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**"Sustaining systematic improvement in NT schools"**

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**Abstract**

The National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP) was established in 2004, when the developers of "Scaffolding Literacy" brought their program to the Northern Territory at Charles Darwin University with funding from DEST to support a system-wide implementation of the methodology. The Northern Territory Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) committed to rolling out the Accelerated Literacy program in 100 schools, training 700 teachers and reaching 10,000 students in predominantly remote locations. As a member of the evaluation team examining the impact of the program on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, the question of proving or improving raises its head. While the focus of the evaluation is clearly to 'prove' I argue that there is also a real need to use the evaluation process to improve implementation efforts in Northern Territory schools, particularly regarding the provision of school based professional learning.

The model of intensive training being evaluated is described, along with the findings from thematic analysis of teacher focus group data which explored teacher's opinions of in school professional learning and support. Thematic analysis of teacher focus group data demonstrates that there are two main areas which had the greatest impact on supporting teachers as they went about the task of program implementation: the provision of ongoing in school support, embedded in teacher's daily work and providing highly trained school based specialists to facilitate this. While these strategies are highly effective, they are the exception rather than the norm. I use these findings, along with current professional learning research and literature as a basis for a discussion of possible ways to build teacher capacity through in school professional learning. Finally I argue the case for further research to explore the potential of online learning communities and regional face to face networks to support teacher and specialist professional learning in schools.

## **1 Introduction**

The National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP) aims to improve outcomes for students, particularly for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory, by raising English literacy levels using the Accelerated Literacy methodology. The National Accelerated Literacy Program commenced in late 2004, when the Northern Territory Government and by the Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), agreed to fund the project, jointly committing funding of

over \$16 million over four years. Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (NT DEET) committed to implementing the program in 100 schools, training 700 teachers and reaching 10,000 students in predominantly remote locations by the end of 2008.

As a member of the evaluation team examining the impact of the program on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, the question of proving or improving raises its head. Although the findings of the evaluation will provide insight into the effectiveness of the professional development and support efforts, that is not the focus of the evaluation. The main aim is to prove or disprove the effectiveness of the implementation efforts: are students' literacy outcomes improving and under what conditions? Furthermore, even if the preliminary report does shed some light on ways to improve future professional development efforts, waiting until mid – end of 2008 is of little use to teachers at the coalface, learning how to implement an unconventional teaching method.

For those interested in improving, this focus on proving is a distraction. However, it need not be as much rich data has been gathered from the 20 teacher focus group interviews to date. This data informs us of teacher's opinions of the effectiveness of Accelerated Literacy professional development and support. Analysis of this focus group interview data and current teacher and school effectiveness research provides much insight into how future models of professional development can be improved.

Analysing the teacher focus group data separately to the evaluation ensures that improving professional learning efforts is not lost sight of in the attempts to prove the effectiveness of the implementation efforts.

## **2 Background: the model of intensive support and training being evaluated**

Charles Darwin University is contracted by NT DEET to develop strategies and resources to support the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (NT DEET) implementation of the Accelerated Literacy program. Program objectives state that by the end of 2008, the program aims to train 700 NT teachers in the Accelerated Literacy methodology and a further 370 as in-school coordinators.

At the time of writing this paper, there are currently two forms of training available through Charles Darwin University: a series of four face-to-face professional development workshops<sup>1</sup> (15 days total), as well as the provision of an Academic course: The Graduate Certificate in Accelerated Literacy. The three Accelerated Literacy units are delivered via a three day intensive followed up by online delivery and teaching practice. In addition, Charles Darwin University has developed and delivered several short packages on particular topics on a needs basis.

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<sup>1</sup> PD1, PD2, PD3 and Assessment workshop

These professional development workshops are delivered using a train the trainer model: Charles Darwin University staff train NT DEET Accelerated Literacy coordinators, who in turn deliver the professional development workshops to Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinators and teachers in participating schools. This professional development is delivered centrally (Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine) and within hub schools.

The NT DEET Accelerated Literacy team also delivers the professional development workshops to NT DEET teachers centrally (Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine), in hub schools and also in individual schools across a vast geographic region. These are delivered regularly throughout the year as well as on a needs basis.

