

Teacher Learning: Facilitating and Inhibiting Conditions in NSW Schools

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'If you want people to do things differently

you have to give them something different to do' (DO2)

Introduction

The context for this research project was the professional development of teachers in the major school education system of NSW. The NSW Department of Education and Training employs by far the majority of teachers in NSW, is the largest public education system in Australia and one of the largest in the southern hemisphere. It has 2,220 schools, over 750,000 students and some 46,000 teachers. The schools, located throughout NSW, are mostly co-educational and cater for students from early childhood through to post-compulsory secondary schooling. The system is administered through a central office and 40 districts.

Project Aims

1. To acquire knowledge of the changing contexts, constraints and opportunities for teacher learning of the school-based T&D culture as viewed by teachers and teacher leaders across NSW; and,
2. To introduce and research a new approach to professional development which is designed to enhance teacher learning in school-based T&D viz. the professional learning

portfolio, with a view to further refining understandings of constraints and opportunities for school-based T&D.

Significance of the Project

The significance of the project was that it sought to address a real and urgent problem in NSW schools. The problem concerned a policy shift from centrally produced and delivered T&D for teachers to school-based T&D in a climate of declining resources. In addressing that problem, the project focused on enhancing teacher learning in school-based T&D. It was premised on the notion that teacher learning and development are fundamentally necessary for reforming schools and changing teachers' work practices to continue to improve the student learning outcomes of the schools. The proposition examined through the research was that enhanced teacher learning could be achieved through integration of the learning portfolio process into school-based T&D programs, encouraging teachers to reflect upon and write about their professional learning.

The problem of improving teacher professional development is not confined to NSW. It can be viewed worldwide through the literature on professional development of teachers which clearly points out the importance of ongoing teacher learning for improvement and change. Guskey and Huberman (1995) state:

Never before in education has there been greater recognition of the need for ongoing professional development. Inservice training and other forms of professional development are a crucial component in nearly every modern proposal for educational improvement (p.1).

However, Hargreaves (1994) points to the difficulties encountered at the level of practice, where :

Good intentions are persistently and infuriatingly turned on their heads. Even the most well intentioned change devices which try to respect teachers' discretionary judgements, promote their professional growth and support their efforts to build professional community are often self-defeating because they are squeezed into mechanistic models or suffocated through stifling supervision (p.3).

In the project the impetus was towards more contextualised and teacher-managed T&D. Little (1993) rightly argues that the "dominant [non-contextualised] training model of teachers' professional development ... is not adequate to the ambitious visions of teaching and schooling embedded in present reform initiatives" (p.129). What is generally missing from the 'one size fits all' training model is a recognition of "the importance and variability of local contexts" (p.144) and it is on this point that school-based approaches can make a significant contribution.

Smylie (1996) argues that "teachers' opportunities to learn should be problem-oriented and grounded in inquiry, experimentation and reflection" (p.10) and he points out that the literature challenges notions that teacher learning can only occur through training external to the school. Indeed, "it points to the school workplace as a potentially rich source of teacher learning" (Smylie, 1996:10).

Whilst ongoing teacher learning is considered essential to improving the quality of schools (Leiberman, 1995), is associated with the implementation of planned change (Fullan, 1991) and is a key link between school restructuring and the classroom (Elmore, Peterson and McCarthey, 1996) it has been pointed out that "surprisingly little empirical evidence exists to guide policy to promote it" (Smylie, 1996:10). The purpose of this research project was to move towards redressing that situation.

In addition to the problematic nature of teacher professional development, the literature on portfolios is curiously incomplete. It is claimed that developing a learning portfolio encourages teachers to reflect upon and write about their professional learning and it is suggested that through such work their learning and critical insights are enhanced and the full complexity of teaching can be portrayed (Shulman, 1992; Wolf, 1994). Furthermore, there is an assumption that enhancing ones' own professional learning is a high priority for teachers. However, these claims and the assumption are not based on empirical support. Moreover, while the use of portfolios appears to be an intellectually challenging form of school-based T&D, whether or not teachers find portfolios as efficacious for enhancing their learning as the literature assumes is not known. This research will provide some tests of these claims and assumptions.

Research Plan

The project was planned to be in two overlapping and iterative phases consistent with the two aims and over the period of one year in 1998. Phase 1 took place in the first six months and addressed the first aim; viz, 'to acquire knowledge of the changing contexts, constraints and opportunities for teacher learning of the school-based T&D culture as viewed by teachers and teacher leaders across NSW'. There were two parts to Phase 1. In the first part documents were analysed to provide an overview of the nature and extent of school-based T&D in the school system.

In the second part of Phase 1 the task of cultural mapping of T&D was undertaken. We followed Spradley (1979) who uses the word 'culture' to refer to "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour" (p.5). The goal was the acquisition of detailed knowledge of the changing contexts, constraints and opportunities for teacher learning of the school-based T&D culture as viewed by teachers and teacher leaders. We took seriously the notion that teachers and teacher leaders are the medium through which any school-based innovations are filtered (Hatton, 1994). Thus the perceptions of these key players were crucial in providing an adequate cultural map of school-based T&D.

Research Method

It was understood from the outset that the research method to be used must be sufficiently rigorous to capture a highly complex issue ie. the culture of school-based T&D. It was also regarded as essential that teachers' definitions and interpretations must reach the surface of the data. To achieve these goals it was decided that qualitative methods including interviewing, document analysis, observation and portrayals would be employed for data collection. Forty two volunteer teachers and principals from eight schools, including rural and city schools, were interviewed along with eight district office and central office personnel. Interviews of approx. 40 minutes duration were conducted by all members of the research team (5 persons). The interviews were taperecorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) were used for data analysis. In grounded theorising the data are collected and examined for key issues which become themes and categories. As further data are analysed the incidents linking to these previous categories are identified and new categories are allowed to emerge through making constant comparisons. Strauss and Corbin (1990) in discussing their more recent appreciation of grounded theorising make the role of the researcher more visible in the research process. They write of 'theoretical sensitivity', that is, the ability to give the data

meaning and detect relationships between the various categories. They suggest that one of the sources of theoretical sensitivity is the professional experience of the researcher(s).

An initial perusal of the data revealed four themes which are regarded as provisional at this time and subject to analysis and interpretation by the research team:

Theme 1: Representations of workplace learning held by practitioners

Theme 2 : Facilitating and inhibiting conditions of teacher learning

Theme 3: Competing priorities and purposes of T&D

Theme 4: Consequences of teacher learning for student learning.

Theme 2: Facilitating and Inhibiting Conditions of Teacher Learning in NSW Schools

The notion of 'conditions of teacher learning' has been drawn from previous research and literature on teacher development. For instance, Hopkins, Beresford and West (1998) working in the school improvement tradition in the UK emphasize the importance of enhancing the internal conditions of the school for improving both student learning and teacher development. The school level conditions that underpin their work are staff development, involvement, leadership, co-ordination, enquiry and reflection, and collaborative planning. Their recent research on classroom conditions reveals that 'pedagogic partnerships' and 'reflection on teaching' are further important conditions of teacher development.

