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Teacher Professional Development as a Transformative Experience

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Between March and April 2006, the Division of Professional Learning (DPL), Faculty of Education & Social Work, University of Sydney, conducted a Certificate of Primary Literacy Education. This consisted of a two-day 'Future Directions in Literacy Conference', followed by five, two-and-a-half-hour evening workshops, ranging in topic from 'Balanced Literacy' to 'Space to Play'. The DPL intended the Certificate to provide literacy educators with the space and opportunity to share the latest research and best practice in literacy education and to have a shared public voice to the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*. Conference participants numbered approximately 150 and included postgraduate students, classroom teachers, assistant principals, literacy consultants, librarians and university academics. Twelve of this group also enrolled in all five evening workshops and successfully completed the Certificate. This article shares the reflections of Certificate participants on the content of the conference and evening workshops and how the professional development experience had a transformative influence on their knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, beliefs and/or teaching practice.

Background to the Study

In the last decade there has been mounting, international support for professional development as a key means of prompting educational change and increases in student attainment (Bissaker, 2001; Guskey, 1995). This global commitment results from systems supporting claims of a "symbiotic relationship" between professional development and school improvement (Hawley & Valli, 1999, p. 129). Although evidence is limited, much of the literature suggests that in order to reform student attainment we must first improve teacher knowledge and skills (DEST, 2005a; Ewing, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

This paper reports on part of a larger doctoral research study on the design characteristics of effective teacher professional development[1]. It considers the reflections of participants in a Certificate of Primary Literacy Education (CPLE), delivered by the Division of Professional Learning (DPL), at the University of Sydney, in particular: responses to the content of the CPLE; and how the professional development experience influenced knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, beliefs and/or teaching practices.

Context of the Study

On 30 November 2004, the then Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, announced details about the Australian Government *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*. The Inquiry was intended to be a broad, independent examination of reading research, teacher preparation and practices for the teaching of literacy, particularly reading. An independent Committee was appointed to conduct the Inquiry. In turn, a Reference Group supported the Inquiry Committee. Submissions to the Inquiry were called for through advertisements in the national media. In total, 453 submissions were received. The Committee's report and recommendations, *Teaching Reading*, was launched on 8 December 2005. The report called for: an integrated approach to teaching literacy

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[1] Professional development is synonymous with inservice training (INSET).

(Recommendations 1 & 2); support for parents and carers in providing early literacy education in the home (Recommendation 4); priority to be given to pre-service literacy education (Recommendation 11); and increased opportunities for ongoing professional development in literacy for all teachers (Recommendation 15) (DEST, 2005b).

The CPLE was designed in the latter half of 2005, in response to the Australian Government *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*. The CPLE aimed to support primary teachers in furthering their understanding of literacy pedagogy from Kindergarten to Year 6, by providing a balanced overview of the current issues in literacy education and a forum for literacy educators to share research findings and best practice. Its structure was loosely modelled on the Certificate of Secondary Mathematics Education (CSME), as previously discussed by Anderson and Moore (2005). The inaugural program was conducted during March and April 2006. Twelve participants completed the CPLE by attending a two-day 'Future Directions in Literacy Conference', followed by five consecutive Wednesday evening workshops.

Of especial interest for this research study, was the CPLE's capacity to transform – or markedly change (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003) – participants' understanding of literacy education. As a result, the research primarily focussed on answering the following questions:

- Did participants learn about new aspects of literacy?
- Did this learning challenge current beliefs?
- Were participants able to implement new knowledge and skills in their classroom?

To this end, participants were encouraged to complete a "reflection on learning" survey at the beginning and end of each workshop. In addition, four participants were interviewed towards the completion of the CPLE to gather further evidence of learning.

This paper reports on designing the course, evaluating participants' professional learning from their responses to surveys and interview questions, and reflecting on participants' replies in order to refine the CPLE and plan future learning experiences.

Designing Effective Professional Development

The relationship between professional development, teacher learning and changes in classroom practice is well documented in the research literature (Fullan, 1991; Hawley & Valli, 1999). Though the current body of evidence is small and far from definitive, it implies there may be a positive relationship between teacher professional development and school improvement (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2000; Hawley & Valli, 1999). In consequence, there has been increasing global system support for the employment of teacher professional development as a key means of prompting educational change and enhancing student attainment (Bissaker, 2001; Borko, 2004; Rowe, 2003). Recent developments in Australia demonstrate state governments' financial and legislative commitment to transforming schools via teacher professional development. The NSW Institute of Teachers' (NSWIT) recent mandate of 100 hours professional development, every five years, for teachers at the level of Professional Competence endorses research espousing the positive impact of professional development on educational standards (NSWIT, 2005). However, while a keyword search on the subject of professional development will reveal a deluge of articles, books and conference papers, much of the literature is quite dated, the bulk of research having been conducted in the late 1980s to mid-1990s. Recent, renewed interest by international governments in teacher learning and professional development supports fresh research in this area.

A substantial literature exists on the subject of teacher change (see, for example, Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Day, 1999; Guskey, 1985; Fullan, 1991). This literature encourages broad and varying interpretations of the term 'teacher change', including: change as training; change as adaptation; change as personal development; change as local reform;

change as systemic restructuring; and change as growth and/or learning (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

From the post-depression era, teacher change was linked with organised professional development (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Initial professional development activities were based on a paradigm that implied a deficit in teacher knowledge (Richardson, 1999), lately much criticised in research literature (Guskey, 1986). More recently, there has been a fundamental shift in the theories supporting professional development: a switch in emphasis from change as something done to teachers, to teacher ownership and acceptance of change as an active, life-long, learning process (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002, Day, 1999; Fullan, 1991; Guskey, 1986; McKenzie & Turbill, 1999; Richardson, 1999). New models of the process of teacher change have been devised to complement this development. Generally, these differentiate between learning types and their comparative value or impact. Foci include: teacher knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs, attitudes and practice.

