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Thinking outside the square: A change model of university supervision of the practicum

Abstract:

Tertiary supervision of preservice teachers undertaking professional practice no longer assumes the importance it once held. Competing interests (e.g., research and consultancies) mean that fewer university staff commit to this area. Those who do find their promotional opportunities may suffer. Against this background, this pilot study developed, trialled and evaluated the effectiveness on a "Professional Development Schools" approach. In essence, it involved hiring a professional development facilitator for each school whose task was to work with both preservice teachers and supervising teachers in their professional development. Reports indicate a high level of satisfaction with the outcomes. The project is on-going.

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Outcomes

Several of the projects begun during Semester 2, 1999 are still being worked on in the three schools. It is not anticipated that any of these projects will be completed by the end of the 1999 school year, largely due to their scope and to the contextual constraints outlined previously. The fact that the teachers who are involved in these projects are motivated to continue learning through them is in itself a positive outcome of the project. School plans to continue resourcing the project in 2000 (written into 2000 Annual Operational Plan of one school) is a recognition of the project's partial success and of its future potential. An overview of continuing and discontinuing projects is provided in Table 5 on page 18 of this report.

The majority of discontinuing projects have not been "lost". Teachers in these projects remain interested in working through them but have been unable to do so for a number of contextual and personal reasons.

In summary, the following truisms have been reinforced or lessons learned from the work undertaken in this project

- The "buy-in" process with school leaders is the most critical phase of engagement with professional development schools. Unless school leaders are actively supportive of a long-term, action learning, classroom-based approach to professional development of their teachers, the program cannot be successful;
- An external facilitator or "critical friend" - university lecturer or consultant employed by a school or group of schools - is **essential** in the initiation, development and evaluation of classroom-based professional development programs;
- Professional development of staff must be a prominent component of a school's Annual Operational Plan if the program is to be successful;

- Teachers must be provided with adequate "time to learn" and active support by school leadership if classroom-based professional development programs are to have any chance of success;

- Email and the internet have high potential to facilitate and support classroom-based professional development programs for practising teachers and for pre-service teachers;

- Pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and mentors do not generally use available electronic support and learning programs because of lack of time, lack of skill and lack of access to computers. Pre-service and practising teachers tend to turn to "expert" colleagues in other schools for apparently portable solutions to generally egocentric issues and problems rather than engage in practitioner research to resolve pedagogical problems;
- There are no overt philosophical, pedagogical or organisational links between the placement of pre-service teachers and interns for school-based learning and the professional development of classroom teachers;

- There is no articulation between the university assignments and projects to be completed by pre-service teachers, in schools, during practicum programs and the day-to-day school-based learning programs and opportunities made available to them by their supervising teachers and mentors. Practicum-based university assignments and projects do not consider the significant contextual restrictions and opportunities encountered by pre-service teachers in individual practicum settings;

- Open access, by pre-service teachers, to the professional knowledge and skills of their supervising teachers and mentors is not a clear goal of school-based practicum programs. Pre-service teachers receive developmental feedback of greatly varying quality from school-based supervisors and mentors and they rarely find opportunities to engage in genuine learning conversations with their supervisors and mentors; and
- Pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and mentors value highly, the on-site presence and active involvement in school-based practicum programs of university teachers.

Recommendations for future Professional Development Schools

The following recommendations, based on the foregoing outcomes, findings and experiences, are offered to colleagues who may wish to further develop this approach to the articulated professional development of pre-service teachers and of classroom teachers in the future

1. Invite schools to participate in the professional development program at the beginning of each year. The faculty would offer professional development schools

- a pre-service teacher who would complete his/her final practicum and undertake an internship with each classroom teacher undertaking a classroom-based, action research, professional development program;
- optional access to a faculty member or external consultant who would act as a "critical friend" to the school and to pre-service teachers in practicum and related professional development programs throughout the year;
- access to the expertise of faculty members, by request;

2. Schools will be eligible to participates in this internship/professional development program if

- staff professional development is a goal in the school's Annual Operational Plan;
- mechanisms such as the use of "non-contact time" and/or current curriculum time to provide professional development "learning time" for professional development teachers are operationalised;
- all classroom teachers in the professional development program have access to and are competent users of email and the internet;

3. The Education District Director be involved in the annual identification, selection and support processes for Professional Development Schools;
4. The "buy-in" phase with leaders of professional development schools begins as soon as possible in the year. The program should not proceed in a school until the "buy-in" process with the school leadership has been satisfactorily completed;
5. Revise the curriculum and pedagogy of faculty practicum subjects so that they articulate with the goals, opportunities and strategies of classroom-based professional development and with the day-to-day realities of classroom teaching; and
6. Invite final year pre-service teachers to participate in this program and select those to be placed in professional development schools on the basis of their eligibility and willingness to undertake the internship program in their final semester.

This is a report, from the perspective of a professional development facilitator, of a pilot action research project which investigated the potential of the QUT Professional Development School program to positively impact on classroom pedagogy for the benefit of children, classroom teachers, pre-service teachers, school communities and a Faculty of Education.

The reports is concerned with

- The project context with reference to

- previous research undertaken by the QUT Faculty of Education;
- Education Queensland's *Education 2010* and *New Basics* agendas (Luke, 1999; Barrett, 1999)
- the work and responsibilities of the faculty's School of Professional Studies and Professional Experience Unit;
- three State system professional development schools; and
- the roles and responsibilities of the professional development facilitator.