A pertinent study from USA (Borko, et al., 1997) sought to identify features of staff development efforts that are successful in fostering teacher change. The findings reveal five themes: 1) situating the change process in the actual teaching and learning contexts where the new ideas will be implemented is an effective strategy; 2) group discussions of instructional and assessment issues eg. in workshops can be an effective tool; 3) change can be facilitated by introducing new ideas based on teachers' current levels of interest, understanding and skill; 4) when teachers' beliefs are incompatible with the intentions of the staff development team and are not challenged, teachers are likely to ignore new ideas or inappropriately assimilate them; and 5) time is a major obstacle to changing classroom practice.

During the past decade there has been a growing body of literature which focusses on teacher learning as the key to improving student learning. One of the first to write about this theme was Roland Barth (1990). In 1990 he wrote:

Teacher growth is closely related to pupil growth. Probably nothing within a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self-confidence, or classroom behavior than the personal and professional growth of their teachers (p. 49).

At this point we know a great deal more about how to promote such teacher growth. As Darling-Hammond (1998) points out:

Teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see (p. 8).

In earlier research in Australia, the present author (Retallick, in press) identified seven factors which account for teachers' willingness and ability to engage in significant workplace

learning : the context, the teacher as person and learner, the situations of teaching, learning resources and support, system recognition and reward, the culture of the school, and the nature of the innovation/change. The study also presented a list of facilitating and inhibiting conditions of teacher workplace learning, largely drawn from the literature of the late 1980's and early 1990's. The purpose of the present study is to investigate these issues in the late 1990's and within a specific context of policy and practice ie. teachers in the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Some of the conditions emerging from the present study are similar to those revealed in other studies though there are also some additional conditions which can be attributed to the specific context of NSW in the late 1990's and also to the growing awareness amongst teachers that their own professional learning is increasingly important in the fast changing, postmodern world of the end of the twentieth century.

Table 1

Thematic Structure of Teacher Interview Data

UNDERSTANDING AND VALUING WORKPLACE LEARNING

- Attitude to school focused T&D
- Closeness to the classroom
- Being a presenter
- Practice and theory
- Reflection
- Recognition from the Department

MEETING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

- teacher needs
- school and system priorities
- integrating needs and priorities

COLLABORATION

- sharing
- working with colleagues
- making practice visible
- meetings as learning opportunities

LEADERSHIP

- Role of the Principal

- Other executives

OUTSIDE EXPERTISE

- Inter-school visits/exchanges

- Bringing outsiders in

PRACTICES IN T&D

- 'Train the trainer' model

- The 'one day' T&D days

- Organisation and presentation

- Ongoing programs with follow-up

EMOTIONS

- Anxiety and stress

- Enjoyment

- Guilt

RESPONSE TO CHANGE

- Imposed change

- Amount of change

- Short term perspective

TIME

- Finding time for T&D

- T&D after school

- Time away from class

REDUCED T&D FUNDS

- Effects of the salaries agreement

- T&D 'on the cheap'

- Missed opportunities

- Buying time

DIFFICULTIES FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

- Getting casuals
- Extra costs
- Sydney-based policies and programs

Analysis and coding of the transcripts produced the thematic structure of the teacher interview data as shown in table 1. It reveals 11 relatively distinct categories which will be referred to as the conditions of teacher workplace learning in NSW schools. Some of the conditions are facilitative of teacher workplace learning and others are inhibitive while some are both, depending on the presence or absence of particular elements which constitute each of the conditions.

UNDERSTANDING AND VALUING WORKPLACE LEARNING

Understanding and valuing workplace learning emerges from the data as a condition of workplace learning in the sense that it produces a generally positive or negative attitude by teachers towards their own learning. This condition arises in NSW particularly because of the recent policy move away from a wide range of courses being provided outside of schools and towards school focused T&D with an emphasis on workplace learning within schools.

Attitude to school focused T&D

Some respondents were clearly in favour of the policy shift to school focused T&D whereas others were lamenting the decline of 'outside courses' and showed little acceptance of workplace learning. One teacher summed up the change in policy and practice quite well in saying: 'I have been teaching for a few years now and the ... training used to be all outside the school in the old days ... these days it's in the school' (T27). Another teacher commented: 'Obviously there were very good points about going away to a course, particularly if that was your focus (but) I really think school-based training and development is much more powerful' (T10).

When asked to state what words come immediately to mind about school focused T&D most teachers responded positively:

Cooperating, coming together, working together for a common means (T32)

Learning, learning from other people, learning about the job, learning the skills to be a teacher in general and then particularly in the teaching area that I am in (T17)

It would be team collaboration, workplace learning, co-operation, achieving the best possible outcomes for both staff and students and addressing staff and students and parents needs (DO4)

Extension of knowledge. Ideas, something new, something different which you can apply to your teaching. Initiative based on the policy, changes, new syllabus and the follow up ... but mainly ideas, ideas and different things (T26).

Obviously there were very good points about going away to a course (but) I really think school based training and development is much more powerful (T10)

I think there is a learning culture that exists within the school where people are prepared to learn from each other (T39)

Some, however, had a negative view:

Not sufficient, irrelevant, not specifically for us. Probably in many cases a waste of time (T29)

I suppose the thing that jumps out at me is lost opportunities to meet with people outside my school (T21)

... now and its really left up to executives to carry the can on professional development which I reckon is a short cut from the Department and I make no bones about that ... Now not only do you have to work that out but you have to provide all the input yourself or go and organise somebody else to do it (T24).

One teacher placed the need for T&D in the context of the changing world:

Training and development is really important because when you teach for a long time you get comfortable and I think you can't afford to, the world is moving at such a fast pace I feel we must be updated ... The main purpose of training and development is to rev you up, shake you about and to take back in that room something new (T26).

The idea of teachers learning from each other was a common theme:

'we've had a lot of professional development with peers and I think we need to value that more' (T2).

I don't think the skills of teachers are utilised enough in school-based training, we overlook a lot of people who have worthwhile skills that could be passed on ... There are a lot of people in this school who are very talented in lots of areas and I think we need to utilise them more(T8).

One respondent, a consultant, commented on her experience of teachers' lack of understanding and negative attitudes towards workplace learning:

I think their attitude to learning is that it should be done to us, that we should not be responsible for it, that we should actually be taken out during school time, the lid opened up, things put into it. What unfortunately is not being inbuilt into the school culture is that workplace learning happens every single day, that everytime that you are doing something different or for example you are showing someone how you organise or coordinate things, that is workplace learning (DO1).