The NT DEET Accelerated Literacy team also provides ongoing support to teachers during week long site visits each term. This support varies, according to need and includes modeling of demonstration lessons, observation of teaching with lesson analysis and feedback, mentoring, support with planning, training new teachers and training in Accelerated Literacy student assessment procedures and data analysis.

In addition, according to NT DEET (2006), the role of the DEET Accelerated Literacy specialist is to '...assist remote AL schools to form learning communities. Schools entering the program will be linked to current AL schools that are geographically or historically isolated. Schools demonstrating advanced practice i.e. Phase four schools, will provide professional development support to other AL schools' (p. 2). School based

Accelerated Literacy Coordinators attend the same professional development workshops as teachers as well as four additional professional development days each year for advanced training.

School based Accelerated Literacy Coordinators are usually appointed a .5 fraction to carry out their duties, but this varies from school to school. Their role in the program varies, according to the school's time in the program. However, their main function is to support teachers at the school level in the day to day program implementation. The NT DEET Participation and Service Model (2006) outlines the different phases of implementation.

Phase one schools are schools starting up the program. School coordinators are required to 'work intensively with the Professional Learning Team in order to develop the skills required to support teaching staff with the implementation of Accelerated Literacy. Some schools may be asked to form partnerships with other AL schools' (NT DEET, 2006, p. 21).

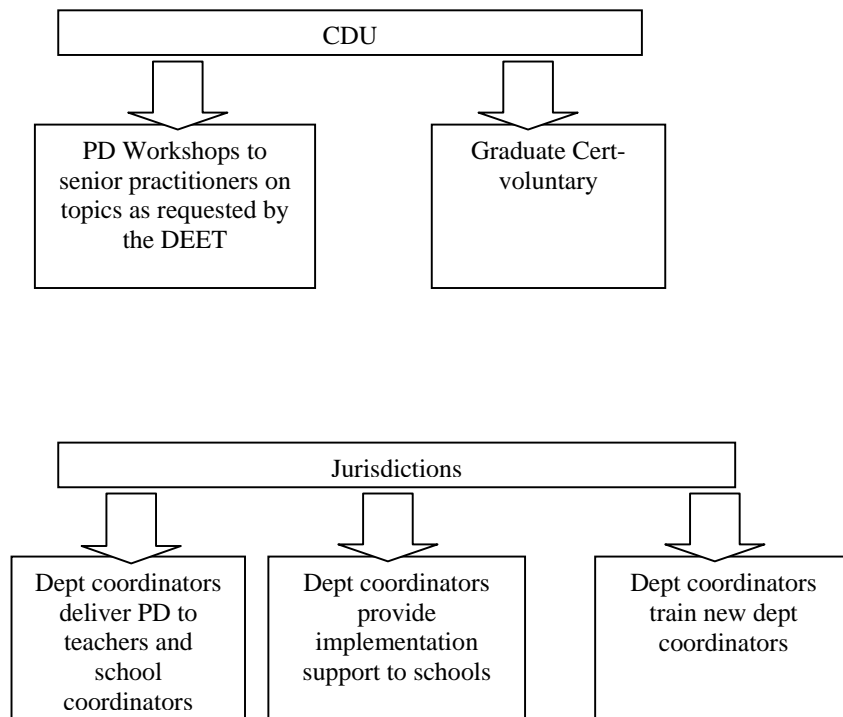
Phase two schools are those that are implementing the program. Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinators in phase two schools are expected to have completed at least two of the three Professional Development packages (NT DEET, 2006, p. 21).

In phase three, schools are managing the program and 'all staff working in the program have been trained in the AL teaching sequence and the school coordinator has

completed all specified National Accelerated Literacy Program Professional Development' (NT DEET, 2006, p. 22).

Phase four schools are exemplary sites which act as 'a resource site for other schools through activities such as; demonstration of best practice, mentoring, informal or formal networking and the provision of resources' (NT DEET, 2006, p. 21).

## 2.1 Current training model



From: Hawkes, K. Charles Darwin University- National Accelerated Literacy Program- Strategic Planning (2007).

### **3 Improving: building teacher capacity through in school professional learning**

#### **3.1 Research methods**

As mentioned in the introduction, the primary focus of the National Accelerated Literacy Program evaluation is to evaluate the extent to which Accelerated Literacy professional development and support impact on Accelerated Literacy teaching methods and student outcomes.

