The disruptive possibilities of looking in classrooms
Debra Hayes, Ken Johnston & Ann King
Griffith University

Abstract
Looking in classrooms is one of the most basic requirements of school improvement, and yet it is one of the least practised skills of teachers and one of the most contentious methods of educational researchers. When it does occur, it is difficult to agree on what to look for and even more difficult to agree on what is seen. This paper describes the approach to describing classroom practices adopted in a three-year research project in four schools working under challenging circumstances. The research aimed to describe how these schools were attempting to change, and how they might conceptualise the process of change under these conditions. The ‘findings’ of the research were developed in the form of stories, that framed and documented the conversations between the participants and the researchers. The introduction of classroom observations, ‘Day Diaries’ of the experiences of one class, was designed to disrupt the classroom practices that were taken-for-granted in these schools and leverage support for improvement focussed on teacher professional learning. The methods we adopted to write non-judgemental accounts of classroom practices are described, as well as the use we made of these accounts in reflective dialogue with school leaders and teachers.

Introduction
Young people from low-income families continue to fare poorly at school. Over many years, teachers, school leaders and researchers have explored ways of compensating for inequities in society by providing a better education for these and other groups of similarly affected students. Making a difference has been the goal of numerous innovations in practice and research but the link between low income and a poor education appears even more intractable as the gap between the rich and the poor in our society continues to grow (ABS, 2004). The individual cost, as well as the social and economic cost of not benefiting from schooling, drive continuing efforts to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of students who benefit the least from education.

In this paper, we describe a day in the life of a Year 8 class in each of four public high schools characterised by high levels of poverty and high levels of difference that are participating in the research project Changing School in Changing Times. We produced these descriptions because what matters most in schools happens in classrooms, and these Day Diaries provide a means to investigate the practices of teachers.

We are interested in these practices because they provide insight into teachers’ pedagogical choices, as well as their knowledge about pedagogy, and about what they consider is possible and works within the local context of their school. When teachers talk about their practices they make visible their logics of practice. These logics are not necessarily logical to an outsider, especially those that are unfamiliar with local contexts and removed from the day-to-day operations of the practices being examined. Systematically exploring these logics through the Day Diaries “makes it possible to consider a significant ‘fact’ of modern life: Power is exercised less through brute force and more through the ways in which knowledge (the rules of reason) constructs the ‘objects’ by which we organize and act on the issues, problems, and practices of daily life” (Popkewitz, 2000, p. 18).

The logics of practice shared by teachers within the context of a school represent the body of local knowledge about ‘what works around here’; what the students in the school are perceived to be capable of; what types of families it is believed that they come from; and what are believed to be the limits of teachers’ collective efforts. This practical reasoning operates through the pedagogical and leadership practices of teachers and school leaders, and the Day Diaries provide glimpses into the rules and logics by which they operate. However, there is a gap between our ability to theorise what is going on, and what is actually going on. Bourdieu (1990) warns that we can commit ‘scholastic fallacy’, which places ‘ the models that the scientist must construct to account for practices into the consciousness of agents, to operate as if the constructions that the scientist must produce to understand and account for practices were the main determinants, the actual cause of practices’ (p.133). Our empirical challenge was to avoid such a fallacy, and we went about this by producing recounts of practice that were co-constructed by practitioners and accepted as accurate by them. These recounts were stripped of any attempt to interpret or evaluate these practices being described. Our purpose was to produce artefacts of research that would facilitate extended discussions with teachers aimed at understanding their logics of practice, their knowledge of the capabilities of their students, their take on the demands of the curriculum, and their belief in the potential of their practice to make a difference.
In terms of practice, the Day Diaries do not necessarily reflect what is possible but what is considered to be possible within the context of each school; they are settlements that are continually negotiated and agreed to by school leaders, teachers and students; and they result in pedagogical effects, but not necessarily those that we desire. The central claim of this paper is that when teachers and school leaders understand their roles as primarily pedagogical in purpose, they are able to trace the effects of learning to the logics of their practice, instead of more common explanations that trace the effects of learning to the values, aspirations and capabilities of students, their families and communities.

Describing and interpreting classroom practice

The Changing Schools in Changing Times research project commenced in 2005. During the first year, the research involved meetings, classroom observations and interviews with school leaders and classroom teachers that were used to produce a story of each school. These stories provided a means by which the researchers provided specific feedback to each school, as well as a mechanism for developing shared understandings of key issues, challenges and local conditions (Hayes, 2007). While the stories provided important insight at the level of the whole school, we felt as though classroom practices slipped from view because the observations we had made in classrooms were not collected in such a way that we could check or share them with the research participants.

