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CAREER STAGE PD AND THE NATIONAL TEACHER QUALITY AGENDA

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Abstract: The Australian Government is increasingly politicising education within broader economic agendas. Improved education outcomes are being linked to national programs regarding improving teacher quality, professionalism and status. Ongoing professional development is a significant aspect of teacher quality, with research indicating positive benefits for staff morale, teacher retention and career satisfaction.

Traditionally, system-wide curriculum and other educational change have frequently been supported through centrally-devised and pre-packaged one-off workshops conducted by experts. However, the impact of these standardised workshop formats has been questioned, with effective change and professional development increasingly involving ongoing collegiality and support and engagement in practical activities within communities of practice.

Research regarding emergent trends in teacher professional development highlights the effectiveness of differentiated programs for various career stages. Coaching and mentoring, quality online programs, portfolios, school-based teams and professional networks focused on meeting the needs of beginning teachers, experienced and leadership groups are highlighted.

This paper reports on some Australian and overseas research conducted through literature searches and interviews. With funding linked to accountability within political agendas, the research highlights the importance of using professional development models which involve deep learning for teachers. Real problem-solving activities within ongoing collegial groups support teachers in developing a professional identity, a sense of responsibility for other teacher learners and educational change for the benefit of students and the wider community.

Introduction

The intersection of political, economic and educational agendas has been highlighted in recent years and in 2005 there has been considerable controversy created in regards to national initiatives such as the Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU), report cards based on letter grades and school league tables. With the media spotlighting these directions, other reforms introduced by the Federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, in relation to teacher quality, professionalism and professional development have received less attention (DEST, 2004). Regarding these aspects and consistent with educational research (Campshire, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000, citing Sanders & Rivers, 1996), the Federal Government has identified that quality teaching accounts for 60% of the variation in student learning outcomes, with significant federal funding for relevant pre-service teacher and teacher professional development projects being provided (Nelson, 2003). This includes \$159 million for teacher professional development through the Australian Government Quality Teacher Project (AGQTP) since 2000. An additional \$139 million for further 2005-2006 AGQTP professional development projects has been linked to achieving wider educational and economic outcomes in relation to literacy, numeracy, indigenous education and boys programs (DEST, 2005).

In addition, in 2004 the Federal Government has established the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL) with a \$10 million funding injection for the initial four years (DEST, 2004). Its role has been identified as promoting professional standards and professional learning by supporting the implementation of the MCEETYA national framework within a career continuum of graduation, competence, accomplishment and leadership levels (MCEETYA, 2003). Research and communication and representing a national voice for promoting the profession are other NIQTSL roles with the overall objective being to 'raise the status, quality and professionalism of teachers and school leaders...run by the profession for the profession' (DEST, 2004).

A key aspect of being a profession is 'possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognized body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level' (Australian Council of Professions). Therefore, continual updating of knowledge and skills through professional development is required for a profession. Rather than involving attendance at one-off conferences with prepackaged input provided by experts and little connection to local situations, professional development is increasingly considered as consisting of:

.. all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agent to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teacher lives (Carney, 2002, citing Day, 1999: 4)

Therefore, professional development involves 'a sustained period of time' (Indiana State Teachers Association, 2004). Learning occurs within the working day and situated within professional associations, study groups and other networks and throughout various stages of a teacher's career. The intersection of broader collegial and school or organisational improvement directions as well as personal and career challenges is emphasised. Various researchers (Barab & Duffy, 2000; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Wenger, 1998) have indicated that situated learning involves engagement in joint enterprise and developing shared beliefs over an extended timeframe. In addition, in situativity theory teacher learning is a social experience in collaboration with 'like' colleagues. It also involves distributed learning through personal reflection as well as practical activities and artifacts. Tasks such as examining student work, planning lessons jointly, and problem-solving, have been identified as most effective in changing classroom practice and impacting on student learning. Through extended involvement in joint enterprise and shared beliefs, collaboration and practical activities and artefacts, individual identity within community is established. Consistent with communities of practice, coaching processes occur and there is ongoing interaction and community responsibility for the learning of others, as well as sustainability of the group. Research has indicated that only 10% of conference input impacts on educational change (Rhodes & Houghton-Hill, 2000). One-off workshops are still an aspect of professional development, ensuring communities are constantly revitalised with new ideas, with a process for connecting conferences into other learning being important.

This research uses literature searches and case study school teacher interviews in selected sites as well as project leader interviews and school leader surveys for the purpose of investigating emerging trends in teacher professional development across Australia, Canada and the United States at various career stages.

The results of the professional development research have been analysed using the learning model of situativity theory but also highlighting individual cognition learning approaches and the needs of teachers at different career stages. In the final section of this paper, the results are discussed within the context of Nelson's national teacher reform movement, with funding linked to accountability with the Federal government's overall political agenda. The research highlights the importance of using professional development models which involve deep learning for teachers and which reinforce teaching as a profession, as well as focusing on the specific career needs of beginning teachers, experienced teachers and leaders.

Career continuum

A career continuum is recognised as a successful strategy in updating skills, with experienced teachers and leaders having different needs to those who are newly - employed (Bell, 1991; Friedman, 1999). In relation to teacher career continuum research, Huberman (1989) indicates that while teacher experiences vary, generalised phases can be identified as shown in Figure 1:

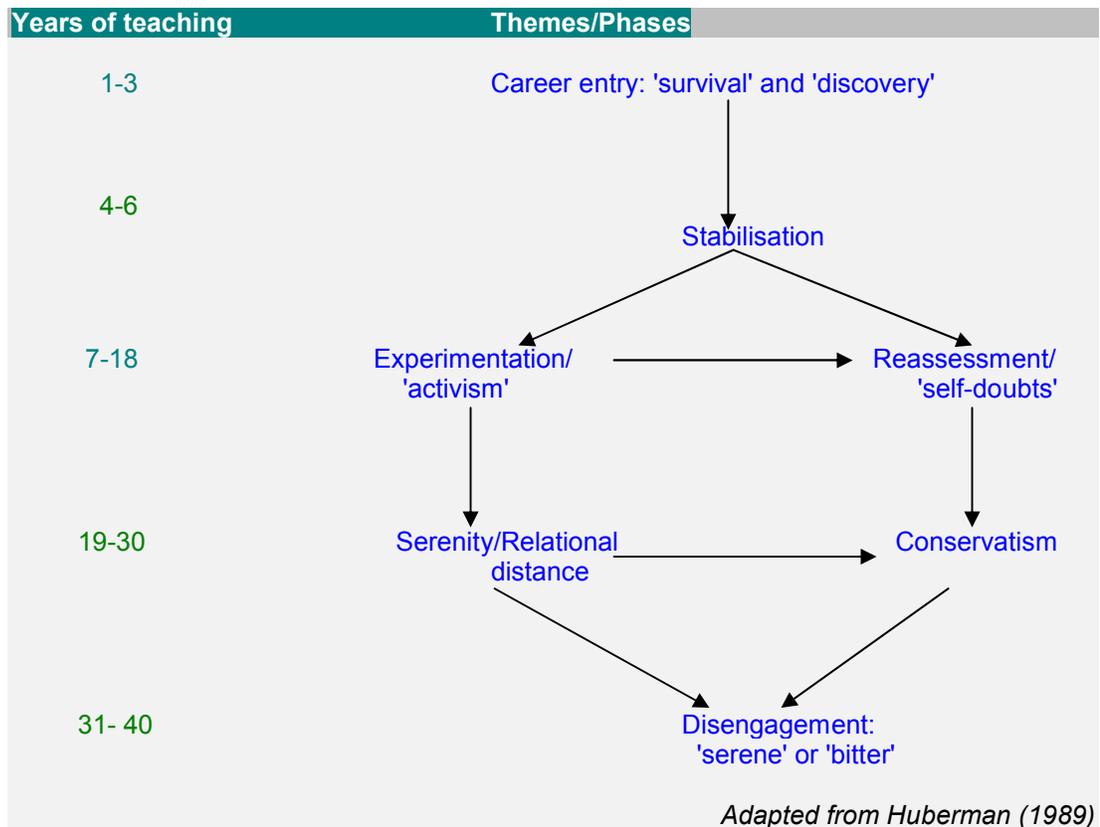


Figure 1: Successive themes of the teacher career cycle: schematic model

This model of various career stages can be related to differing professional development needs (Huberman, 1992). The first to third years of career entry usually involve self-centred survival and discovery and dealing with discipline problems, with guidance and support needed, perhaps including a systematic induction program, mentoring, classroom observation, basic instructional training and supervision (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). In the second stage of stabilisation after four to six years of teaching, for many people there will be those critical incidents that eventually develop a commitment to staying in the teaching profession. Success and confidence in classroom methodologies are frequently experienced during this period, with collegial professional development in teams being important. The third stage at 7 - 18 years is usually one of energy and experimentation where new responsibilities are taken up at work as personal and professional rewards occur, and there may be opportunities for promotion. However for some teachers this may also be a time of reassessment and self-doubts and questioning the career decision. This may be followed by a period of seeking balance between work and family, and eventually disengagement as retirement approaches (Huberman, 1992). While Huberman's research-based description of career stages reflects generalisations and may oversimplify the diverse experiences of individual teachers, the recognition of teaching experiences changing over time and the need for teachers to maintain enthusiasm through restructuring their work and ongoing teacher learning, is emphasised (Smylie, 1999).

Teacher career pathways are increasingly being established to provide motivation and as a strategy to address attraction and retention issues. An example exists in the Mineappolis school district in Minnesota, United States, where a career continuum has been developed by the licensing board. This includes twenty categories from future teacher, student teacher, intern (ongoing practicums as part of the graduate program), resident (newly qualified and teaching 80%), probationary, professional tenured, through to demonstration teacher, site lead teacher, distinguished, National Board Certified and master teacher (Minneapolis Public Schools-www.mpls.k12.mn.us/departments/CIT2/continuum.htm). These categories, developed in a career continuum,

have been devised to attract new recruits and to motivate quality staff to stay in the profession, with the United States already experiencing considerable issues of teacher and leader shortage. In Australia, the MCEETYA professional teaching standards previously outlined also have career levels.

Some critique of career stages has highlighted the individualist nature of this approach and argued that this is devoid of social context and focuses on teachers at various stages of their professional lives tinkering within the isolation of their classrooms to make changes in practice (Smyth, 1998). This view is contrasted with a more empowered model where teachers construct new knowledge through professional engagement with colleagues (Smyth, 1998). This current research emphasises that catering for individual needs within career stages is a significant consideration. However, as Carney (2002) indicates, the professional development of individual teachers at different career stages can effectively occur within a collegial context through induction and mentoring for beginning teachers, workplace study groups and advanced skills processes for experienced teachers and coaching and network study groups for leaders. This career stage professional development can be linked to broader school and/or educational system change agendas as outlined in further detail throughout this paper.

Career continuum emerging trends

This section outlines the research results in terms of emerging professional development trends within a career continuum which are relevant to the NIQTSL national teacher quality agenda and MCEETYA professional teaching standards of graduate, competence, accomplishment and leadership. The results are also related to situativity theory.

1. Professional development trends for beginning teachers

The results of the literature searches and program leader interviews, case study school teacher interviews and school leader surveys indicate that the key emerging trends relevant to the professional development of beginning teachers include systematic induction programs and mentoring. These support processes can be related to graduates and then skill-building towards professional teaching standards of competence in their early years in the profession.

Induction

Career pathways processes acknowledge that teachers at various stages in their careers require different support and professional development approaches, with beginning teachers needing an effective induction program. The early years of teaching are focused on survival and improving various skills such as behaviour management, lesson programming and classroom management routines, with recruits being supported by a comprehensive induction program. An induction program for beginning teachers:

Welcomes and introduces the teacher to the profession...acknowledges the importance of the teacher and the contribution that they can make to the learning of the student; responds to the identified needs of the teacher, the school and the system; lays the foundation for professional growth to occur....captures and nurtures the drive and commitment, the 'moral purpose' (State Government of Victoria, 2003).

In the United States of America, Halford (1998) considers that, compared to other professions, there is insufficient support for beginning teachers. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future underlines the importance of increasing the professionalism of teaching, one significant step being through establishing a beginning teacher induction process: 'A profession has a responsibility to take care of its members and clients. It is professionally irresponsible not to support the new teachers' (Thomas, citing Huling-Austin, 1989). Beginning teacher induction involving a professional growth focus rather than formal evaluation; reduced classroom and other responsibilities; induction as part of a professional development continuum within a culture of collaboration; reduced workloads; and appropriate compensation for mentors, are strategies highlighted for successful induction programs within the United States context (Thomas).

Similarly in Australia, the 2002 Commonwealth Government report 'An Ethic of Care,' highlights the importance of a long-term support program for beginning teachers. The critical early period of induction involves orientation in professional and organisational issues, as well as providing personal and professional support, with the focus being on the importance of developing knowledge and skills, professional development and appraisal. This report emphasises that an effective induction program is essential to deal with the 'reality shock' which occurs for beginning teachers, including the demands of the professional teaching role, overwhelming workload, physical and professional isolation, conflicts between expectation and reality, and difficult initial teaching assignments (DEST, 2002).

This Australian report recommends a model for the management of induction programs which is based on systems, districts and schools each addressing seven aspects at their level of responsibility. These seven aspects relate to developing or refining a policy, assigning responsibility, designing a delivery model, allocating resources, planning for accountability, implementing the model and evaluating effectiveness. For example, the system's responsibility for policy incorporates broad requirements, with the expectation of district guidelines and in-house school processes. The delivery of an induction model at the school level involves specific aspects at the orientation, establishment and development phases. This includes pre-commencement visits, an initial support person, meetings with the principal/senior staff, and an orientation booklet, as well as telephone contact from the school (DEST, 2002). These support strategies provide the basis for an ongoing professional development process for beginning teachers reflecting situativity theory. Situated and supported learning occurs within the school site, district or wider systems context and involves joint and collaborative activities with others to induct the newcomer into the shared beliefs of the profession, while engaging in relevant practical activities and artefacts.

While at the time of conducting this Commonwealth (DEST, 2002) research there were significant gaps in the quality of Australian beginning teacher induction programs, in recent years the state education systems have begun to develop programs. The Victorian induction checklist and planning materials reflects report recommendations and focuses on teachers who are beginning or returning from extended leave (Stirling: program leader interview, 2003; Victorian Department of Education & Training, 2002). The Victorian induction program, similar to the Commonwealth report, underlines student behaviour management, catering for the range of learning needs, organising student learning and assessment and record-keeping as aspects. Communicating with parents, classroom management, student motivation, teaching strategies, developing sequenced learning programs, and time and stress management are also part of the establishment phase program (State Government of Victoria, 2003). The Commonwealth report outlines that in the development phase, similar strategies to the establishment phase would continue, but highlighting situativity theory and community responsibility for newcomers, with more observation and feedback from other staff. System and district support and structures for induction include systems-provided time, clear probation processes, professional standards and workshops, networks and curriculum assistance. For example, the Victorian Institute of Teaching, the registration body for Victoria, has introduced a program to support beginning teachers on provisional registration in meeting the professional standards for full registration and this program includes developing a portfolio, teaching observations and reflection (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2005).