This paper, while not part of the evaluation effort, utilises data from the evaluation to answer the question: What are teachers' opinions of the effectiveness of the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies, professional development, resources and support?

At the time of writing this paper, twenty teacher focus group interviews had been conducted with teachers in schools in all phases of the implementation. Focus groups consisted of between two and twelve participants and usually lasted one hour.

Questions asked in the focus group interviews relevant to this discussion were:

- How do you feel about the in school on-going support you receive (principals, AL school based coordinator, NT DEET professional learning team coordinators)?
- What do you like best about the ongoing, in school support that you receive?

- What could be done to improve the level of support you receive?

The focus group interviews have been transcribed and analysed using a thematic approach. The main themes that emerged from the analysis are: ongoing, in school professional learning and access to specialist expertise. The findings are discussed in light of current teacher professional development research and literature. The professional learning literature does not distinguish between formal professional development workshops or seminars, and in school ongoing professional learning. However, for the purposes of this analysis I have focused on 'support', which is referred to as professional learning throughout this paper.

### **3.2 Ongoing, in school professional learning**

Ongoing, in school professional learning that is embedded in teacher's work and organised around approaches such as team based collaboration and structured mentoring are commonly cited as the backbone of teacher development (Hawley and Valli, 1999; Hill, 2001; Ingvarson, 2004; Vic Ed Dept, 2005). Moreover, professional development research has shown that an ongoing, whole school approach to professional learning, sustained over several years, makes a significant contribution to improved achievement for students (Hawley and Valli, 1999; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005).

While collaboration appeared to be largely an informal process in Accelerated Literacy schools, the opposite could be said of mentoring, as when it was effective it appeared to

be highly structured. This could be because of the nature of the mentoring activities in Accelerated Literacy schools: demonstration lessons, observation and feedback and team planning all require much planning and organisation. The next section highlights the essential role of specialists in the mentoring process and the challenges faced providing this type of intensive support.

A common theme throughout the teacher focus group interviews was the need for ongoing support, embedded in their teaching practice facilitated by either the DEET AL specialist, or the School Based Accelerated Literacy Coordinator as effective and essential approaches to professional learning. This was especially the case in the early stages of program implementation. The importance of this is exemplified by the following comment:

‘Particularly last term, when I was new to the school and new to AL, the DEET person ... and she was fantastic; she modelled the first few lessons of the term so I kind of got an idea of what I was meant to be doing, rather than just reading it ..., kind of put it all into a little bit more perspective, and then she sat with us and ... I had to pull out whereas I was kind of ... teaching and knowing what to do but how you actually then implement it in the AL framework is a little bit different, but yeah, found having that kind of guide at the beginning, totally invaluable’ (s87, p.4).

Teachers overwhelmingly stated a preference for mentoring approaches to in school professional learning, where a more experienced other supported, or scaffolded less experienced teachers. Effective strategies included; demonstration lessons, team teaching, observation and feedback of lessons and team planning. One teacher stated:

Yeah when I worked at Plainview I had another lady who's just like a guru in AL and we were given time to plan and then I would be able to watch her and then she would come and watch me so I was able to learn by her modelling and then she would watch me and then give constructive feedback, so it was building me all the time .... ' (s13, p. 17).

Other teachers commented about the effectiveness of lesson observation and feedback:

'So we've had the opportunity to – first up we saw her teaching an AL lesson with my class and next time she came, she observed me teaching and gave me some feedback and the third time, we were turn taking, team teaching, and that was very good – I think even more effective than the ...' (s51)

And:

'(T1) But the observations I found have been really beneficial as well because that's the feedback that you want, so if I'm not doing it right, then tell me how to do it right. I'm willing to take it on, like help me out here....,

(T2) 'Yeah, I agree. The observations have been awesome, really good, to get that critical feedback (s87, p. 11).

The impact of supporting teachers with planning is highlighted by the following

comments:

'And I said that to Penelope (ALSBC) like last week, I just feel like if I didn't have that planning time with you, Penelope, I wouldn't keep doing it I don't think cos it's too confusing ... ' (s10, pp. 4-5).