- Defining what project partners wanted to achieve through participation in the project, with reference to the learning goals of

- the Professional Experience Unit within the faculty's School of Professional Studies;
- the three professional development schools; and
- participating classroom teachers from each of these schools.

- Developing learning and management strategies for the project with

- the leaders of each of the three professional development schools;
- the pre-service teachers and interns undertaking practicum and internship programs in each of these schools;
- participating classroom teachers; and

  supporting the implementation phase of individual and group professional development projects in these schools.

- Project outcomes as of November 1999; and
- Recommendations for future professional development schools.

Project context

QUT Faculty of Education

This project was seen as a new research undertaking directed by the leaders of three participating schools in collaboration with the university. While the project was designed around the "Zeichner" model of Professional Development Schools (Zeichner & Miller, 1996), where teachers in schools work with experts to explore and benefit from the school-based nature of professional development, the project was promoting an approach not previously encountered in the Australian context. This is a high risk approach as the focus on school-based personnel using participative action research within the research methodology may produce some highly pertinent data, idiosyncratic to individual school and classroom contexts together with other uncertain outcomes.

The significance of this project resides in the findings of previous researchers in this area. Successful Professional Development Schools overseas (Zeichner & Miller, 1996) have become sites where teachers assume new roles as mentors and teacher educators and engage in reflective, teacher-initiated inquiry into their professional practice (Darling-Hammond, 1994). These changes represent significant educational reform with the potential to enhance student learning outcomes and address problems of equity and social justice (Zeichner & Miller, 1996; Luke, 1999). However, Teitel (1996:33) concludes that expected outcomes are not being achieved by many Professional Development Schools and more research is needed to illuminate what is not known in areas such as the impact on school culture and identification of the impeding and facilitating factors within the developmental phases of mature Professional Development Schools.

The critical questions arising from this research and shaping this particular project were

- How can a set of conditions for establishing a culture of support for teacher inquiry in schools be effectively initiated and nurtured considering the professional growth opportunities appropriate to particular school cultures and working through the inevitable problems and tensions raised as part of the change process in individual schools (Lieberman & Miller, 1991; Groundwater-Smith, 1996)?
- How can both beginning and continuing teachers be best supported by a school culture that encourages and empowers them to investigate the social and political dimensions of their practice as a basis of developing options for professional action to address issues of equity and social justice within learning contexts (Zeichner, 1997; Luke, 1999)?
- How can pre-service teachers and particularly interns be best assisted to build their personal knowledge base of professional practice through authentic practice within the classroom, school and community contexts, and through genuine learning conversations and cognitive apprenticeships with expert professional mentors (Ethel, 1997; Shulman, 1987; Schon, 1983)? and
- How can a professional development facilitator be employed most effectively in supporting professional development in professional development schools?

Answers to these questions appear to be particularly relevant within the emerging future directions of public school-education within this State.

Education 2010

In a recent seminal paper (Luke, 1999) on futures for public school-education in Queensland, Professor Allan Luke, Deputy Director-General, Education Queensland has clearly stated that pedagogy - teaching and learning in the face-to-face setting of classrooms - is THE work of teachers and of schools.

School leaders, classroom teachers, pre-service teacher educators - everyone involved in the educational enterprise - are being challenged to develop and to become immersed in "productive pedagogies" which is

an approach to creating a place, space and vocabulary for us to get talking

> *about classroom instruction again..... it's a framework and vocabulary for staffroom, inservice, preservice training, for us to describe the various things we can do in classrooms -*
>
> *the various options in our teaching 'repertoires' that we have - and how we can adjust these, play with these, to get different outcomes.........*
>
> *It has the possibility of providing a common ground and dialogue between teachers, school administrators, teacher educators, student-teachers and others about these 'repertoires' and about what aspects of our teaching repertoires work best for improved intellectual and social outcomes for distinctive groups of kids* (Luke, 1999).

Luke refers to Sizer (1984) to support the notion that we as educators need to move towards educationally productive approaches to pedagogy and to make sure that we provide the resources and guidance where it is needed and requested for productive school-based reform. He goes on to say

> *The actual work on pedagogy - and the actual change in the cultures of Education Queensland - has to occur at the grassroots level, in the classrooms and led by principals. All the school reform and improvement literature says that it's schools that change, move and shift - and it's in the schools, in staffrooms and classroom that results are made.*

Luke also cites the work of University of Queensland researchers - Lingard, Hayes and Mills - which clearly shows that it is the principal and the school who have to set key enabling conditions in place for the development of professional learning communities - professional development schools.

He goes on to make the point, substantiated by Vygotsky, that learning occurs through "assisted performance" with a mentor who

> *throws out the rope further than you currently can grasp, you stretch and with some help grasp it, or if you can't grasp it, your mentor is there to catch you or assist or model.*

Luke makes the point, long ignored in pervious professional development and in-service programs, that the resources and talents and knowledge for reform doesn't lie outside schools in universities or in central offices or with "experts" - it resides within classrooms where there are a lot of very skilled teachers engaged in productive pedagogies. Luke exhorts us to

> *get mentoring each other, swapping strategies, and having curriculum conversations about what we did differently.*

These futures imperatives and directions described by Luke (1999), complement the faculty's research in Professional Development Schools and sustain the goals of this project as developed in the faculty's School of Professional Studies.