We also wanted to focus more on what was happening in classrooms because the research literature consistently emphasised that what matters most in schools happens in classrooms. If we seriously want to reduce the achievement gap between students from different social backgrounds, we need to pay more attention to day to day teaching and learning. This means focusing upon classrooms and understanding the range of experiences that are offered to students. If we were to thoroughly investigate the efforts of the participating schools to bring about improvements in student and teacher learning we needed a way of examining what was going on in classrooms. However, we also acknowledged that this was not going to be a straightforward task since classrooms are complex spaces and what happens within them can be easily misinterpreted or lost in translation.

In the second year of the study, we worked with the schools to produce detailed recounts of the classroom experiences of one Year 8 class over the course of a single day (we chose Year 8 because we had observed Year 7 in the first year and it was our intention from the outset to follow this cohort in the school for three years). We put together a team of observers in each school that shadowed the class for a whole day. The team included two members of the research team as well as an observer nominated by the school (usually a member of the executive or a respected classroom teacher). Although we were concerned that the presence of three visitors would disrupt the classes under observation, feedback from teachers whose classroom we visited suggested that the lessons generally proceeded as usual. Our fieldwork in the first year highlighted that variations in routines are commonplace in high schools, and that students are familiar with adults, other than the teacher, being present in classrooms.

During the day, the two members of the research team alternated between observing a lesson and working with the remainder of the team to write up a recount of the lesson based on their observations and the written notes of the school-based observer. The immediacy of the writing process meant that the details were still fresh in the mind of the observer and the written notes of the classroom observer provided local knowledge that was not readily available to the team. The use of a data projector to display the text as it was produced allowed the written notes of all the observers to contribute to the task of recounting what could be observed during each class. No attempt was made to judge the quality of the lesson or assign meaning to actions. As much as possible, recount was emphasised over interpretation and analysis.

The following day, members of the team met with each teacher to develop the recount further by check whether the recount accorded with their understanding of what happened during the lesson. As a result of these discussion, the recounts were modified to include missing details, delete inaccuracies and change the words and expressions that were judgemental in tone. As at other times during the research when we provided feedback to the schools, Ann King (a former high school principal) took on the role of facilitator. Ann fulfilled a critical role in the research process as a communicator and translator of research practice to school-based personnel, as well as school practice to researchers. Soon after the meetings with individual teachers, Ann facilitated a meeting of all the teachers in each school whose lessons were observed. At this meeting, they had the opportunity to read the combined description of their lessons, and to discuss their ‘reading’ of the day diary. Around this time, the school leaders were also given the opportunity to read the Day Diaries.

Our intention was to use the diaries as tools of reflection, not tools of accountability; to bring classroom practices into the research process in ways that assisted the participants to identify the logics of practice operating in the school; to co-construct written descriptions of each class that were broadly accepted as authentic accounts by those whose practises they described; and to use these as the basis for further reflection. We wanted to describe what was attempted, what was
achieved, and what was considered to be possible within the context of the school. While there was no ‘right’ way to judge or evaluate what was described, we hoped that the detailed descriptions would assist us (researchers, school leaders and teachers) to better understand the local contexts of learning and teaching, and to challenge taken for granted ways of operating that were established in each school.

The Day Diaries

The process of co-constructing with teachers written descriptions of their classrooms required trust and cooperation, as well as a willingness to make public their professional practice. Although we had worked in each school for over 18 months, we may not have had contact during this time with the teachers who participated in the construction of the Day Diaries. It became clear that letters providing information about the research and how we planned to conduct the classroom observations were insufficient to prepare teachers to participate in the production of the Day Diaries. Consequently, we modified our approach and visited the schools ahead of the observations so that we could meet with the participating teachers to discuss what we wanted to do, why we wanted to describe their classrooms and how we were going to handle the descriptions.

The degree of cooperation was important if the Day Diaries were to become artefacts for professional reflection rather than a managerial tool of accountability. Our purpose in this project was not only to contribute to the field of knowledge about schools working in challenging circumstances, but to contribute also to the participants’ knowledge of the contexts in which they were working and learning. We envisaged the classroom descriptions as a means to unsettle and disrupt the existing logics of practice and to open a space for school leaders and teachers to see what goes on in classrooms from a different perspective.

