

TEACHER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS:  
A VIEW GAINED THROUGH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION  
MONITORING PROJECT

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## **Abstract**

Today's teachers work in exhausting times. Curriculum and assessment change has been unrelenting and even the most conscientious teachers often feel overwhelmed. At national and local levels, professional development programmes have assisted teachers to address these changes and a number of approaches have been adopted. However, while teachers have engaged in professional development programmes, the actual benefits to classroom teaching and learning have been less certain. The quantity and frantic pace of these changes have worked against the achievement of quality outcomes. This thesis makes an important contribution to existing knowledge about professional development practice because it investigates teachers' experiences of educational change and school improvement processes to show what is both helping and hindering teachers as learners. The findings suggest that currently many schools are not effective learning organisations.

This research uses the example of the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) reports to explore teacher learning processes in action. It is argued that the impact of the NEMP reports and their assessment information is being compromised because classroom teachers are already fully committed to curriculum document developments mandated by the Ministry of Education. In fact all professional development projects are faced with the same dilemma that schools are working with multiple projects at the same time. While this continues to happen the potential benefits of the NEMP reports as assessment exemplars for effective assessment practice remain unrealised because teachers' time is drawn to so many other competing priorities. It is this reality which now makes answers to key questions about teacher learning especially important. These questions concern who makes the decisions about what it is that teachers should be learning and how this learning might be presented to them. It is a matter of concern that teachers are cast as 'victims of change' and decisions about their learning largely determined by others. Rather than helping schools to help themselves and become 'agents' of change, this practice increases teachers' dependence on others for learning.

A three stage approach to data collection is used in order to suggest improvements to current practice in professional development for teachers. This begins with questionnaire surveys to establish baseline data on the impact of the NEMP reports on classroom teachers in the Canterbury region. From this information an intervention is introduced to eight teachers who share a quality learning circle experience in order to learn more about the NEMP reports. Then observations and interviews of teachers in case study schools show teacher learning in action and reveal the strengths and weaknesses of current professional development experiences within

schools. It is argued that the future effectiveness of schools will depend upon their capacity to determine their own learning needs and then find ways of addressing them. Schools will therefore need to acquire a more extensive repertoire of data gathering and analysis skills if they are to know how they can make significant improvements and not just duplicate what others find suitable for other settings.

It is argued that improvements to teacher learning and development must address the focus of how teachers learn and will require a major review of how schools are structured and organised for teacher learning. Different arrangements will be required to allow 'learner centred' practice and the emergence of teacher learning communities from within schools. Schools will stand a better chance of being learning organisations when steps are taken to remedy the current structural arrangements which at the moment work against quality learning for teachers.

## **Acknowledgements**

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In particular, I owe my sincere thanks to eight teachers who formed a quality learning circle. These teachers undertook to increase their knowledge of the NEMP reports within a group setting. This required an extra commitment and a willingness to share what they had learnt with each other. Their infectious enthusiasm, energy and honesty have become the 'lifeblood' for this thesis. More than anything, they have shown that teacher learning can be enhanced when teachers are given the time to talk, share and observe one another's practice within the school day.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### *The problem – managing teacher learning and development*

Throughout the past 10 years, New Zealand teachers have been inundated with changes to school curricula and methods of assessing learning. While professional development has accompanied many of these changes, teachers have had little time to absorb one change before another has descended upon them. Like grasshoppers, teachers have jumped from one change to another, rarely looking back or stopping for breath. This situation has affected the outcomes of professional development, since teachers have either been unable to engage in or even complete development-related activities. The question that now needs to be addressed is whether current models of professional development have made any difference to the learning and teaching occurring in classrooms. If the gains have been minimal then alternatives must be found to enable better learning opportunities for teachers. Positive results should come from investments of time, money and energy spent on professional development for teachers.

Time is needed for teachers to acquire new knowledge, skills and understandings and put them into action. While schools have planned schedules for regular professional development in place, this cannot guarantee that teachers will subsequently put their new learning into practice in classrooms. Both the pace and amount of change have had a numbing effect on teachers, making it hard to sustain an enthusiasm for learning. In particular, because of this overload of curriculum and assessment change those leading professional development within schools have faced an increasingly difficult role in trying to convince other teachers that they ought to develop a different approach or way of teaching or assessing learning. While school principals have been sympathetic to these pressures, they themselves have had difficulty reconciling demands to meet national deadlines for implementation alongside the need to be confident about the quality of the work accomplished in the time available for development. The management of these changes has proved to be extremely challenging.