School of Professional Studies - Professional Experience Unit

The Professional Experience Unit (PEU), within the Faculty of Education's School of Professional Studies, is charged with providing some 3000 pre-service teachers annually

with good quality practice teaching and learning opportunities under the supervision and guidance of highly competent and effective classroom practitioners (Board of Teacher Registration, 1998).

This is accomplished by the PEU entering into commercial agreements, regulated by an Industrial Award, with schools and practising teachers to provide the required classroom based learning opportunities and experiences for its pre-service teachers over the period of their teacher preparation courses. Pre-service teachers are given on-campus preparation for each in-school practicum experience and school-based supervisors and mentors are provided with printed guides that detail their responsibilities and the faculty's processes and expectations. A small number of on-campus learning programs are directly linked with and a few are closely articulated with school-based practicum programs. Members of faculty staff are allocated as supervisors to groups of practice schools. The supervisory model currently in use no longer has a focus on the traditional, regular, routine observation of student teaching. Rather it is about empowering the teacher supervisors by clarifying program details and by providing them with professional support to carry out these roles effectively.

Over time, the PEU and the School of Professional Studies have developed

- *Supervision and Mentoring (SAM)* - an accredited course for school-based practicum supervisors (Yarrow, Millwater and Adie, 1998);
- *Mentoring Casebook: video-based interactive learning materials for professional development* (Ballantyne, Green, Yarrow & Millwater, 1997)
- *MENTOR-EDM: online resources for teacher mentors* (Ballantyne, Millwater, Mylonas, Yarrow, Hansford, McCrae, Miles, Packer & Pillay, 1998);
- *MENTOR-EDS: online resources for preservice teachers* (Ballantyne, McCrae & Packer, 1998)
- *Prac Link*, an online support service for pre-service teachers engaged in school-based practicum
- Regularly revised practicum programs and pedagogy; and
- Professional Development Schools - interns in Eden, Glendon and Norton schools.

In spite of these initiatives, the faculty and the PEU continue to be confronted by

- the increasing difficulty of securing good quality, classroom-based practice teaching placements for pre-service teachers;
- the problem of genuinely articulating campus-based and classroom-based learning programs for pre-service teachers;
- the urgent need to communicate effectively with its classroom-based teaching partners; and
- the challenges of providing relevant professional development opportunities and programs for its classroom-based teaching partners and for campus-based teachers.

Within this context, the faculty established this pilot research project

- *to meet the industry partner (principals') needs for school-initiated professional development and improvement of professional practice through support from a research associate, internships and expanded university-school collaboration;*
- *to consolidate innovatory approaches to the practicum by placing pre-service teachers in emerging Professional Development Schools;*

- *to evaluate the effectiveness of these arrangements about professional learning outcomes for pre-service teachers, professional development outcomes for classroom teachers and changes in classroom and schooling practices at each site. Unanticipated outcomes will also be mapped;*
- *to refine the structures and processes used to foster the growth of Professional Development Schools considering the findings of the action research program;* and
- *to research a model of professional development that may be adopted by other schools through the school-based management and consequent, innovatory and differentiated staffing practices.*

(Yarrow, 1998)

Participating schools

As previously indicated the PEU has worked with Glendon School and Norton School since 1994 and with Eden School since 1998, in the development of the internship program - an extended teaching program for high achieving pre-service teachers who have completed their course requirements and who voluntarily undertake an internship as a pre-employment induction to their profession. As an extension of this learning relationship, the leaders of these three schools agreed to partner QUT in this pilot project which aims to address the foregoing issues. Each of these schools, together with the faculty, made a significant financial commitment to the project. Table 1 provides some descriptive data from these schools.

Table 1

School Data

Characteristic	Eden School	Glendon School	Norton School
Enrolment	540	427	407
Year levels	P-7	P-7	P-7
Classroom Teachers	25	19	18
Principal	1	1	1
Deputy Principal	1	1	1
Pre-school teachers	1	1	1
Learning support teachers	1	2	1
Location - km from city centre (Approx.)	17	12	8

| Established | 1998 | 1953 | 1865 |

(http://www.qed.qld.gov.au/apps/owa/school$.startup)

In addition to these data, the following school and faculty leadership factors were important influences on the conduct and development of the project

- in Eden School the Deputy Principal was new to the school in January 1999;
- in Glendon School an Acting Principal, replacing the Principal who was on long service leave, was leading the school for the first eight weeks of the project. A new Deputy Principal commenced duty at the school in Term 3, 1999;
- in Norton School, the Deputy Principal who had commenced duty in the school in January 1999 was Acting Principal until November 1999, replacing the seriously ill Principal. A senior teacher in the school was Acting Deputy Principal for five months of the project;
- the faculty's Chief Investigator and leader of a Collaborative Research Management Team for the project was unavoidably absent for approximately four months of the project.

The context of research associate, facilitator and critical friend

A research associate was appointed in this project in June 1999 to work in each of the three professional development schools for approximately 6 hours (1 day) per week for a period of twenty-two weeks.

The role of the professional development facilitator in the project was

......(to) work collaboratively in each school with the industry partners to identify professional needs and to plan and implement programs to meet these needs; to include the coordination of input of specialist contributions as required; to help each school to develop as a collaborative community of inquiry where members become action researchers of their professional practice, in both school and classroom contexts and across a range of issues, including equity and social justice; to lead weekly seminars for pr-service teachers to encourage critical reflection of their own professional practice and that of expert teachers; and to help the Collaborative Research Management Team in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the research data as a basis for the formative and summative evaluation of the project.