Another key support for beginning teachers which is identified in the Commonwealth report (DEST, 2002) as part of an induction process is providing newcomer assistance through mentoring, with United States and Australian regions now introducing programs.

Mentoring

Consistent with effective professional development practices, mentoring is increasingly being linked to successful induction programs through community members taking responsibility for recruits. Mentoring is:

A nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional development (Alberta Teacher's Association, 2002).

An alternative definition of mentoring is, 'a critical friend focusing on reflective practice' (DEST, 2002). Mentoring has benefits for the whole learning community in that the new teacher is supported in the transition into teaching. While the mentor is revitalised through career enhancement and provision of an opportunity for leadership, public recognition and reward, schools can build their capacity through the inherent professional development (Education Queensland). Therefore, mentoring has the potential to benefit not only the individual concerned but the school as a whole, with the mentoring pairs becoming part of the professional culture which focuses on the classroom but also provides the opportunity for strong collegial relationships between colleagues and the injection of new ideas.

One school leader interviewee in the case study school research commented in respect to her own experiences as a beginning teacher with a principal acting as her mentor:

I guess my first school would still stand out as being the best for me and that was because the principal and principal's roles were very different in the early eighties. The principal actually had time to come into classrooms and see what we were doing and we just don't any more. And as a beginning teacher that was really important to me and she came into my classroom on a regular basis and observed and gave me written feedback. And we sat down and talked about that feedback and also identified some goals to work on. And um, you know I'd ask her for articles to read and things that I could follow up and she was good at putting things together and helping me and planning what I wanted to do (Owen, 2003: Interview 7).

The processes relevant to mentoring are outlined in Figure 2 below:

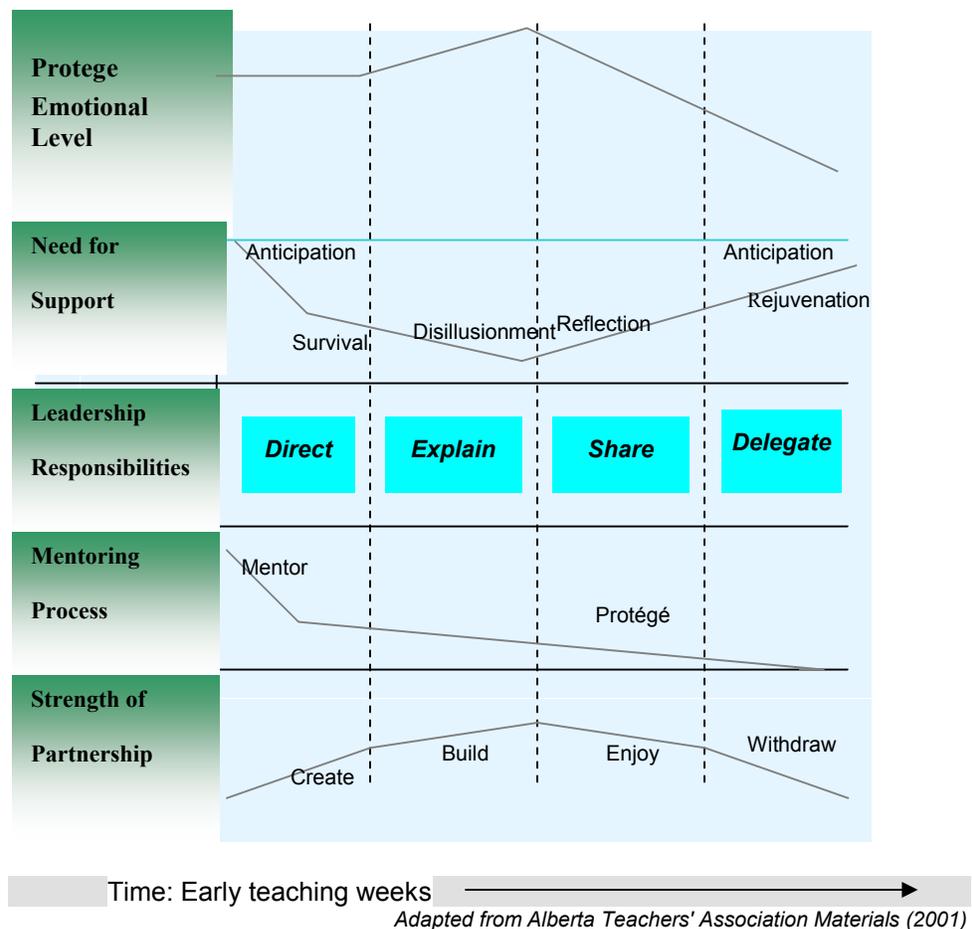


Figure 2: Dynamics within the beginning teacher mentoring process

Figure 2 is a generalised summary of the relationship between some key aspects of mentoring during the early year(s) of teaching. This includes the protégé's emotional levels, need for support over the first year, different processes used by the mentor, degrees of mentor responsibility as a leader, and different phases of the partnership. While no specific timeframe is given as this varies with individual people, the figure indicates that in the initial weeks of the first teaching assignment, social and personal issues dominate. There is a high level of anticipation and the mentor and protégé are creating a partnership, with the mentor being highly involved, perhaps even directing the protégé. Following this, while the relationship continues to build, the beginning teacher moves into survival mode and the mentor may be involved in considerable explanation of school, curriculum and pedagogic issues. This role of support person involved in continuous explanation of issues becomes particularly significant during a phase of possible teacher disillusionment, as behaviour management rather than curriculum issues begin to dominate, and the workload and responsibility become overwhelming. The protégé at this time may experience a high level of emotion and may question the career decision, with the strength of the relationship with the mentor providing support to deal with the challenges of this phase. Through reflection and experiencing successes, a more equal relationship between the mentor and protégé begins to occur. Over time, as the new teacher becomes more skilled and confident and rejuvenates through shared experiences, the mentor eventually withdraws and delegates responsibility to the protégé (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

The previously cited Australian Commonwealth report on beginning teachers (DEST, 2002) emphasises the importance of induction involving mentoring to provide opportunities for beginning teachers to reflect on their work, question their practices and challenge assumptions underpinning schooling through a critical friend or mentoring relationship. However, the Commonwealth research findings show that most beginning teacher induction programs do not include a mentor but involve support by an untrained buddy for school orientation purposes, with no provision of time for carrying out these responsibilities. Only 28.4% of schools who claim to use mentoring actually set up appropriate structures including time for mentoring. Mentoring involving critical reflection on classroom practices with a skilled teacher has been stressed as a particularly significant form of support, but only 25.7% of beginning teachers receive this, with joint curriculum planning, observing others, and student behaviour management support variously available to 25-50% of respondents (DEST, 2002: 70). The report emphasises the importance of a buddy for the initial orientation period as currently provided, but states that critically reflecting on teaching is not necessarily appropriate in the initial teaching phase and may be more appropriate in the development phase. Also, the mentor may need to be a different person from the buddy teacher. The mentor may be chosen by the beginning teacher as someone they admire and feel comfortable with, or someone identified by the school as particularly skilled, as well as being someone who is trained and is provided with time to do the role:

The clear message from the surveys and focus groups is that although mentoring has acquired a significant profile in business and education over the last decade, it is not an automatic 'fix-all' for the induction of beginning teachers. Mentors need to be carefully selected, and supported by training and appropriate allocation of time. And all parties need to have a clear understanding of the role and its expectations (DEST, 2002: 77).