Additionally, teachers commented about the positive impact of a whole school approach

as this provided many opportunities for informal collaboration and discussion. The

following quotes demonstrate the impact of this on teacher's professional learning:

'...so the whole school was involved and our following 2 PDs happened as a whole group at the school so if you didn't understand things about it you could talk about it later so that really made a big difference ...' (s52).

And:

'...I mean the one thing that I enjoy about the whole experience to be honest with you is that the whole school are all speaking the same language...across the whole of the school' (s7, p. 14).

These findings demonstrate the effectiveness of specialist mentoring from both the DEET Accelerated Literacy specialist and the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator.

### **3.3 Access to specialist expertise**

The role of a specialist teacher has been cited in two significant studies as a critical component of whole school professional learning, particularly when developing system wide capacity. The Commonwealth Government National Inquiry into the Teaching of Reading recommends:

that all schools identify a highly trained specialist literacy teacher with specialised skills in teaching reading, to be responsible for linking whole-school literacy planning process with classroom teaching and learning, and supporting school staff in developing, implementing and monitoring progress against individual literacy plans, particularly those children experiencing reading and literacy difficulties.' {Commonwealth Department of Education, 2005, p. 16}

Additionally, Ingvarson, when discussing why the large scale roll out of the Getting it Right Strategy in Western Australian Schools is effective, cites the importance of access to highly trained school based specialists, whose sole role is to, 'work 'shoulder to

shoulder' with a number of colleagues for about half a day each week, with each teacher, for two years' (2004, p. 64). Importantly, Ingvarson notes, 'the availability and the training of the Specialist teachers are crucial (2004, p. 67).

Not only is a highly trained in school specialist integral for the ongoing professional development of teachers, so too is access to outside expertise (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Vic Ed Dept, 2005). However, the literature clearly distinguishes between in school collaborative approaches that support teachers as they go about their daily work and occasional visits by outside experts. Indeed, outside experts should not be relied on as the only source of expertise available to support staff as they take on new challenges, such as transforming their thinking about teaching and learning.

While many teachers in the focus group interviews stated a need for ongoing, in school professional learning, embedded in their daily practice, the opportunities for this were at times inhibited by a lack of access to specialist support. Teachers overwhelmingly commented about the crucial role the Accelerated Literacy School Based coordinator plays, or could play, in supporting their professional learning when school conditions are right. Nevertheless, the NT DEET Accelerated Literacy specialists were often the only source of this in school support and their school visits were usually limited to one week per term. The impact of this was emphasised by one teacher commented:

'... I can't understand ...why can't you get more...I mean I really – my heart went out to the ladies that were doing it, like last year. They were spread out so much, one lady was doing five or six schools on her own....two of those AL teachers that come up to the school and I spoke to .... there's too much travel for them alone ...' (s3).

However, this lack of access to specialist support was not the case in all schools. Some schools reported having access to a highly trained full time or part time Accelerated Literacy School Based coordinator, although this was the exception rather than the norm. In these schools, teachers reported that ongoing mentoring was effectively supporting teachers to develop Accelerated Literacy teaching expertise. One teacher stated:

'the thing that was really significant was that we had a full time AL coordinator and she was able to come to our classroom regularly and she did, like at least every two weeks and she would video our lessons and she would sit there and watch in a non threatening way and join in so all the time we were getting feedback, like all the time, it was just constant and ongoing so all the time ... I think that having that onsite support all the time was crucial' (s52).

Unfortunately, comments such as the one above were uncommon and teachers often lamented the lack of access to in school specialist mentoring and collaborative problem solving. This appeared to be due to a variety of factors, including different expectations regarding the role of the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator, varying levels of Accelerated Literacy expertise in each school and school conditions, all of which impacted on the capacity of the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator to facilitate collaborative professional learning in the school.

The role of the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator varied enormously from school to school. In some schools, teachers reported that they viewed the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator's role as largely administrative: assessing students, maintaining student assessment folders and ordering resources. In these schools, ongoing, in school professional learning was non-existent, with the exception of when the NT DEET AL specialist visited. It could be argued that this should be expected, given the different expectations for Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinators' roles, depending on the phase of the implementation. However, there were no patterns between roles that could be attributed to the phases of the school. It really depended on school conditions, rather than phase of implementation.