Models of Professional Development

Designing professional development opportunities for teachers in relation to new approaches to teaching and learning requires consideration of several factors including teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. Indeed, there is a significant body of research indicating that professional development designed to improve teachers' knowledge of, and beliefs about, their discipline is especially useful for improving practice (Bissaker, 2001; Garet et al., 2001; Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Sandholtz, 2001; Sparks, 1994). One way to approach professional development, therefore, is to encourage teachers to reflect on their beliefs, knowledge and learning and to share their thoughts with colleagues; this may prepare them to embrace new approaches or recommendations and put theory into practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Guskey's (1986) four-step model of teacher change proposes that significant changes in teacher beliefs occur only after teachers have trialled new methods and found improvements in student attainment apparent, a view strongly supported by more recent research literature (Ingvarson, 2003; Steadman, Eraut, Fielding, & Horton, 1995).
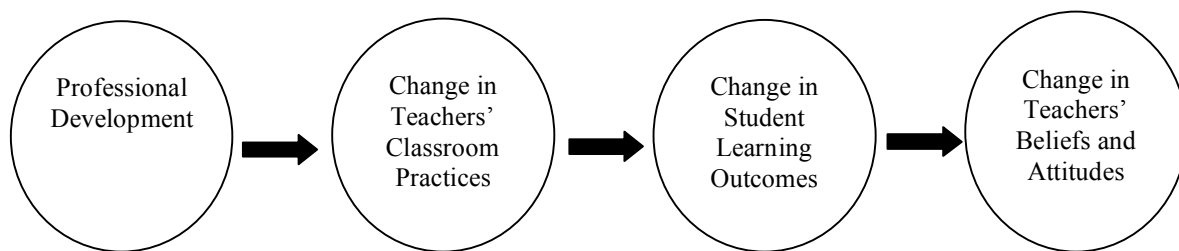

Figure 1. A model of teacher change (Guskey, 2002, p. 383)

For Guskey (1986), professional development is a catalyst or vehicle for changing teaching practice, leading to improvements in student attainment, and, finally, changes in teacher beliefs. Hence, teacher change is often slow, demanding substantial time both for study and development (Ewing, 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Ingvarson, 2003; Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, & Hewson, 1996; Mockler, 2001).

Although elements of Guskey's model have proved insightful (perhaps, most specifically, its emphasis on the necessity for teachers to undertake change in relation to the classroom environment), it has been criticised for its linear representation (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). A number of researchers convincingly argue that the process of teacher change is non-sequential (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Day, 1999). Indeed, Day (1999)

would argue not only is teacher change non-sequential, but that the developmental stages from novice to expert can alter according to changes in environment and circumstance.

Whilst retaining four domains of the teacher's world (similar, but not identical to Guskey's), Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) "interconnected model of professional growth" recognises the complexity of professional development, allowing for multiple growth pathways between domains that are non-linear in structure (Figure 2). Critical to the model is the change environment since some school contexts support teacher professional growth while others may not.

Three Australian studies on the professional learning of mathematics teachers provided the data for the empirical foundation of this model, which presents two types of domain: the external domain, located outside the teacher's personal world; and the teacher's personal world of practice, combining the domain of consequence, the personal domain, and domain of practice. While change can occur in any of the four domains, the specific domain will be determined by the change 'type'. Where experimentation with a new teaching strategy would reside in the domain of practice, for example, new knowledge or beliefs would be located in the personal domain. For Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), "reflection" and "enactment" are the mediating processes by which change in one domain leads to change in another. As they explain:

> Change in one domain is translated into change in another through the mediating processes of "reflection" and "enaction". The term "enaction" was chosen to distinguish the translation of a belief or a pedagogical model into action from simply "acting", on the grounds that acting occurs in the domain of practice, and each action represents the enactment of something a teacher knows, believes or has experienced. (p. 951)
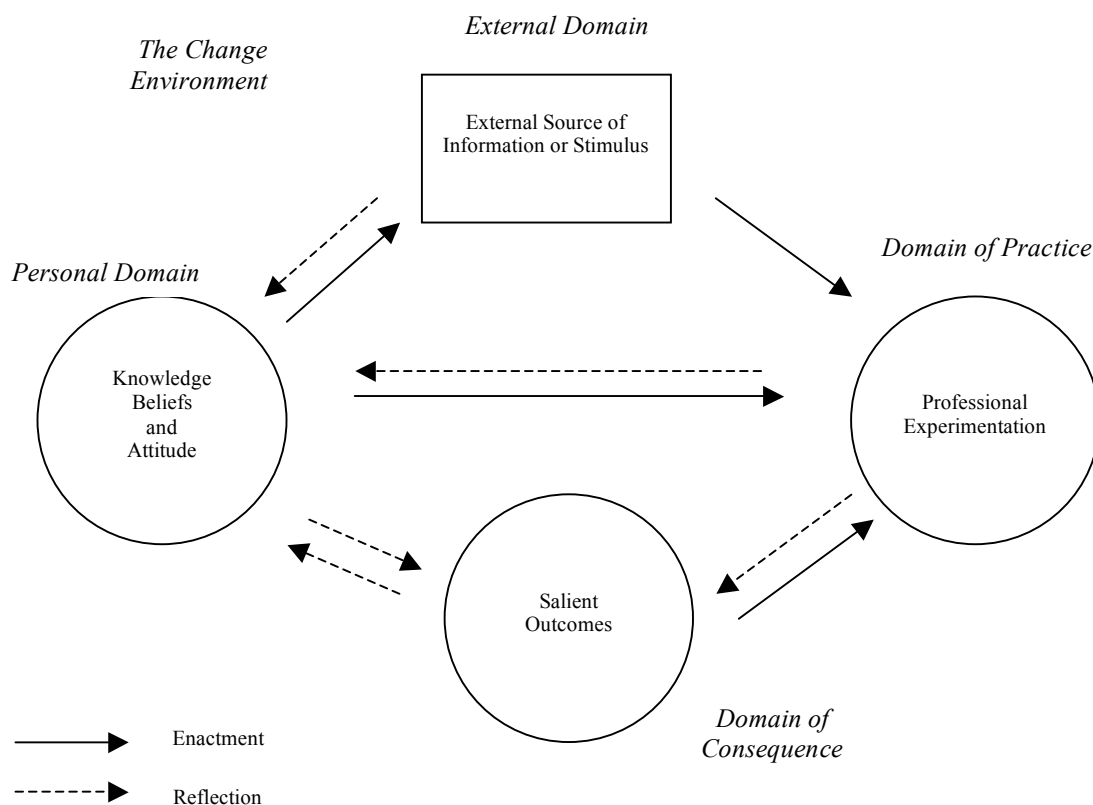

