

MCK04892

Barbra McKenzie

Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Wollongong NSW 2522

**'Implementing professional development experiences into classroom practice:
Teachers articulate their process'**

Abstract:

The importance of ongoing professional development opportunities for classroom teachers has been well documented (Ramsay, 2000; Vinson, 2001; Nelson, 2003). This study focussed upon how five teachers from a Catholic Diocese translated their literacy based professional development experiences into the reality of their individual classroom practice. In research supported by an APA(I) grant, teacher respondents articulated and discussed the logic structures that sustained this process. A range of data, including videotape, interviews, classroom artefacts and flowcharts were collected and analysed using a Grounded Theory methodology. Some of the results are presented and discussed in this paper.

Introduction

There is little doubt of the important role that professional development opportunities play in the professional life of teachers, several recent and comprehensive reports into the teaching profession have discussed the significance of continuous professional learning (Ramsay, 2000; Vinson, 2001; Nelson, 2003).

One of the core themes that continues to run through the literature on professional development is that of dynamic and ongoing change (Guskey, 1994; Fullan, 1990, 1991; Heckenberg, 1994; Sparks, 1994). The literature is dense with discussion on the role that professional development programs play as agents of change (Retallick, 1999; Rhine, 1998; Lasley, 1998); the ability of professional development to influence teacher beliefs and practices (Fullan, 1990; Guskey, 1986; Turbill, 1994; Sparks & Richardson, 1997); the types of professional development experiences that are considered to be successful (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Dadds, 1997; Renyi, 1998; Black, 1998); the role that reflection plays in this process (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983, 1987; Brookfield, 1995) and the effectiveness of some professional development activities over time (McBride, Reed & Dollar, 1994; Rhine, 1998, Butler, 1996).

This study sought to understand the processes involved in the creation of the literacy blocks in the classrooms of five teachers. Specifically, how teachers implemented ideas and strategies demonstrated and discussed in literacy based professional development modules into their classroom practice. One aspect of this (Phase One) involved defining and illustrating the pragmatic and organisational components that were apparent in these blocks of time. A deeper and more specific focus (Phase Two) was an attempt to uncover and understand the nature of the creation of that space. In fact this focus upon '...attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:3) continues to be one of the important reasons for viewing our respondents' lived experiences' (Damico & Simmons-Mackie, 2003).

Background to the Study

This study began in an attempt to understand how teachers translate their learning in a professional development experience into the practice of their classrooms. The stakeholders involved in this study were the Frameworks Professional Learning System developed at the University of Wollongong by Turbill, Butler, Cambourne, with Langton,

(1991,1993) and the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay. This common interest in professional development and teacher practice led to a SPIRT or APA(I) research grant in 1999 that funded a PhD scholarship.

The common area of interest for both industry partners was in the literacy based professional development provided by Frameworks for the Diocese teachers. The Diocese had chosen Frameworks as part of their Early Learning Initiative to assist in the professional development of their teachers in the area of language and literacy. This was a project designed to run over three years from 1996 to 1998.

The University of Wollongong is a regional university on the south coast of New South Wales and the Broken Bay Diocese is located on the eastern seaboard of New South Wales in an area that ranges north and westwards of a large capital city to a regional centre on the central coast of New South Wales. The schooling system directed by the Diocese provides educationally for students from diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds through thirty-nine Primary and fifteen Secondary school sites.

Participants and Sites

Initially all primary schools and teachers in the Diocese were informed by way of a newsletter of the objectives and purpose of the research project. Expressions of interest were sought from interested schools and teachers who volunteered to become a part of the research. The Diocese then selected three schools that they felt were a representative sample of the range of schools within their district. Five volunteer teachers from these sample schools were invited to take part in this research.

Primary school classrooms are complex, dynamic sites where numerous multi-faceted interactions are occurring, often simultaneously. Although each of these sites had many common features due to the fact that they were all primary classrooms, all had functioning literacy blocks, and all a part of a single school system, they were also very different. Each classroom culture was a reflection of the beliefs and philosophy of the teacher who had created it (Ikeda & Beebe,1992; Robinson, 1995; McKenzie, 1997).

Methodology

In order to gain greater understanding of the complex series of relationships involved in classroom teachers implementing aspects of their professional development

experiences into the literacy block component of their classroom practice it was necessary to choose a methodology on the basis of its methodological 'appropriateness' (Patton, 1990:39; Flick, 1998).

