**"Well, that was an intellectual dialogue!": How a whole-school
focus on improvement shifts the substantive nature of classroom talk.**

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores how students' talk in classrooms is influenced by a whole-school focus on lifting the quality, and the substantive nature, of classroom dialogue as an approach to improve student engagement, and to develop listening and speaking skills. Specifically, we show how designing and participating in whole-school professional learning projects emerged as a central condition for teacher and student development in the area of improving substantive classroom dialogue. The paper draws upon data from a larger, three-year empirical study in several Australian primary schools into the interconnections between professional learning, student learning, teaching and leading over time. In this paper, we focus particularly upon professional learning and its effects upon teaching and student learning, and illustrate how changing students' literacy practices require changing the practice architectures – that is, the broader conditions within which teacher and student learning occurs. Drawing on examples of teacher and student learning practices, we reveal the particular "sayings" (language), "doings" (activities), and "relatings" (relationships) which create and sustain the conditions under which students' dialogic practices can flourish. The research reveals that the practices of collaborative, critical reflexive dialogues on the part of teachers contributed significantly to the development of dialogic practices within literacy learning in classrooms.

KEYWORDS: Classroom talk, professional learning, substantive dialogue, teacher change, theory of practice architectures.

INTRODUCTION: TEACHER LEARNING AS CONTESTED

Teachers' learning has long been considered an important vehicle for enhancing students' learning. However, there has been significant debate around whether and how various teacher-learning experiences have contributed to students' learning. As part of this debate, the nature of teachers' work and conditions for professional development have been recognised as contributing to the take-up or otherwise of particular learning practices. While there is strong advocacy for professional learning practices which move beyond simply "delivering" content to professionals (Webster-Wright, 2009), more traditional approaches to teacher learning – what Zeichner (2003) refers to as the "training model" – continue to exert influence. Indeed, in a context of contestation over the nature of the professional development practices most valued (Hardy, 2012), such approaches continue to exert influence, even as efforts to foster alternative approaches are supported (Doecke, Parr & North, 2008).

In part, such conservatism is also the manifestation of a more neoliberal ideology of a standards-based reform agenda. Significant pressures on ensuring teachers are aware of the particular professional learning initiatives, are resonant with processes of standardisation and accountability of teaching practices – processes which create challenges for teachers as they struggle to make sense of them in the context and complexities of their everyday practices (Doecke, Parr & North, 2008; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). As a response, some leaders in schools and even school systems recognise that engaging in action research and other forms of practitioner inquiry is a powerful form of professional learning (Doecke, Parr & North, 2008). However, although "teachers and school leaders are mindful of the dangers of increased 'demands' with respect to standardised conceptions of professional development, unless there is some modification to the ways in which professional learning is valued and *embedded* within their working lives" (Doecke, Parr, & North, 2008, pxiii), the continuation of more traditional, one-off workshop approaches in many western settings, including Australia (Hardy, 2012), remains, and is likely to continue.

Standards-based reforms in their various iterations continue to have a significant impact on professional learning practices and this impact has intensified over time (Doecke, Parr & North, 2008). Indeed, the latest iteration of national professional standards for teachers – "National Professional Standards for Teachers" (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011) – continues this narrative of atomisation and individualisation of practice. Under these conditions, it is important to be able to identify and celebrate those instances of more substantive teacher learning, and evidence of how they influence student learning. Furthermore, revealing the conditions which contribute to such practices – conditions different from more dominant neoliberal and managerial conditions which exert so much influence in schooling settings (Hardy, 2012) – is particularly important.

This paper explores the extent to which students' talk in classrooms was influenced by a whole-school focus on lifting the quality of classroom dialogue as an approach to improve student engagement and develop listening and speaking skills. The paper elaborates the connections between teacher professional learning practices, teaching practices and student learning practices. Such connections are often taken to be an ethereal notion, seemingly difficult to identify, to isolate in actual practice. In this paper, we attempt to reveal the texture of such associations. In particular, we seek to elaborate the various actions ("doings"), talk ("sayings") and relationships ("relatings") which contributed towards enhancing the conditions for teacher and student learning in two school sites in a rural and regional community in Australia. We make this contribution as an alternative to the more dominant and problematic teacher learning practices, which currently characterise so much of schooling practice.

UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT: THE CASE FOR PRACTICE ARCHITECTURES

The paper draws on a new line of enquiry in practice theory, which offers a new way of conceptualising educational practices. Recent work by Green (2009), Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008); Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer & Bristol (2014) and Schatzki (2002, 2010), among others, has sought to show how

practices – like practices of teaching and learning – are held in place by distinctive preconditions which enable and constrain particular kinds of interconnected activities, language and relationships which together constitute a practice of one kind or another. These dimensions of practice are a way of understanding practice and practice development which acknowledges that practice is informed and shaped by particular cultural-discursive ("sayings" or language), material-economic ("doings" or activity) and social-political ("relatings" or ways of relating) arrangements of practice both from within schools and across the broader educational landscape.

In this paper, we construe professional learning as an example of a particular social practice. In terms of practice theory, practices like professional learning are constituted within and by specific conditions and "arrangements" of practices. A particular practice of professional learning in a particular school is shaped by both national and local policy agendas that exist in that school, and these function as preconditions for the professional learning that occurs there. Such policies include, for example, national professional teaching standards (for example, AITSL "National Professional Standards for Teachers") with their attendant atomised, decontextualised conception of teachers' learning which foregrounds a conception of teachers' learning as individualistic and competitive. Indeed such generalist policy foci are part of a broader process of policy borrowing of neoliberal practices, and the embedding of such practices within a range of national foci – including teaching standards, curriculum and testing (Lingard, 2010). These existing practices, and the broader conditions of which they are a part, and to which they simultaneously contribute, constitute a particular set of *architectures* which influence subsequent practices. That is, these conditions and existing practices comprise what might be described as "practice architectures" – conditions and practices which collectively influence and prefigure people's activities and practices (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Furthermore, practice architectures change and evolve in the light of changing conditions (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008), including the particular social arrangements of people and objects, which characterise the make-up of any given practice (Schatzki, 2002).