Figure 2. The interconnected model of professional growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 951)

A third model of teacher change, proposed by Harland and Kinder (1997), was derived from research into a professional development program on science teaching in primary schools. This longitudinal study enabled researchers to explore the mid- to long-term effects of continuing professional development on teachers at five case-study schools over a three-to-four year period. The resulting "empirically-grounded" typology of professional development outcomes identifies nine categories of change, including:

1. material and provisionary – material resources (worksheets and lessons plans, for example) that result from the professional development;
2. informational – a new awareness of the background behind the topic in focus;
3. new awareness – a conceptual shift in what participants' understand to be the appropriate content and delivery of a particular subject area;
4. value congruence – how closely the participants' personal beliefs about teaching/learning match those of the professional development providers;
5. affective outcomes – an acknowledgement of the emotional experience intrinsic to any learning/change situation;
6. motivational and attitudinal – increased levels of enthusiasm/motivation post-professional development;
7. knowledge and skills – a deeper level of understanding, theoretical knowledge and critical reflexivity at a curriculum and pedagogical level;
8. institutional – impact on a collective group; and
9. impact on practice – the ultimate intention of professional development to bring about change in the classroom.

From their observations, Harland and Kinder (1997) produced a "tentative hierarchy of outcomes" (p. 76). Acknowledging a change in classroom practice as the ultimate goal, the proposed ordering of outcomes is presented in Figure 3.

INSET Input

3rd *order*	Provisionary	Information	New awareness
2nd *order*	Motivation	Affective	Institutional
1st *order*		Value Congruence	Knowledge and Skills

Impact on Practice

Figure 3. The tentative hierarchy of outcomes (Harland & Kinder, 1997, p. 76)

Third-order professional development will have the least impact on teacher practice and any changes are likely to be short-lived. However, as with Fullan's (1991) model, Harland and Kinder (1997) conclude that professional development needs to impact at all three levels in order to succeed – not just at the most influential levels.

Substantial research in the area of teacher change has provided some insight into how teachers learn and transfer new knowledge into practice. The three models described provide useful frameworks for designing, analysing and evaluating professional development. Guskey (2002) and Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) establish the need to consider teachers' knowledge, beliefs, practices and student outcomes as important variables when evaluating the impact of professional development. Harland and Kinder (1997) identify motivation, emotional and institutional support, and value congruence as similarly important to the change process. Reflection has been described as a "mediating process" (Clarke &

Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 951), which plays a central role in engaging teachers in a review of their learning and a reconsideration of their practice.

Designing the Certificate of Primary Literacy Education

Teacher professional development can take many forms, from workshops and conferences to less formal activities, such as professional reading, observations and reflection activities. In recent years, school/university partnerships have proven to be of significant value (Ewing, 2002; Frampton & Vaughn, 2003; Sandholtz, 2001). The Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (AGQTP), perhaps, best exemplifies the success of such a model in Australia, where groups of teachers work on school-based research projects together with an external academic team member. In the case of the *Action Learning for School Teams Project*, the participation of an academic partner was shown to be an "important" factor for some groups of teachers for the "extension" of action learning within their school (Ewing, Hoban, Anderson, Herrington, Kervin, Smith, 2005, p. 9). Such studies strongly suggest that the support of an academic mentor is an effective strategy to assist teachers in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and beliefs, and implementing new approaches.

The CPLE was designed for primary school teachers and leaders wishing to develop greater knowledge about developing children's literacy, as well as the opportunity to join a community of learners reflecting on their practice. It aimed to support participants in furthering their understanding of literacy pedagogy from Kindergarten to Year 6.

Like the CSME's before it, the CPLE design was, in part, informed by the Garet et al. (2001) large-scale national survey into the effects of different characteristics of professional development on teachers' learning, which revealed a set of:

> ... three core features that have significant positive effects on teachers' self-reported increases in knowledge and skills and changes in classroom practice: (a) focus on content knowledge; (b) opportunities for active learning; and (c) coherence with other learning activities. It is primarily through these core features that the following structural features significantly affect teacher learning: (a) the form of activity (e.g., workshop vs study group); (b) collective participation of teachers from the same school, grade, or subject; and (c) the duration of the activity. (pp. 915-916)

Informed by this advice, the CPLE incorporated:
- a focus on content of the *NSW English K-6 Syllabus* (Board of Studies NSW, 1998);
- active learning through discussions with colleagues and opportunities to try teaching ideas between the weekly workshops; and
- critical exploration and reflection upon strategies for developing more sophisticated levels of literacy in the classroom.

In addition, the CPLE included both a two-day conference and workshops, encouraged more than one teacher from a workplace to attend, and involved ongoing meetings over a five-week period. Further, consideration was given to Clarke's (1997) ten important principles to guide planning of professional development (see Appendix 1). In particular, the CPLE focused on:
- addressing issues of concern and interest largely identified by the teachers themselves;
- involving teachers from a number of schools;
- recognising and addressing barriers to growth at several levels;
- requiring active participation, including the use of required readings;
- investing time and opportunities for planning, reflection and feedback;

- affording opportunities for ongoing support from peers and critical friends; and
- encouraging participants to set further goals.