Locating this research within a qualitative, naturalistic or constructivist (Creswell, 2002) paradigm reflects the focus on understanding the 'multiple realities' of the respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:143) and acknowledges the complex nature of the phenomena under study. As Creswell discusses, qualitative research is selected when

'...the inquirer is interested in exploring and understanding a central phenomena, such as a process or an event, phenomenon or concept. This exploration is needed because little existing research exists on the topic or because the issue is complex and its complexity needs to be better understood' (2002:62).

The general lack of research available concerning how classroom teachers implement aspects of their professional development experiences into their classroom practice also affected the methodological choices made with respect to this inquiry. The use of a grounded theory methodology reflects a concurrence with Strauss and Corbin's (1990) view that

'...one does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge' (p.23).

Both the choice of the research sites and the participants in this study also suggest another element in the research design, that of the use of case study. When choosing from an array of methods in an inquiry, researchers identify from a 'toolkit' (Feyerabend, 1975:30) of possible resources. In this way a researcher creates a 'bricolage' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a:4; Arminio & Hultgren, 2002:456) or pastiche of methods that they judge to be the most appropriate. The use of a multiple (Creswell, 2002) case study method in this instance reflects such a choice as a series of complex research sites were being entered, with a view to observing the many interactions there. Each of these sites represented a 'bounded system' (Stake, 2000:436) of the literacy block in each teachers classroom.

Data collection

Over the lifetime of the present study data were collected systematically (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) in a variety of textual and visual forms. In phase one of the study, this took the form of field notes of classroom observations, videotaping of the two hour literacy block in each classroom over five days, the collection of artifacts such as class timetables and classroom resources and the creation of classroom maps and diagrams. In phase two of the study this included the creation by the teachers of flowcharts. The data in both phases also included both structured and semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2002) that were recorded and later transcribed. The field notes, classroom observations and the transcripts of interviews were routinely returned to the respondents as a form of member checking.

These forms of data formed part of ' a procedure involving the simultaneous and sequential collection and analysis of data' (Creswell, 2002:449) that in grounded theory research is referred to as 'theoretical sampling' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The collected data are then analysed immediately as the results of this analysis assist the researcher to determine the type of data to collect next. This process forms part of the emergent (Dick, 2000) design where existing data is analysed and coded into categories and the need for additional data is identified and sought from respondents to add depth to or refine 'the meanings of categories for the theory' (Creswell, 2002:450). The researcher ceases data collection when saturation (Dick, 2000) occurs or when data adds no new information to a category.

The tools of 'persistent observation' (Flick, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) served as a means of entering each classroom to identify the elements of each literacy block. The videotaping of literacy blocks allowed for a re-visiting of classrooms with the ultimate goal of learning how these elements interacted and how they served to assist in the creation of that space.

The data collection tools were further supported and extended by the use of 'one-on-one' (Creswell, 2002:206) teacher interviews initially conducted with a view to understanding how teachers had constructed the literacy block in their classroom, why they had chosen that particular form and to also discuss the types of professional development that had influenced their decisions. These initial interviews provided a

basis for understanding each classroom space and served to focus and refocus understandings regarding the salient themes that were emerging.

The second level of interviews were more focused and occurred after the videotaping of each of the classrooms. Here questions became more structured by using the classroom video data to provide stimulus for questioning. For example this now took the form of referring to behaviours, events or activities captured by the video and seeking more information and background concerning teachers' exposure to the activity thus attempting to gather a range of specific information that used the videos as a focus.

A two phase study

Data in phase one identifies the common elements or components that comprise the literacy blocks of the respondent teachers in this study. These elements are the observable, discernable, visible aspects that appear to a greater or lesser extent in each of the literacy blocks created by the teachers in this study.

Data in phase two identifies the processes that teachers indicated that they used as they appropriate information, ideas and activities from their professional development experiences to redesign, extend and adjust their classroom literacy blocks.

Having documented these demonstrable behaviours in phase one and clarified them further by means of the interviews, the second phase sought to probe these observable phenomenon in order to understand the processes whereby teachers had created that space.