The theory of practice architectures builds out of Schatzki's (2002) understanding that practices are comprised of the particular "sayings" and "doings" which make practices distinctive, or of a particular kind – like education practices or medical practices or agricultural practices. However, while these sayings and doings help make sense of practices, Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) argue that practices are also inherently influenced by the inter-relations between people involved in practice. Drawing upon Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of "communities of practice", Kemmis and Grootenboer expand Schatzki's (2002) notion of practices as "held together" by particular actions and language, and make the case for a more explicit focus upon the relationships, "relatings", which also always simultaneously characterise practices.

This paper seeks to draw upon this theorising to make sense of the professional learning practices which characterised the learning occurring in two school sites in a rural and regional community in Australia. In particular, we draw out the specific teacher learning, teaching and student learning practices by focusing on the "sayings", "doings" and "relatings" which comprised these practices respectively, and the ways these shaped and produced a set of conditions – practice architectures – different from

those fostering narrower conceptions of teachers and students' work and learning under current more managerial conditions. As part of this process, we draw out the *cultural-discursive*, *material-economic* and *social-political* arrangements at any given site that helped make those sayings, doings and relatings possible.

CASE STUDY SCHOOLS: OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In this section, we contextualise the research by presenting descriptions of particular whole-school professional learning projects undertaken by teachers at the two case study schools. Both schools were geographically situated in non-urban areas of NSW, Australia. Presley Primary School is a small-medium sized school located in a regional city. Its school population of approximately 280 students is generally from lower-middle-income families. Monroe Primary School is located in a small farming community, and its 160 students are generally from lower-middle-income backgrounds.

At "Presley Primary School"[1], teachers were involved in a whole-school project focused on implementing the *Habits of Mind™* program. The *Habits of Mind* (Costa & Kallick, 2009) is an initiative focused upon developing metacognitive awareness of patterns of behaviour to provide students with a language to talk about learning behaviours, skills, attitudes, cues, past experiences and proclivities. This project (one of four main projects at Presley) formed the collective enterprise for teacher learning at Presley over the three-year period of our study. It was initiated by the principal and her executive staff in response to shared teacher concerns about student engagement and the lack of complexity in students' oral language development. The project focused on developing and improving the practices required for students to engage in focused ways in their classroom lessons. The project also aimed to transform the language used by students and teachers as they articulated and described their learning practices.

At "Monroe Primary School", teachers developed a whole-school project focused on improving oral vocabulary in classrooms in order to improve the quality of student writing. This project was initiated by the deputy principal, who was also responsible for leading the staff professional development activities in literacy and for staff data analysis of the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). In this school, teachers recognised that student performance in writing was weaker in the area of vocabulary use; this was evident in their everyday work, and the writing strand of NAPLAN assessments. With this knowledge, teachers from Monroe made the decision to develop oral vocabulary as a springboard into writing improvement. They worked as a collective to negotiate the practice arrangements, which shaped their professional learning over the three years.

Although different, the projects in these different schools cohere around a focus on improving student dialogue and language development. Improving classroom dialogue had been a focus of ongoing professional development in the district since the late 1990s. In this region the early work of James Britton (1970), and in more

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[1] All names are pseudonyms.

recent years, Robin Alexander (2001, 2008), on the role of talk in classroom practice, informed the development of school-based ongoing professional development programs. With the view to improve student learning and their own pedagogical practices, the teachers in both Presley and Monroe schools were making attempts to change their talk practices and pedagogical interactions by collectively, as a staff, addressing these issues in two levels. First, as members of their own professional learning communities (Wenger, 1998), the teachers were participating in critical reflexive dialogues. Critical reflexive dialogues are focused professional learning conversations which do not simply reflect back on past practices but endeavour to transform the discourse and conditions for practices into the future (Edwards-Groves, 2003); such practices are not just about reflecting, but acting to change the circumstances within which teachers work and learn. Second, improving the talk practices of the classroom were a focus. Initially, based on the work of Alexander (2008) on dialogic teaching, and variously described as dialogic practices, dialogic talk or dialogic pedagogies, the teachers were aiming to extend their teaching repertoires through more dialogic pedagogies (Myhill, Jones & Hopper, 2006; Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur & Prendergast, 1997).

Alexander's work, informed by the thinking of Bakhtin (1981), connects to the notion that dialogue allows participants to create new meanings and new understandings, rather than simply reproducing previously connected understandings. In this paper, dialogic pedagogies are taken to be those interaction practices which aim to leverage student learning through particular talk moves which open up the communicative space of the classroom into a shared platform for deeper learning, meaning-making, participation and engagement with the topic (Edwards-Groves, Anstey & Bull, 2013). These talk practices, also referred to as a Socratic dialogue, are a shared movement towards promoting critical thinking and inquiry as teachers and students through genuine inquiry-based dialogues (Myhill, Jones & Hopper, 2006, p. 25). According to Barnes (2010), this kind of talk is the "antithesis to 'right answerism' [found in many classrooms]...which has the power to shape knowledge through participant engagement with a range of [more dialogic talk] processes: hypothesising, exploration, debate and synthesis" (p 7). For the teachers in both Monroe and Presley schools, professional learning dialogues and focused readings concerning the role and impact of dialogue and classroom talk for the teaching of English formed part of their professional inquiry. Teachers from Presley school also drew on the literature of the *Habits of Mind* (Costa & Callick, 2009) as a foundation point for the change strategy work in their site.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as a three-year qualitative project based on developing in-depth descriptive case studies of education practices in a small number of primary schools. Participating schools were nominated by the local district office as schools who were trying innovative approached to professional learning and teaching. On the district recommendations, the schools were invited to participate in the three-year study researching education practices. As a part of their data gathering, researchers regularly visited the schools, up to six times per year for varying periods of time, contributing to discussions about the nature of teachers' learning within the schools; however, in large measure, the work of the teachers was relatively autonomous –

certainly in comparison with teacher learning initiatives involving academics and teachers collaborating frequently and deliberately with one another as a means to improve practice. The collective case study approach (Stake, 1995) adopted seeks to draw out similarities and differences from across the cases.