Further, the professional development facilitator was required to

- *identify needs and plan programs to shape the type of culture normally associated with successful Professional Development Schools;*
- *develop collegial relationships with principals, teachers and pre-service teachers in each school;*
- *assist with the ongoing implementation and evaluation of the project;* and
- *use high level skills in the successful fulfilment of professional development needs in the schools, under the guidance of the chief investigators and in collaboration with other personnel.*

(Yarrow, 1998)

To facilitate the conduct of the research project and the achievement of its previously stated goals, the professional development facilitator worked in two areas

   a. defining what school leaders and classroom teachers wanted to achieve for their learners, for themselves and for their schools within the goals of the project; and
   b. developing learning and management strategies and processes to help classroom teachers and school leaders achieve their learning goals.

Defining what project partners wanted to achieve

In defining the learning goals of project partners, the following priorities are discussed

   a. the faculty's goal of developing stronger collaborative ties with professional development schools;
   b. individual school goals of school improvement; and
   c. the goals of participating teachers to improve the pedagogy of their classrooms.

Faculty of Education -School of Professional Studies - Professional Experience Unit

This pilot project was concerned with the collaborative development by the Faculty of Education and three participating schools of an action research based professional development model for teachers. This model of professional development was to be different from models previously experienced by classroom teachers in that it was to be driven by teachers' individual professional development needs. These needs arose from their own efforts to improve the pedagogy of their own classrooms.

This approach contrasts with typical systemic professional development, "in-service" programs for practising teachers which tend to be top-down, system or school driven; focused on curriculum or policy change; and delivered outside the classroom context by school "outsiders" in "single hit" workshop mode. In concert with this type of professional development for practising teachers, visits to the classrooms of "experts" (usually in other schools and usually during school-time) are supported by the teacher's school. Furthermore, participation in after hours seminars, workshops or short courses that may or may not be financially supported by the teacher's school, is required.

These systemic approaches to the professional development of school-based teachers and leaders and to the implementation of new curricula and policies have been less than effective or efficient because they do not appear to consider the context, capacities, readiness and motivation, needs or learning styles of the intended participants. Nor do they use delivery strategies or change processes which provide on-going support of learners as they attempt to contextualise the concepts, skills and changes that are to be implemented in their classrooms and schools.

There is generally no provision for the sharing and celebration of individual and group achievement either during or at the end of the planned learning and change program. Often, these programs do not have the full support of school leaders and managers because they do not understand or share the corporate vision of the future. And often, the post "in-servicing" phases of these programs are not adequately resourced, either materially or in terms of learning time for teachers or appropriate school leader, peer or critical friend support for the participants.

The goal of this pilot project then was to investigate the feasibility of developing a professional development model that was driven by improving the pedagogy of individual classrooms, as determined by the professional judgements and interests, capacities, motivation and learning styles of individual practising teachers. It was anticipated that collaborative action by the faculty and by the school leaderships in this project would result in a strengthened professional relationships between the faculty and schools; enhanced team building and collaborative effort in each participating school; improvement in classroom pedagogy and learning outcomes for children; and teachers who were empowered to be truly reflective, action oriented classroom practitioners. It was also anticipated that the faculty's collaborative support of individual practitioner professional development would result in improved practicum pedagogy, particularly in terms of greater access by pre-service teachers to the professional knowledge and skills of their classroom based supervisors and mentors. A significant increase in the quality and quantity of classroom placement opportunities for pre-service teachers and interns was another anticipated outcome of this professional alliance.

Participating schools

While the leadership of each of the participating schools agreed with and supported these project goals, each school developed its own set of organisational professional development goals at the outset of the project. These goals are presented in Table 2.

An examination of schools' goals reveals that

- Each school has similar goals for the level of support and preferred support processes for its pre-service teachers. Glendon School has the additional goal of directly involving its pre-service teachers in its school and professional development goals of improving the teaching of reading for all of its children;

- The goals of Eden School are clearly focused on identifying and satisfying developmental needs of individual teachers in a supportive, collaborative, action research based learning context;

- The goals of Norton School are similar to those of Eden School in terms of their focus on individual teacher learning in a supportive, collaborative, action research based environment. They do, however, suggest a linkage between personal professional development of individual teachers and the school's curriculum development priority (and system imperative) in the area of technology education;

- The goals of Glendon School are overtly driven by the school and community imperatives of improving children's literacy performance through improved classroom pedagogy. The interests, learning needs and learning styles of individual teachers are secondary to the school's curriculum, pedagogy and assessment imperatives.

Clearly the learning and leadership cultures are quite different in each of the three schools.

Teachers

Within each school, the process of introducing and beginning ("buy-in") the professional development program identified a number of teachers who indicated an interest it pursuing their own professional development within the context of their school's professional development goals. While each teacher identified an individual professional development

goal which was directed at improving the pedagogy in his or her classroom, teachers with similar learning goals were grouped together on the assumptions that

- This approach to learning works best when it is done in teams or groups; and
- There needs to be a strong link between teachers' learning and efforts to change what is done and the way things are done in schools.