Besides the moral and professional issues of providing support to beginning teachers, there are the practical considerations of retaining recruits in a time of teacher shortage. American states and school districts are of particular interest because they have variously experienced teacher shortage over the past decade, with some research indicating that 40-50% of those who enter the profession, resign during the first seven years of their careers (Thomas). A range of induction programs have been introduced to ensure that beginning teachers experience success in the profession, and more than thirty American states have now introduced an inservice training and mentoring program, with costs varying depending on the program.

Mineapolis, Washington State, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, and Wisconsin have introduced mentoring programs for beginning teachers in the past five to ten years. Mentoring programs vary from one state to another. For example, the Colorado program involves full-time release of mentors for three years, with each mentor being assigned about fifteen new teachers, and meeting and conducting classroom observations at least weekly. Retention rates for new teachers have now increased from less than 70% to 91% after five years (National Educators Association). Similarly, the Walla Walla mentoring program in Washington State operating since the mid

1990's has resulted in 90% retention during the initial five years of teaching (Walla Walla, 2001; Walla Walla, program leader interview, 2003).

All of these programs from various American states are based on the Toledo Plan, a joint Ohio Federation of Teachers and government program for supporting beginning teachers using peer mentors, which has operated for over fifteen years. In the Toledo Plan, the beginning teacher program uses the mentoring teacher to provide support and then to evaluate the beginning teacher's success in meeting teacher-developed professional standards, the decision then being ratified by a joint union/government board. Consulting teachers receive payment for the additional workload and serve as mentors for three years (Working for America). Payment for mentor teachers in Rochester ranges from 5-15 % of total salaries, averaging from \$3000 to \$9000, while in Cincinnati, salary increments are around \$5000. District mentors who provide support across several school sites, teach no more than 60 % of contracted time, with mentoring time occurring during the actual school day (Thomas).

The United States research has shown that not only do new teachers benefit from these mentoring programs, but in terms of a career continuum and revitalising teacher enthusiasm and professionalism, there are also benefits for mentors. These include increased reflection, more effective teaching, greater professionalism and improved commitment to teaching (Auton, Berry, Mullen & Cochran, 2002). The established American experience and research into mentoring programs provide significant information for Australian education systems in developing mentoring programs as will now be outlined.

Mentoring programs for Australian beginning teachers

With teacher shortage increasingly impacting on all states of Australia, induction and mentoring programs to support beginning teachers and increase retention are occurring. The Victorian induction process also involves a mentoring program which is linked to the registration process. Some release time for the mentor and beginning teacher for observations and conference attendance is provided and a portfolio process is used (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2003).

The Tasmanian Beginning Teacher Time Release Program provides access to four hours of time release per fortnight for additional support as part of the induction program for new full-time teachers. This time may be banked and is available for school/district/department induction programs, mentoring activities with an in-school colleague, making contact with the district support person, attendance at specific professional development programs, observation of experienced teachers or for enabling experienced teacher observation of and feedback to the beginner. Additional time-out for lesson preparation, classroom visits, and collaborative activities with other beginning teachers is also included (Tasmanian Human Resources Management Branch). Building on the initial induction process, the Port Arthur district program uses existing district support staff who work with new staff in a beginning-of-year induction program and at other times, in addition to a mentoring program (Moss: program leader interview, 2003). However, rather than the mentoring program starting during the orientation phase, in line with the DEST (2002) report on successful mentoring, reflecting the significance of mentoring as critical reflection on teaching skills, instead mentoring occurs in the establishment and development phases. Therefore, in Term 2, the district support staff coordinates the in-school mentor process to develop an individualised program for a specific number of beginning teachers, with district staff facilitating the mentor training day. The district support is therefore available throughout the year, including organising a beginning teacher network and supporting the assigned school-based buddy and mentor, with the state-provided fortnightly time release also being available for the mentor teacher (Department of Education, Tasmania).

Both the Victorian and Tasmanian programs acknowledge school level induction responsibilities for beginning teachers, as well as systems funding and resource material development, with some district-based mentor training, coordination and follow-up.

2. Professional development trends for experienced teachers

The research findings indicate that professional development within the school study group team is a key emergent trend highlighted in this research, particularly in relation to meeting the needs of experienced teachers. Catering for individual needs within performance management and portfolios, as well as using advanced skills certification processes and teaching standards, also provide support for experienced teachers.

Teacher learning community and workplace study groups

Teacher learning day-to-day in the workplace learning community, rather than unconnected individual conference attendance, is a key emergent trend in professional development as outlined in relation to a statement from the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching:

In the new view of professional development, teachers are engaged in professional learning every day, all day long. It pervades the classroom and the school....Teachers learn together. They solve problems in teams or as a whole faculty because every teacher feels responsible for the success of every student in the school community. Rather than looking only outside of the school for expertise, teachers build it within their own environment (NPEAT, 1999).

The new approach to teacher learning can be linked to situativity theory. This means that professional development occurs within a particular social environment, through group discussion and shared understanding and input, as well as practical activities to work with new ideas (Barab & Duffy, 2000). Learning happens because others on-site or within like-minded situations or in online contexts are involved, with people sharing and developing ideas together over the long-term within a learning community.

However, traditionally while teachers have been responsible for creating these learning conditions for students, there has been very little opportunity for sustained intellectual learning communities for themselves:

Teachers cannot create and sustain contexts for productive learning unless these conditions exist for them....[teachers need] to accept the obligation as a group to develop a forum specially designed for their growth and development, a forum that acknowledges that there is a world of ideas, theory, research and practice about which they should be knowledgeable (which is not to say experts), if they are not to wither on the vine, if they like their students, are to avoid passive resignation to routine (Sarason, 2003: 369).

Renowned American educational learning community researcher, Du Four, uses the metaphor of cultivating a garden to establish a healthy culture for teacher learning. He emphasises the importance of high maintenance, 'shaping the assumptions, expectations, habits and beliefs that constitute the norm...rooting out the weeds of bad culture, including unwillingness to accept responsibility, working in isolation, turf wars...' (Du Four & Burnette, 2002). Du Four emphasises the importance of developing a teacher learning culture through celebrating small victories and successes and presenting student stories and excerpts from surveys as a means of showing how teachers can make a positive difference in students' lives. Regarding teachers working in isolation, he suggests systematically engaging staff in 'ongoing, daily, job-embedded professional growth in an environment designed to ensure collaboration' (Du Four & Burnette, 2002).

Other researchers (Thomas et al., 1998; Smylie, 1999; Nias, 1999) have also emphasised the benefits of school-based teams. Some of the literature (Thomas et al., 1998) about highly collegial settings indicates that in these environments, there is evident: 'a high level of innovativeness, high levels of energy and enthusiasm and support for personal growth and learning'. However, teachers in low collegiality environments, 'see their job as routine, their workplace setting as highly bureaucratized and their subject matter as static or unchanging' (Thomas et al., 1998, citing McLaughlin, 1993: 94). Teacher union involvement has focused on support for schools as professional learning communities, with capacity building and action research based on teams identifying improvement goals related to student learning (Garvie, program leader interview, 2003). Furthermore, research on teacher burnout emphasises the issues of depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, with role conflict, lack of participatory decision-making, poor classroom climate, work overload, and lack of peer and manager/principal support, all being factors. 'The professional norms of privacy, egalitarianism, and autonomy that characterise many schools may actually mitigate against the type of classroom-oriented, instructional-focused, problem-solving collegial interactions that may help teachers deal more productively with sources of stress in their work' (Smylie, 1999: 70). Working together is essential in reducing teacher burnout because it emphasises people rather than administrative paperwork, with openness in conflict resolution, a caring environment and professional development being important (Nias, 1999).