What goes on in classrooms can also be traced to the practices of school leaders. When the school executive examined the Day Diaries they tended to elide how they had contributed to shaping the pattern of interaction in the classroom. They focused upon the internal particularities of the classroom – the nature of the particular students, the qualities of the particular teachers, the peculiar nature of the particular day, and so on. But as leaders within the school, they were also implicated in the context that produces the interactions recounted. In our discussions with the school executive, we asked then to consider: What is it about your leadership practices that produce the effects recounted in the Day Diaries?

In order to protect the identity of the schools and the teachers in this paper, we use very limited forms of identification. Twenty classrooms across the four schools were described. We have chosen the following two lessons to illustrate the Day Diaries. The first recount is of an English class taught by an experienced teacher, while the second is a Mathematics class taught by a newly appointed teacher.

**Day Diary, 2006**

**Period 5 (English)**

The teacher introduced a new topic, ‘Advertising’, and the students were asked to write this heading in their books.

The teacher wrote the following terms on the board: advertising, product name, slogan and sales technique. She asked students to define slogan, and then clarified the meaning of this term.

The teacher handed out the first of a series of advertisements and outlined that the students would work in groups to identify the product name, slogan and sales technique for each. The teacher worked with the class on the first ad by asking the questions (e.g., what’s the product names, what’s the slogan) and prompting correct responses. Students who called out were made to wait.

The discussion about sales technique was slower, more pauses and waiting for each group to provide a detailed response. All groups were involved in this process, there was some low level talking, but most students were participating in the task.

Some minor interruptions – another teacher came to the door looking for a student, a student arrived late.

The groups were then asked to repeat the process with four other ads. Most groups were working on the task, most seemed to know what was required. There was an increase in the level of noise as two students exchanged comments and the groups got under way.

The teacher prodded the groups to complete one example and move on to the next.

About 13 minutes before the end of the lesson, the groups were asked to stop and then make up their own ad. They could use a familiar product with a sales technique that had been studied earlier; pick a familiar product use an existing slogan or create a new one. The teacher provided a selection of products to choose from (e.g., food, drink toothpaste, sports products) if they were stuck.

The teacher moved around the groups discussing and clarifying the task.

Some students finished earlier than others. The students worked in groups but completed individual tasks. All students had completed a draft outline of their new ad.
Day Diary, 2006
Period 1 Maths

At the start, there were 7 students and two more arrived in the second half of the lesson. The room was arranged in rows with a central aisle. Students sat towards the rear and sides. The room, chairs, desks and walls were marked by graffiti, the noticeboard at the rear was empty and torn.

During the first 5 minutes, folders were distributed, as well as pens to those who needed them. The teacher wrote on the board seven probability questions: e.g., probability of picking a red card, the ace of spades, or a red jack from a pack of 52 cards.

He then moved to the back desk to talk to some noisy boys. He asked them to start work. But they continued to talk very loudly. He mentioned that they would be detained at the break if they did not comply.

Two girls sharing an MP3 player commenced working.

About 10 minutes from the start of the lesson, the teacher started going through the questions on the board. He directed questions to two noisy boys at the back. And, some of the girls called out answers. Loud comments from the boys continued (a lot of swearing and name calling directed at each other).

The teacher commenced answering the questions on the board, and the girls at the front often called out the answers. ‘Good work, people are getting the hang of this, those were just quick questions to wrap up last week’s work’.

The teacher announced the start of a new topic and wrote ‘Measurement’ on the board, and talked about and wrote a series of relevant words on the board: e.g., centimetres, volume, litres, surface area, and kilometres. The students were asked to create their own title pages, and the teacher provided some ideas for what they might include (5 minute time limit). Throughout this activity the girls worked quietly and the boys were very noisy. More swearing and noise from the boys prompted the teacher to again threaten detention at the break. He also noted that he was looking for someone to provide a merit certificate to.

When the teacher went to rub out the probability questions and answers, the boys asked him to stop. They were given two minutes to finish the questions and the title page.

The teacher moved around the room commenting on the students’ progress. In between, he wrote short problems on the board requiring students to copy and fill-in blanks related to measurement (area) problem.

More misbehaviour: a desk was tipped forward, two boys wrestled, a book was thrown on the floor. Meanwhile the teacher continued to discuss the work on the board with the girls.

Throughout the teacher commented favourably on participation and correct answers, he remained calm and quiet.

The teacher noted that he would remove one student. A female teacher arrived at the door and removed one of the disruptive students. The teacher continued with the work and the girls provided answers.

About 45 minutes into the lesson, a sheet was handed out, ‘Area activities’, and the students commenced work.