Closeness to the classroom

An important facilitative element of workplace learning for teachers was dealing with issues of relevance to their classroom teaching and student learning. With school focused T&D there is an immediacy of help with classroom concerns whereas 'outside' courses can lack such elements:

I think after we had the training, I like to go back to the presenters and discuss things with them ... try it in the classroom and then come back, which you can do when it's in school because the people that present it are here (T8)

... you don't have to go outside the school to get help on something, you've got somebody right there. For instance there's a teacher on staff who the other day sent a message saying 'can I see you when you've got a minute?' She and I sat on the steps at recess in the sun, drank our coffee and she said to me 'this is what I'm trying to do, where can I go now?'. If you had to go outside the school to get that help you probably wouldn't do it (T13)

Whereas when you do a course outside the school it's different. It's just something outside school, it doesn't really happen in school ... (T13).

School focused T&D was viewed more positively when teachers could see the connection with classroom concerns and student learning:

The policy directions are very clear and consistent, I think it is a great training and development policy. It is focused in the right direction, its all about improved learning, its all about improved learning outcomes for kids, its all about the culture of the schools and working within that focus (T39)

I think seeing results, seeing the children's results number one because that is the most important thing (T43)

... teachers are in schools to teach, it's the first priority and training and development shouldn't infringe on that too much if its not going to have benefits, direct benefits for the students (T44)

Being a presenter

One of the implications of school focused T&D in practice is that a lot of teachers are now presenters of T&D to their colleagues. Many respondents saw this as a learning opportunity and a rewarding experience:

... when you present (its) not just about the content you're learning, you learn a lot about yourself and interaction with other people and of course you know those things are important, especially for teachers (T10)

It has been a wonderful learning experience for me and its been a great, I have seen rewards from the in-service days that we had organised and just going out to the schools and seeing what schools are doing and being able to say 'look, you are on the right track'... I felt quite honoured to think they thought the skills I had that I could share with someone else, it is quite rewarding (T43)

... I found myself in this role of standing, talking ... they were having a great time and they were saying 'yes' and I was throwing in my two bob's worth about well this is what you do with your kids and this sort of thing ... and I thought I've just had the most beautiful experience (T13).

Practice and theory

In the interview data practice was usually given predominance in any discussion about its connection with theory. When theory 'works' it was because it has practical application and can be frustrating when it doesn't:

Whatever (form) the theory comes in we're looking towards how we can apply it in our school ... people are trying really hard to follow through the theory, it just doesn't happen. I think that's the frustrating part (T3)

The theory is only useful as long as it's viable, you can talk theories all day and then if you walk out of that knowing the theories and understanding and not seeing any point to your classroom you have gained the knowledge which isn't of any use to you ... I prefer to see it work back the other way, this is what works in the classroom and this is the theory behind that, but to a lot of presenters the theory is all and unless they make that actual link with the classroom it loses it (T45)

... you need to go back and look at things once you've done the practical work and it sometimes fits together better. So there was a balance, one of my ideas for training and development is that you need that theory, that's almost a rationale for why you're doing things and also the practical. A lot of teachers are very practical ... But I think it's good for people to know where you're coming from so I think they did that well, I think they went back to the theory and showed us where they started and how it went together and then we had a practical session so I think everyone was very satisfied (T10)

Reflection

Many teachers recognised the importance of reflection in learning from everyday experience. One teacher described it this way: 'Well, usually I go back over the day and reflect and think if I was to do that again I wouldn't do it this way' (T14). For another teacher what was important was 'the desire to reflect on what you're doing and how you think about what impact, if any, it has on the students' (T19).

One respondent thought of reflection as a form of self-evaluation:

There is no doubt that experience is the greatest teacher and I think self-evaluations ... They sit down and they look at themselves professionally and they say 'that didn't go well or I am not happy with that program, I am not teaching that well; how can I make it better' (T24)

The Reading Recovery program was mentioned in a number of different ways as exemplifying high quality T&D for teachers. In this case a teacher commented on the importance of reflection as an aspect of the program:

... in reading recovery because you have to reflect you are encouraged and given time to do so while training and the way the whole thing is set up and the type of programming and notes that you need to take you have to reflect (T44)

Recognition from the Department

A considerable number of respondents were concerned about lack of recognition by the Department of the expertise of teachers and of the extra work involved in school focused T&D. They clearly wanted a more supportive and encouraging response from senior administrators in the department:

... we need training and development but at another level there's very little evidence that you know the Department (provides) support and encouragement for people to do training and development (T9)

... they need to perhaps value the expertise that they have amongst the teachers ... the Department doesn't recognise that and often I think teachers become very disillusioned you know that's where you get the teachers becoming cynical and that's sad because I think you lose a lot of valuable people (T13)

I think the lack of recognition mean(s) that school focused T&D becomes a burden rather than a blossoming (T13)

... I really think the Department needs to look at something for teachers to reward them and say they have developed themselves professionally, they have got to set some goal to do it... I think somehow you have got to have some incentive in a school to make people want to develop their teaching (T24)

MEETING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

The notion of meeting needs and priorities was seen as an important condition of any T&D conducted in schools. Needs were seen in two domains; teacher needs and school/system priorities (the system was usually referred to as 'the Department'). Meeting teacher needs is clearly seen as a facilitating condition and many teachers viewed the system priorities as inhibiting the achievement of their own needs. Some respondents viewed the idea of integration of those domains as important.

Teacher needs

When asked about what they would regard as good T&D, many teachers nominated 'meeting teacher needs' as being most important. Typical responses were: 'I would make sure I was meeting the needs of the people involved' (T8) and 'I'd try to achieve the fulfillment of the needs of those who were involved in the training and development' (T16). When asked to explain how they would ascertain such needs T16 responded: 'I'd be sending out some sort of survey or talking to those people involved first to find out what their needs are ... what they wanted to know what they wanted to learn and what their expectations of the exercise were so that then I could tailor the training and development to their needs and what they expect' (T16).

On the other hand, lack of attention to teachers' needs was viewed as a definite inhibiting condition of teacher learning:

I think that's the problem with those ones that you get a general document and you get someone trained in that document and they go around the schools introducing them and I find that that's not a very satisfactory way because its not really answering a lot of teachers' needs (T28)

no one has sort of sat down really here yet and identified teachers and their needs and where they want to go (T28)

School and system priorities

Respondents were generally aware that the system has priorities though the reaction to that was mixed; some were happy to follow such priorities as guidelines whereas others felt that they simply got in the way of meeting their own needs or those of the school:

The Department has priorities as well and I think the enforced nature of that is not good in that we're told these are going to be the priorities and this is what you'll undertake to do on staff development day and that doesn't particularly suit the schools and so therefore it doesn't suit everyone's needs or fit in with that school as well (T10)

Well I mean we always use the departmental priorities as our guidelines (T11)

you have to take on board what the department wants you to cover in terms of Agenda 98 and all this sort of thing (T34)

... there is a huge difference between what I need as a teacher and what the department feel I should know just so that I don't get myself into some sort of litigation (T35)