In phase two of this study the teachers created flowcharts in an attempt to articulate and demonstrate the processes involved in implementing aspects of a professional development experience into their individual classroom practice. These flowcharts used a series of 'in vivo' codes (Strauss, 1987:33) that were then explored further via an in depth interviews, using the flowchart as a stimulus.

Data analysis

The cycle of data collection then data analysis to direct further data collection form part of an emergent design (Glasser, 1992), demonstrate an integral component in the

'hermeneutic dialectic process' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:44) and lie at the heart of grounded theory research (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

In phase one of this study the following table illustrates the research focus, data collected during this phase of the study and the type of data analysis procedures used.

Table: 1 Phase One of Data Collection and Analysis

Focus of Research
The impact of professional development on the classroom practices of teachers in the Diocese
Research Question
'What is the nature of those factors which support and/or hinder the ways teachers turn a professional learning experience into classroom practice'
Data Collection
Five days of video of the Literacy Block in each teachers' classroom One-on-one interviews with teachers based on video Classroom observations Field-notes Classroom maps, diagrams and artefact collection
Data Analysis
Video analysed to identify use of Instructional strategies used in PD to seed interview questions and explore classroom practice Constant comparative analysis of interview data comparing incident with incident, incident with categories and category with category

Data analysis included the use of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify incidents or indicators, the unifying of these under a common category (Glaser, 1992), the creation of a set of mapping rules (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that could be applied to each category, the comparing of these to each other to enable the collapsing of categories if necessary. This resulted in the identification of seven higher-level concepts that reflected the actions of teachers in their literacy blocks, were observable in the video data, field notes and classroom observation. These concepts were given active code names (Charmaz, 2003) and a storyline (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) created that demonstrates their connections. Interestingly these seven concepts can also be identified as markers of professional competency within the literature on teacher professional standards as recognized by a variety of Departments of Education within Australia (Department of Education and Children's Services, W.A. 2000; Martin, 2001; Victorian Government Schools, 2001; Department of Education and the Arts, Qld, 2003; Australian Capital Territory Department of Education, Youth and Family Services, 2004).

In phase two of this study the following table illustrates the research focus, data collected during this phase of the study and the type of data analysis procedures used.

Table: 2 Phase Two of Data Collection and Analysis

Focus of Research
The impact of professional development on the classroom practices of teachers in the Diocese
Research Question
'What is the nature of those factors which support and/or hinder the ways teachers turn a professional learning experience into classroom practice'
Data Collection
Flowcharts created by each teacher to reflecting how they appropriate aspects of a professional development experience into their own classroom practice One-on-one interviews with teachers based on these flowcharts
Data Analysis
Flowcharts contain 'in vivo' codes (Strauss, 1987), used these during follow-up interviews to explore each concept more fully A semiotic system to discuss a semiotic system Constant comparative analysis of categories comparing them with each other and unifying under a concept via the use of mapping rules

Data analysis focused upon the 'in vivo' codes (Strauss,1987:33) identified by the respondents in their flowcharts, these are

'...derived directly from the language of the substantive field: essentially the terms used by the actors in that field themselves' (Strauss, 1987:33).

These codes were compared via the use of constant comparative analysis (Glaser,1992), unified under a common concept (Glaser,1992) with a set of mapping rules(Strauss & Corbin, 1990) created to explain their selection in each particular concept. These concepts were given active code names (Charmaz, 2003) and a storyline(Strauss & Corbin, 1990) created that demonstrates their connections.

Phase One Findings

Data analysis in phase one deals with the identified common elements or components that comprise the literacy blocks of the respondent teachers in this study. Data analysis demonstrated that the literacy blocks in this study were impacted upon by seven themes, each connected to and influenced by each other and thus the implementation of the literacy block in the classroom. Within each of these theme areas teachers engaged in a set of behaviours that were identified during the coding process. These themes include;

1. Knowing What and Knowing How,
2. Creating Optimum Learning Environments,
- 3.

Communicating with Students, 4. Understanding Student Learning, 5. Engaging a Plan-Assess-Report Routine, 6. Working with the Community, 7. . Each of these themes occurred in the literacy blocks of all five teachers and were further triangulated across observations, field-notes, interviews and videotapes. Examples of how these themes were made manifest in the data will be discussed briefly below.