United States research on collegial learning notes the social and intellectual benefits of learning together, as well as some issues in working through conflicting ideas or alternatively not engaging in debate for the sake of preserving congenial relations (Thomas et al., 1998; Jarzabkowski, 2001). In one school-based secondary school research situation, an internal study group was established involving release time for regular professional development over three years for about 30 staff using English literature and history documentation as artefacts. These ongoing sessions provided an opportunity for teachers to engage in deep learning in a similar manner to the learning time students engage in (Wineburg, program leader interview, 2003). Benefits of establishing this ongoing professional development time included introducing new material into the classroom, time for intellectual discussion, increasing use of engaging teaching methodologies, becoming reflective, considering different and sometimes conflicting teacher perspectives, and even promoting wider school reform issues (Thomas et al., 1998; Wineburg, program leader interview, 2003). However, Borko (2004) indicates that in workplace teams, congeniality and a supportive environment can predominate and prevent discussion involving a critical examination of teaching issues. On the other hand, when sharing over an extended timeframe is involved, discussion may move beyond congeniality and passionate debate may occur, with the resultant tension and conflicting ideas providing challenge for the membership of the community (Wineburg, program leader interview, 2003). This aspect relates to situativity theory which draws attention to the individual identity becoming established within community and community sustainability, but also the importance of accommodating new ideas and ensuring challenge such that educational transformation is supported. Borko (2004: 7) indicates that 'professional development leaders must help teachers to establish trust, develop community norms that enable critical dialogue and maintain a balance between respecting individual community members and critically analysing issues in their teaching'.

Similarly, Carroll (2002) indicates that the skills that teachers use in these groups involve asking powerful and revealing questions about the practice of teaching. Members of the group restate ideas to draw additional attention to them. They broaden and reconceptualise an example into a general idea, shift perspectives through recontextualising, and recycle ideas from earlier in the session to seek agreement or disagreement based on the previous speaker's comment. Carroll's research on study group dynamics shows that through this process, negotiation of meaning in the community of practice occurs, resulting in joint construction of ideas which are reintroduced in subsequent conversations and reflect the collegial construction of knowledge over time (Carroll, 2002). This view is supported by comments from a case study school interviewee:

When you work as a team, you hear about different perspectives on things. You sort of have to sit back and look at something the way someone else is looking at it. And it's interesting because you might not have thought about it from that point of view. And things like that are quite interesting rather than just working on your own and doing your own....I mean it forces us to negotiate and compromise (Owen, 2003: Interview 8).

In establishing teacher study groups and learning communities involving small teams of self-managing staff supporting each other formally and informally within a particular school, the process involves working to problem-solve together, concentrating on 'the combination of knowledge of subject, knowledge of teaching and knowledge of particular groups of students' (NBPTS, 2003, citing Little 2001: 37). This regular contact allows a deeper grasp of content to develop and an emphasis on conceptual, problem-solving and inquiry aspects of the subjects, joint curriculum planning and perhaps developing a weekly timetable for shared classes. The role of the leader becomes one of fostering experimentation, providing information and supporting collaboration within the overall agreed direction and vision for the school and values. Consistent with situativity theory and the sense of joint enterprise and shared beliefs as well as community sustainability and individual identity in community, the process of effectively involving people in the collaborative change process is outlined: 'Individual tinkering will result in system-wide coherence....clarity about who we are as a group creates freedom for individual contribution... Only when everyone in our organisation understands who we are and has contributed to this deep understanding do we gain the levels of commitment and capacity we so deeply need' (Wheatley, 1997).

Australian research by Mulford and Silins (2001) has shown that a school environment of participatory decision-making will maximise student learning. A few comments from the school leaders' surveys indicate the importance of the school leader in establishing a culture of team learning:

Self motivated staff members are encouraged to share their learning with others and are offered whatever support they require to explore ideas further.

Learning circles are being established for participants to discuss their new learning.

These statements highlight the importance of teachers being accountable for student learning with leaders needing to convince teachers to use action research and gather student performance data, and to be involved in critical dialogue and collaborative decision-making.

The case study school interviews regarding professional development within collaborative teams in the school community also indicated an enthusiasm about collegial teacher learning, being 'responsible for each other's learning' (Owen, 2003: Interview 11), 'supporting each other with our practice' (Owen, 2003: Interview 8), 'learning a lot professionally' (Owen, 2003: Interview 14). This regular collaboration certainly reflects other research on effective professional development (Kenway et al., 1999). Furthermore, consistent with situativity theory and other research (Lewis, 2002), the importance of coherence and connecting with school planning or individual planning goals and a focus on content including programming and methodologies was evident. Active learning through examining and assessing student work together, using a professional development format of in-depth discussion, and extended duration to allow for the professional development activity, was also emphasised.

Collegial performance management and advanced skills certification for individual professional growth

The small team learning communities within schools create an opportunity for teachers as well as students to learn from each other and this collegiality can also occur through the performance management or supervision processes. However, overseas and Australian research into performance management based solely on a hierarchical line management format of goal setting meetings and imposed classroom observations for data gathering, post-observation meetings and written reports, has generally indicated negative staff perceptions in terms of teacher professional growth and impact on student learning (Wragg, Wikeley, Wragg & Haynes, 1996; Down, Hogan & Chadbourne, 1999; Down, Chadbourne & Hogan, 2000).

While one aspect of performance management is about achieving school and system directions, Spitz (2001) also draws attention to individual professional growth models. These involve self-assessment, peer coaching, interactive journals and portfolios which are 'more in keeping with how teachers understand their role and with how they improve their practice to involve teachers more meaningfully.....to make importance on growth central without ignoring the issue of competence' (Clandinin, Kennedy & La Roque, 1996).

Various emerging trends models exist which focus on collegial performance management. For example, in Alberta Canada, joint education system and union cooperation has resulted in professional learning communities and professional growth plans being developed starting with student learning goals and school vision and developing action research approaches for individuals and teams (Podlosky, program leader interview, 2003). In Australia, in one of the case study interview schools which had over 100 staff, the shortened school day meeting rotation was scheduled to include time for performance management in teams once a term. Staff in this school identified three preferences for a line manager from those in the assigned promotion roles and interested advanced skills teachers. Following individual staff/manager consultations to document performance goals and clarify any individual issues, during the shortened school day meeting rotation all staff assigned to a particular performance manager meet as a group to share their goals and achievements with each other as a team. This has had a positive impact on teacher attitudes towards performance management:

Staff actively share their goals and classroom practice. Classroom practice evolves quite a lot because it's a good way of reviewing what you're doing as well as suggesting perhaps a better way or if you ask for advice you hear what other people are doing...it's not threatening, it's not judging and that's been very healthy (Owen, 2003: Interview 2).

Some interesting performance management collegial models are also being used in Columbus, Cincinnati and Seattle in North America and these have been developed jointly with education authorities and teacher unions (Improving Teacher Accountability and Incentives, 1998). For example, in Rochester in Cincinnati, experienced teachers have a choice between a traditional supervision model of manager-conducted classroom observations or working with a peer group that includes the manager, with various models being available for doing this. The models include developing a portfolio, peer appraisal, project work, and using goal setting and data gathering individually or as a group. However, irrespective of the model, the focus is on meeting professional standards, gathering data from parents, students and peers, student achievement data gathering, and making the links to the school improvement plan (Rochester Teachers Association). The purposes for portfolios according to various United States programs include demonstrating skills and understandings in the achievement of outcomes in student teacher programs and meeting criteria for full teacher registration in completing a program as a beginning teacher. Demonstrating ongoing learning and achievement of competencies as an experienced teacher were other purposes (ERIC).