Every one of our staff development days now tends to have a major focus which is imposed upon us from the centre so you know with one hand we're being given the time and the opportunity three days per year to get together professionally and to be inserviced, on the other hand we're being told you will spend two hours because there's been a big flap because of the Royal Commission so we're really worried about child protection so you've got to go through this regardless of whether that's a priority of the school (T21)

Integrating needs and priorities

A solution to the problem of meeting both individual needs and system priorities was seen to be in the idea of integrating needs and priorities, usually at the level of the school principal or head of department and through the school T&D committee:

... I would work with the T&D Committee here and (ascertain) what are the Department, school and individual requirements and needs for the year and try and marry them together in a program of 'best fit' (T1)

I believe it is up to the head teacher of a faculty area to be able to provide priorities for training and development through their supervisory roles. These are developed and negotiated on a one to one basis and funded partly from faculty funds and partly from school T & D funds (T1)

The key to it is that it is about improvement of practice so that its really about eventually trying to negotiate a training and development plan with every member of staff ... it has got to be negotiated between them and the person who is their supervisor so it's a jointly agreed developmental plan for each person, that is something that we will work towards (T39)

COLLABORATION

The literature on teacher learning and development places strong emphasis on collaboration. As Hopkins et al., state "Teacher development takes place most effectively in a school where there is a culture of collaboration" (p. 132) and Hargreaves says "Collaborative cultures turn individual learning into shared learning" (p. 15). The present study convincingly supports this notion from the perspective of teachers in NSW schools and it is clearly a facilitative condition for teacher learning.

Sharing

Sharing is seen to be at the heart of collaboration. Respondents were strongly in favour of teachers sharing ideas and strategies for teaching and they often felt that this form of workplace learning was more important to them than formal T&D sessions:

I think they learn more by doing and by sharing (T2)

I'm a great believer in sharing strategies, pooling ideas, planning together ... Teachers do have a lot to offer each other, if only they believed in themselves a bit more and we're prepared to share a bit more (T7)

Talking to one another. If you use something in the classroom which works very well you talk about it within your faculty so that others might be willing to try that ... I like talking to teachers in other faculties and having a look at how they go about doing things and then seeing how I can apply that to my own practice (T25)

(Learning) from other teachers, older more experienced people who are willing to share ideas (T26)

I find our sharing sessions are more useful than the school based training and development (T38)

There seems to be a very narrow view that (T&D) is something that you go to and somebody pontificates and gives you the good word ... I think that we need to open our minds and look for creative ways to have ongoing training where people are learning off each other ... I think that's where we need to train our executive in these ways to encourage sharing (DO2)

Working with colleagues

An important element of collaboration is working in cooperative ways with colleagues such as in the form of collaborative planning, team teaching or mentoring relationships. Teachers recognise that they learn a great deal through working in such ways: 'I think most of it comes from working with colleagues' (T1), 'I think from each other, especially if they are encouraged to work cooperatively' (T4). One respondent put it this way: '... my belief is that the only way that school focused training and development can be effective is through the use of team collaboration' (DO4).

Collaborative planning was often mentioned as a way of working with colleagues that was considered helpful and useful though finding time could be a problem:

I would like to have the time to sit down as a group and work on that together so it really is a corporate program (T14)

I think teachers need to have time to sit down and work out things that they do well and things that they don't do so well and things that they think they really need to work on (and then) on a school basis with a group of teachers being able to plan it as a staff thing (T28)

... if you find someone who you can work with ... we group and collaboratively plan that sort of approach. That's great, that takes a lot of pressure off, it's shared responsibility and that's great (T10)

Mentoring has been used extensively throughout NSW schools and was mentioned by one respondent:

We decided last year that we would try and do a mentoring program with our training and development ... They worked as a team in the classroom. The timetable has been drawn up so that times allowed for the mentor and the mentoree to discuss things prior to working together in the classroom. The idea is that teachers work as a team (T11)

The experience of two teachers in working closely with others indicates how important they regard that experience:

I'm teaching drama for the first time and I'm teaching a Year 10 class ... the woman I am teaching with is, she is inspirational ... I mean it's a new experience for me anyway so fairly steep learning curves are involved. The way that she has been helping me get through that, almost daily, I couldn't wish for better (T15)

When I first came here discipline was so different from where I was at previously. Straight away I looked at techniques of a colleague who I worked with on Year 6 ... Then computers; something I took a while to get into. I worked with 2 staff members and they got me interested in computers ... Teaching of reading, particularly when you go down to lower grades. You look at another colleague who has had a wealth of experience in reading recovery, you go and ask her how she is doing things (T24)

Making practice visible

Whilst the work of teachers in classrooms has traditionally been invisible to other teachers, there is evidence in the present study that this is changing. Many teachers are still not entirely comfortable with other teachers in their rooms but they are beginning to recognise the learning potential of making their practice visible to others.

... one of the things that staff said was we don't get into other people's rooms to see things and I know that's a problem across school staff (T10)

... any change I think has come from interacting with other staff and seeing other people work. That is something I would like to do more often. I would like to see more of other people teach (T20)

None of us in our faculty are sort of closed door teachers. We tend to have our doors open and none of us feels inhibited about someone walking in to ask a question or ... walking in to have a look at what was going on and I think we tend to sort of compliment each other when we see something good happening and we support each other if we see something happening that we know the teachers are having difficulty with, we don't feel inhibited. (T25)

I'd like more team teaching opportunities, I'd like to see more teachers going into each others classrooms and seeing what they do (T14)

Meetings as learning opportunities

One way in which schools are adopting the school focused T&D policy is by changing the traditional staff meeting, or at least part of it, into a teacher learning session. The data suggest that this move is generally welcomed by teachers:

A lot of the valuable T&D is in our own staff meetings (T4)

Well we're starting to look at using our staff meetings as professional development opportunities and so far that's been really quite good... I'd like to see that continue in the school (T14)

They learn more ... informally just talking about things in the staffroom, sharing ideas, I really believe in that idea, show and tell, and informal things like that. I'd like to see more of that say at staff meetings (T2)

... it's the same as the professional development staff meetings we have on a Tuesday afternoon. They are just what we do, they're just a normal part of what we do in school and we've had some good and we've had some bad but basically they're to help you improve your teaching and ultimately be better for kids and so they are a part of your everyday life (T13)

If a head teacher is doing his or her job properly then I would suggest a lot of professional development type work was on the faculty meeting agenda and not just the usual administrivia (T1)

LEADERSHIP

Leadership emerged from the data as a facilitative condition of workplace learning with the role of the principal and other executives seen as crucial to the development of a teacher learning culture.