The data informing the research include interviews with teachers about their teaching and learning practices, as well as observations of their classroom teaching practices. Observations of students' learning also occurred during these teaching episodes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 19 teachers, two principals and five executive team members from the two schools. Interviews were also held with six student focus groups, and emphasised the nature of students' learning during these classes. These interviews and observations were further augmented by observations of instances of teachers engaging in professional learning at the respective school sites. In this way, comprehensive and detailed observations of school practices such as classroom lessons and professional learning meetings were triangulated with evidence from interviews with teachers and student focus groups. All data were gathered over a three-year period. While the broader research project to which this work relates focused upon the study of five schools, this paper concentrates upon the practices within two school sites, and in particular, upon the nature of the classroom dialogue which transpired at these sites. Each of the teacher interviews and student focus group interviews was recorded and transcribed remotely. All names are pseudonyms.

Analytically, the application of the notion of practice architectures revealed not only the nature of particular "doings", "sayings" and "relatings" on the part of principals, teachers and students in relation to particular learning and teaching practices, but also revealed how these doings, saying and relatings helped forge new conditions for transformed teacher and student learning practices.

FINDINGS: DIALOGUE IN ACTION

The findings reveal evidence of how teacher learning practices of critical reflexive dialogue and collaboration contributed significantly to the nature of dialogic teaching practices which unfolded in their literacy classrooms. We firstly explore the nature of the professional learning practices which transpired within the schools – in particular, the "doings," "sayings", and "relatings", which enabled them to unfold as they did. We then refer to two excerpts of student learning literacy practices, and the teaching which elicited such learning, as evidence of how these teacher-learning practices enabled this teaching and subsequent student learning to develop.

Transforming professional learning practices: Engaging in whole-school, critical reflexive dialogues

Participating in professional learning conversations which were critical and reflexive was a key "driver" of practice development for the teachers at the two schools. This involved changing the language or discourse teachers encountered in their professional learning; this was a deliberate endeavour in each of the schools, and occurred at a whole-school level. For instance, at Presley Primary School, teachers

drew on the principles of the *Habits of Mind* program they were learning about for developing the language and activities of students:

> It took time, but in our staff development work we now use the language and understandings of the *Habits of Mind* program to talk about our work as teachers; if the kids are expected to use this language in their learning…we took it that we should be expected to use the ideas in *our* learning. So at one level the *Habits of Mind* program has not only changed our teaching, it has changed the way we think and talk about our teaching….we need to consider how we as teachers "strive for accuracy" in our work, or "persist" with our approaches….do we make superficial attempts at changing what we do or do we "persist" in *our* learning? Do we "build bridges" from the practices we know to the new ones we want to implement? (Casey Kent, Executive team member, Presley)

At Presley, a whole-school focus and commitment to change created an impetus for changing the ways in which teachers engaged with one another in professional learning: "This is our responsibility as a school, and we'll work together to do it." (Casey Kent, Executive team member, Presley)

What was important in this school was the acknowledgment that the language encountered in the *Habits of Mind* program influenced both the language encountered in *both* teaching *and* professional learning:

> [T]here's been a huge shift…and I think it's through the professional dialogue that we've slowly built on….Constant discussions in staff meetings…those like myself or Lynnette…[a teacher]…who are perceived as leaders in curriculum will openly say, "What I'm doing isn't working…". That opens conversations in teams…. (Melissa Farmer, Executive team member, Presley)

Similar to the situation at Presley, professional dialogue encountered at Monroe required teachers to go beyond reflecting, discussing and recounting practices, to challenging each other so that practices would change. Further to this, Diana Pratt, a Kindergarten Teacher at Monroe Primary School stated, "Without the challenge, there is no learning." The notion of challenge as a critical dimension of professional learning was distinctive in the descriptions offered by many teachers:

> We make sure our talk is high level and fits with our inquiry approach. This means we all have to be more critical, we have to try to go deeper when we reflect on what we currently do...so we have a clearer idea of what we need to change. It is sort of questioning each other too when we talk about our teaching. (Katrina Mason, Year 3 Teacher, Presley Primary School)

Professional discourse was anchored in challenging the practices of colleagues through critical questioning; this emerged as a feature which the teachers attributed to their own learning. Participating in professional learning conversations characterised by critical questioning and challenge required conditions which would enable and sustain such practices. These conditions – practice architectures – included a commitment to a whole-school focus for change. Such conditions altered the *cultural-discursive* arrangements (how "talk" was organised), the *material-economic* arrangements (how activities, such as teacher learning were orchestrated), and the *social-political* arrangements (how teachers related to each other) at the school. The

space traditionally assigned for general staff meetings, for example, was re-made as a professional learning space:

> Reorganising staff meetings to be about professional learning was very deliberate.... [This enabled] the reflection and thinking....It was just constant dialogue....And so you know that you're going to get dialogue that's based on thought, rather than reaction....There was enough strength among us, strength...of people who knew what they were doing to ensure that the dialogue was professional, on task, and learning oriented....We wanted to push each other's thinking, challenge each other...to be about quality professional conversations. (Casey Kent, Executive team member, Presley)

At Presley, changes to the practice architectures for professional learning put in place arrangements which would accomplish changed interactions among staff as they moved from a whole-staff group to smaller targeted group structures to enable dialogue which was more "thoughtful, professional, on task and learning oriented".

Over time, the practice of engaging in professional learning conversations enabled a culture of collaboration as a professional learning practice to emerge, which in turn created the conditions for the development of more critical and reflexive dialogues. These dialogues continued to evolve as an ever-increasing spiral of critical professional dialogues, which were reflexive in nature and reflective of and responded to the demands of the sites (Kemmis et al., 2014). These also proved to be a pivotal factor for the changing practices which were occurring in classrooms. At each school, teachers recognised and acknowledged how their shared professional learning influenced their practice – they jointly determined and co-constructed the language, the activities and the relationships through their particular professional learning projects.