In some schools, teachers commented that although the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator was committed, and schools were organised so that there were opportunities for collaborative professional learning, these were hindered by the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator inexperience in the program or lack of expertise. At times, due to staff turnover, teachers had more experience and expertise than the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator whose role it was to support them:

*'And he also wanted me to go and team teach with teachers and ... programs... planning, when I myself am at the same level as everyone else. And you expect to go and sit now and tell those teachers... when no-one has given me any extra PD you know, what I'm supposed to be looking for?' (s3, p. 26)*

There can be no doubt about the impact this type of support has to teacher's professional learning. However, in order for this to be effective conditions in school need to be in place to facilitate this type of intense support.

### **3.4 Conditions for in school professional learning**

Effective school leadership is integral to the effective implementation of professional development (Commonwealth Department of Education, 2005; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Meiers and Ingvarson, 2005; Victorian Education Department, 2005). Moreover, Meiers and Ingvarson's study, *Investigating the links between teacher professional development and student learning outcomes* found, 'Leadership support was a crucial mediating influence. Where leadership support and commitment was strong, the case studies indicate that it was possible to implement change over time' (2005, p. 5). It is clear that principals have a crucial role in facilitating effective, ongoing support.

While researchers did not specifically address the issue of principal support and leadership during the focus group interview, the impact of principal support for the program, and effective leadership regarding the implementation efforts at the school level was implicit in teacher's responses about conditions for facilitating in school professional learning.

Teachers often commented that despite Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator's high levels of commitment their attempts to facilitate ongoing professional learning

were frustrated by school conditions over which they had little or no control. The following comments highlight the impact of school conditions on Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator's capacity to support teachers effectively. One Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator said:

'...I tried. They said, no, no with my .5 I always used to teach a class and then team teach with someone or plan, but no, no I was very much directed to take up that (teaching) load (s13, p. 6).

While another teacher commented:

' Yep, that the school as a whole should be very supportive and pro-active towards the accelerated literacy program, hence giving co-ordinators at least time so that they're able to come and view other teachers and give constructive feedback in improving continuously your delivery of accelerated literacy. You go stale, it's a program where you really need to be given feedback consistently so that you can improve the best student outcomes and at present that is not happening' ( S 16, p. 16).

Indeed, one of the weaknesses of in school professional learning reported by teachers was that it was resource intensive, especially in small schools where teachers and coordinators and principals often have dual roles and are already stretched. Organising time release, especially for cohorts of teachers to work together, planning, observing lessons etc is impossibly difficult in some small schools. This is demonstrated by the following comments:

(T 1) 'And just time allocation for Gary to be able to plan with me, the support for that isn't there so Gary is in classes and not just AL classes....

(T2) And that's the whole trouble with this finding common time to meet for planning or informal or formal PD's cos everyone is stretched across such a

broad range of things that you're spending a lot of time running between, you know your head space ...' (s13, p. 6)

Another teacher in a small remote school said:

'...I still go back and say that every school should have a full-time AL coordinator because there's a lot of work. They're expecting a .5, besides teaching a class of AL, which is a pre-requisite, then doing all the reports and then also going into the classroom and helping supervise the teachers' work, you know team teaching, assessments and stuff – that's .5. (S3, p.25)

The focus group data clearly demonstrates that when the program was supported by principals they made it a priority to create the conditions necessary to facilitate ongoing, in school mentoring and collaborative activities. They ensured that the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator was allocated at least a .5 time release and provided structured time release for the Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinator and teachers to work together. They ensured that this was ongoing and facilitated over an extended period of time. In short, they committed to the long haul. Interestingly, the provision of these conditions, although requiring some creative management, was not always limited to larger schools with more access to human resources, although this appeared to be more common in larger schools.

### **3.5 Professional learning communities**

Professional learning communities can help to foster collaborative learning whether it be informal collegial support or more formalised activities such as understanding an aspect

of the theory, team based planning or mentoring activities (Department of Education and Training, 2005 p, 11). Moreover, professional learning teams can be facilitated using a variety of delivery modes, such as face-to-face in schools or regions, or online.