Table 2

Professional Development Project Goals of School Leaders

Eden School	Glendon School	Norton School
1. To develop strategies/ processes for helping teachers to identify their personal professional development needs. This is not a deficit model. The goal is to provide all staff members with the opportunity and the support required • to identify personal professional development needs; • to think about and to plan possible interventions; • to try and to evaluate interventions; • to share the process and the outcomes; and • to support the notion of "learning circles" where/ when possible. [This model may be extended to parents is the longer term]	1. The professional development project is to assist each teacher in the school to embrace proficiency in the teaching of reading as a personal professional development goal and to support the individual development needs of each teacher of reading in the school. The needs of learners attending the school are focused in the area of learning to read effectively at each developmental level. All teachers ought to be skilled and effective in<u>teaching</u> the children in their care to be appropriately functional readers. All teachers and pre-service teachers have been given a discussion paper that challenges them to think about and to discuss in their network meetings the work of Professor Peter Hall and the ideas and ideals contained in *Why schoolchildren can't read* (Bonnie Macmillan, ACER)	1. To develop a professional development model for the school and for individual teachers that is different from the current Education Queensland model. This model is to focus on learning - not on training. Key features of the model are • it is driven by learning needs identified by individual teachers; • it will support the learning needs of those teachers who are motivated to participate; • it will support an action learning process (identify a learning need/interest; plan an intervention; try it out; evaluate and share it; go to the next issue); • it will use strategies and processes such as coaching, networking, learning circles etc. to support individual professional development programs;

		and • if appropriate it may support school professional development initiatives such as technology and thinking skills.
2. Regular, on-going support and supervision of preservice teachers on both an individual ("needs") and group (approx. 1 hour/week - planned, in-school reflection/ theory/ practice session) basis.	2. Support pre-service teachers in their involvement in the school's focus on improving the teaching of reading.	2. Regular, on-going support and supervision of preservice teachers on both an individual ("needs") and group (approx. 1 hour/week - planned, in-school reflection/ theory/ practice session) basis.
3. Regular group reflection/ discussion sessions (approx. 1 hour/fortnight) with supervising teacher-mentors.	3. Regular, on-going support and supervision of pre-service teachers on both an individual ("needs") and group (approx. 1 hour/week - planned, in-school reflection/ theory/ practice session) basis.	

Table 3 shows the learning goals and professional development projects of the different groups of participating teachers in each project school. An examination of teachers' projects and goals reveals that

- Teachers' professional development interests in Eden School (17 of 25 classroom teachers) are focused on learning more about and resolving classroom and school problems in the areas of

  o multiage teaching and learning in the P-3 area of the school;
  o using computer technology effectively in learning and teaching programs;
  o behaviour management; and
  o sports coaching.

- In Glendon School the professional development interests of all teacher participants (17 of 19 classroom teachers) are focused in the area of literacy, but with the following emphases

  o improved teaching strategies and reading outcomes in the P-3 area of the school;
  o improved teaching strategies and "core" literacy outcomes in the middle years of primary schooling;

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- o improved teaching strategies and "core" literacy outcomes in the final years of primary schooling;
- o effective training and use of peer and adult literacy tutors across the school program; and
- o cooperative planning and teaching with the Teacher Librarian across the school program.

- In Norton School, those teachers who participated in the program (9 of 18 classroom teachers) all have learning goals in the technology area. While this focus was not mandated in the school's professional development program goals, teachers may have felt or believed that this was the only professional development area that would be supported by the school leadership. Teachers in Norton School want to learn about and resolve classroom and school problems in the areas of

    - o using computer technology effectively in classroom learning and teaching programs;
    - o effectively organising and managing the school's computer resources; and
    - o skilling children and teachers in the use of computers a learning tools.

These goals were elicited from school leaders and classroom teachers by way of the following strategies and processes. The following section also discusses the strategies and processes that were developed to help school leaders and classroom teachers work towards the achievement of their stated learning goals.

Developing learning and management strategies

The following interdependent aspects of the implementation "phase" of the project are discussed in this section

a. work with school leaders to identify and clarify "school" professional development goals and their preferred operational processes;
b. work with pre-service teachers and interns and their supervising teachers and mentors in school-based practicum programs;
c. work with classroom teachers to identify their professional development goals and their preferred learning styles; and
d. work with school leaders and classroom teachers in the implementation of their individual and group professional development programs.

School leaders

Following an initial meeting with the three school leaders (2 Acting Principals) and members of the faculty's Collaborative Research Management Team, the professional development facilitator met with school leadership teams in their schools on a number of occasions to develop the sets of School Professional Development Goals listed in Table 2. This process involved linking the goals of this project with those listed in each school's Annual Operational Plan and clarifying the operational protocols and resourcing parameters that would describe the professional development project in each school. Email was used frequently and easily in communicating with Eden School and to a limited extent with Norton School where it was still being installed. Facsimile was used to communicate with Glendon School as there was no email connection with that school until mid-September. This phase of the project was quickly and easily accomplished.

Table 3

Professional Development Goals and Projects of Teachers

Eden School	Glendon School	Norton School
Reduce reliance on lock-step grading in P-3 years by increasing multiage teaching and learning over these years. Effectively articulate the pre-school program with the Year 1-3 learning program. [6 members including the Principal and Pre-school Teacher-in-Charge]	Write and implement a P-3 literacy core curriculum that emphasises a. collaborative P-1 transition program; b. a comprehensive set of strategies for teaching children to read well; and c. effective planning, resourcing and evaluation. [9 members including Pre-school Teacher-in-Charge]	Use computer technology in outcomes-based teaching and learning program and in school-based assessment and evaluation programs. [1 member]
Develop and trial a framework of computer competencies for children in the P-3 years. [1 member]	a. Identify the core literacy skills to be learned by children in the middle years; and b. Develop effective strategies to teach these skills. [3 members]	Use computer technology effectively in lower school learning and teaching programs. [3 members]
a. Improve teachers' competence and confidence in using computers for planning, managing and communicating; and b. Use computers effectively as learning tools in classroom programs. [5 members]	a. Identify the core literacy skills to be learned by children in the final years of primary schooling; and b. Develop effective strategies to teach these skills. [4 members]	Develop and implement a hierarchal computer skills program for children (teachers, aides, parents) across the school. [1 member]
Use computer technology to organise Health & Physical Education learning and teaching resources across	Develop and implement an effective tutoring skills program for classroom aides and peer tutors who will	Review the school's software holdings and develop a system for keeping teachers informed