With support from the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) and the Primary English Teaching Association (PETA) executive, two University of Sydney academics aimed to design a course that would address future directions in literacy education, as well as provide opportunities for teachers to work together over an extended period of time. As the literature stresses the importance of allowing sufficient time, both for the professional development program and subsequent trials/experimentation (see, for example, Ewing, 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Ingvarson, 2003; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1996; Mockler, 2001), time was a prime dictate for CPLE structure. Designed as a two-day conference, followed by five evening workshops, the CPLE provided twenty-four hours of face-to-face tuition outside of school hours. This enabled the participation of practising teachers and satisfied the requirements for a postgraduate unit of study. The two-day conference included keynote addresses by two international speakers; four feature presentations by renowned academics, twenty paper presentations (mostly refereed) by experienced academics, consultants, and literacy teachers; plus two panel sessions. Participants were able to choose two feature presentations and four papers from the program. Five, weekly meetings were then held, each with a focus on one aspect of literacy education including: a balanced approach; diverse needs, space to play; assessment and the teaching learning cycle; and new literacies. The final evening also provided opportunities for feedback on the design and organisation of the course. Participants survey responses formed the basis of the evaluation, which is presented in the next section. At the end of each meeting, participants were encouraged to complete evaluative surveys that involved reflecting on what they had learnt and how they might employ this information to enhance the teaching and learning of literacy.

Evaluating Professional Development

Education is driven by results (Sparks, 1994): just as systems require teachers to improve the attainment of their students, schools require professional development to improve the knowledge, skills and practice of their staff. As a result, accountability is paramount for providers and administrators of professional development (Killion, 2003; Shaha, Lewis, O'Donnell, & Brown, 2004; Sparks, 1994). Consequently, thorough evaluation is critical to any professional development offering, assisting providers to improve the design, content, delivery and administration of programs in progress; document evidence of program impact on participants' knowledge, beliefs and practice; identify the influence of program context on processes and outcomes; and adapt future programs of a similar nature (Caffarella, 2002; Guskey, 1999).

The models described earlier informed the design of the CPLE as well as the evaluation tools. In particular, the Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) model provided a framework for analysis of data. Harland and Kinder's (1997) nine categories of teacher change also informed instrument design and evaluation.

There is a strong argument for employing quantitative and qualitative analysis of multiple cases in order to ascertain the effectiveness of professional development: an analysis of different kinds of data, gathered in multiple settings, will expose "the dynamic influence of specific elements within a context" and "applicability of professional development elements across contexts" (Guskey, 1997, p. 4). This view is supported by literature claiming the frequent superiority of mixed- over mono-method research (Burke, Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Consequently, evaluation of the CPLE employed a mixed-method approach, conducted through self-report survey and semi-structured interviews. Interview and survey questions related to all nine categories identified by Harland and Kinder (1997). In keeping with a

mixed-method approach, these contained a mixture of Likert-style (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) questions. While the author acknowledges that the ultimate value of teacher professional development is its impact on student learning outcomes (Guskey, 1997, 1999, 2003), accurate evaluations of student response were in this – as in most – instance(s), difficult to obtain due to the brevity of time between course conclusion and the final summative evaluation. However, there is potential to explore student learning at subsequent interviews.

The surveys were designed to assist teacher reflection on their learning. Nine surveys were used to evaluate the CPLE – one pre-CPLE or formative survey to gauge participants' expectations, one at the conclusion of each day at the conference, one at each of the five evening workshops, and a final summative survey involving evaluation of overall learning as well as the delivery and organisation of the CPLE. The weekly surveys included a series of questions about the previous meeting as well as about the current evening's workshop (see Appendix 2 for a sample). This section of the paper presents the background information for participants, discusses the responses to a selection of the survey questions, and analyses the interview responses of four teacher participants.

The Participants

The CPLE was designed to cater for a broad audience, including: primary literacy teachers, literacy coordinators, and literacy consultants, from each of the three systems (DET, Catholic and independent). In total, there were twelve participants. Of these, ten participants were currently working in education and represented eight different schools (1 DET, 6 Catholic and 1 independent) and one Catholic Education Office (CEO). Their professional roles varied accordingly and included: classroom teacher, Mathematics Coordinator, Assistant Principal, Curriculum Coordinator and Literacy Consultant. The remaining two participants included a former teacher and budding children's writer; and a retired haematologist, aiming to facilitate his grandchildren's literacy skills. As a result, attendees' level of experience ranged from 0 to thirty plus years. Of the twelve, ten participants were female.

The Surveys

The first page of the weekly survey was to be completed by participants at the beginning and the second page at the completion of each evening workshop (see Appendix 2). Descriptive statistics were employed to identify basic patterns in subjects' numeric responses to each professional development program. Further, extensive information was obtained through reading, coding and analysing participant responses to open-ended survey questions.

This section of the paper presents the data and analysis of a selection of the survey questions. In particular, data is presented which considers participants survey responses to each of the following:
  a. Reasons for attending the CPLE
  b. Implementation of ideas in classrooms
  c. Sharing ideas with colleagues, and
  d. Learning about aspects of literacy education and challenges to current thinking.
Each is discussed briefly below.

Reasons for attending the CPLE.

Participants cited a range of motives for attending the course. Some participants named more than one. These included:
  • obtaining new knowledge and understanding (88%);
  • a desire for inspiration (8%);
  • to challenge themselves (8%);

- a sense of responsibility to their students and profession (24%); and
- the opportunity to network (8%).

The following responses from two participants were typical of teachers in this group:

To update my knowledge, particularly about new literacies.

Personal concern over the quality of my literacy program.

Surprisingly for the course providers, although a number of participants had indicated their intention to complete the two optional written assignments, in order to achieve one postgraduate unit of study, none of the respondents cited formal accreditation as motivation for their attendance.

Implementation of ideas in classrooms.

Each week participants were asked to report whether they had managed to implement any of the previous week's learning in their classrooms, to identify evidence of Harland and Kinder's (1997) category 9, and Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) professional experimentation. As two of the participants were working outside of teaching at the time of their attendance, their answers to this survey question were disregarded. Overall, responses were extremely positive, with between 60% (week 1) and 100% (week 3) of teaching participants trialling their learning in their classrooms each week. In addition, the majority of the teachers' responses demonstrated significant reflection about, and modification of, strategies for their classrooms, as opposed to simply employing a worksheet, for example:

Greater use of enlarged text. Using text in shared reading and then moving to guided writing. Have restructured guided reading sessions.