For the teachers in our case study schools, different material-economic arrangements emerged to foster professional learning. The physical space of staff meetings and the activities that were encountered there changed to enable teachers to share practice and practice development. In our observations, it was evident that teachers, with the guidance of principals, positively responded to these changed conditions. For instance, at Presley, teachers shared the responsibility for planning and leading the professional learning meetings in rotation arrangements where each took turns in "hosting" and "chairing" the meetings in their own classrooms. These meetings centred around the school project, and would include activities such as sharing specific strategies teachers had trialled (what was successful, what was not), critiquing unsuccessful practices or strategies, sharing work samples or classroom success stories, sharing professional literature or texts teachers had discovered, demonstrating a technique and so on. A teacher from Presley explained the benefits of such deprivatisation of practice:

> Taking responsibility for the meetings and sharing what we have been trialling in our classrooms...is about teachers working with one another, and this sense of open teaching with the door open, team teaching in that sense of inquiry…and *not* a kind of privatised activity of teaching. (Leah O'Dwyer, Kindergarten Teacher, Presley)

Teachers like Leah began learning from other colleagues and sharing the practices that were the focus of development. In this way, along with her colleagues, Leah co-

produced professional learning as she made her practices public. In this school, new material arrangements were formed which *de*-privatised teaching; these simultaneously became a crucial dimension of the changed and changing cultural-discursive arrangements found in the schools. Furthermore, these both created and were reciprocally created by the changed material arrangements encountered in the sites, and were a distinctive shift away from traditional forms and functions of both staff meetings and professional learning. Participating in deprivatised practices appeared to be a key ingredient for the kind of cultural-discursive development that was required to change the nature of the talk and dialogue in classrooms at these schools.

At Monroe Primary School, staff meetings were similarly re-designed as spaces to open up practice initially through professional learning dialogues. In this next example, teachers were participating in a professional learning dialogue; they were discussing their somewhat *un*glossed experiences (to date) of the successes and challenges that come with changing practice.

Annemaree	[Mrs Arnot]: I have been really focusing on developing and lifting specific vocabulary through our speaking and listening.…So the purpose has been trying to...actually notice the extended talk within their key learning areas, and within their speaking generally. It's been a hard slog and hard to let go sometimes.
Martin:	Yeah, I've really been pushing that in my talk too and the transfer from oral to writing to describe and noticing a change....I am trying very hard to use the different questioning to extend their vocabulary, not always to great effect I might add.
Annemaree:	Yeah, I've found that out by videoing them while they're talking in their groups about what they're going to write [in their reports], but then when they actually write, those words are lost, they're not there.
Dianne:	[A few turns later] I've noticed since we've started this project that, if you are, if it becomes a focus, you do really notice lots more things like you said with the way they speak, with the way they write....So I guess I have to really work on that transfer from whole class to small group and from oral to written responses...to lessen the gap between, even what we are speaking about and encouraging them to speak that way, but also to encourage them to write that was as well.
Brian:	But it would be good, I suppose more to bring it in more into their everyday speaking, communicating with each other and with adults…instead [having them] elaborating and extending thinking...and that would be good to see that more happening orally trying to put it their everyday conversations I think...
Laura:	It's hard to keep it up.
Annemaree:	You'll soon forget it's there and just do it.
Laura:	...(*Laughing*) how can I?
Megan:	...Chantelle [a student] is coming up and asking, what would be a more "expensive" word than this, and she's actually really taking it on board and trying to write also using the language...well with a higher level of vocabulary base and making her speaking and writing more interesting. So she's really, from observation, thriving on it, so and I can see an improvement there.

For these teachers such staff room conversations were conducted in a way that "nobody feels intimidated; all respecting and valuing collegial wisdom" (Annemaree, Monroe). These dialogues formed what the teachers described as "that openness and trust" which enabled them to "go forward to make a difference to students' learning outcomes" (Mel, Monroe) and a way to "go that bit further, to make our classrooms dynamic learning places" (Annemaree, Monroe). For them, this created what was described as "working as a team basically in a climate of learning" (Martin, Monroe). The "openness and trust" experienced among these teachers enabled them to "go

public" with their personal challenges as they attempted teaching change. This is evident in the comment by Annemaree who stated: "It was a hard slog and hard to let go sometimes" (referring to letting go of the more dominant position of controlling and mediating the turns of talk) and by Laura who indicated that sometimes "it is hard to keep up".

As another example, one teacher worked on "deprivatising practices" by instigating what she described as "classroom walk-throughs". Through this approach, teachers were given time to visit each other's classrooms to observe, share, discuss, critique and reflect on their own and others' practice. For Monroe teachers, this became an important opportunity for professional learning. In an additional step, teachers would share what they had learnt at staff meetings. In describing "classroom walk-throughs", Guy Lancer, a Year 4 Teacher, highlighted the inherent benefits of such an approach for his professional learning:

> When you get the opportunity to go into anyone else's classrooms...like Belle's my partner teacher – she's got Year Three, so we work together,...we just keep professionally developing each other, you know. There's no pressure, and that's the thing. And it's really important for teachers. You go into someone's class: you're just going in there to observe, to look…to learn.

At play here is the notion that opening up classrooms for the purposes of professional learning changes the actions, language and relationships – ultimately, the practice architectures – encountered in the particular sites. As for Guy, this was manifested as the enactment of professional learning, which moved away from traditional approaches to learning. The practices-in-practice associated with these changed spaces challenge those architectures around more individualised notions of professional learning.

For these case-study schools, it seemed moving toward practices which deprivatised teaching arrangements transformed their sayings (how they thought and talked about their practice), their doings (how they conducted and arranged the activities of their professional learning and teaching practices), and their relatings (how they related, through their practice, to one another, their students, their community, and to others). Opening the classrooms created new communicative spaces, which enabled teachers to deprivatise their practice; importantly for these teachers it acted as a form of professional learning.