the school. [1 member]	work with learners across the P-7 continuum. [3 members including Pre-school Teacher-in-Charge]	of what, where, suitability, applications, user instructions, access etc. [1 member]
Identify and increase staff competencies sport coaching for the benefit of all children in the school. [1 member]	a. Develop and implement a school Resource Centre policy that focuses on collaborative planning and teaching with the Teacher Librarian;	Learn how to use CD-ROM based resources effectively in learning and teaching programs. [1 member]
a. Help young adolescents to identify the characteristics of good leadership in their peers and to help them to develop some of these characteristics in themselves; and b. Revise the school's behaviour management program. [2 members]	a. Develop and implement a system for effective use and management of "traditional" learning resources; and b. Develop and implement a system for effective use and management of "new" learning technologies. [3 members including the Teacher Librarian]	Identify and use software appropriately to support learners with Individual Education Programs. [1 member - Support Teacher]
Improve teachers' skills in counselling children and Parents. [1 member]		

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Pre-service teachers and interns

Table 4 provides information about the pre-service teachers and interns placed in each of the professional development schools. Pre-service teachers in this context are student teachers who are completing programs of assessed teaching practice under the close supervision of practising teachers in classrooms. Interns are selected pre-service teachers who have completed the requirements of their university course and who have been granted

an *Authority to Teach* by the Board of Teacher Registration and who have elected to
undertake additional classroom teaching experience prior to their first appointment as a
teacher.

Table 4

Pre-service teacher and Intern Data

Descriptor	E School	G School	N School
Pre-service teachers(N)	9	7	6
Course/Year	6 B.Ed - Primary - Yr.4 3 B.Ed - Early Childhood - Yr.4	B.Ed. - Primary - Yr.4	B.Ed. - Primary (Graduate Course) - Yr.3
Practicum period	5/7/99 - 13/8/99 (6wks)	5/7/99 - 13/8/99 (6wks)	4/10/99 - 29/10/99 (4wks)
Interns (N)	1	2	1
Completed previous practicum in this school	Yes	Yes	No
Mentor same/different from prac. supervisor	Same	Different	Different
Mentor involved in PD project	Yes	Yes	Yes
Internship period	8/11/99 - 17/12/99 (6wks)	8/11/99 - 17/12/99 (6wks)	1/11/99 - 10/12/99 (6wks)

Pre-service teachers had been allocated to these schools and to the supervising
teachers/class groups within them prior to the commencement of the professional
development project. The school-based, action research projects and assignments that were
to be completed by pre-service teachers during their practicum program were set in advance
by campus-based subject convenors without reference to the goals or processes of the
professional development project. It was expected that pre-service teachers would negotiate
individual projects and tasks with their supervisors/mentors.

Within this context the professional development facilitator met with each group of pre-
service teachers in their schools, on a regular weekly basis

- to have them write about and then to discuss their practice and their learning;

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- to clarify expectations and processes and to resolve concerns;
- to work through the stages of their action research projects; and
- to encourage them to use the web-based *Prac Link* facility.

The professional development facilitator met each supervising teacher on a regular weekly basis to provide support and assistance, to clarify expectations and to share observations regarding the pre-service teacher's development. The professional development facilitator also observed each pre-service teacher teach and provided written and verbal feedback to the pre-service teacher and to the supervising teacher regarding my observations.

Evaluation surveys received from pre-service teachers indicated unanimous, strong satisfaction with this type and level of in-school support from a university representative. Similar responses were received from supervising teachers in Eden School and Norton School, however supervising teachers in Glendon School expressed limited satisfaction with my involvement in the practicum program. This may have been due to some difficulties experienced in communicating my school visit and meeting arrangements with the school office, pre-service teachers and with supervising teachers.

A disappointing aspect of the practicum program was my inability to link the action research assignment work done by pre-service teachers with the professional development activities that would be undertaken by may of their supervising teachers, simply because the practicum occurred while the professional development "buy-in" process was still being undertaken with teachers.

As indicated in Table 4, only three of the sixteen eligible Year 4 pre-service teachers arranged to take the optional internship program in Eden School and Glendon School. None of the pre-service teachers who did their practicums in Norton School were eligible to undertake the internship at this time. It is of interest to note that the four interns, each of whom has an *Authority to Teach* from the Board of Teacher Registration, was placed with a mentor who is a participant in the professional development program. Interns are able to relieve their mentors of 50% of their teaching responsibilities. The professional development facilitator was fully involved in the on-campus preparation of interns and have provided school-based and internet support for these mentors. While the four mentors have used the time made available to them through the internship program to pursue their professional development programs they have not involved their interns as partners or collaborators in their learning programs eventhough this was suggested as a useful learning strategy for both the mentor and the intern. School leaders, mentors and interns are highly satisfied with the intern program in each participating school.