Role of the principal

Not all principals are regarded as effective in terms of promoting teacher learning, those that are seen as effective are seen as learners themselves or agents of change in the school:

... with school based training and development so much depends upon the principal you've got (T35)

I think that the principal too has got to be a learner, so that they know that there are things going on that may be of interest to their staff (T35)

.. in a couple of schools there has been effective change but not all of them, they don't all take it on board and it very much depends upon the leadership in the school. If the leadership is not effective that change will not occur... (DO36)

Leadership in terms of our principals, means showing the way, leading the way, encouraging, learning all the time, creating a learning environment within schools (DO2)

Other executives

The school executives, including VP's, AP's and department heads as well as the principal, are all seen as part of the leadership team in the school. The new T&D policy is causing executives to rethink their roles and become more involved in building a learning culture in schools:

It has never been part of the culture of this department, it probably goes back to the supervisory structures that used to exist ... but the idea of a teacher and a supervisor sitting down talking and negotiating a development plan has never been really part of our culture (T39)

the one thing that I have learnt through school focused training and development is that basically if you've got a cohesive team and you also have the leaders as part of that team then you are more likely to impact on a change and to make waves (DO4)

... as a Head Teacher I made sure that reading material which was full of teaching ideas was available from Australian and overseas professional associations. I also encouraged them to join as individual members (T1)

Probably being a first year out when I was out at (name of school), just having my AP who was my supervisor, just having her as someone who, if I was having trouble with something, or I just wanted to ask a quick question, I could run across to her, ask her and then, she would always be there to answer my questions, help me out with anything I needed...(T5)

The new head teacher gave me a lot of classroom assistance for the one class I was having trouble with ... For the problem class I began to keep a lesson journal for each of their lessons. The journal was to contain the beginning of the lesson details, student behaviour, what was done to control the behaviour, how instructions were given, how problem students were handled, how the lesson was concluded, how much homework was set. I was to then sit and review these lesson developments and make judgements as to how the next lesson could be improved (T6)

OUTSIDE EXPERTISE

Whilst much workplace learning occurs within schools through teachers learning from each other, the data reveal that teachers regard it as important that outside expertise is also brought into the school. Data on outside expertise as a facilitative condition relates to inter-school visits/exchanges

and bringing outsiders into the school.

Inter-school visits/exchanges

For teachers, visiting other schools and exchanging with teachers in other schools, sometimes overseas, is highly regarded as a learning experience. As one teacher explained: 'this is probably another facet of in-school training and development, it doesn't necessarily mean just drawing on the resources within your school, it means going to another school in a real life situation' (T13). Other teachers spoke of their experience in these terms:

One other experience I found that was particularly valuable was when I was teaching in an isolated area of the state. On quite a number of occasions I arranged for teachers to have short term exchanges. This was especially effective for teachers who came from schools where they were the only person teaching in that KLA, often they were beginning teachers and quite often feeling very discouraged. It was also an eye opener for members of my own staff to exchange with these teachers as they quickly learnt to appreciate their own situations and the professional support of others they had taken for granted (T1)

I think going to various settings has a big impact, and I think I sort of appreciate that in the fact we are the largest setting of support unit within a mainstream in the Riverina area. Consequently for teachers out in mainstream who all of a sudden have a child in their unit or classroom that has a disability or has a learning need, learning support need, we have a lot of people that come in and look through the unit (T3).

Bringing outsiders in

The role of outsiders, such as consultants, is important in facilitating teacher learning, particularly in areas where their own expertise is limited:

... we want to take another step in the technology which I haven't got the expertise in at the moment. That is somewhere where I would need to ask someone to come in to the school and train me (T13)

... there needs to be a fine balance between workplace learning that occurs on site and at the same time balanced off against the need to bring outside knowledge into the school (T39)

When the training is done by qualified consultants it is worthwhile, because the consultancy will take your situation into consideration and will then give you ideas as to how to implement their document because they have been part of the document (T38)

You would look at setting up some sort of networking of experts that you could get as much information about those issues as you needed, because I don't think any one person at the school should be relied on to have all that information to hand, so I would be looking at going much further afield and getting the information that I needed (T7)

... teachers came out of their classroom and worked for a day with me, but then they would go back and use a lot of that information and trial it in their classroom and come back and talk about it, go back, and I found that model to be the most powerful model in all my consultancy years because people are trained in what they have to do, back in their classroom they trial it, they feel okay about it and then they talk about the improvement in the learning (DO6)

PRACTICES IN T&D

A number of specific practices of T&D in schools emerge from the data as either facilitating or inhibiting teacher learning. Of particular concern to many respondents were the 'train the trainer' model of T&D and the 'one day' approach which has recently been adopted in NSW schools.

'Train the trainer' model

The idea of training one person from each school who then passes on that information to the rest of the staff has been used a great deal for T&D in NSW. One teacher saw a particular advantage in the model:

I think the idea (of) training actual staff members to come back and in-service the staff is an excellent idea. It is lovely, because then you have that person there all the time so if you want to go and ask them about anything troubling you and they are there on the spot. You don't have to ring anybody or get them to visit the school (T34)

However, for most respondents it was seen as quite problematic:

... I know that Training and Development (Directorate) said, one should go and then come back and relay it to everyone, but that is a pretty tall order to relay a professional's (knowledge) who has studied in those areas, to relay all those details that they have obviously studied for a long time (T3)

You've come back with the ideas that you can use, but you really can't share them and I think a lot of the T&D is meant to be done with this in mind. You are supposed to come back and share them, but once again there is lack of time and so many other things need attention too (T4)

I thought I sold cooperative learning really short to condense my 5 days into 3 one-afternoon sessions; they didn't get the same passion for what I was doing - you lose that (T31)

They are also using the train the trainer technique, but the training that they are giving to the trainers who are other colleagues is very minimal, they send you the document and say here, and that is it, and then that person supposedly goes through the document or through the information given then passes that on at a development day, or at some sort of a meeting to the rest of the staff. So you very rarely get a complete training on the documents (T38)

... the new drugs document was a train the trainer type situation. I felt that being a rural school, the document hadn't really taken our circumstances into consideration and not only did the trainer have to deal with the fact that the document didn't cover rural schools, but she didn't know what she was doing and consequently the rest of us came away with next to no knowledge about what the document actually entailed or what we were supposed to do with it, so it was not really satisfactory at all (T38)

The 'one-day' T&D days

For some years schools have had an allocation of 'pupil-free' days for T&D and up to 1997 they could choose to the specific days on which they would occur. From the beginning of 1997, however, the Department has insisted that all schools throughout the state will have their three 'pupil-free' days on the first day of a school term. Whilst this enables the Department to conduct state-wide training sessions by satellite transmission for part of the day, many teachers feel that it creates a lot of problems for schools.