Knowing what and knowing how

This theme relates to teachers knowledge and understanding of both subject specific curriculum content (in this case with respect to literacy) and how to disseminate this knowledge to their students. Data included in this theme included the types of teaching and learning strategies teachers used, the content material that was used, the connections teachers made for children and the role played by the syllabus. Examples are:

‘...it’s the same thing if you’ve got a Big Book, you’ve got 101 things that you can teach from that’. (SR8/99)

‘...this strategy now that I’ve been employing for years actually shows children how to do it’. (SR8/99)

‘...still go by the syllabus...’. (MT9/99)

Creating optimum learning environments

In order to bring this knowledge and experience to their students, teachers first need to create a learning space. This theme relates to the ways that teachers develop a classroom ethos that promotes fairness and equity, includes clear expectations and obvious and workable classroom routines and organization. Examples are:

‘...this is your work and you take responsibility for it’. (SR8/99).

‘...they are really conscious of what they are going to be learning now’. (MT9/99).

Understanding student learning

One of the elements that contribute to the continued positive development of this space is an understanding of how children best learn. This theme relates to the ways teachers demonstrate their understandings of the developmental stages of their students; the range of learning styles present in their classroom; the impact of a students’ home background, skills and interests on their classroom interactions. Examples are:

‘...my readers circles are graded by ability levels’. (SH9/99)

'I'm just trying to get onto that next level'.(AW8/99)

'...their backgrounds are different.(SH9/99)

'...they don't have past tense in their first language'.(SB9/99).

Communicating with students

Another of the important elements that contribute to a positive learning space and impact on learning is the development and maintenance of relationships and communication.

This theme relates to the notion that teachers create a classroom climate that recognises semantic knowledge, promotes questioning and discussion as well as active listening to develop learning. They also work to develop a range of group learning opportunities and select various strategies, tools, resources and activities to encourage learning. Examples are:

'I might get them up to talk to the class'.(SB9/99).

'I like to talk to them all the time about their personal learning styles'.(SR8/99)

Engaging a plan-assess-report routine

In order to provide incentives for continued learning, developing optimum feedback is an essential element. This theme identifies how teachers demonstrate the planning of specific goals utilising key content; the implementation of these through engaging learning opportunities that are supported by appropriate resources. Teachers also implement appropriate assessment techniques that measure, monitor and provide feedback to students. They then report this knowledge to a range of stakeholders and use it to evaluate teaching and learning. Examples are:

'...how can I begin the learning?'(MT9/99)

'...it's never a perfect piece until I've had the final conference with them.(SH9/99)

'...that's why I honed in on that in that lesson'.(AW8/99)

'...you plan like that, you have your framework and the kids get involved'.(SR8/99)

Working with the community

Teachers are also expected to work with a range of other stakeholders across the community in order to positively enhance student learning. This theme concerns the way teachers develop methods of effective communication with a range of stakeholders

regarding student learning from both inside and outside the school and provide classroom access for interested parental involvement. Examples are:

‘...talking to my co- teacher’.(SB9/99).

‘...the clientele here likes textbooks to a certain extent’.(SH9/99).

Incorporating professional development experiences

In order that teachers remain at the cutting edge of research and have access to a range of new and valuable knowledge they need to take part in constant professional development activities. This theme recognises that teachers accept responsibility for identifying their own professional needs and initiate professional development experiences that are best suited to fulfil their individual requirements. Teachers initiate and maintain a reflective focus and seek out opportunities to engage in professional conversations and/or other collegial methods. Examples are:

‘I’ve always got things in the back of my mind, thinking...’(SB9/99).

‘I’ll keep that context of what I learnt up there and I’ll do it some way that suits this group that I’ve got this year’. (MT9/99).

‘This seems to be something that comes up in evaluations all the time, that it was great to get together with other teachers’.(SH9/99)

Phase Two Findings

Data in Phase One dealt with the visible, observable components of the literacy blocks in each of the classrooms in this study. Data in Phase Two deals with processes that teachers indicated they used to create and recreate their literacy blocks. This phase deals with the invisible, what goes on underneath, the individual logic structures that teachers use as they create, maintain, add, subtract, change and modify the components of their literacy blocks. This type of change appears to occur as a result of some type of intellectual unrest or cognitive dissonance on the part of the teacher. Often this was caused by exposure to and engagement with some type of professional development experience.