Therefore performance management and experienced teacher professional development is increasingly influenced by career continuum models and professional teaching standards, with the Commonwealth Government establishing a National Framework for Professional Teaching Standards (MCEETYA, 2003). The framework includes four levels of graduate, competence, accomplishment and leadership, with standards related to professional knowledge, professional practice, professional values and professional relationships. Each Australian state is expected to develop generic standards within the framework and subject specific standards are also evolving. In Australia, professional teaching standards are frequently evolving through the state teacher registration authorities, focused on the graduate entry into the profession and full registration and renewal requirements (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2005). For those seeking higher levels, state-based employers have established processes including advanced skills certification (DECS).

Advanced skills certification can be related to performance management processes and encouraging and highlighting strengths and leadership potential in staff, with individual meeting time for teachers and line managers to get together being important. In commenting on the need for individual encouragement of staff and career planning, one of the case study school interviewees in relation to her seeking the Advanced Skills Teacher accreditation commented: 'If you have a leader who will support you and encourage you... I had a principal who was nagging me that I should do this... And finally one day he was going to a conference and he just said, look I really want you to do this and really made me feel valued' (Owen, 2003: Interview 10).

South Australia's Advanced Skills Teacher (AST1) process involves professional development for individual teachers while acknowledging their accomplished skills. The Advanced Skills Teacher certification has some similarity to the United States National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards has a focus on: 'results-driven, standards-based, job-embedded experiences' (NBPTS, 2003: citing Schlecty, 1998). In the National Board view, it is about collegiality:

The literature on teacher learning and professional development shows that most powerful learning opportunities for teachers are anchored in student learning, include high standards, are content-focused, develop ongoing collaboration and networks across teachers, share common norms of beliefs, and provide in-depth focused learning experiences that relate closely to the classroom (NBPTS, 2003: 11).

Both United States and Australian programs use portfolios as a significant part of the process. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards for accrediting advanced skills teachers involves the teachers concerned in external professional development and with other candidates. Collegial professional development is also involved for the volunteer teacher assessors who engage in four days of intensive summer holiday training before assessing advanced skills teacher portfolios using the general and subject specific standards (Harmon, Project Three interview, 2003). The NBPTS portfolio includes videotaped classroom teaching sessions with whole class and small group discussion, lesson plans, student work samples and assessment, evidence of collegial, family and community involvement and reflections on teaching that show their impact on student learning (Mineapolis Public Schools-www.mpls.k12.mn/staff/teacherportfolio/port_org_pag4.html). At this stage in South Australia, only the first level of Advanced Skills Teacher certification (AST1) is available and this involves teachers developing a portfolio to demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge and experience to satisfy the seven generalist criteria (DECS). The portfolio can be developed over time through performance management, and in the AST1 process, there is line manager support, classroom observations, and a presentation to a panel that includes an experienced generalist peer

evaluator. The purpose is to acknowledge higher level teaching skills and responsibilities and to attract teachers to remain in the classroom rather than moving into administration roles for promotion.

Reflecting situativity theory and collaborative learning, South Australian Project Two teacher interviews indicated voluntary establishment of collegial teams supporting the advanced skills teacher preparation process: 'There were a group of us doing it together in our school at the time...we started working together...it was fabulous...the sharing of ideas, the challenging, the debating and the supporting' (Owen, 2003: Interview 13). Another AST1 teacher commented on the self-reflection involved in the process as 'a reflective program process and always looking at changing things there for ourselves and the children' (Owen, 2003: Interview 15) and similarly:

I found it really valuable because I had to reflect on lots of things that I had just, were ingrained in my practice and that I hadn't thought about them for a long time...That was the thing that I got the most out of it. It was self-reflection, why are you doing, what you're doing....I had to do things like with the SACS framework, it's fine to say you use it but really pull it apart. And I needed extra training to have a look at that and was provided with time and it was paid for to actually go off and do it (Owen, 2003: Interview 10).

Similarly, another teacher who had undertaken her Advanced Skills Teacher process worked with a collegial team:

Four of us that started off together and two dropped off along the way. But it was absolutely amazing. Because we just got all that, got the criteria and then we started working together and we were just putting in hours, after school, at night, on weekends. But it was fabulous. Again it was that, as I am going back to all the time, the common ground, the common purpose. The sharing of ideas, the challenging, the debating and the supporting of the, how do you, what can I do that demonstrates criteria three or whatever. I don't think that I've got. Of course you have, don't you remember you did so and so. Oh is that what it means (Owen, 2003: Interview 13).

Therefore school-based collaborative teams based on specific needs support experienced teacher learning at the individual level, as well as meeting whole school and student learning needs.

3. Professional development trends for leaders

Within the career continuum focus, in addition to ongoing learning for beginning and experienced teachers, significant professional development is needed for potential and current leaders which seems to link with national political agendas of NIQTSL and MCEETYA in relation to professional teaching standards. The literature searches and program leader interviews, case study teacher interviews, and school leader survey results indicate that a range of emerging trends relates to leadership professional development including study groups and networks, coaching and mentoring programs.

Study groups and networks

School-based and external study groups and networks provide opportunities for ongoing and supportive succession planning for future leaders, as well as ensuring professional development for current leaders. Consistent with situativity theory, external networks are important because they provide the opportunity for membership of other learning communities, with new ideas being formulated and introduced into the school environment, thereby providing challenge and preventing insularity. These ongoing opportunities for learning question the value of one-off professional development essentially based on input from experts. Knowledgeable and inspiring presenters are still valued but longer term programs providing time to reflect and applying ideas through collegial discussion and problem-solving within real life situations are more effective in achieving educational change (Borko, 2004; Spillane, 2002). Workshop/study group professional development formats, collective participation, and extended professional development programs involving practical tasks are emphasised (Garet et al., 2001; Lewis, 2002).

One leader interviewed in a case studies project indicated this connectedness and follow up in discussing the value of locally-based networks:

A lot of my learning as leader has probably come from networks, being part of networks. My best learning comes from visiting other sites. Like I love going into other sites. If I know there's a school doing something really good, I'll make a personal invitation to that site, go and meet with the principal, meet with the staff, have a tour, look at the resources that they're using, look at the program they've put in place. I love to talk to the other leaders about school structures and curriculum development (Owen, 2003: Interview 11).

This statement implies that the local ongoing network is available for follow-up discussion. Other research on effective leadership professional development highlights that focused reflection is an essential part of the follow-up process and this is consistent with situativity theory.

Beginning leaders need particular support and networks are being created by districts and superintendents to provide extended follow up and reflection opportunities:

The very first day we met that night and had a champers or a wine or whatever, just to share stories and where we were and they were maintained for the first year intensively. We did those probably every three weeks and then after the following year they probably dropped off to once a term. But he [the District Superintendent] got us over the hurdle by doing that and I think what it did was it built up that collaborative bond of being able to say, shit I don't know how to do this...I've stuffed this up big, big time. Yeh, so have I. So you've got that really close network. So, also what they did, was introduce at that time a lot of the theory stuff behind professional development and leadership, people like Sergiovanni and that type of person where a lot of that stuff was put into our professional development programs which gave you a lot of that theory and the background stuff that was very necessary to function effectively as a principal (Owen, 2003: Interview 6).