A student commented: ‘How much longer is left of this shit lesson’. The teacher noted the inappropriateness of the language, provided the answer with reference to mathematical equations and assisted the student complete his work. Two more students entered loudly and joined the boys sitting at the rear. The teacher provided the worksheet and pencils to the new arrivals.

A new heading was written on the board: Perimeter

The boy who had been removed returned. The boys at the back threw paper at each other. At the same time, the teacher drew a diagram on the board and worked through two examples on the board.

The teacher continued to comment favourably on participation and corrected answers: ‘Well done’. The disruptive student was asked to leave again, and a teacher appeared to remove him from the class. The girls who were working started to draw on each other’s arms.

A teacher came into the room to collect a desk for the student who was removed. The students returned to working quietly.

Two of the boys started to get disruptive again.

The teacher commenced answering the worksheet questions on the board.

One of the new arrivals asked: ‘How long until the end?’

The waste paper bin was surrounded by wads of paper.

An absenteeism sheet was delivered to the room.

In the last few minutes, the teacher asked questions to review the lesson, folders were returned to the front, more paper was thrown, a student left and was brought back by the threat of being marked a truant, hangman was played led by the teacher, the class ended and level sheets were completed.
Since these Day Diaries are limited to one class on one day, we were concerned that they may be dismissed as isolated and unrepresentative of the majority of classes in each school. However, in follow up meetings with the senior executive in each school, they claimed that the practices were widespread within their school; they are not anomalies. Western undertook its own check by appointing a consultant to spend a day dropping into classes across all years, for fifteen minutes at a time. After visiting twenty classes, she produced descriptions of classroom practices that were considered by the principal to replicate the Day Diaries.

It is unlikely that anyone can read these recounts and not feel a sense of unease, perhaps in the form of sympathy for the teachers and students, or pangs of recognition from their own schooling experiences, or alarm that classrooms could look like this. The Day Diaries provide glimpses into the daily schooling experiences of students and teachers in public high schools located in diverse communities that all have high concentrations of difference and disadvantage. We observed a cross section of teachers and curriculum areas, but the classrooms across the four schools in every curriculum area looked remarkably similar. They ran according to similar routines, or ‘scripts’ that went something like this: enter classroom, sit down, pay attention to the teacher, answer questions, receive resource (usually a worksheet), listen to instructions, work individually (or occasionally in groups) on a set task, hand in work or make available for inspection, pack up, and exit room.

It may be that this script is pervasive across all schools, but it has a chance to work in schools where students are prepared to invest more in being ‘schooled’. It is not that these children are smarter or more resilient or more passive, but they understand the rewards of schooling and have more capacity to cooperate with the script, and to imagine a future beyond school that requires school completion.

The pervasiveness of these experiences suggests that we must look for explanations beyond the characteristics of individual teachers, schools, and communities. There are very few lessons that depart from the script. Why is this so? In responding to this question, we would like to start with a consideration of how schooling is constituted in democratic capitalism before bringing our focus to the level of the school.

**Markets and logics**

Democratic processes constitute the public schools in our study. As such, the forms they take are susceptible to election cycles, polls and promises. In recent years, there has been a drift of students from public to private schools, and increasing choice in education and specialisation in schools (including gifted and talented programs and selective streams) have been taken up largely in an attempt to stem this flow. In other words, these policies are perceived to make public schools more appealing to parents who can afford to send their children elsewhere. But for all the children that get to attend their school of choice (public or private), others with less mobility enrol in what is available.

Consequently, some schools are populated by children who are more likely to be successful at school. As Teese and Polels (2003) explain, in these schools there is less of a gap between what is demanded in the curriculum and the perceived cultural and pedagogical resources available to students. On the other hand, students whose cultural resources do not necessarily ensure success at school generally attend schools in high poverty and high difference contexts. These students may be able to care for family members, and able to manage part time work as well as full time school; and/or they may able to speak more than one language, have a deep understanding of their cultural heritage and be embedded in a strong network of social relations, but these attributes do not tend to contribute to success at school, indeed they may work against it. And, in terms of pedagogical resources, the least experienced teachers and leaders generally staff these schools. Consider the relative value of the pedagogical resources available to students in one school in our study in which there is one faculty made up of two first year out teachers, who are being led by an Acting HT in her second year of teaching (having spent her first year as a casual), and two unfilled vacancies are being taken up by casuals.