In this phase each of the teachers created an individual flowchart in an attempt to capture their process as they decide what, how and in what form they appropriate elements from a professional development experience and implement these into their classroom literacy block. Each flowchart is an attempt by the teacher to capture their

own logic processes in a two dimensional form. Although these flowcharts assume a linear format in an attempt to articulate a process that is complex, dynamic and 'messy', teachers were anxious to ensure that the process itself not be viewed as a linear, lock-step one. They revealed that after attending a professional development experience they interacted with the information presented there in a complex, recursive and at times simultaneous manner as they cycled (moved) through a series of reflective, analytical, change and evaluation (processes). This interaction could occur in many different combinations and was teacher specific. This process could be likened to a journey and this analogy will be used to discuss this phases of the study.

Recognising a need

The journey begins when the teacher (or a times a Principal or Executive Teacher) recognises a need for the type of additional input that a professional development experience could provide for a teacher and initiates their attendance.

'...so if it's a directive, then you can be rather hostile. I mean you go, but you feel that you don't really want to be there'. (MT01102)

'I was either invited to a professional development or I initiated it because I wanted to and to me that was part of my process'. (SB01102)

'...you come with knowledge and experience so you bring a package with you of your own experiences'. (SH1602)

Who or what initiates this experience could impact upon the type of attitude that the teacher brings with them to the professional development experience.

Experiencing Professional Development

As the journey continues teachers are exposed to a common experience regardless of their level of teaching experience, their range of circumstances, their preferred learning styles. Their engagement with that experience depends upon a number of factors that include their perception of the credibility of the expert conducting the professional development. Other important factors include the flavour or ethos surrounding the experience, physical factors such as time allocation and the location of the venue. The attendee's attitude is another important factor as is the teachers' level of experience.

'...for the last 5 years I've had the senior class at the school. I find a lot of the courses that I go to are infants and middle school based, there isn't a lot of examples given for senior classes'. (SH1602)

'...but it was always too far away either in another area or one that I couldn't get to'. (MT01102)

'I don't like to be too structured with the way to go about something'. (AW01602)

Some teachers could exit from the journey here due to a combination of some or all of these factors

Reflecting Upon/Analysing the Experience

Further along in the journey, the teacher decides whether or not to engage with the information presented in professional development experience. If they do engage, they indicated that they typically begin to initiate some type of personal analysis or reflective component with respect to the experience. At this stage these types of reflective questions will decide whether or not they move forward and implement aspects of the content of the professional development experience. These questions are both pragmatic and predictive in nature and appear to involve a type of 'mental mapping' of the professional development experience in order to overlay this upon the reality of their classroom space.

'Maybe it doesn't fit into the climate of my classroom or my school at this stage'.(MT1102)

'...when you're sitting there the first thing you do is to relate it to what you already do'.
(SH1602)

'...and would it be something that I would use readily'. (SR1602)

If the answers to these questions are no, or not now then the teacher may exit from the professional development journey here.

Deciding upon Possible Changes

As the journey continues teachers review the range and types of changes that would need to occur in light of the new, additional or revisited knowledge presented to them in the professional development experience. They reported that they are seeking justification or proof that this change is necessary. This also is a predictive stage of the experience where teachers attempt to forecast how the changes they have decided to implement could impact in a number of areas. These include; existing classroom practices, classroom organization, resources, students and other stakeholders within or who impact upon the classroom space

'...particularly organizational things that I had got from the course and then think about how that was going to go in my classroom'. (SB01102)

'...a lot of questions based on my experiences and my practices in my classroom'.

(AW01602)

'I looked at the physicality of my room and what I needed to change to be able to visually have all the stimulus for perhaps text types, or processes to prepare to write'. (SR01602)

Teachers indicated that if they felt that the new ideas or practices were too difficult to implement, too disruptive for their classroom organization, too complex or not achievable given their time or resource constraints then they could exit from the professional development journey here.

Implementing Changes

As they move further into the journey some type of change linked to their professional development experience is implemented in their classroom. This change can be identified by the teacher as related to their own beliefs and philosophy, influenced by the new or increased understanding gained from the professional development experience. Often in the early stages after returning from a professional development experience this change will take a physical form. For example a revised group structure, the use of a specific type of environmental print, a re-organising of the classroom space or a change in the way time is organised.

