

## **Leading professional learning in a time of crisis**

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Professional learning is acknowledged as key to improving teaching practice. The great disruption to educational continuity induced by the COVID-19 pandemic required a rapid shift from face-to-face learning to a learning-from-home model. Confronted with unanticipated shifts in modes of learning, teachers found themselves needing to make urgent adjustments to content, timing and pedagogy. This research focuses on understanding how teachers were supported to change their practice as learning shifted to learning from home. In 'normal' times, carefully planned professional learning would be a key element to support such significant changes in teaching practice. However, in the 'new normal' this time was not available. Despite the limitations of time and long-range planning, however, professional learning for teachers was evident albeit in quite different formats and forms.

This research draws on the notes taken from eight meetings over a six-month period with the leaders of learning within a national network of more than 50 non-government school leaders. It charts the steps and missteps they took as they navigated their way through the new learning-from-home paradigm.

Analysing the dialogue generated in the regular meetings of the leaders of learning, we sought to develop an understanding of the extent to which the key elements of effective professional learning were evident in the professional learning available to teachers during this time. What became clear is that teachers were willing to make rapid and even radical changes to their teaching practice. It was evident that professional learning indeed played a key role in supporting teachers to successfully make these changes. This research highlights the extent to which teachers were willing to take risks and try pedagogical approaches that they were unlikely to attempt in non-lockdown times. The manner in which teachers pivoted in their practice, readily and with agility, reflected highly levels of emotional trust engendered by the extraordinary circumstances induced by the pandemic. The teachers sought out assistance from their peers and school leaders in order to make these changes as the key source of professional learning. This research provides the opportunity to further develop understandings of how the individual learning needs of teachers can be supported in a school environment.