For the teachers at the two schools, the collaborative nature of the practices they enacted enabled professional learning. Collaborating with colleagues emerged as a critical condition for effecting sustained and sustainable change. With this practice came changes to not only the *material-economic* (physical spaces) and *cultural-discursive* (language and dialogue) arrangements, but also important *social-political* arrangements found at each school. There was a movement away from teachers being led by the principal towards teachers leading each other. The particular professional learning activities teachers participated in (for example, discussions as a whole staff, professional dialogue groups, coaching and mentoring conversations, and substantive staff professional learning meetings), "hang together" through particular relationships – relatings – and with a consciousness and deliberateness about teachers' work together.   Collaborating and sharing responsibility became a particular way of relating, which enabled a professional learning culture to emerge as a "communitarian

practice". This practice was intricately connected to relationships teachers developed with each other, which reciprocally contributed to the shape and conduct of the professional learning practices encountered in each school. In particular, many teachers in these schools recognised, experienced and understood this culture as pivotal for practice development for themselves as individuals, and collectively for and with other members of their staff.

Transforming teaching practices: Student learning in action

In both Presley and Monroe, classroom lesson excerpts show how the teachers create a more dialogic climate in their classroom talk, one that moved them from dominating the talk in lessons. These excerpts show the substantive nature of the dialogues they were now orchestrating and how these unfolded in practice. The teachers from these two schools had been working collectively and in collaboration with their colleagues on the particular whole-school projects (described above) to change their teaching practices, in particular the use of vocabulary and dialogue as a focal point. In the past, the teachers had recognised that their classroom talk practices were dominated by teacher talk time and they were, through their professional learning dialogues, seeking to address this. As indicated in the interviews, they were attempting to open up the communicative spaces through more dialogic pedagogies. The way in which the teacher at Monroe (in the following transcript) encourages students to elaborate their on responses during classroom literacy lessons reveals evidence of a change to past practices. This provides evidence of the effectiveness of their teacher professional learning for informing their teaching, and, subsequently, building students' literacy capacity:

Mrs Arnot:	Okay, by wandering around listening to what you were discussing in your groups, we've got a couple of things to consider as we were thinking about our big guiding question...Is Antarctica in danger of devastation? What are the issues? Are they going to destroy Antarctica?
Jonah:	They could.
Mrs Arnot:	Could, why Jonah? Can you go a bit deeper for us?
Jonah:	Because people do go there to try to stop it ((0.4))
Mrs Arnot:	Stop what?
Ben:	Stop global warming and stop tourists, like stop people coming to Antarctica.
Mrs Arnot:	Hold on to your thoughts, Ben. Let Jonah finish his thought first.
Jonah:	Well, some people go out to Antarctica and fish, fish everything out and so it might become more over fished.
Mrs Arnot:	That's interesting, Jonah. Can you say more about that idea? What are the implications of that, of overfishing?
Jonah:	So like the penguins and whales are dying. When the people like went there, to fish, like and they take too many fish, and the penguins have no food then. And like the Japanese whaling boats, they take too many, more than they need and they are becoming, um extinct.
Mrs Arnot:	Jonah, where did you learn that? Where's your evidence?
Jonah:	Well, we went to lots of websites first, and found out some of it, researching information.
Mrs Arnot:	Oh right, so you researched some other things did you?
Jonah:	And Monica said she saw something on National Geographic channel too, what did you say again Monica?
Monica:	Yeah, well there was a show on about the fishing and whaling in Antarctica; and the Japanese wanting whales for food too, and the scientists have been saying that the fish stocks are running low.

Mrs Arnot: Okay, interesting facts here Monica o:oh; fish stocks, that's a technical term, good one, thanks for adding that, Monica. Anyone else want to add to Monica's idea?

(Year Five, Unit: Fragile Environments, Monroe Primary School)

This sequence of student learning in action demonstrates some key dimensions of classroom dialogue, which were the focus of practice development for Mrs Arnot and her colleagues at Monroe Primary school. In this example, the open-ended or "big guiding question", "Is Antarctica in danger of devastation?", was a strategic pedagogical practice that facilitated the flow of participation turns in this classroom; this is significant, as enacting more dialogic practices was a key focus of the professional development in this school. Jonah's response "they could" counts as a legitimate response and is taken up as one to be noticed and explored – an important feature in a dialogic classroom. As shown in the next turn, the teacher's question "Can you go a bit deeper for us?", and the sequence which followed, invited Jonah to sustain the flow of ideas and deepen his reasoning. This type of dialogic move provided the opportunity for students like Jonah to share and explore their own ideas further and to elaborate their own line of thought. Such a move positioned Jonah as a thinker, not simply as being correct or incorrect or a learner trying to guess what is in the teacher's head as in the typical classroom talk structure Initiation-Response-Feedback or IRF (O'Connor & Michaels, 2007).

What is on display here is an attempt to enact more dialogic practices in teaching, that is, providing students with more extended turns to talk so that they can sustain their thinking and deepen their reasoning. These were practices Monroe teachers were learning about, practising and observing in their classroom walkthroughs. However, it is important to acknowledge that, in this instance, the dialogue, in one way, is still largely driven and managed by the teacher, and so in that respect it still bears some strong connections with traditional IRF patterns. However, these attempts to press for reasoning (O'Connor & Michaels, 2007) with the question "Can you go a bit deeper for us?" acted as a means to encourage students to deepen their understandings as they thought about, enacted ("went public") and evaluated meanings arising from the talk in which they were engaging. In the above example, what Jonah understood, how he came to these understandings and how he justified them, was evident in his talk and this was facilitated by the teaching practices of Mrs Arnot. Following on, Mrs Arnot enacted wait time as she paused for four seconds to wait for him to continue on with his idea. "Wait time" provides students enough time to make a response they are comfortable with before they "go public" (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013). Interestingly at the point of Ben's interruption, the teacher did two things: first, she did not dismiss Ben's ideas completely (she returned to him later in the lesson), and second, she allowed Jonah to sustain his turn. Mrs Arnot's questions, "Can you say more about that idea?", "What are the implications of that, of overfishing?" and "Anyone else want to add to Monica's idea? signalled to Jonah and students that a deeper engagement with the topic was required. These questions, which facilitated building the classroom dialogue, were also the same kinds of questions teachers used to frame their professional learning dialogues in staff meetings as they challenged and questioned each other in critical reflexive dialogues.