In the United States, courses, study groups and networks are used to develop leadership potential and to support beginner principals. Leadership study groups are usually conducted over one or two years, and focus on regular meetings for several days or after school within district groups. The study groups sometimes use experts as facilitators, and ongoing constructivist tasks are completed between sessions within the workplace, with a coach and/or mentor sometimes being involved. Reflecting the focus on a broadly-based leadership, many programs for schools have traditionally included intensive written applications and interviews to select potential leaders, with the current programs having a more general focus on development leadership potential, with support staff also being involved (Yarrow, program leader interview; 2003). Rigorous planning is necessary for effective implementation, and new learning relies on moving beyond existing assumptions and establishing an environment of protected dissonance which challenges practice (Evans & Mohr, 1999). One Canadian program outlined by an interviewee leadership course participant indicated that it involved content regarding time management, working with parents and the school community, celebrating the successes of schools, and strategies for successfully starting the school year as some of the topics. When mixed groups including support staff were involved, regular timeslots to address particular group needs were established. Some issues raised included the need for clarity regarding the role of the coach of individual career planning support versus leadership potential assessor operating for the education system (Yarrow, program leader interview, 2003). Consistent with other mentoring literature, Yarrow also found that there was a need for training mentors in their work with potential leaders including supporting completion of assessment tasks related to the leadership program.

However, new teachers, principals and leaders not only need professional development in their beginning years in the new role, but as an ongoing process which may be linked to network and university accreditation:

The advice for principals in a nutshell, is to get into the habit of and situations for constant learning. Skill and know-how are as important as attitude. This means access to new ideas and situations, active experimentation, examination of analogous and dissimilar organisations,

reflective practice, collegial learning, coaching in relation to practice and more (APAPDC, 2003: 6, citing Schon 1987).

One United States study group program to support current leaders' professional development is conducted through the Annenberg Institute for School Reform in Brown University. Principals meet as a small study group four times a year, with regular communication between meetings. Participants come from across the country, from urban and rural situations, and from various grade level situations. Participants, who are all selected because they are involved in school reform, are not given a predigested course as this 'hardly leads to new thinking about leadership, teaching or learning' (Evans & Mohr, 1999). Instead, reflecting relevant situativity theory aspects of establishing joint enterprise while engaged in practical activities, Evans and Mohr emphasise that principals read and prepare for each session, ready to articulate their goals and dilemmas, and being constructively critical of their own work and that of colleagues. Reflecting effective professional development principles, learning experiences are intellectually rigorous and provoke questioning of long-held assumptions.

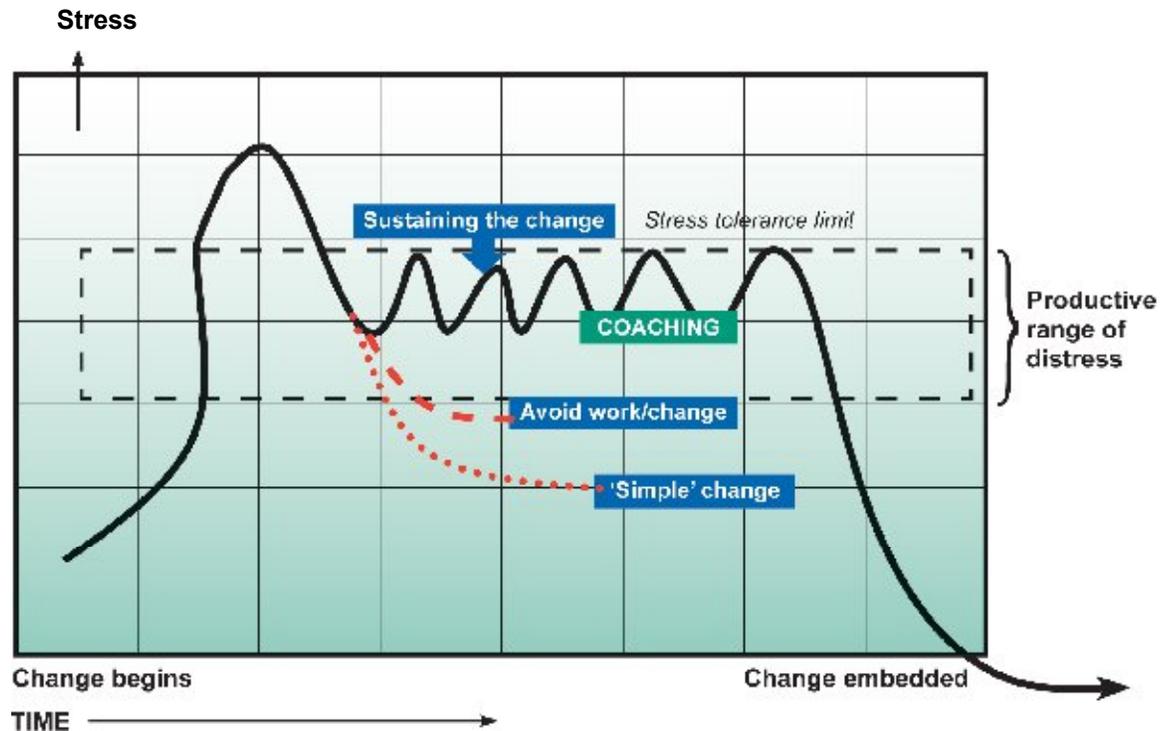
Coaching and mentoring of current and future leaders are other strategies that are currently starting to be established.

Coaching and mentoring

Within some leadership succession study groups and other leadership professional development activities, coaching and mentoring are being used in the United States and increasingly in Australia, to support leadership development and enhancement. Mentoring usually involves people at different levels of experience and may provide some more directive approaches, while in coaching there is more of an equal partnership (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2002). Coaching supports an individual to make meaning from their experiences, also encouraging them to take time to reflect on their practices and to decide what action to take:

Coaching is an ongoing partnership that helps clients produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance and enhance the quality of life. In each meeting the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action. Coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice (Hoult, citing International Coach Federation, 22/5/03).

Therefore, unlike mentoring which involves one person with superior skills working with another to upgrade their abilities as relevant to beginning teachers and those moving into new roles, coaching is a partnership to facilitate growth and learning, although some demonstrating, training and direction may also be involved, dependent on the needs and wishes of the person concerned (Hoult, 2003). Therefore, a coach needs to have the capacity to build relationships, is a good communicator and listener, is empathetic and has a genuine interest in the other person. The coach is also forward-thinking, an analytical and conceptual thinker and has the capacity to inspire, build relationships and provide challenge in a respectful manner (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2002; Hoult, 2003). Coaching involves regular structured sessions including goal setting, analysing reality, examining options and ascertaining action, with the decision-making and solution finding being in the hands of the coachee. Coaching 'deepens your understanding and moves you from where you are to where you want to be' (Hoult, 2003), with coaching involving regular support until there is a change in cognition and behaviour as reflected in Figure 3:



Adapted from Hoult (2003)

Figure 3: Sustaining the change through coaching

Figure 3 indicates the initial high degree of stress in the early stage of a change process beyond the productive range of distress. If simple change is involved, the person usually copes with the initial distress without intervention by others, accommodating and making changes or simply avoiding the work and change. If the change required is more complex, through ongoing support involving coaching over a period of time, the person begins to operate within the productive range of distress and gradually makes the changes and feels comfortable. Therefore, the role of coaching is to provide regular support while the change is implemented. Coaching ensures that the stress becomes more manageable, with the change event gradually being embedded and coaching then being suspended. Linked to this model, Malone (2001: 28) indicates that coaching is a method of supporting change through self-talk, mastery of experience, modelling, social persuasion and changes in psychological states. 'Coaching is linked to self-efficacy because this plays a central role in regular motivation and performance attainments by capitalising on employees' beliefs in their capability to mobilize, then motivate cognitive resources and courses of action needed to exercise control over events in their lives'.