One teacher said that the Department should 'allow the school to set their own time frame, so that they could access a really good speaker or a really good program on the particular day that can be available rather than everyone having the same person or everyone in the state having to do drug education today, I find that very limited ... that's not seen as a valuable exercise' (T2). Other teachers were just as critical of the same-day approach:

... when you may wish to have a guest speaker, quite often the speaker is unavailable at the times you wish them to be ... especially as the days now all have to be on at the same time. We have lost the ability to negotiate days and times for those type of speakers (T1)

We have to fit in too much in a short space of time (T4)

A lot the Department's requisites on these training days are policy ... it might be a review of some changes here and there and that will be the last time we touch it, so it's more an interesting day, but not a lot of mentoring going on or training follow up after it (T12)

That now is very difficult because every school has a staff development day at the same time, there's only a very selective pool of people that you can get in from outside. Every school's competing for them (T21)

... the drug education was done with our staff development day and I found that a very negative experience, mainly because I felt that there was nothing new ... that really didn't give a picture of what was happening within our schools today (T25)

I just get cranky every single time that they do it because its a cheap, shoddy way of treating us as teachers because they then turn around and more or less say that we are not adequately dealing with these problems and really they haven't provided us with either the resources or the background to be able to do the job they are asking us to do (T25)

I think the Department moved the right way giving us pupil-free days but unfortunately now instead of the school being able to focus on what it would like to do during those professional development days they are being taken up with a Department driven agenda (T25)

... the pupil-free days; I think sometimes we waste those when we really could get down to the nuts and bolts of what we are teaching and why we are teaching and are we meeting the needs of the kids that we are teaching. Sometimes they become very divorced from anything that we are doing within school (T30)

Some teachers felt more positive about the T&D days:

I enjoy staff development days. The last one I thought was good, we had it well structured and we had outside people come in and I find that stimulating (T21)

I feel that the day is usually very hectic, is very busy and we do push through an awful lot on a pupil free day, because we do make the most of them. Where we would get that time to do it I don't know because we don't have time, particularly with the policies they are coming out thick and fast at the moment, so I feel that those staff development days are very important and they are wisely used too (T26)

I liked the staff development days because I see that they are effective. You come in, you have got set tasks, you get through them and there seems to be something at the end ... (T22)

Organisation and presentation

Teachers were highly critical of poorly organised T&D and of presentations that were not interactive or practical. T&D consisting of lectures dealing with theoretical topics drew the most negative comments in the interviews:

The unsuccessful ones are somebody at the front talking. It just doesn't work ... I like a seminar kind of situation (T21)

... all the inservices I've been to this year haven't been hands on, haven't been workshops they have been 'talking at', so while I was pleased with them, I think there's a long way to go in terms of presentation (T2)

It was talk and listen. He stood out the front and talked, he had a couple of slides of statistics, but there wasn't enough opportunity for interacting of groups to share ideas ... it was just a sit down and listen type lecture (T8)

... where you play a passive role and you sit and you hear people talk and its not interactive, its those sorts of in-services ... Yes the back of your mind, how does this relate to what you do in the classroom and if you think its not, well for me, if I think there is not a lot of relevance I guess you get cynical and think of the time you could be using more wisely (T44)

I would say the worst one in recent days would have to be without a doubt the Child Protection one; that was poorly done. I don't think we should have spent the time on it that we did ... It was extremely poorly organised, the material was boring, the video tapes were long and dreary and most people's minds were wandering well before the completion of the tape (T1)

More positive experiences were described in these terms:

I think the peer support; I think that that was really good because it was useful, practical ... I thought that that was very powerful and I liked hands-on things; I liked the art work shops that we have done; I don't like just sitting there and having information, because I turn off after a while (T22)

We were given a lot of scenarios to sit down and fathom out. We worked in small groups coming up with solutions to the problem ... I just prefer those T&D days where you get into small groups and actually work with people, and you've got something concrete that you're aiming for (T7)

Ongoing programs with follow-up

Successful T&D which facilitates teacher learning is conducted over a period of time, rather being 'one-off', and has follow-up built into the program. Effective follow-up is about trying ideas in the classroom and then having further sessions to discuss and reflect upon those trials. As various respondents said:

... the one off doesn't work, it needs to be something that's on-going (DO1)

... you've got to give the teachers the time to absorb it all, get back into their classrooms and try and use it, and then you've got to have another day, at least, a month or two months, whatever you think might be necessary to get everyone back together again and see, did you learn anything from the day, how did you use it, was it successful, the only way your ever really going to know with T&D days if there successful, is to find out how much is actually being used in the classroom (T7)

I was really fortunate to have the opportunity to work with local technology people in OASIS ... we actually went through the OASIS modules for a day with our leaders and then the follow-up afterwards was really good (T4)

Once again Reading Recovery was cited as an example of a program that is ongoing with follow-up:

Reading recovery training, it was six years ago and that was really powerful. That was basically a year, fortnightly tutorials and behind glass demonstrations with students, thus ongoing daily, working with students and recording and having to submit regularly parts of your programs. Then part of that component if you continued with doing reading recovery you had term meetings where you had to teach behind glass, so the follow-up with reading recovery is really strong (T4)

I think probably the best training and development I ever had was the year I did reading recovery training ... that's been the most powerful training I have ever done (T26)

Where teachers do not have an opportunity for follow-up they feel disappointed:

I think some of the (courses) where you go away intensively for a couple of days and come back enthusiastically, fall down because there isn't usually anybody else you can share your experience with. You come back with a lot to do and then it's very difficult to get everybody as enthused as you are, because you have this experience and I think that the drawback of anything is lack of follow-up (T4)

I did a weekend inservice course which was on craft and drama for Book Week. It was fabulous and I did a lot of wonderful puppets, hands on things, ... when I came back I desperately wanted to do something to show what they could do and how easy it was and how wonderful it was; I never got the opportunity (T32)

EMOTIONS

The data reveal a range of emotions relating to teacher workplace learning. Hargreaves (in press) reminds us that teaching and teacher development involve emotional work; they "cannot be reduced to technical competencies or clinical standards alone" (p. 27). Goleman (1998) writes of emotional intelligence which "means managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together smoothly toward their common goals" (p. 7). It is clearly important to recognise the significance of emotions as teachers move into more collaborative forms of working and learning. A range of emotions were expressed in the data and they comprise a condition of teacher learning.