Classroom teachers

Explaining the goals and the processes of the professional development project to classroom teachers and having them commit to an involvement in it was a critical phase of the project which occurred after the initial "buy-in" with school leadership teams.

The general approach used to engage interested classroom teachers in the project involved

a. a presentation to the school staff in which the professional development facilitator

- introduced himself and his role in the project;
- presented and explained the professional development project goals;
- described the objectives, potential benefits and implications of classroom-based professional development programs;
- listed and explained the steps involved in implementing the project in the school; and

- issued each staff member with a *Professional Development Expression of Interest* form. This form gave teachers an option of not participating in the program if they so wished.

a. a planning meeting with the school leadership following an analysis of returned *Expression of Interest* forms;
b. a meeting with each individual (during class time with teacher release) who expressed an interest in participating in the project to

- clarify their stated area of learning interest; the outcomes and benefits that they expect from participating in the project; their preferred learning modes; and any other issues that concerned them;
- introduce them to the action research cycle (Wilkinson, 1996: 32); and
- begin planning their learning program; and

a. a planning meeting with the school leadership to resolve resourcing issues and to

identify groups of like projects which individuals may or may not wish to join to

work and to learn collaboratively.

This process resulted in the identification and initiation of the professional development projects described in Table 3., involving forty-three of the sixty-two classroom teachers (69%) in the three schools.

While a similar approach was used in each school, there were significant differences in each school process due to differences in school-based practicum programs; leadership styles; and schools' tactical and operational priorities. In Eden School the process developed as described above and teachers were encouraged to share their action research projects in an intranet discussion room established by the Principal. In Glendon School the process did not begin until mid August when the Principal returned from leave. Norton School, unlike Eden School and Glendon School did not have pre-service teachers until October so my first interaction with teachers was in relation to their professional development projects. When these had been identified and clarified, the school leadership established a Technology Committee which took responsibility for coordinating projects, providing a discussion and problem solving forum for participants and for communicating with other members of the school team.

Having completed the introduction and initiation phases of the project, the professional development facilitator worked to support individual and groups of teachers in the implementation phase of their action learning professional development projects.

Supporting the implementation of professional development projects

This phase of the project has proven to be the most difficult and the most unsatisfactory for all participants for the following reasons

- a small number of participants were not prepared or were not able to take responsibility or their own learning and professional development and expected to be supported in attending in-service courses, preferably during contact hours, or in visiting "experts" in other sites. They did not want to engage in action research into the pedagogy of their classrooms. They wanted to be provided with patent solutions to the learning and teaching issues that concern them in their daily practice;

- face-to-face access to individuals and to groups of teachers by the research associate has proved to be almost impossible on a regular basis. Any contact before, during or after contact time intrudes significantly on teachers' very crowded schedules unless the school leadership make special teacher release arrangements. The financial, professional and equity costs of any such arrangements have to be considered against the capacity of other schools to replicate this professional development model and against the immediate responsibilities of teachers to the learners in their classes;
- viable communication and support alternatives such as staff meetings, group and committee meetings which focus on professional development programs are additional to the already crowded meeting schedules of schools and teachers. **If professional development of teachers is a priority then the school's meeting schedules need to accommodate it**.

Because of these difficulties it was agreed that the professional development facilitator use email as the main communication tool with individual teachers, with groups of teachers, with school leaders and with participants across the three schools. This strategy has worked very well with a small number of proficient and motivated email users. It has the promise of being less intrusive on teachers' time and can be controlled by individual teachers. The use of email has the additional benefit of engaging teachers in contemporary communications technology and introducing them to online professional development possibilities and opportunities. Generally, however this initiative has been less than satisfactory to date for the following reasons

- In Eden School all teachers have access to email in their classrooms however several teachers do not know how to use it and many are not in the habit of using email as a communications tool;
- Email has been made available to teachers in Glendon School during September. Teachers are learning how to use it and are discovering the communications opportunities and costs that it presents;
- Teachers in Norton School do not have ready access to email to date. Efforts are being made to overcome this difficulty and teachers are being trained in the use of email by the school leadership.

As well as providing information and support to all project participants using email and participating in online discussions with competent email users the professional development facilitator worked with some participants, by request, in their schools on a number of occasions to assist them with their planned learning programs.

What then, have been the outcomes of this project?

Outcomes

The shaded areas in Table 5 indicate those projects which are still being worked on in the three schools. It is not anticipated that any of these projects will be completed by the end of the 1999 school year, largely due to their scope and to the contextual constraints outlined previously. The fact that the teachers who are involved in these projects are motivated to continue learning through them is in itself a positive outcome of the project. School plans to continue resourcing the project in 2000 (written into 2000 Annual Operational Plans) is a recognition of the project's partial success and of its future potential.

The majority of unshaded projects have not been "lost". Teachers in these projects remain interested in working through them but have been unable to do so for a number of contextual and personal reasons.