Providing students with more complex texts and drawing on the language contained. Using this as a model for writing. Identifying explicit grammatical structures. Have been determined in attempting to use more inferential questions.

In addition, two teachers referred to a perceived impact on their students' behaviour, reflecting Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) domain of consequence:

With my reading recovery children, I tried using some questioning techniques and it helped a little [in] drawing them out.

[The Assessment, Teaching and Learning Cycle workshop] was quite timely as we were reading a lot of Pamela Allen books. So I chose one and covered the texts and we read the visual text together. Students were extremely engaged and excited by the process and quickly incorporated discussion.

On the few occasions participants neglected to implement their new knowledge and skills, the primary reason cited was a lack of time:

Have not spent much time in the classroom this week due to inservice.

I have made some initial plans for change within the classroom. At this stage, I literally haven't had the time to implement these simple changes.

Whilst such instances were rare, they highlighted a perpetual obstacle facing participants of teacher professional development: how to secure time to plan and implement new strategies/skills within an already hectic school day. In addition, these comments raise a taxing question for evaluators of professional development: whether a participant's failure to implement new knowledge and skills is a consequence of poor program planning or external variables relating to the school context.

Sharing ideas with colleagues.

Participants' sharing of knowledge and skills with colleagues in school indicated the CPLE's relevance to their individual institutions, complementing Harland and Kinder's (1997) category 8. As with the implementation question, the two non-teaching participants' survey responses were ignored. Responses were overwhelmingly positive, with between 70-90% over the five-week period reporting they had shared new knowledge. Approaches included:

- meeting with the principal and executive to discuss the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Reading*;
- working with grade partners to develop assessment tasks for oral presentations;
- discussing the need to contextualise the teaching of spelling K-6 at a staff meeting.

Colleagues' reactions to participant sharing were generally positive, and, in some instances, resulted in the employment of strategies across the school:

> *...jointly constructing lessons with resource staff.*

> *Had a follow up session with RW and 8 colleagues the following day. [We] are working to develop a more explicit teaching framework.*

These results emphasise participants' encouragement of a community of learners within their school context, cited as highly beneficial to the sustainability of professional learning throughout the literature (see, for example, Fullan, 2005; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Ingvarson, Meirs, & Beavis, 2005; Liebermann, 1995; Sandholtz, 2001).

Learning about aspects of literacy education and challenges to current thinking.

In response to the question "what did you learn from this presentation and how do you plan to use the information to enhance the teaching and learning of literacy", almost all participants reported gaining new knowledge, skills and understanding each week. With reference to Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) personal domain and domain of practice, participants' comments were classed as alluding either to personal or practical knowledge. Personal knowledge included reference to beliefs and attitudes about literacy and literacy teaching and learning. Examples in this category included:

> *I learnt more about the principles of literacy teaching and learning. Really brought me back to the foundations of literacy learning. We tend to get so caught up in the "latest" trend in particular "program", usually commercial. It was great to know and affirm that teacher judgement is the ultimate basis for our literacy session.*

> *... the importance of quality text – I had always known this but sometimes in a school it is hard to break the mould! I feel inspired to do so now.*

In contrast, practical knowledge included new teaching ideas, tasks or activities, as well as practical ideas to aid implementation. For example:

> *A more suitable/effective way of running guided reading programs.*

> *In the writing process, if you demonstrate simple sentences and accept simple sentences that's all you get. Raise expectations and model how to add on to the basics and evaluate the field of change.*

In Fullan's (1991) experience, teachers are often conservative in their beliefs, thinking and behaviour, adjusting to change by making as few changes as possible. This viewpoint supports a growing body of evidence that demonstrates learning new knowledge and skills is

difficult and frightening for many adult practitioners and, indeed, causes conflict if it is of any value (Day, 1999; Fullan, 1991; Steadman et al., 1995).

With very few exceptions, participants consistently agreed that each of the five evening workshops challenged their previously held attitudes and beliefs about literacy education. The following responses from two participants were typical of teachers in this group:

> *I will make time for a space to play! I have allowed other things to crowd my teaching practice – time to slow down and then move to writing later on.*

> *How text had changed over the years. From our reading – I found this fascinating. It challenged me to think more critically about text structure.*

Far from uneasiness with the change situation, however, all of the participants' responses indicated a ready embracement of their newly held attitudes and beliefs. These responses support compelling evidence that suggests some teachers modify their former behaviour with relative ease (Gardner & Williamson, 1994; Harland & Kinder, 1997). This may be because the 'new' materials actually complement these teachers' preconceived notions. In this instance, although ticking that their attitudes had changed, each week a significant number of participants indicated that the session had in fact "reinforced" or "improved" their viewpoints as opposed to transformed them.

To gain more detailed information about the impact of the program and the potential for change, respondents were asked if they were willing to be interviewed at a future date. Six of the 12 respondents agreed to be interviewed.

The Interviews

Four of the six assenting teachers were interviewed in the final stages of completing the CPLE to gather further information about change in the three dimensions described by Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) – personal domain, domain of practice, domain of consequence (see Figure 2). Quota sampling was employed to ensure that significant characteristics of the wider, program population were represented in authentic proportions. A semi-structured interview provided questions as discussion starters; each lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was conducted face-to-face. Interviewees proved keen to participate, talking openly about their experience of the CPLE, in addition to its transformative influence on their knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, beliefs and/or teaching practice.

In summary, Judy had been teaching for more than 34 years, most recently at a Catholic primary school south of Sydney. Her current roles included Reading Recovery and Assistant Principal. Lucy attended the CPLE with a colleague from an independent school, where she was a classroom teacher for Year 3 and Stage Coordinator for Stage 2. She had been teaching for 17 of the 28 years since qualifying, having had a break of 11 years to raise a family. Margaret had left teaching having spent five-and-a-half years in the classroom. She was focussing on writing children's stories, whilst researching other options. Barbara was a classroom teacher in an inner-city Department school. She had been teaching for a total of seven years, having had two short breaks with children.

Judy's challenge to transform staff teaching practices.