'...and just thought, did I agree with them, did they fit in with my philosophy'. (SB01102)

'I really looked at the physical reading program as such, with the books and the grouping, the timetabling'. (MT01102)

'I actually had to disband a lot of the areas I had already set up without taking away everything, I made it more of an English room'. (SR01602)

'I felt it wasn't going to work unless I went in and changed my room, not completely but to how I wanted it to be for these new processes and practices to work'. (SB01102)

'...have actually changed the seating arrangements in the classroom twice'. (AW01602)

Teachers indicated that proposed changes that had successfully passed through the previous pragmatic and predictive stages were often implemented.

Reflecting Upon Changes

At this stage of the journey teachers have implemented some type of change into their classrooms, based upon and justified by the information they received during a professional development experience. Teachers indicated they reflected critically upon

the types of changes they had implemented. In this stage they sought to understand if the changes they had made were working, and if they needed modifying. If the changes weren't working the reflection focused upon issues related to the lack of success. Teachers reported that a lack of success often led them to return and/or revise the original professional development experience. This could take the form of; a return to their notes or course information, discussions with colleagues who had also attended and at times a resort to authority in the form of those who had conducted the professional development course.

'...like for the guided reading groups I revisited notes to look for some activities to do with Guided Reading from that course'. (SR01602)

'I'm always looking at why is this working, or this not working, how can I make it more effective'? (AW01602)

'...it doesn't matter if it doesn't work that day, I can try again'. (SB01102)

'I put the changes into place and as I went through I thought..."now is it working"? and I reflected upon it, I did some evaluation about whether it was reaching those expectations that I wanted'. (MT01102)

Some teachers reported that a lack of success when implementing a change that they considered to be justified did not automatically result in the abandonment of that change.

Evaluating the Results of Changes

As they neared the end of their journey teachers indicated that they implemented an evaluative element into the process. Here they sought to understand how the ideas and understandings they had appropriated from the professional development experience actually worked in practice. They reviewed these ideas in light of how their students responded, how easy or difficult they were to resource, how their physical environment impacted upon the process and if they could observe any positive impacts with respect to learning.

'...how would I know if it's working effectively, how am I going to know. Once again it's got to be concrete. I've got to be able to see the results, see the connections, so I did this and that happened'. (MT01102)

'I was really looking at the children's reactions to it and how they coped with it and I realized that some things I just changed too quickly for them'. (SB01102)

'...you're always analysing everything according to the needs, the outcomes or the classroom climate'. (AW01602)

Teachers indicated that in this stage of the process, they were looking for positive, observable, demonstrable indicators that a change had occurred.

Modifying Changes

At this stage of their journey teachers indicated that they reflected upon the changes they had made with a view to deciding if these needed to be adjusted or modified in any way. If so, they asked themselves reflective questions concerning the range and type of modification necessary. They also reflected upon the best ways to accomplish this and what this modification would involve.

‘...finding out if it’s not working, how can I make it work, how can I fit it into my routine and into the environment to meet those needs’. (AW01602)

‘...or I would re-arrange how I would approach that the next time, or you put it aside for a year or a couple of years’. (SH01602)

‘I think it’s ongoing. I think you get to the assessment stage and then you go back, maybe because of another course you do or just re-visiting strategies’. (SR01602)

The types of connections that teachers made in this stage appeared to indicate some acceptance of the change. That they had appropriated the change implemented as a result of a professional development experience into their own beliefs and philosophy.

Discussion

As an ‘armchair traveller’ experiencing the professional development journey vicariously through teachers connected with this study, several issues identified by the teachers flowed from the data. These issues have the potential to impact upon the way the professional development of classroom teachers is implemented in the future. These issues included;

- More attention needs to be paid to the types of attitudes that teachers bring with them as they attend professional development experiences. Being directed to attend a specific form of professional development (no matter how well intentioned) by the Principal or Executive Teacher may simply result in a resentful and resistant attendee who fails to engage with the experience.
- Some teachers felt that they were sent to a professional development experience too early in their teaching career, or to the wrong type of professional

development experience. They indicated that in the first year or two out of University they are in 'survival mode', simply trying to cope with what their role as a teacher entails, understanding the culture of the school, working daily with a variety of syllabi, interacting in a professional manner with parents, creating and developing an optimum learning environment. The professional development that they needed in this stage of their careers was connected to providing them with information and assistance that would deal with these more pragmatic areas of their professional lives. Issues here connected to the 'one size fits all' view of professional development.