In summary, the following truisms have been reinforced or lessons learned from the work undertaken in this project

- The "buy-in" process with school leaders is the most critical phase of engagement with professional development schools. Unless school leaders are actively supportive of a long-term, action learning, classroom-based approach to professional development of their teachers, the program cannot be successful;
- An external facilitator or "critical friend" - university lecturer or consultant employed by a school or group of schools - is **essential** in the initiation, development and evaluation of classroom-based professional development programs;
- Professional development of staff must be a prominent component of a school's Annual Operational Plan if the program is to be successful;

- Teachers must be provided with adequate "time to learn" and active support by school leadership if classroom-based professional development programs are to have any chance of success;

- Email and the internet have high potential to facilitate and support classroom-based professional development programs for practising teachers and for pre-service teachers;

- Pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and mentors do not generally use available electronic support and learning programs because of lack of time, lack of skill and lack of access to computers. Pre-service and practising teachers tend to turn to "expert" colleagues in other schools for apparently portable solutions to generally egocentric issues and problems rather than engage in practitioner research to resolve pedagogical problems;
- There are no overt philosophical, pedagogical or organisational links between the placement of pre-service teachers and interns for school-based learning and the professional development of classroom teachers;

- There is no articulation between the university assignments and projects to be completed by pre-service teachers, in schools, during practicum programs and the day-to-day school-based learning programs and opportunities made available to them by their supervising teachers and mentors. Practicum-based university assignments and projects do not consider the significant contextual restrictions and opportunities encountered by pre-service teachers in individual practicum settings;
- Open access, by pre-service teachers, to the professional knowledge and skills of their supervising teachers and mentors is not a clear goal of school-based practicum programs. Pre-service teachers receive developmental feedback of greatly varying quality from school-based supervisors and mentors and they rarely find opportunities to engage in genuine learning conversations with their supervisors and mentors; and
- Pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and mentors value highly, the on-site presence and active involvement in school-based practicum programs of university teachers.

Recommendations for future Professional Development Schools

The following recommendations, based on the foregoing outcomes, findings and experiences, are offered to colleagues who may wish to further develop this approach to the articulated professional development of pre-service teachers and of classroom teachers in the future

- Invite schools to participate in the professional development program at the beginning of each year. The faculty would offer professional development schools

  - a pre-service teacher who would complete his/her final practicum and undertake an internship with each classroom teacher undertaking a classroom-based, action research, professional development program;
  - optional access to a faculty member or external consultant who would act as a "critical friend" to the school and to pre-service teachers in practicum and related professional development programs throughout the year;
  - access to the expertise of faculty members, by request;

- Schools will be eligible to participates in this internship/professional development program if

  - staff professional development is a goal in the school's Annual Operational Plan;
  - mechanisms such as the use of "non-contact time" and/or current curriculum time to provide professional development "learning time" for professional development teachers are operationalised;
  - all classroom teachers in the professional development program have access to and are competent users of email and the internet;

- The Education District Director be involved in the annual identification, selection and support processes for Professional Development Schools;

- The "buy-in" phase with leaders of professional development schools begins as soon as possible in the year. The program should not proceed in a school until the "buy-in" process with the school leadership has been satisfactorily completed;

- Revise the curriculum and pedagogy of faculty practicum subjects so that they articulate with the goals, opportunities and strategies of classroom-based professional development and with the day-to-day realities of classroom teaching; and

- Invite final year pre-service teachers to participate in this program and select those to be placed in professional development schools on the basis of their eligibility and willingness to undertake the internship program in their final semester.

Table 5

Continuing Professional Development Projects - November 1999

Eden School	Glendon School	Norton School
Reduce reliance on lock-step grading in P-3 years by increasing multi-age teaching and learning over these years. Effectively articulate the pre-school	Write and implement a P-3 literacy core curriculum that emphasises a. collaborative P-1 transition program;	Use computer technology in outcomes-based teaching and learning program and in school-based assessment and evaluation programs.

program with the Year 1-3 learning program. [6 members including the Principal and Pre-school Teacher-in-Charge]	b. a comprehensive set of strategies for teaching children to read well; and c. effective planning, resourcing and evaluation. [9 members including Pre-school Teacher-in-Charge]	[1 member]
Develop and trial a framework of computer competencies for children in the P-3 years. [1 member]	a. Identify the core literacy skills to be learned by children in the middle years; and b. Develop effective strategies to teach these skills. [3 members]	Use computer technology effectively in lower school learning and teaching programs. [3 members]
a. Improve teachers' competence and confidence in using computers for planning, managing and communicating; and b. Use computers effectively as learning tools in classroom programs. [5 members]	a. Identify the core literacy skills to be learned by children in the final years of primary schooling; and b. Develop effective strategies to teach these skills. [4 members]	Develop and implement a hierarchal computer skills program for children (teachers, aides, parents) across the school. [1 member]
Use computer technology to organise Health & Physical Education learning and teaching resources across the school. [1 member]	Develop and implement an effective tutoring skills program for classroom aides and peer tutors who will work with learners across the P-7 continuum. [3 members including Pre-school Teacher-in-Charge]	Review the school's software holdings and develop a system for keeping teachers informed of what, where, suitability, applications, user instructions, access etc. [1 member]
Identify and increase staff competencies sport coaching for the benefit of all children in the school. [1 member]	a. Develop and implement a school Resource Centre policy that focuses on	Learn how to use CD-ROM based resources effectively in learning and teaching programs. [1 member]

	collaborative planning and teaching with the Teacher Librarian;	
a. Help young adolescents to identify the characteristics of good leadership in their peers and to help them to develop some of these characteristics in themselves; and b. Revise the school's behaviour management program. [2 members]	a. Develop and implement a system for effective use and management of "traditional" learning resources; and b. Develop and implement a system for effective use and management of "new" learning technologies. [3 members including the Teacher Librarian]	Identify and use software appropriately to support learners with Individual Education Programs. [1 member - Support Teacher]
Improve teacher's skills in counselling children and parents. [1 member]		

[Shaded cells indicate continuing projects] 18

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