Judy enrolled in the CPLE in a bid to stay up-to-date with the latest research in literacy education. She recognised expertise, innovation and leadership as vital to her role and hoped to employ knowledge, skills and understanding acquired from the Certificate to this end:

> *If I want to be effective in my position then I need to know what's going on and
> I need to be able to be seen to know what's going on and be able to help lead
> staff and to set them in the right direction.*

Yet, her initial impression was one of disappointment at the content of the conference:

> *[After] attending the conference, I almost didn't come [to the evening
> workshops] because the conference wasn't anything that I expected; and I
> know there were teachers who came the first day but didn't come the second
> day because it just didn't cover, it was totally unexpected, you know, so I was
> just hoping. So I thought, "well I'll come to the first night, you know.*

When asked to elaborate on the experience, she expressed concern about what she felt was presenters' over-emphasis on the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Reading*. As she explained:

> *My complaint was there was an awful lot of complaining about the literacy
> policy that came out, the* Inquiry*, that it was on reading, so that was a problem
> for starters, and it just seemed to be two days on that. The sessions that I went
> to were good, but the main sessions were just complaining about this, I mean
> that's what came across,*

Fortunately, however, Judy's perseverance rewarded her with rich dividends. Her responses indicate that there had been a change in her personal domain: the CPLE had both cemented previous knowledge and understanding, but also reawakened her interest by introducing innovative ideas about where to take literacy in the school:

> *If nothing else it's reignited my passion and got me going to the classrooms
> and saying "Now, try this." And "These are good activities." So more aware
> probably of what's going on.*

Indeed, so impressed was Judy by the majority of evening workshops that she subsequently organised for a number of CPLE staff to present at her school.

As Judy was responsible for reading recovery, she was unsure whether she would be able to implement any of the practical ideas in her classroom. However, she indicated that she had shared many of the teaching ideas with her staff, so there was evidence of change to her domain of practice.

> *I've been around to teachers and suggested, "Look, I heard this last night"
> and I obviously pick who I say it to, and I say, "Look, have a go at it, and I'll
> come and talk to you in a week or so, and see how it's going." So I've done
> that with some of the guided reading activities that Robyn suggested. I've
> introduced the questioning techniques to get them starting to think about
> improving what they're doing in that way.*

Yet, despite significant efforts to encourage staff to modify their practice, Judy could provide little, if any, evidence of a change in the domain of consequence, primarily because she had yet to follow up progress with them.

> *I mean, I've asked people to try things out, but as yet, I haven't gone back and
> said to them, "How's it going?" because there's been a lot going on and it's a
> matter of giving them space. If I go back too soon, it turns them off, so you give
> them time to feel around.*

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Wisely, she acknowledged the emotional experience intrinsic to any learning/change situation (Harland and Kinder's (1997, category 5), hence the importance of allowing teachers sufficient space to trial new learning before questioning them about the change endeavour.

Lucy's challenge to transform her self-confidence.

Lucy enrolled in the CPLE in a bid to secure more information. Having previously taught at, and sent her children to, Department schools, her relatively recent post at an independent school proved to be a totally new, and not entirely satisfactory, experience. She described the sector as "insular" and archaic:

> *I mean, our reports, we were still on an A3 piece of paper with an average for maths and a mark and an average. We had never moved to outcomes-based reporting because the Board of Studies, up until last year, didn't; it wasn't mandated. We could really do whatever we wanted to do.*

Lucy anticipated that the CPLE would provide her with new sources of knowledge, inspiration, renewal and understanding to make up for this 'void' in her experience.

Lucy was highly motivated by the content of the CPLE and quickly made changes in her domain of practice:

> *We did some hot seating last Friday, because we're doing "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe", and um, we had the characters, and I'd done that, I think what it's done too, I've done things in the past, but schooling now is a lot tighter in your time and so some of those things that you've done, you think "I used to do that".*

The experience prompted her to recall previous occasions that she'd used the technique, to reflect on why she had abandoned it, and to conclude that this was an inevitable consequence of a lack of time in the curriculum. Hence, she found the presenter's reassurances to slow down empowering:

> *Because now you've got this mental list of things that you've got to get through and so often they [hot seating, for example] are the things that go by. And so, for RE to say, "Slow down, really, because you've got to put time in to get that result at the end." That was really good to hear.*

Indeed, by providing a credible rationale for changing teaching practice, the CPLE bestowed on Lucy a much-desired license to modify her behaviour:

> *You get through [the material] so it sticks, I think. Otherwise, you'll say, "We've done that." And the kids look at you as if you've never done it before, and you say, "But don't you remember?" And that's the bit, you know, "You've got to get the kids to do the driving on the bus", one of her [the presenter's] phrases.*

In relation to the domain of consequence, Lucy reported witnessing a significant change in her students' behaviour as a result of her new teaching practices:

> *So last week we did hot seating, and we got the kids to make the questions up and then we asked them and I saw kids doing things there that I just hadn't seen, you know, they were putting on accents.*

For Lucy, changes in her personal domain were the most challenging. As an undergraduate, Lucy had "battled" with a "very reflective course that made you think". Now, 30 years on, the CPLE's reflective writing tasks were proving equally challenging, demanding self-discipline:

I've put it on myself, only because I thought, well I wanted to do this, so, just do it. Because otherwise, for me, it's really just like going to an inservice day and you come home and think that was great and you use a little bit of it, but when you've actually got to sit down and work out, you know, what it was all about and put that into words, that's been …

Similarly, the option of writing two assessment tasks, in order to employ the CPLE as unit in a postgraduate program, caused her significant anxiety:

But I'm a bit concerned about that next step, that major. Yeah, my head's not in any clear direction of where to go, and I've said this thing to myself, that I want to finish it.

Yet, her resolution and persistence to complete the tasks clearly demonstrate a growing confidence, hence slow transformation in her beliefs about her own ability.

Margaret's challenge to transform her career.

Margaret had recently returned to Sydney after a six-month sabbatical overseas. She had resigned from her former school in July 2005, after teaching for five-and-a-half years. While she enjoyed studying for her Master of Teaching, having qualified, she quickly lost interest in her role as a teacher and began to research alternative career options:

Well, I was needing a change. And, yeah, I was trying to decide whether to become more of an expert in literacy or school counselling, or, so that's why I did my five years really, because you have to have than behind you, don't you. Um, and then, just to be a good classroom teacher; I just wanted to see.