In a further dialogic move in this sequence, Mrs Arnot is making attempts to strategically step away from playing a central role in the dialogue to hand over more control of the talk to the students. As a result, Jonah and Monica enacted their own

moves towards dialogue, as they invited each other to add more, and to sustain the point. In this talk move, described by Churchill (2011) as "vacating the floor", teachers still guide and direct the flow of talk, but students are provided with more opportunities to listen to, talk to, and respond to each other's ideas (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013). Such a change in practice is acknowledged by Mrs Arnot as being "hard to let go" (Annemaree, above). This finding is distinctive in that it shows that the teaching practices were beginning to be directly influenced by the professional learning practices teachers were participating in; the teacher learning practices "travelled" through to student learning practices (see Hardy, Edwards-Groves & Ronnerman, 2012). These insights also show how the different teacher practices – vacating the floor – changed the ways the students related to each other. In this way, new *social-political* arrangements or ways of relating were forged; there was shift in power away from the typical hierarchical teacher-dominated talk to more democratic talk practices.

Similarly, at Presley, students were expected to elaborate their responses through an ongoing and iterative series of questions of students' understandings (related to the *Habits of Mind*, which are italicised in the excerpt for greater ease of understanding):

Mr Bryant:	Now, I've brought in this glass container, like a sort of big jar for us to study today, do you know what it is, what's it for?
Sally:	Aquarium
Mr Bryant:	Go on Sally, an aquarium, what do you know about aquariums?
Sally:	Fish^
Mr Bryant:	M:mm, fish, aquarium, tell us what you mean by that, how do they connect?
Jacob:	It's not an aquarium; it's a//
Mr Bryant:	//Hold your thoughts Jacob. Let Sally finish her turn. Sally
Sally:	Well, an aquarium is glass container holding water for water creatures like um fish, so that's not an aquarium
Mr Bryant:	Right, so what are you thinking then?
Sally:	Um, not a aquarium, it's got a lizard in it, what's the word. Did you know it, Jacob?
Jacob:	It's a terrarium/
Sally:	/That's it, terrarium/
Mr Bryant:	/*Thanks for that Jacob, like the way you worked interdependently there* Sally and Jacob. And love the way you used the word "water creatures", Sally, a good thinking word, We'll have to remember that one, guys. ((Teacher writes the words "terrarium" and "aquarium" on the whiteboard)). These are a couple of interesting words, but they're a bit the same, those two words aren't they? Terrarium and aquarium, a bit of a challenge. Why is it, what's the difference? Even if you just look at the beginning letters, the prefixes as we call them. I'll give you some time to think about that, look at them carefully.
Mason:	Terrar-rar, aqua, aquarium
Mr Bryant:	Think some more Mason about what an aquarium is, and see if you can work out what "aqua" might mean? What does that word remind you of? If you've got people from Italy in your family you might know this, because it's an Italian word.
Dom:	I know, water, "aqua" means water.
Mr Bryant:	Good on you, Dom, *using past knowledge*, it means water. So what do you think the prefix "terra" might mean? What have we got in there? We haven't got water in that one.
James:	Arr-plants?
Mr Bryant:	Yeah there are plants, what else, keep going James, we'll work this out *if we persist*. ... ((several turns later)) What a list of technical words or phrases we have collected today by *persisting* and *working interdependently*, look what we came up with. Let's stop there a minute and quickly review what we have;

	and see if we have missed something out before we move on. ((Reading)) TERRARIUM, AQUARIUM, and we now know what those prefixes mean now, this one ((pointing)) EARTH, GLASSHOUSE, HOT HOUSE, VAPOUR, MOISTURE, did I miss any?
Sam:	Water creatures
Mr Bryant:	Oh:h how could I forget "water creatures"; lucky you are on the ball today, Sam.
Sam:	I'm *working interdependently*
Mr Bryant:	You most certainly are.
	(Composite Year Three/Four, Unit: Environments; Understanding prefixes, Presley Primary School)

This sequence demonstrates two main features of student learning which connected directly to the professional learning practices and the program of learning which teachers like Mr Bryant were participating in at Presley Primary School. In this short sequence, Mr Bryant firstly explicitly drew on the language of the *Habits of Mind* as he threaded the concepts *persisting, working interdependently* and *using past knowledge* through the dialogue (marked in italics). Students were learning about the concepts and their relevance to their learning, as they were using them in their talk. Their comprehensibility of the lexicon of concepts was evident in the students' correct use and application of the terms; for instance Sally's redirect to Jacob was an enactment of the two *Habits of Mind* concepts *working interdependently* and *listening to others with understanding*; Sam's articulation of the concepts in his final turn signalled deep understanding.

Second, Mr Bryant together with the students in his class demonstrated a shift towards opening up the communicative space towards more dialogic talk practices. It was evident that students were provided with more time to think and talk and ultimately participate in more substantive classroom conversations. Even though the questioning was still relatively directive, these conversations were more substantive in that the talk turns were extended from the two to three-word answers that were typical in this classroom, as when the teacher pressed Sally to deepen her understandings and clarify her thinking. As Mr Bryant asked Sally to "tell us what you mean by that, how do they connect?" and "what are you thinking then?" he provided her with the time to think through her ideas and to extend her thoughts. Students were also provided with genuine opportunities to engage more directly with each other. This was evident when Sally controlled the turn-taking in her question directed to Jacob, "Did you know it, Jacob?" As the teacher provided students with more opportunities to extend their ideas, a move which was counter-typical of the classroom talk encountered previously in this school, the talk encountered in classrooms moved towards being more dialogic.

This example shows that by practising and sharing teaching in their professional learning, teaching changed and influenced student learning practices, the vocabulary teachers and students used, and the nature of the dialogue students encountered in their classrooms. Over time, more dialogic talk practices (Alexander, 2008; Edwards-Groves et al., 2013) began to form part of the repertoire of teaching practices at Presley Primary School.