In other words, processes such as selection and streaming concentrate high achieving students, most commonly students from middle-income families, in schools or classes where they are isolated from others. These concentrations are more desirable contexts in which to teach, and they tend to draw experienced teachers and educational leaders away from less desirable contexts; they accumulate the benefits associated with more experience and less mobility, as well as the status and rewards that follow success. Since the cost of these impacts on the education system is unlikely to be borne by those who benefit, they face little or no economic incentive to mediate their demands. In this sense, human induced change on educational systems are an externality, one that is not ‘corrected’ through an institution or market, unless policy intervenes to ensure that public schooling remains a public good: one in which all people can enjoy its full benefits.

There are parallels between this failure of public schooling to distribute educational resources fairly to citizens, and the failure of the market described by Nicholas Stern (HM Treasury, 2006) in his economic assessment of the impact of
climate change. Stern claims that the market has failed to ensure that corporations who pump large amounts of carbon dioxide waste into the atmosphere pay for the benefits they receive. The costs of their actions are transferred to others in the form of a degraded environment. These corporations have, to this point, largely escaped paying to pollute the environment. In a similar way, an increasingly differentiated public school system that accumulates resources and experience is some schools at the expense of others, reflects a failure of government to ensure that people pay for the benefits they receive. Those who demand choice in education are bringing about changes in schooling, thereby imposing costs on the system that they do not bear directly, neither via markets nor in other ways.

As we become familiar with the idea that globalisation of the economy is putting new competitive pressure on jobs and livelihoods, developing the educational capacity of citizens to compete in increasingly knowledge based economies is a growing priority. Tom Bentley (2006), the former Director of Demos claims that,

“This puts a new premium on education, research and patents, or intellectual property, and is leading to a growing emphasis on innovation policies around the world. But the innovation that matters is not just in the science lab and the university precinct... Though building industries of the future is crucial, diffusing new practices and methods across the wider economy is just as important. Service-based innovation, for example, in which innovations like... car sharing transform the way that we think about very familiar activities, can have a powerful effect... So what role might government have in all this? The lesson is that many of the solutions will start as small scale, everyday practices and then grow. So just as important as the power of government to direct, resource, and control key areas of our lives is its ability to invest in new capabilities, new partnerships and new ways of organising.

Applying these ideas to public schooling suggests that while they are very familiar to us, we need to transform the way we think about how they function within increasingly globalised economies. What innovations and new practices might make a difference in high poverty and high difference contexts? What kinds of small scale innovation, along the lines that Bentley describes, might have powerful effects on how we school young people? In the remainder of this paper, we describe the processes we have developed in collaboration with the participating schools that are designed to transform the way we think about such a familiar activity as classroom practice.

Changing the script: an effect of pedagogical practice

Schools have a type of universal form that makes them familiar and recognisable to people around the world. In this way they function as discourses in which certain ways of communicating and organising are taken for granted. The origins of language and practice are forgotten. This was illustrated through the observations made by teachers to explain the routine nature of the classroom practices (that we have called ‘scripts’) recounted in the Day Diaries. Some indicated that if they were more confident or more experienced, they might have been able to relax the script, and allow for risky innovations. They associated innovation with quality teaching, and most could name a handful of colleagues who were respected for their innovative practice. Others argued that a relaxation of the script was possible if students were more compliant, and keen to learn. In other words, it was an effect of student quality. Others claimed that a relaxation of the script was more likely if the teacher was working within a particular field of knowledge, such as English, or creative arts. Here the explanation was that relaxation was related to the curriculum and students’ engagement with it. And, still others claimed that if they were freed from the constraints of external testing they would be able to relax the script. In this example, the reason for maintaining the script was externally imposed.

These explanations reflect teachers’ practical reasons for why things are as they are – they are their logics of practice. While the Day Diaries reveal that there is a desperate need to change the scripts in the participating schools and to produce different kinds of effects, these logics explain why change is unlikely. The challenge for teachers and school leaders working within these contexts is to respond in different ways. Extra resources are sometimes used to tinker with the old scripts, tweak the structure here and there, and make it work better. But these are often superficial changes that disappear when the additional resources are no longer available. While innovation is required, it does not only mean that we have to think outside the square and come up with novel ways to do things. Innovation is also reflected in doing familiar practices in classrooms better. After all, we can demonstrate that some teachers are much better than others in using essentially the same approach but with better results.