This can be related to situativity theory and community responsibility for the learning of others. Through supporting others in developing their skills and self-belief, this leads to greater knowledge and confidence. Malone (2001) indicates the social role of coaches in facilitating and challenging destructive thinking, encouraging the coachee to recognise and understand their thought patterns and internal self-talk. Therefore the coaching process, involves accelerated learning and guided mastery and creating opportunities to be successful at new activities. This includes practical and relevant activities, including verbal reinforcing and gradually increasing task complexity, with progressively greater effort occurring by the coachee to ensure success. Change is therefore carefully managed through the coaching process, with care taken to support psychological wellbeing through the coach encouraging the employee within reasonable stress boundaries (Malone, 2001).

Coaching for school leaders is a significant professional development trend in the United States education system to ensure a process of managed change. For example, the Small Schools Network and Coalition of Essential Schools in America is based on the learning communities concept of subdividing large schools, particularly secondary schools, into smaller operating groups, each frequently having its own culture (Coalition of Essential

Schools). One of the key supports provided by private foundation money for Coalition of Essential Schools member schools is the provision of trained coaches to support leaders and teachers to restructure schools and to improve teaching and learning. For example, in Washington state, retired principals are hired and trained as coaches, with around 40 coaches helping 90 schools. The coaches meet together for two days a month to work on their coaching skills through reading and discussion about understanding change, equity and closing achievement gaps, using data to inform school decision-making, getting the community involved and teaching and learning. The role of coach is to bring technical expertise and to give an external perspective as schools restructure into smaller units, working with the principal to ask questions rather than giving advice. The coaches work for at least one day a week in each of the assigned schools and facilitate meetings, find resources, use surveys to establish student learning or school climate data, analyse data, and ask probing questions. In addition, Coalition school leaders also network together for a two day retreat about three times a year using the funding provided (Reeder, program leader interview, 2003).

Similarly, mentoring is being used to up-skill current and future leaders through the support of a more experienced leader. This involves providing job-embedded training for site administrators to deepen their leadership capacities through a regular close working relationship to address current instructional issues and develop practical applications. Mentoring involves a role model who teaches, sponsors and encourages a less skilled or less experienced person to support professional growth (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2001).

In the San Diego district in California, a mentoring program has been introduced using highly experienced school leaders who work with new principals to build skills. They attend each site on a bi-weekly basis to give feedback on staff conferences, conduct teacher coaching sessions and participate in parent meetings. The goal is to develop a collegial relationship through conversations, discussion and problem-solving sessions about the school site and instruction practice, rather than evaluate the principal. Walkthroughs, intra-district visitations and teacher pairings have been successful strategies. Walkthroughs involve short observations in classrooms with time spent debriefing at the end of each session, looking at student engagement, classroom environments and pedagogy. Follow-up discussions regarding observations, identification of trends and steps for improvement, also staff professional development and demonstrations, are involved. The mentor principal, because of their cross-district role, can also set up intra-district visits, thus overcoming the isolation of school leaders who may become insulated. The mentor develops a deep knowledge of district reforms and can match administrators and groups. Individual teacher pairings can also occur with teacher strengths recognised and walkthroughs used to 'capitalise on differences in expertise, predict failure in the social isolation of practice and create interdependencies that stretch over these differences' (Barry, 2002: 2).

The mentor principal keeps leaders aware of current literature and seminars for meeting the needs of teaching staff. Principals meet together and the mentor principals facilitate these instructional leadership sessions as well as supporting site administrators to develop a site improvement plan: 'Attracting strong capable people to school site administration is only the first step in building leadership capacity. Successful organisations change and improve because they involve their leaders in continuous growth opportunities. Administrators must be coached and supported in the same way an effective system supports teacher learning' (Barry, 2002: 3).

In conclusion, coaching and mentoring are significant professional development strategies which reflect principles of effective learning to improve the skills of current and future leaders through intensive and longer term support processes.

Discussion

The literature review and teacher interviews identify effective professional development as including career stage considerations of beginning teachers, experienced teachers and leaders using approaches such as coaching, mentoring, network and study groups, teacher teams and portfolios. These types of professional development approaches may be linked to situativity theory which highlights learning situated within a collegial group in which there is a common purpose and relevant practical activities. An extended timeline for professional development which supports the development of teacher identity within that community and members taking responsibility for the learning of others is involved.

As outlined in the Introduction to this paper, the Federal Minister of Education has announced his intention to promote the profession and to provide additional funding for teacher professional development, while also positively acknowledging the quality of the Australian education system and international rankings in literacy and numeracy (Nelson, 2003). However, in recent times the media has also been used to create public controversy and to sway public opinion towards particular nationalised reforms. Newspaper headlines including 'Learning sinks in a sea of claptrap' (Donnelly, 2005), 'Trainee teachers need remedial English classes' (Maiden, 30 September 2005), 'Teaching reform: It's time to change what and how our schools teach' ('Teaching Reform', 2005), 'New age courses fail kids' (Gosch & Maiden, 2005) and 'Students shaded by those overseas' (Maiden, 28 September 2005) reflect the crisis rhetoric. These articles represent a politically-generated media campaign for the purpose of transforming the historical landscape of essentially state-based education towards achieving broader national reforms.

Despite concerns regarding this political intervention, the funding and overall resource implications provide considerable incentives which override any initial cynicism (Cumming, 2004; AJCPTA; Buckingham, 2005). The establishment of NIQTSL, a focus on initial teacher education and graduates, funding for targeted professional development programs and professional teaching standards for graduates, competency, accomplished and leadership, highlight a focus on ongoing professional development for all teachers, as well as identifying specific career stage needs.

Consultation regarding the professional teaching standards for accomplished teachers and leaders, as well as initial teacher education and beginning teacher programs is currently underway. Although there is some cynicism about performance-based pay, the independence of NIQTSL, verification processes and costs and the role of leadership standards in regards to principal selection processes, the additional professional development funding and opportunity to promote the profession is welcomed (Cumming, 2004; Buckingham, 2005). Professional development programs relevant to career stages include Quality Leaders: Leaders Lead Project; Effective Programs for Beginning Teachers; and a range of programs in relation to experienced teachers such as Asian languages, mathematics and indigenous education (NIQTSL, 2005).

Individual schools, professional associations and clusters are currently applying for funding in relation to these programs. While specific Federal Government outcomes are articulated, there seems to be considerable scope for schools and groups to develop programs and professional development approaches which are situated within the local context and provide the opportunity for collaborative learning within and across sites over an extended timeframe. For example, the boys' education lighthouse project encourages a communities of practice approach and providing an 'environment for teachers within and across the participating schools to engage in professional dialogue about significant issues in the improvement of learning outcomes for boys' (DEST, 2005c). Schools and cluster groups can use some of their funding to employ a consultant from a nationally-established register, with consultants providing support in designing professional learning programs and in the implementation and evaluation phases (DEST, 2005b). A detailed professional development resource pack has also been prepared (DEST, 2005a). From the program and materials available from the federal funds, at this stage it seems that coaching and mentoring, networks and study teams professional development approaches are generally being encouraged.

Therefore federally-funded programs of this type are being developed which are consistent with the AGQTP published principles of good practice in PD including collaborative problem-solving, being school-based and occurring within a wider change process and focused on student learning (DEST, 2002a). Rather than one-off events and a prescribed program, consistent with this current research, the focus for professional development is that it is situated in the local context and involves an extended timeline and collegial processes, with externally consultancy support available if desired.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has outlined some research findings regarding teacher professional development programs focused on particular career stages involving practical activities and collaborative approaches including coaching, mentoring and study groups over an extended timeline. At this time it would seem that the approaches being used for national teacher quality agenda and associated professional development show consistency with a wider range of research findings regarding effective professional development approaches. Developments over

the next twelve months, particularly in terms of NIQTSL and beginning teachers, experienced teachers and leadership career stages, will be of considerable interest in regards to national professional development directions and agendas.

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