- Teachers indicated a greater need for professional development to actively link theory with practice and for this practice to be firmly rooted in the classroom. As the data from teachers flowcharts demonstrated they are often seeking some justification to change their existing practice that they then evaluate in light of how well this actually worked in practice.
- Collegiality was another very important issue that flowed through the flowchart and interview data. Teachers indicated that some professional development experiences mindfully created space for teachers to interact with each other. Other experiences were more concerned that teacher professional conversations could be viewed as 'off-task' behaviour that needed to be limited. Overwhelmingly teachers identified the collegial component of any professional development experience as a vital aspect of professional learning.
- A major issue after returning from a professional development experience is connected to time. Teacher indicated that they needed time to digest, reflect and evaluate their experiences and to identify and discuss with colleagues the most appropriate ways to implement the relevant aspects of the experience into their classrooms. As the flowchart data demonstrates this is both a reflective and predictive process. Teachers indicated that they often felt some pressure or expectation to implement some change quickly. This often took the form of some type of physical, demonstrable change such as the use of environmental print connected to the professional development experience or physically re-organising the classroom space e.g. use of group work or learning centres.
- The process of translating a professional development experience into classroom practice is messy, complex, dynamic and convoluted. The benefits are not always obvious immediately (at times not even to the teacher) often because of a

range of other issues ideas cannot be implemented for some time. These issues could include a lack of available resources, the physical classroom space, the role of other people within the classroom and the dynamics of a particular class. Often these or other issues cause teachers to place ideas gained from a professional development experience 'onto the backburner' to be implemented at a later date.

- The role of the Principal is an important one for those teachers who have been sent to a professional development experience with the expectation that they will come back and facilitate that information to the rest of the staff. In this case the Principal needs to create a climate where that teacher is validated and edified and a designated space and time where this facilitation can profitably occur, instead of just a few minutes at a staff meeting. Thought needs to be given to where this type of facilitation occurs, open the classroom – not the staffroom.

For many of the teachers in this study, the use of the flowcharting process has been instrumental in assisting them to further articulate their logic structures as they move to translate the information from a professional development experience into their classroom practice. As one teacher remarked:

'Well I was just thinking, this flowcharting format that we're discussing. This is the kids and my path that I'm showing here. Its shows that the work begins obviously, but also shows that it never ends, it just goes onto the next level'.
(SR01602)

References

Arminio, J. & Hultgren, F. (2002). 'Breaking out of the shadow: The question of criteria in qualitative research.' *Journal of College Student Development*. Vol. 43. Issue. 4. pp. 446-466.

- Australian Capital Territory Department of Education, Youth and Family Services. (2004). 'Professional pathways and pathways to improvement'. Australian Capital Territory Department of Education, Youth and Family Services. ACT.
- Black, S. (1998). 'Money and the art of staff development'. *Journal of Staff Development*. Vol. 19. No. 2. pp. 14-17.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Butler, J. (1996). 'Professional development: practice as text, reflection as process and self as locus'. *Australian Journal of Education*. Vol. 40. No. 3. pp. 265-283.
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. (2nd Edn.). (pp. 249-291). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Dadds, M. (1997). 'Continuing professional development: Nurturing the expert within'. *Journal of In-Service Education*. Vol. 23. No. 1. pp. 31-38.
- Damico, J. & Siimmons-Mackie, N. (2003). 'Qualitative research and speech-language pathology: A tutorial for the clinical realm'. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*. Vol. 12. Issue. 2. pp. 131-143.
- Darling-Hammond, L. & McLaughlin, M. (1995). 'Policies that support professional development in an era of reform'. *Phi Delta Kappan*, April, pp. 597-604.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. (1998). 'Entering the field of qualitative research'. In N.K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. (pp. 1-34). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. (2000a). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of qualitative research*. (2nd Edn.).(pp 1-28). London: Sage Publications.
- Department of Education and Children's Services. (2000). 'Advanced skills procedural manual: Recognising and acknowledging exemplary teaching and learning practices'. Department of Education and Children's Services. Western Australia.
- Department of Education and the Arts. (2003). 'Professional standards for teachers'. Department of Education and the Arts. State of Queensland.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of effective thinking to the educative process*. Boston: D C Heath and Company.