In working with the four participating schools to reflect on the Day Diaries and to develop responses, we have emphasised the importance of reflecting on practice, and we have developed processes and artefacts, such as the Day Diaries and School Stories (Hayes, 2006), to support this reflection. We have found it difficult to engage school leaders and teachers in conversation about their practice, which are reflected in the Day Diaries. They tend to deflect or displace attempts to pay attention to their own practice. School leaders generally focus on the practices of others who they attempt to influence and manage, such as faculty heads and teachers. While teachers tend to focus on what practices are possible. The Day Diaries expose leadership practices and classroom practices, as well as their effects, which are for the
most part not the effects that are desired. An important first step has been to pay attention to practice long enough to link it to effects. Although Stern is talking about climate change, his advice gives applies equally to schools: We need to take strong action now. At the level of policy, this means strong, deliberate policy choices; at the local level, this means strong deliberate choices about practice.

Reflecting on practice

As mentioned earlier, once the Day Diaries were completed we facilitated separate meetings with the participating teachers and leaders in each school. We were interested in the multiple viewpoints that could come from a group conversation, and the possibilities it provided for each person present to see classroom practice in a new light, or at least from a different perspective. We wondered whether it would raise issues about the nature and quality of the learning experiences of students in the observed classes.

After allowing time for the participants to read the Day Diary of their school (these ranged from approximately 2000 words to 4500 words), we asked them to comment on how they ‘read’ it, what they thought it told them, what they noticed, and what patterns emerged for them. These were the initial stages of the four-phase reflective cycle described by Carol Rodgers (2002). During this phase, participants attend to what is rather than to what they wish were so; they pay attention to describing and to differentiating.

We encouraged the group to avoid explaining or defending what was recounted in the diaries. While this is a natural thing to do we felt that if they could check this kind of response then deeper reflection might be possible.

In this initial conversation, we did not encourage any leadership response to the Day Diaries. Our only ‘advice’ was to encourage the groups to see these descriptions as evidence of the effects of leadership. We hoped they would want ‘new’ effects through ‘new’ forms of leadership. When we did begin to explore how they might respond to the Day Diaries, we suggested that a change in the way teachers teach probably calls for a change in the way leaders lead. We encouraged school leaders to conceptualise change in terms of what needed to be learnt in order for change to happen.

We encouraged school leaders to conceptualise change in terms of what needed to be learnt in order for change to happen. In other words, to respond primarily in pedagogical rather than organisational ways; and to consider their role in facilitating and supporting teachers’ learning. This was challenging, as it asked the school leaders to start with their own practice, and to seek to change it in ways that produced more desirable effects before attempting to change the practice of others.

Admittedly, we did set out to encourage a sense of unease and dissatisfaction with what was recounted in the belief that a level of dissatisfaction with how things are is necessary before any real change is possible in settings where people have established ways of doing things. But we found that this unease came easily as everyone was unhappy with what was recounted. For the most part, the school leaders were willing to acknowledge the Day Diaries provided a glimpse into the reality of classrooms in their schools.

The type of change that might make a difference in these schools requires mobilising everyone to make what may seem to be ‘painful’ adjustments in attitudes, work habits and ways of learning; to step outside their known patterns of behaviour; to take risks; and to try and develop a new ‘script’ of classroom, faculty and leadership practice.

The conversations and opportunities for reflection may help teachers and school leaders to ‘see’ what is happening within their classrooms, but the challenge is to imagine how classroom practice might be different; to produce different effects to the ones reflected in the Day Diaries. We argue that this should be understood as pedagogical challenge, rather than as an organisational or structural one. In other words, that teachers and leaders consider what they need to learn in order to develop new practices for different effects. Fundamentally, this requires clarity of purpose and a collective understanding of how practice is a means by which agreed purposes may be achieved.

In Rogers’ terms, we have worked with these schools so that they may be present in an experience, and so that they may ‘read’ an experience. With some we have tentatively explored a later part of the reflective cycle: analysis. This involves generating ‘conjectures’ about what is happening (2002, p. 10). However, we have not yet developed a process for ‘thinking critically and creating theory’, what Rogers claims involves the unearthing of assumptions, the use of a common analytical language and the use of frameworks. The final stage of the cycle involves experimentation or taking some intelligent action.

Applying this framework suggests that the next phase of our research should address how leaders can develop new understandings of change, especially changes in their practice that might support improvement in students’ learning outcomes. However, we suspect that there is much to be learnt from continuing to pay attention to current practices, and from continuing to gather evidence of the current effects of these practices. Such evidence is a useful starting point for deeper reflective conversations about leadership as leaders reveal their thinking about why they adopt the practices they...
do, and what they believe to be the effects of these practices on learning. Our hope is that this might lead to a desire to imagine and create different practices that have different (more successful) effects.

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