This push for a more robust dialogue was explicitly recognised by students. Students in the Year 3/4 class indicated how a push for more intellectually demanding dialogue – a key focus of the *Habits of Mind* approach – influenced their learning:

Blake: Well, he talks you into trying to explain like what you mean because it's, like it's a confidence, it's like it makes us feel more confident even like when we're not justifying, when we're just like talking….Because he won't let us, he doesn't like it when you just answer "no" or "yes" because he says, "Those are kindergarten answers!"

Grace: ((Later in the interview, students were discussing *their learning.*)) We get in groups, then we ask questions and discuss what this certain thing means or if someone asks questions like what does "interactive" mean, we'd like discuss it and work it out until everyone gets it.

Tobias: In Term 1 we've been told to use high modality words and -

Miriam: And in most of our writing tasks we have a criteria that marks us on technical words -

Helena: Like technical language and to make sure that that language is fit for the subject -

Tobias: And not just technical words like for our HSIE unit, scientific terms like for non-metals for example, SO4 and C1- and CO3 and things like that.

Grace: Yeah, and one of the good things is that we're actually helping make the criteria so we know what we have to achieve and yeah.

Miriam: ((About *Habits of Mind*)) It's the things that you should do and you should train your mind to start doing so/

Helena: /just unconsciously/

Patrick: /so in the future you can have a better working lifestyle.

Blake: Like it helps better education and habits, it's a good habit that you should develop to do with how you think and act and things like that, so it's a habit of the mind.

Grace: To improve what we're doing so we might be just gathering data by just reading something but we'll look up at the habits of mind and find it says gathering data through all sense so we'll go and do an experiment or we'll watch a video and it'll mean that we'll gather more data.

Tobias: And that actually kind of joins with the types of learning because gathering through all senses is kind of being, is kind of whether you're gathering it through being hands on, whether you're listening to it or whether you're looking at it.

Patrick: And sometimes our class, each week or each couple of weeks we focus on just one habit of mind that we think we need to improve on. Like I chose listening and understanding with empathy instead of just listening and like letting it breeze past, I was listening to interpret all the information and so when I went back to my desk I would know exactly what to do and then once I thought I'd finished and improved a lot in that I would move on to a different habit of mind that I thought I needed to focus on.

This excerpt, from a student focus group interview, provides convincing empirical evidence that the students participating in these classrooms were beginning to enact a more sophisticated kind of "extended" or "substantive" dialogue with a "sustained flow" of ideas in their own talk. Students demonstrated they can speak freely, at length, and they usefully build on each other's ideas/contributions without mediation by an adult (beyond the initial question). In many ways these data contrast with the kinds of dialogue data from the classrooms presented earlier in the paper; that is, in one way, although the teachers were making attempts to change their dialogic practices in practice, they still acted predominantly as a mediator of the talk turns.

The excerpt above shows that the students were not only able to use a rich vocabulary as they described their learning, but were themselves demonstrating capacities for reflecting on the learning which they experienced. They drew explicitly on the language of the *Habits of Mind* program in their recounting of their classroom learning experiences. In addition, these students were able to specifically articulate what they were learning *and* what this meant for them as learners. This was further evident in the way in which one of the students, Molly, exclaimed, "Well, that was an

intellectual dialogue!" at the end of the student focus group interview. Her teacher later commented that that was type of the response they had been waiting for. Molly's statement showed that she could both identify and participate in substantive dialogue, and was reflective about her own learning. To her teacher, this was evidence that the whole-school focus on raising the quality of dialogue in the classroom was beginning to pay off and this was evident across the school. As Caroline Harper, Kindergarten Teacher, Presley Primary School, observed in regard to the explicit teaching of these dialogic practices with her Kindergarten students (five or six year olds):

> I'd say...."What sort of things did you do today to be able to work as well as you did?…[W]hat did that look like?…" [T]hey're starting to learn to articulate, become aware and identify the particular skills and practices that we're using.

This was illustrated by the following exchange between one of the authors and one of Caroline Harper's Kindergarten students, Bailey, who clearly drew on the language and associated understandings of the lexicon of practices from the with the *Habits of Mind* program:

Researcher:	So…[what kinds of *Habits of Mind*]…have you learnt all about?
Bailey:	*Past knowledge*, it's like, like you see that bridge over there, the purple bridge?
Researcher:	Yes, I can see that.
Bailey:	Yeah, well, that's like *past knowledge*, that is *past knowledge* because they know one half of that city and they've never been on that half, so then, so it's *past knowledge*, so they know that bit, then they need to learn a little bit of that bit.
Researcher:	Oh, okay, so it's something that they learn about?
Bailey:	Yeah.
Researcher:	They know a little bit, but then they learn a little bit more about it?
Bailey:	Yeah.
Researcher:	Okay, that's pretty hard isn't it?
Bailey:	Yep, and *thinking flexible* means we're thinking very good.
Researcher:	Oh, okay.
Bailey:	Do you see the red one…*[student pointing to an animal he has constructed in his habitat which had pipe cleaners coming out of its head]*…that it has all the things in its head?
Researcher:	Yep, I see that.
Bailey:	Well, that's *thinking flexibly* because it's thinking about a lot of stuff.

In his description, Bailey was attempting to *use* and *explain* the Habits of Mind concepts *thinking flexibly*, *persisting*, and *making links between prior and current knowledge* to the researcher. The excerpt shows that the language from the professional development program had entered Bailey's talk, and even as a six-year-old (even if only at a rudimentary level), he demonstrated the capacity to speak metacognitively about the practices he was enacting.

The excerpts presented above provide evidence of the effects of the professional learning in which teachers engaged on teaching practice and subsequent student learning, and of the significance of the conditions which enabled this teaching and student learning.

DISCUSSION

Across the corpus of data presented, teacher and student enactments demonstrated a movement towards a more dialogic approach to teaching and to professional learning. This was evident in both teachers' professional learning talk practices and to a certain degree their classroom talk (dialogic pedagogies); this was talk of more substance, and resulted from the whole-school focus in both schools. Building substantive dialogue as a part of the professional learning was ultimately derived from teachers' and school leaders' shared commitment and responsibility to transformation at both Presley and Monroe schools.