- Dick, B. (2002). Grounded theory: A thumbnail sketch.
<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/qcm/ar/arp/grounded.html>. Accessed 3rd March 2002.
- Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Feyerabend, P. (1975). *Against method*. London: Verso.
- Fullan, M. (1990). Staff development, innovation and institutional development. In B. Joyce, (Ed). *Changing school cultures through staff development. Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*. Virginia. pp. 3-25.
- Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Glaser, B. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press.
- Guba, E & Lincoln, Y. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. London: Sage Publications.
- Guskey, T. (1986). 'Staff development and the process of teacher change'. *Educational Researcher*. Vol. 15. No. 5. pp. 5-12.
- Guskey, T. (1994). 'Results orientated professional development: In search of an optimal mix of effective practices'. *Journal of Staff Development*. Vol. 15. No. 4. pp. 42-50.
- Heckenberg, K. (1994). 'Towards the development of a grounded theory for the initial implementation stage of an innovation in a change process'. Unpublished Honours Thesis. Australia: University of Wollongong.
- Ikeda, T. & Beebe, A. (1992). *A review of teacher nonverbal immediacy: Implications for intercultural research*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (42nd, Miami, FL, May 20-25, 1992).
- Lasley, T. (1998). 'Paradigm shifts in the classroom'. *Phi Delta Kappan*. September. pp. 84-86.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: Sage Publications.
- Martin, C. (2001). 'Competency framework for teachers'. Murdoch University for Education Department of Western Australia.
- McBride, R., Reed, J. & Dollar, J. (1994). 'Teacher attitudes towards staff development: A symbolic relationship at best'. *Journal of Staff Development*. Vol. 15. No. 2. pp. 36-41.
- McKenzie, B. (1997). *A clarification of the aspects of nonverbal communication that contribute to and assist in the maintenance of a positive classroom climate within the classroom of one teacher*. Unpublished honours thesis. University of Wollongong.
- Nelson, B. (2003). *Australia's teachers: Australia's future. The review of teaching and teacher education*. Available Url: <http://www.dest.gov.au/nelson>

Paton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Ramsay, G. (2000). *Quality matters: Report of the review of teacher education NSW*. New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

Renyi, J. (1998). 'Building learning into the teaching job'. *Educational Leadership*. Vol. 55. No. 5. pp. 70-74.

Retallick, J. (1999). 'Teachers' workplace learning: Towards legitimisation and accreditation'. *Teachers and Teaching*. Vol. 5. No. 1. pp. 33-50.

Rhine, S. (1998). 'The role of research and teachers' knowledge base in professional development'. *Educational Researcher*. Vol. 27. No. 5. pp. 27-31.

Robinson, R. (1995). *Affiliative communication behaviours: A comparative analysis of the interrelationships among teacher nonverbal immediacy, responsiveness and verbal receptivity on the prediction of student learning*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (45th, Albuquerque, NM, May 25-29, 1995).

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Sparks, D. (1994). 'A paradigm shift in staff development.' *Journal of Staff Development*. Vol. 15. No. 4. pp. 26-29.

Sparks, D. & Richardson, J. (1997). *What is staff development anyway?* Ohio: National Staff Development Council.

Stake, R.E. (2000). Case studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd Edn) (pp 435-454). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. London: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Turbill, J. (1994). 'From a personal to a grounded theory in staff development'. Unpublished doctoral thesis. NSW, Australia: University of Wollongong.

Turbill, J. (2002). 'The role of a facilitator in a professional learning system: The Frameworks project'. In G. Hoban.(2002). *Teacher learning for educational change*. Philadelphia: Open University Press

Turbill, J., Butler, A., Cambourne, B. with Langton, G. (1991, 1993). *Frameworks: A whole language staff development program 3-8*. Stanley, NY: Wayne Finger Lakes Board of Cooperative Services.

Victorian Government Schools. (2001). 'Teacher class handbook'. Department of Education, Employment and Training. Melbourne: Victoria.

Vinson, A., (2001). *Public education inquiry New South Wales: An inquiry into the provision of public education in New South Wales*. Report of the Independent Inquiry into Public Education in New South Wales. Available Url: <http://www.pub-ed-inquiry.org/>