Enjoyment

A number of respondents felt enjoyment in their experience of teacher learning, particularly in the collaborative aspects of sharing and working with colleagues :

Mentors and help, support, sharing of ideas, working alongside colleagues, working together in cooperative teams/partnership, teams, a great deal of learning, practical, hands on... I really enjoy it and feel satisfaction (T16)

... it was very well informed and it was enjoyable and they had really good speakers ... they made it an enjoyable experience (T2)

I love going out of the school and learning new things and bringing them back and sharing them. I enjoy being in front of people in the school, we do a lot of sharing like that which is wonderful, just talking to the staff and all that sort of thing (T14)

That's what I like about teaching is the process and that I learn continually and that the students that I teach, teach me and that the teachers that I teach with, teach me. It does seem to be quite interactive and I find it quite enjoyable (T15)

that's the type that I enjoy most where I can come back bring ideas and bring strategies back to staff or back into the classroom (T43)

Anxiety and stress

Other respondents were less positive in emotional terms:

It creates anxiety for me, yes, but I think that there is a lot of anxiety for teachers. A teacher rang me yesterday and said this workplace stuff is all very well, but he said what's happening is that we are becoming insular and particularly in secondary schools the science

people aren't getting together, the music people aren't getting together, that's what is causing a lot of anxiety with those people (DO6)

And they are becoming stressed because the other issue is that they are constantly being asked to implement a new Literacy policy, implement the new Chemical Safety document, implement the new OH&S stuff and it goes on and on and on so they are being asked to do a lot of things over and above their teaching and learning (DO6)

Guilt

Seeking advice from other teachers can be an emotive issue and some teachers feel guilty about leaving their students to go to T&D sessions:

I don't like to admit to other teachers my weaknesses as such because it's something that isn't really shared and you sort of think I would love for somebody to just admit that they're human so I can say well I'm human too, but we have this guilt that we carry around all the time (T14)

You have to find the time to go, sometimes you feel very guilty being off your class and sometimes it is just not feasible to go after school, especially if you have children and family commitments ... parents expect you to be with their children in the classroom all the time and I don't think parents appreciate your absence (T34)

RESPONSE TO CHANGE

The data reveal that the nature and amount of change is a significant issue for teachers in NSW schools. They feel bombarded with policy and curriculum change. Their response to the rapidity of change is an important condition of teacher learning.

Imposed change

There is a generally negative response to imposed change:

For really effective and positive change to occur, the people that are affected by the change or changes really have to be convinced of the worth of it. The common view is that there has been far too much change of a top down nature that has been forced on schools and teachers and little or no reference is made to those in the frontline, that is, the classroom teacher or schools for that matter (T1)

I think you can't impose something from the top I think it has to come from the base and work your way up and I don't think that someone at the top is going to have a true idea of individual teachers and what their strengths and weaknesses are (T28)

that's my frustration with T&D and perhaps, sometimes it's not targeted where you want it to be targeted ... a lot of it is imposed, and that doesn't allow the school to address what the school perceives the needs of the school (T2)

Amount of change

It is not only the top-down nature of change that concerns teachers but the amount and rapidity of change as well:

Like if you take the situation of the English document ... I was just getting to know it when they decided to change it, so then you put it on the backburner, well there's no use doing too much more until the change comes (T7)

I think the main problem is that we have had so many changes within curriculum structure within the school over the last few years that a lot of the teachers, particularly the less experienced teachers have been so busy coping with those changes, that they really haven't had time to then go back and look at the idea of professional development (T25)

I think too, our wondrous Department of Education and their almost obsession with change at the moment, people don't like to invest a lot of time in anything because everything is seen as so impermanent now (T45)

Short term perspective

The response to rapid change can be adoption of a short term perspective whereas effective change takes a considerable amount of time:

The critical factor for me in schools and what I observe all the time is that people jump in implement something and then walk away from it and it's all done within a term ... to change a system like a school you have to do it over four or five years and you have to evaluate it and you have to then be prepared to take the ball and change things (T9)

TIME

Time was one of the most frequently mentioned and problematic issues in the data. It was generally seen as an inhibiting condition in that there is insufficient time to do all that teachers would like to do with school focused T&D. Time and funding are closely related conditions in the data in the sense that 'money buys time' for teachers to be released from classes but even that is not without problems.

Finding time for T&D

Since the change to school focused T&D, teachers are finding it difficult to find the time within an already busy school day. Under the previous policy they were 'given' time by being released from classroom teaching for a day or days to attend courses outside the school. Just about every teacher interviewed mentioned the problem of insufficient time:

... and I don't think we have enough time for that sharing (T4)

... time, time is the greatest pressure, teachers find it very difficult; there's so much on our agenda (T10)

I think the lack of funding and the lack of time are my main concerns about the training ; its all well and good if you don't have a family and you don't have other commitments (T22)

... time is a big factor; particularly today the job is a lot more high stressed; it should be getting easier but its harder ... (T24)

When are you going to do professional development within the school structure if you are not given some block of time when teachers are actually released from face-to-face teaching so that they have the time to actually look at something and give their full time to it (T25)

There is data to suggest that teachers are finding time by working longer hours outside of school:

Time, I think is the main thing. I just find often that you have got so many things that you want to do within your classroom, so much preparation and at times when I've been meant to be doing an inservice for the staff on drug ed. etc, you have to spend your weekend preparing for it and then you don't get your classwork done or else you are staying up so late at night to prepare everything so you are covering both areas that you are so tired that you are not as effective as you should be, so I think time is the major factor and just too great a workload on people (T31)

... teachers now spending more of their own time out of school hours getting familiar with documents, even though there is in-service training within the school time but I think that the time teachers are having to spend going through documents or understanding documents is more demanding in the last five or six years. Teachers are expected to do a lot more their own time (T43)

Other ways of finding time were also mentioned:

Flexibility is actually crucial and I think not just from the administrative point of view, but people being flexible, finding ways around the time even (DO3)

... in some schools I have been into that are way ahead the principal goes in and says 'I'll cover that class so that you can go and meet with this group and whatever' and so being a little bit more creative like the best things for leaders the role model is actually saying 'I think this is important so therefore I will support you and give you time' (DO4)

If the average classroom teacher is to become a 'consultant' to the staff as well, they should be given the time to do it (T31)

I had to present an in-school presentation yesterday after school on drug ed and I had to say to the kids 'I am sorry but you are going to have to go out at 9.00 and I haven't time to chat at lunch time I have got things I have to do' (T31)

... one of the things that the Department could do is to appoint a teacher to the school who didn't have a timetable and that this would be a very economic way of allowing teachers to have time to do professional development because people who were wanting to do professional development could then have this person take their classes, on a rotational basis so that they had time. (T25)

T&D after school

Perhaps the most common way for schools to find time for T&D is in after school sessions. Certainly such sessions create time for T&D but many teachers feel that it is not effective after a day in the classroom:

We have things like Monday afternoon training and development ... and I find doing those on Monday afternoon we were all pretty exhausted and were bombarded with a lot of those things I find difficult to take on board ... and I think it causes more frustration and it's very disheartening (T3)

At the moment we're doing it after school in our own time ... It's just tiring because you teach all day and then you stay at school till like five in the afternoon (T5)

It all happens outside of school now, I mean the Department runs courses but they are always 4-6pm in the afternoon and if you have family commitments you don't have time to go and sometimes after you have done a day's work you really don't want to go (T30)

One teacher suggested a possible solution to this problem:

I think if your going to run T&D after school it has to be a progression on from the day not just expect people to come at 3.30, perhaps if they came from 12.00 to 5.00 and so it was only half a day, I think that would be more acceptable and a more useful time frame as well, so I think if you find time there, then you would probably find more support for maintaining the teaching program, but also allowing a certain amount of time to do the T&D, I think that would work (T2)