Margaret enrolled in the CPLE for a variety of reasons, including interest in the topic; an opportunity to hear the opinions of literacy experts - academics, consultants and master teachers – on the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Reading*, as opposed to the government's or media's slant; and for the opportunities to network. She hoped that her participation in the CPLE would help broaden her world:

It was important for me, just to see that, I think I was feeling that the world was getting too narrow and that I was needing, and perhaps I needed to come on a course like this when I was teaching, but there didn't seem to be anything like this, or I wasn't being nurtured to look for a course like this.

However, rather than prompting a transformation in her personal domain, in the main, the CPLE reaffirmed her previously held attitudes and belief:

I think it's been good for me to reflect on how I was teaching and on good classroom practice and, um, it definitely makes you think of the different ways to try different things and I think I would, would try that, but it has reaffirmed that I was pretty much on the right track, which was good for my confidence.

Margaret's decision to share information gleaned from the CPLE with flatmates and family, however, does indicate significant personal reflection on the new information provided:

But they're interested in, everyone has a view, you see, on teaching, because they've been taught themselves, so of course they've got a view. And, um, people with children and as soon as you say you're doing a literacy course that creates interest. And, um, my parents have been in the education world, so I've had some good chats with my parents about it. So, yeah, I have been sharing things.

As Margaret was currently working outside of schools, it was impossible to determine whether the CPLE had prompted changes in either her domain of practice or consequence. However, her responses did indicate changes at Harland and Kinder's (1997) categories 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7. Also, like Barbara (see below), Margaret's response to the inclusion of theory highlighted the near anti-intellectual nature of schools:

> *I would say that it's good to have some theory because, what I found, you know, and the different academic research, because when you're in the classroom you, well I haven't been reading articles because of time and stuff. So in terms of, yeah, I feel much more updated on what's out there because in the school environment and in the classroom you can become quite insular.*

Barbara's challenge to transform her practice.

Despite her school colleagues' assumptions, Barbara's primary motive for attending the CPLE was to improve her own knowledge, skills and confidence teaching literacy in a manageable fashion. As she explained:

> *Well it's the sort of thing that kind of fell, everybody said, "Are you going to do it for promotion?" It's like, no, I just know I need to earn it and I want to be a better practitioner. But for me, the Certificate of Primary Literacy Education works really well because it's a short burst, but it's also, it is the practical and it's in chunks that I can handle and manage, you know, think about it and then bring it back.*

In addition, a career-long mathematics focus, in conjunction with the school's identification of literacy as an area of weakness, prompted Barbara to address her own deficiencies in this area:

> *[Literacy] is an area that my school had identified and I looked at my own teaching, and I've always had a maths focus, so I've just had a nagging feeling that my written, my writing, my literacy could be a lot better.*

However, her initial impressions of the program were negative: Barbara readily admitted to disliking elements of the conference, in particular the theoretical thrust of the presentations, which she both found frustrating and irrelevant:

> *Initially it took me a while to get into [the conference]. There was the jargon, the academic side of it and the academics, so I found that initially off-putting, I suppose. And I was coming from the school situation where you're always looking for the practical things you can take straight to the classroom and that wasn't the purpose of the conference, so I sort of had to bide my time until I got to these night sessions.*

Barbara's subsequent responses indicate that there was a significant change in her personal domain, however. While she continued to regard the academic thrust of the conference less useful than the practical sessions, she later acknowledged a number of positive outcomes from listening to theoretical sessions, most significantly the challenge to her mind:

> *I couldn't believe it had been 10 years, 10 years since I had really got back into a formal type of redevelopment, and basically in that time there's been great opportunities through the district and the Department, but I think there is, there's also a changing mindset because it is external and it is through the University. There is that expectation that my mind will be challenged. Even though I didn't enjoy some of the academics, I think it was good for me to hear*

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*them, because so often we get what's watered down, or what the Department's
view of the paper is.*

Like Judy, Barbara later organised for at least one of the presenters to present to her
school staff. This resulted in a whole-term literacy consultancy project. As a result, there was
significant evidence of change both in Barbara's and her colleagues' domain of practice:

> *We have a team, one representative from every stage or grade as our core and
> we're taking it in and modelling it in the classroom, and it's just been, they're
> excited. So it's just been wonderful; it's been transforming and I can see it as
> an agent for change. And all it took, and it's not just me, [the Principal] was
> looking for someone to run with the ball, and I wanted to just be more effective
> in my teaching, but we needed to some degree, an external source to say,
> "Look, this is theory and this is what's going on."*

However, while Barbara's attendance at the CPLE might be deemed as the catalyst for this
transformation, it seems likely that the subsequent academic/school partnership was of equal,
if not greater, influence.

Similarly, while Barbara reported significant changes in student behaviour (the
domain of consequence), it is difficult to determine whether these result from the CPLE or
follow-up literacy partnership:

> *We talked a lot about inferential questions, more than just barking at print and
> things like that; [the pupils] are excited. It takes them a little while and then
> they practice to justify responses, and that's been a really interesting things.*

Either way, for Barbara, at least, it was clear that increased levels of student animation and
interest were the direct result of changes in her teaching practice, as inspired by her
professional development experience.

Transforming Teachers via Professional Development

Both Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) interconnected model of professional growth
and Harland and Kinder's (1997) typology of professional development outcomes were
employed to inform the development and evaluation of the CPLE. Evaluation results confirm
significant change in the domain of practice, the domain of consequence and the personal
domain (categories one to nine) for at least some participants. More substantial evidence of
transformation, however, would necessitate more sophisticated analysis, involving in-depth
interviews and observations.

Teachers indicated on self-report surveys that they had learnt about new teaching
approaches, they had shared some of the ideas with colleagues, and they had implemented
elements of their learning into their classroom practice. In addition, a number of those who
had trialled new techniques evidenced significant improvements in student attention,
motivation and enjoyment.