We argue that the significance of what unfolded in the classrooms in our research was a direct result of professional learning which pressed for changes in teaching practices; and most importantly this is recognised and articulated by the students, even those as young as six years old. The strong connectivities between these three education practices – professional learning, teaching and student learning – are revealed in this study, a finding rarely reported in the literature. We believe the results of this study furnish the professional development literature with a rich account of professional learning and its ecological connections to teaching and student learning, and for us this is simply because it is shown in both the teaching practices and in the students' richly articulated representations of learning.

Not only does the data presented above substantiate how the work and learning teachers engaged in influenced student learning, and did so in productive ways, it also provides important insights into the nature of the conditions – the practice architectures – which contributed to these important outcomes. This included the action, the "doings", of taking a whole-school approach to the teacher learning which transpired within the respective sites. By establishing a shared and whole-school responsibility for change, which focused on improving student learning, the teachers in the respective schools created a foundation for changing the practice arrangements for professional learning, teaching and student learning. Responding directly to the local needs and circumstances formed specific conditions for transformation in each school.

The *material-economic* arrangements or organisational set-ups and resources required for participating in professional learning across the school as a whole were evident in the provision of spaces within the schools for teachers to meet and discuss their work meaningfully with one another. The setting up of meetings in teachers' classrooms on an ongoing basis or conducting "classroom walkthroughs" provided the conditions for a more coherent and ongoing professional dialogue to unfold. The focus of these dialogues emerged directly from witnessing and sharing practices in more public forums. For these teachers, these dialogues mattered, because they were evidence of their commitment to learning about and enacting practices that directly influenced students' learning. While this is evidence valued by the teachers, it could be also be argued that changing teacher talk practices is a complex, time consuming and intricate task and that teacher's talk practices in the classroom situations (described above) actually can work to constrain student's responses or the potential for more dialogic talk practices. This is firstly identified by the teachers (in the transcript of teachers discussing their professional learning), and secondly, by the conduct of the students in the focus group interview where they demonstrated well developed capacities for engaging in sustained dialogues with peers. Consequently, we argue that for sustainable change these findings have implications for the importance of investing in

longer-term, site-based educational development (Kemmis et al., 2014) that encompasses collegial, action-oriented, professional learning projects.

These "doings" were further enabled by ongoing talk, dialogue – "sayings" – on the part of all involved to make this act of working together as a whole school bear fruit. The dialogue which occurred within the relevant meetings of teachers was clearly generative, and enabled participants to develop a clear understanding of the nature of the work they were engaged in, and the learning they hoped their students would evince as a result of their efforts. The *cultural-discursive* arrangements within the schools were evident in the valuing of teachers' dialogue as a vehicle for transforming teaching and, subsequently, student learning practices. This valuing of teachers' dialogue – critical reflexive dialogues – changed the discourse (enacted in language) teachers used as they engaged with each other.

Finally, these "doings" and "sayings" only made sense because of the strong relationships – "relatings" – which had been forged as part of the collaborative work of these teachers. Teachers related together through processes of collaboration, co-production of their work and sharing responsibility for the professional learning, which emerged at the school sites. They effectively reconstituted the *social-political* arrangements which characterised the respective school sites. This depth of relationship-building was evident in how teachers positioned themselves as agents of change, responsible for their own and others' development in their respective schools. Such an approach is more akin to Sachs (2003) activist democratic professionals than is often the case when teachers are required to comply with the more managerial demands of some current neo-liberal policies. In these ways, the teachers we observed encountered one other in professional learning practices which existed at the nexus of intertwined and overlapping intersubjective spaces: in semantic space, physical space-time and social space. These professional learning practices – and their associated sayings, doings and relatings – were driven by a common project: in this case, a whole-school focus on student learning through developing students' capacity for language, or improving the pedagogy of talk.

The theory of practice architectures used in this study provides a framework for understanding how practices – in this instance practices of professional learning, teaching and student learning – are constituted through the enmeshment of sayings, doings and relatings. Significantly, these sayings, doings and relatings unfolded at these specific school sites, and in ways which are contrary to how teacher professional development is practised more generally. Rather than encouraging a culture of compliance (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009), the personnel within the schools in this research sought to provide an open, collegial environment in which teachers could interrogate one another's practices in a robust, professional but also communitarian and caring manner. More managerial approaches to teachers' learning pale by comparison with these more authentic, grounded, site-based approaches; and the teachers' accounts attest to this.

CONCLUSION

In Australia, while past government-funded projects have failed to show a simple cause and effect relationship between "targeted" teacher professional learning and

student learning outcomes (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005), attempts are still regularly made to measure the value of professional learning inputs in terms of their impact on student performance tests. The study presented in this paper is an "alternative" to such attempts, and has the potential to make an important contribution to discussions about school-based teacher professional learning practice and the "conditions" which best support and promote it.

For teachers of English committed to transforming their practices to secure quality student learning practices, we argue in this paper that three distinct practices need to be changed: professional learning practices, teaching practices and student learning practices. The findings presented in this paper provide strong evidence of the interconnectivities between professional learning, teaching and student learning practices – connections which are often made loosely in much of the literature describing professional learning. As previewed in the introduction to the paper, we aimed to reveal the "texture" or quality of such associations and the evidence presented signifies what we describe as dynamic interconnectivities between these education practices. These were made possible through particular practice architectures – the conditions which enabled and sustained particular project-oriented "doings", "sayings" and "relatings" in each school.

Professional learning practices developed at these school sites were fuelled by the recognition that practice development requires knowledge of and responsiveness to the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the circumstances at each school site. We conclude that a central feature of teacher learning and practice development is the role and particularity of the site as a place where distinctive and unique conditions pertain, and that, in site-specific ways, these conditions influence the development, transformation and sustainability of practices. While it is useful analytically to separate out these sayings, doings and relatings to make sense of teacher learning, teacher and student learning practices, it is the way in which they cohere together around a particular *site-based* project – in this case, the cultivation of improved teacher and student learning for building dialogic capacity – which gives them meaning. The research presented reveals that in order to make dialogic development possible, schools as professional communities need to change organisational practices to provide communicative spaces for teachers to be able learn from one another and work together in more genuine professional learning partnerships than is typically the case.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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