Strategies for developing learning communities are outlined in the NT DEET participation and service model (2007), 'Schools will be linked together to form AL Professional Learning Communities for professional development activities, sharing management strategies and professional networking. Ways of using technology assisted communication and distance learning tools will also be established and linked to the professional learning communities' (p. 3).

While collaboration and a whole school approach to professional learning were mentioned in the focus group interviews as important, teachers reported this occurring in the context of informal collaboration or mentoring, where a more experienced other supports less experienced colleagues. Additionally, the hub school model was cited as an effective learning community, especially for training Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinators.

A School Based Coordinator stated,

T1: Can I just keep talking about the PD's? Because they did the PD1, and had the Co-ordinator's PD straight after it and the Co-ordinator's PD was excellent and actually that was where I learned to teach AL because we went to Gerald River and observed some classes there and it was really good, just looking at the sequence being taught and understanding the context of it. There was all the

people who were doing that PD went along and we watched Nicola doing ..., we watched her teach. And we also talked to the Principal, how they implemented AL in their schools. I mean that was more of a Co-ordinator's thing (s87, p. 6).

Additionally, one teacher commented about the potential for developing regional networks:

'So maybe your cluster of schools and they're all meeting up, yeah I think that would be good because then you could network and keep those contacts (s13, pp. 12-13).

Although professional learning communities are one of the strategies noted by NT DEET as part of their commitment to the implementation of the National Accelerated Literacy Program, (NT DEET, 2006, p. 3), this strategy was only mentioned by the coordinator above.

Teachers did comment about the effectiveness of attending professional development in regional clusters, but since the focus of this paper is ongoing teacher professional learning that is embedded in practice I have not elaborated on this point. However, it can be said that in some instances, schools have been linked together to form AL Professional Learning Communities for professional development activities. It would be good to see this continue to the provision of ongoing professional learning.

Finally, there was no evidence that technology assisted communication and distance learning tools were being used to link teachers in professional learning communities.

#### 4 The way forward

In July 2007 it was agreed that Charles Darwin University would develop and deliver all system wide training (NT DEET team, school based coordinators, practicing teachers, advanced practitioners). NT DEET would be responsible for implementing the program at the school level.

The current strategic plan proposes a three tiered training model, with each tier catering for a different level of teacher expertise / learning. The first tier comprises of an intensive workshop available to teachers new to Accelerated Literacy. The second tier comprises of a series of short courses which are available to teachers who have completed the intensive as well as practicing teachers. The third is aimed at advanced practitioners who have completed the intensive and relevant short courses and wish to further develop their Accelerated Literacy expertise through completion of the Graduate Certificate in Accelerated Literacy / Masters Courses.

#### Example CDU delivery model

<i>AL Expertise</i>	Advanced	Practising	Neophyte
<i>Training</i>	GCAL/Masters	Optional workshops (short courses)	Five day AL Intensive

From: Charles Darwin University- National Accelerated Literacy Program-Strategic Planning (2007). Karen Hawkes.

The problem with separating 'professional development' and in school professional learning is that they become removed from each other and it is difficult for teachers to bridge the gulf between theory and practice. As one teacher noted,

'Yeah. When you know you have to go back and teach to a class, you don't want to have like theories and philosophies in your head, you want to have tools that you can actually use in front of the classroom' (s54, p. 12).

Moreover, focusing on professional development, i.e. the initial training, as well as short courses for practicing teachers does not address the need for ongoing, in school professional learning. It is focusing on the content, rather than the learning. Training and ongoing learning need to be integrated and part of a holistic delivery plan. The first step towards such an integrated approach to professional learning is to develop a model which has at its core the ongoing, long term development of specialist teachers.

Ongoing, in school professional learning for teachers can be facilitated simultaneously. The key is to develop a research based model for ongoing professional learning and then determine which stakeholder is responsible for the delivery. The focus must be to identify teacher's professional learning needs and develop training plans to meet these needs, rather than start from the system level and what each stakeholder's responsibility is. Trying to work out who is responsible for what before actually working out the training plan is putting the horse before the cart.