On the basis of responses to nine survey instruments and semi-structured interviews
with four participants, the CPLE was successful in transforming teachers' understanding of
literacy education for several reasons, including motivating them to engage with issues
surrounding the *National Inquiry into Teaching Reading* and, in at least two cases, to organise
similar professional development activities for their colleagues in school; building on their
current knowledge and skills; challenging their attitudes and beliefs about literacy education;
building confidence in their professional ability; reflecting on their current practice; and
trialling new teaching techniques. In addition, participants' replies highlight a number of
common themes, including: the theory (academic) versus practice (classroom teacher) debate;

time constraints induce poor teaching practices; and knowledge sharing between colleagues facilitates enthusiasm, ownership and reflection.

While the CPLE addressed each of the ten principles described by Clarke (1997) (see Appendix 1), the evaluation highlighted a number of concerns requiring further consideration before offering the CPLE in 2007. First, although participants' anecdotal evidence suggests every practising teacher trialled one or more newly-acquired ideas in the classroom, a five-week program may be too short to make any long-term impact on teaching practice. Second, while the program was designed to encourage participants to extend their professional growth by enrolling in a postgraduate program, this commitment was voluntary, hence realised limited success. Third, though registration price incentives encouraged schools to send more than one teacher, the majority of participants were self-financing, hence the sole participant from each school community.

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Appendix 1

	Ten important principles of professional development (Clarke, 1997)	Certificate of Primary Literacy Education
1	Address issues of concern and interest, largely (but not exclusively) identified by the teachers themselves, and involve a degree of choice for participants.	A formative survey was employed to gauge participants' learning requirements. Also, participants were encouraged to raise issues of concern and interest during the evening workshops.
2	Involve groups of teachers rather than individuals from a number of schools, and	While the majority of participants were individuals from a range of schools, two

3	Recognise and address the many impediments to teachers' growth at the individual, school and district level.	Teachers were actively encouraged to share their stories with other members of the group.
4	Using teachers as participants in classroom activities of students in real situation, model desired classroom approaches during the inservice sessions to project a clear vision of the proposed changes.	Participants were encouraged to trial new learning in their classrooms and report back their experiences to the rest of the group.
5	Solicit teachers' conscious commitment to participate actively in the professional development sessions to undertake required readings and classroom tasks, appropriately adapted from their classroom.	Teachers were encouraged to share their experiences in evening workshops. In addition, a booklet of key references was provided at enrolment. This contained a range of compulsory tutorial tasks and readings.
6	Recognise that changes in teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are derived largely from classroom practice: as a results, such changes will follow the opportunity to validate, through observing positive student learning, information supplied by PD programs.	This was the ongoing aim of the program. Although significant changes were reported in beliefs and practices, long-term changes were probably not obtainable in the timeframe.
7	Allow time and opportunities for planning, reflection, and feedback in order to report successes and failures to the group, to share "the wisdom of practice", and to discuss problems and solutions regarding individual students and new teaching approaches.	After each week of tutorials, teachers were expected to submit a 400-500 word report, including critical reflection of specified readings and tutorial content/discussions.
8	Enable participating teachers to gain a substantial degree of ownership by their involvement in decision-making and by being regarded as true partners in the change process.	A collegial atmosphere was fostered throughout by lecturers and participants alike.
9	Recognise that change is a gradual, difficult, and, often, painful process, and afford opportunities for ongoing support from peers and critical friends.	Groups of teachers quickly began to support each other, exchanging experiences, advice and ideas.
10	Encourage participants to set further goals for their professional growth.	The CPLE fulfilled the requirements of a postgraduate unit of study. Participants were actively encouraged to enrol in postgraduate study at the cessation of the course.

Appendix 2

CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY LITERACY EDUCATION
Participant Reflection on Learning
Evening Workshop No. 2 – Diverse Needs

This questionnaire seeks information about your response to this evening's class. We would be grateful if you would agree to take part in our study by answering all questions and returning the questionnaire to your lecturer at the close of the session.

1. Date of birth: _____

    (This is a code number for anonymity, which will help us collate your answers to each questionnaire.)

2.   Since you attended the *Balanced Literacy* workshop, have you implemented any of the ideas in your classroom? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please give an example and explain what you learnt from this.

_____
_____
_____

If no, please identify what has prevented you from implementing your new learning/ideas.

_____
_____
_____

3.   Have you shared any of the things you learnt from the *Balanced Literacy* workshop with colleagues? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please give an example and elaborate on the setting/their response.

_____
_____
_____

This evening's workshop is about *Diverse Needs*.

Please answer the following questions **before** the workshop begins, by circling the most appropriate descriptor.

4.   How would you rate your current knowledge and understanding of teaching students with diverse needs?

Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

5.   How confident do you feel when you teach students with diverse needs?

Very confident	Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

Evening Workshop No. 2 – Diverse Needs

Instructions: Please rate each item from "Poor" to "Excellent". If the statement is not applicable, please leave it blank.	Poor [1]	Average [2]	[3]	Excellent [4]	[5]
6. How effective was tonight's program in holding your interest?					
7. How effective were the presenter's instructional skills?					
8. How effective was the presenter at answering questions?					
9. How effective was the program at meeting your needs?					
10. How effective was the program at providing information and strategies to enhance your teaching/students' learning?					

11.   What did you learn from this presentation and how do you plan to use the information to enhance the teaching and learning of literacy?

_____
_____

_____

12. Has this session challenged the way you think about teaching students with diverse needs? Yes ☐ No ☐
    If yes, in what ways?

    _____
    _____
    _____

13. Based on your **learning**, please circle an overall rating for this workshop:

Very useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful

Please answer the following questions **after** the workshop, by circling the most appropriate descriptor.

14. How would you rate your knowledge and understanding of teaching students with diverse needs now?

Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

15. How confident do you feel about teaching students with diverse needs now?

Very confident	Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

16. Do you have any other comments or feedback on this evening's workshop?

    _____
    _____

Thank you for taking time to answer this questionnaire. Your comments are of great interest to us.