Time away from class

Another problem seems to arise, however, if teachers are given time away from the classroom for T&D:

I also think sometimes that teachers have enough to try and come to terms with, and time away from class you see it's not just the time that's allocated to the course, it's actually time away from the class that has to be disrupted and depending on your school climate, teachers being absent at PD courses can even be more disruptive (T4)

... inschool training and development means that you've got to step out of your classroom to support other people. Now that can become very burdensome at times and can also become very frustrating (T13)

... our children rely very heavily on security of their teachers, for many we are the most secure thing in their lives, they find it difficult to cope with changing for a day or a couple of days of the training (T26)

REDUCED T&D FUNDS

The data reveal that reduced funding of T&D is an issue of great concern to teachers in NSW schools and is an inhibiting condition of teacher learning. In 1997 a salaries agreement produced a pay increase for teachers at the expense of money for T&D programs in schools. Consequently, T&D funds in schools have been reduced and this is causing a high level of dissatisfaction amongst teachers. Given recent research on teacher satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 1998) showing that 'satisfiers' and 'dissatisfiers' actually fall into separate domains, rather than being on one continuum, it is understandable that teachers can be both satisfied with a pay rise and dissatisfied with reduced funds for T&D.

Effects of the salaries agreement

Whilst most respondents did not connect the reduced T&D funding with the salaries agreement, one did:

My reading of it right across all the schools that I have worked with is that the last salaries agreement that reduced the training and development funding in schools has been seen as an absolute disaster, its one of the worst things that the Department ever did (T39)

Most respondents saw the issue in terms of money being taken away from the schools and the effect that was having:

my role is with Training and Development and I am constantly being told we don't have any money to do anything ... The schools, the teachers are constantly telling me, the Principals are always haggling with me over well do you have money to run this course, do you have money to provide, can you support us with money? And that is the big issue with them (DO6)

I do think that there has been a dramatic decline (in morale) particularly since the training and development funds have been taken from the school (DO6)

Well its starting to become extremely concerning. In this school, at the moment we have had to pull money out of general global grant in addition to the specific funding we get to make sure there is enough funding to be able to produce a workable program and give people some access to professional development ... some other program somewhere down the line has just got to suffer and its probably going to be in capital expenditure programs (T1)

T&D 'on the cheap'

Many teachers felt that the policy of school focused T&D was a direct result of the funding cuts and that it was a way for the Department to deliver T&D in the cheapest possible way with little commitment to long-term effectiveness:

you can be cynical about it all and say school-based is a cheap way out (T27)

I'm a little bit disenchanted with the Department's approach in terms of cutting back on funding and then dumping it all (ie. T&D) on us (T12)

It just appears to the people at the coal face that the budget has just been slashed, that that's the reason for all this in-school training where we have colleagues which are meant to be training us (T38)

and I mean just the total lack of funding and the commitment or the ongoing commitment to teachers training and development, because without that ongoing commitment you end up, not life long learners but you end up with people who get set in their ways and that is it, they don't ever change (T38)

Also, when teachers see the pitiful amount of funds that are given in global allocations to professional development, they often come to the view that the Department treats professional development as a joke as exemplified by the funding, so why should we bother (T1)

Missed opportunities

Some respondents view the new policy and reduction in funds in terms of their missed opportunities compared to the earlier policy:

... they arrange for a high professor or a professional to come to talk to the community or interested people in the community and we see them come, but we are not able to participate due to the lack of funds, due to the fact that in these settings for our teachers to go to it and make the most of this opportunity we would have to get in three special education teachers to take our place (T3)

I'm not sure of the exact figures, but I know we don't get the opportunities to apply for T&D like we did 2 years ago (T4)

Buying time

Adequate funding for T&D enables the buying of time, particularly for teacher release from classes for planning and attendance. When such funding is not available it is difficult for teachers to participate effectively:

Well I suppose in order to have really effective school focused training and development you need some time for the planning to happen so that it really is effective for everybody and in order for that to happen ... you need money so that they can have time off class (T14)

DIFFICULTIES FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

Data from teachers in rural schools indicate some specific difficulties with T&D relating to their geographic isolation and their perception that policies are written with the circumstances of city schools in mind:

Getting casuals

One of the difficulties faced by rural teachers who need to leave their class to attend T&D is finding a replacement teacher for the day. In comparison with city schools one teacher commented that it is 'a lot harder because number one it is really hard to get a casual because you are isolated so they don't want to come (even) if you can find a casual' (T38).

Extra costs

The extra costs of attending T&D for rural teachers can be a real difficulty:

... you have the travel costs, I mean the training and development budget doesn't cover running your car for four or five hours to go to somewhere and it doesn't allow accommodation ... if we go to Sydney to attend a course you have got to pay your own travel, your own accommodation, your own meals (T38)

Sydney-based policies and programs

The data reveal a strongly held view amongst rural teachers that there is a 'Sydney bias' in T&D policies and programs:

Very rarely, very rarely are they ever considered, in any issue. I mean most of the decisions are handed down from a central body in Sydney, they don't even know that small schools exist. They forget about us all the time (T38)

... there is a lot of professional development going on but it's all Sydney based. I mean you open the training books and it's all Sydney based. There is very little that's available for the country areas and the isolated schools and it's a different perspective altogether teaching in those sorts of places and I don't think the needs are being met... (T28)

... there are lots of courses often in Sydney which we had access to previously through regional office funds because they would fund us to go down under their funds. Since we have gone to the district model, that doesn't exist ... (T29)

... sometimes in the 'Education' paper you will read about some lovely inservices, but they are all in Sydney or we are sent fliers for some inservices but they are all in Sydney. It's not just a matter of 'pop in after school and do it'... Some bureaucrats have probably not yet ever

crossed the Blue Mountains to discover the teaching pastures on the slopes and plains
(T31)

Conclusion

The teachers interviewed had a generally good understanding of the new policy on school focused T&D which suggests that the Department's policy dissemination process has been effective. That understanding, however, does not imply outright acceptance of the policy. While teachers value the focus on meeting their own needs and the collaboration which is fostered through a more school-based approach to T&D, they are very concerned about the increased pressure on their time and highly critical of the Department for reducing funding for T&D. They do not regard the salary increase as offsetting this reduction and that can be understood in terms of the two factor model of teacher satisfaction. That model suggests that while a salary increase will remove a source of dissatisfaction it will not produce satisfaction since teachers gain their satisfaction from facilitating student achievement which they feel is being eroded through reduction in funds for their own professional development.

This study confirms earlier research findings about the conditions of teacher learning especially the facilitative conditions of meeting needs, collaboration, leadership and ongoing programs with follow-up in the classroom. What is new here is the importance of not only understanding, but valuing, workplace learning along with the emotional domain which is strongly impacted when teachers are under increased pressure to do more with less time and money. These are inhibiting conditions for all teachers and there are other particular problems for rural schools that are indicated and should be taken into account.

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