conducted two studies primarily based upon observation and interviews in six secondary subject departments (four science, one history and one geography) in order that we might gain a more secure empirical base to develop theoretical understandings of teacher learning on a day-to-day basis in secondary subject departments.

Seminar Title: What is the role of university teacher educators in the new policy landscape for teacher education in England?

This seminar will first present key findings from our research into the learning of SCK and PCK in subject departments. Here I will use the research in subject departments to explore what is learned, how it is learned and what facilitates and constrains this learning. One of the key motivations for this research was that secondary PGCE students in England spend two thirds of their time in subject departments and, as teacher educators, we wanted to understand the day-to-day demands and processes of learning to develop our own ITE and CPD programmes. Since this research took place the coalition government has moved rapidly to more school-led and school-based ITE and CPD. This policy direction draws on a notion of teaching as a craft learned best from experienced professionals in the context of the school and the classroom. As Michael Gove said:

Teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom. (Michael Gove, 16th June 2010)

I will then use our research to reflect on the implications of a move to even more school-based ITE and CPD and ask the question, in this policy scenario, what is the role of a university teacher educator?