Accelerated Literacy School Based Coordinators should now become Accelerated Literacy School Based Specialists and their number one priority needs to be the provision of specialist support for teachers at the school level. Future professional

learning models must focus on developing the expertise of school based Accelerated Literacy 'specialists'. Not only will this involve upping the ante to include the provision of highly structured and intensive professional learning for these specialists, but it includes ensuring clarity about the roles of the specialist teachers and that these roles are the same across the board. Developing the expertise of specialist school based staff must also be a priority as it is evident that relying on a small team of experts to provide the type of intensive support necessary to develop teacher expertise is unsustainable.

Furthermore, the potential for using technology assisted communication and distance learning tools to develop and facilitate online learning communities remains untapped. In light of the issues raised above there is a need for research to develop an alternative model of delivering professional development that is less travel intensive. This research should investigate developing a model of delivery using best practice e-learning facilitation methods and Wegner's community of practice (1998) for the second tier: supporting practicing teachers in schools as well as supporting Accelerated Literacy School Based Specialists.

Content delivered at the intensive needs to be reinforced and further developed as teachers practise the teaching sequence. A well facilitated online learning community, informed by best practice online facilitation literature, would not only provide the forum for this, but will also provide ongoing support (a lifeline) for teachers as they return to their school / training centre and start to implement the Accelerated Literacy teaching

sequence. This is especially important while the Accelerated Literacy School Based Specialists are undergoing their intensive training.

Online learning can be used to develop and facilitate communities of learners which addresses the perceived need for interactive learning and collaboration with colleagues. This can motivate participation and increase knowledge and skill development. In line with Hawley and Valli's (1999) principles of professional development, teachers are viewed as 'experts' and are scaffolded and supported to further develop expertise through facilitated activities and interactions. Furthermore, the content delivered as part of the online learning communities can be delivered 'just in time' and integrated into teachers' day to day work which makes the training relevant, authentic and is suitable for time poor teachers. Finally, online learning can reduce travel costs and time associated with centralised face to face delivery.

**Example delivery model**

	<b>Term one</b>	<b>Term two</b>	<b>Term three</b>	<b>Term four</b>
<b>Teachers and trainers new to AL or those wanting to be accredited</b>	Five day Intensive	Five day Intensive	Five day Intensive	Five day Intensive

<b>Practising teachers who have completed the intensive (online learning community or face to face in regional clusters)</b>	First short course to build on intensive and support teachers as they implement AL.  Topics 1-2 grouped into one cluster and delivered over 8-10 weeks.  Either face to face in regions or learning community facilitated online.	Second short course to build on first short course to support teachers as they continue to implement AL.  Topics 3-4 grouped into one cluster and delivered over 8-10 weeks	First short course to build on intensive and support teachers as they implement AL.  Topics 1-2 grouped into one cluster and delivered over 8-10 weeks	Second short course to build on first short course to support teachers as they continue to implement AL.  Topics 3-4 grouped into one cluster and delivered over 8-10 weeks
<b>In school support and collaborative / mentoring / coaching</b>				
<b>Training School Based Specialists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing, structured / systematic training over two years.</li> </ul>			
<b>Additional support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate regional learning networks / online learning communities</li> <li>More access to regional hub schools for in school training</li> </ul>			

## 5 Conclusions and summary

While the findings presented in this paper cannot be considered preliminary analysis of the evaluation, they can be considered equally important. One of the highest priorities for the implementation and sustainability of the National Accelerated Literacy Program is the provision of effective, ongoing professional learning opportunities that are embedded in teacher’s daily work. High teacher turnover, a geographically dispersed and largely remote workforce and lack of expertise are just some of the challenges that must be overcome if this is to occur. The findings and the recommendations that are

presented in this paper can help to address some of these issues and improve the provision of effective professional learning in all Accelerated Literacy schools.

I have argued that training and professional learning must be integrated, and teachers must have access to highly trained, school based Accelerated Literacy School Based Specialists if any training is to be implemented effectively. Training teachers and sending them back to schools with little or no support is a waste of time and money. Ongoing, in school support that is embedded in teacher's daily work is essential if teachers are to implement the unconventional Accelerated Literacy Teaching Sequence effectively. In order for this to be successful, school conditions must be in place to support both teachers and specialist teachers to develop expertise.

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