There are tensions involved in both providing and participating in professional development programmes for teachers. Just who decides what teachers should know and do in their classrooms is a continuing issue. Teachers themselves are asked to identify their own learning goals and set personal goals. Further learning goals are required for syndicates and schools as whole units which relate to the National Education and Administration Guidelines (NEGs and NAGs) under the



Education Act. These combine to produce a very full agenda for teacher learning and development and subsequent compliance at local and national levels.

One of the challenges of career long development for teachers is that teachers, like the children they teach, are unique in their capacities for learning, abilities, and attitudes. This means that there will be differing starting and ending points in their learning. For providers of professional development programmes this realisation requires making decisions about what learning outcomes are possible within particular time, financial and personnel constraints. A compromise is all that can be expected given the considerable variation between teachers' levels of expertise and receptiveness to new learning. If teachers were placed on a continuum these variations would show teachers at all points from real enthusiasm to passive acceptance and even active resistance. These positions could also vary according to the specific learning area as teachers have their unique strengths and areas of weakness in curriculum areas, which will impact on their willingness and enthusiasm to learn.

Providers face choices in the delivery of professional development programmes. They can choose to work with those teachers already possessing a curriculum strength and help them to be resource teachers for others. Other options include working with those teachers who have identified a learning need, or merely to require all teachers to participate in a specified professional development programme. None of these options is problem-free. The Ministry of Education has adopted all three options in its professional development support for teachers. Over the years these have included whole school development at individual sites, regional school cluster seminars and programmes for individual teachers. Some of these have been provided within the school day with full teacher release offered, while others have occurred after school in teachers' own time.

For each of these variations in delivery, providers and teachers have had to accept that the timing, relevance and quality of learning outcomes has not necessarily satisfied everyone's needs. Despite the best efforts of both providers and teachers, it has been extremely difficult to reconcile what is known about the principles of effective staff development, adult learning theory and the management of change with the constant pressure to conform to the requirements of a national education system. We are still searching for an appropriate model which can engage teachers in active learning and at the same time make a real difference to the quality of learning children receive in classrooms.

### ***The significance of NEMP***

For my study the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) has been chosen as the means through which to explore the provision and quality of teacher learning and development in New Zealand schools. It is highly significant that this particular project (introduced to schools in 1995) has included a professional development component in its design. Two purposes have underpinned the project. One has focussed on accountability and the need to gather detailed information about the overall performance of year 4 and year 8 children thereby allowing comparisons and trends in performance to be tracked over time. The other has related to a need to act on the information and raise student achievements. Crooks and Flockton, the designers of NEMP, were adamant that a New Zealand model for national monitoring needed to produce high quality information about student performance and at the same time make a difference to the teaching, learning and assessment practices in classrooms. In order to meet these dual purposes, strategies for helping teachers interpret and use the information were planned in the design of the NEMP model. Monitoring information has therefore been disseminated to teacher audiences as well as policy makers and curriculum planners and multiple copies of the full written reports plus 4 page summaries (Forum Comments) sent to every school in the country.

Dissemination of the monitoring information to teachers has been a key feature of the NEMP model. Colourful written reports of the NEMP assessment tasks and the results of the monitoring programme have been one way that this information has been made available to teachers. Other methods have been used to build a critical mass of teachers who have gained a more in-depth knowledge of assessment tools for better learning through a direct involvement in the project. This study has tracked this dissemination of written documentation to teachers and recorded the extent to which teachers have accessed and used this information in their classrooms.

### ***Teacher involvement***

Teachers have been involved in a variety of ways to ensure that teacher voices and expertise have been used to shape the content, appeal and relevance of the project. Teachers have been members of advisory panels, assessment task development teams, administration of the monitoring plus its marking. All of these experiences have contributed to the professional learning and development of the teachers involved.

### ***Teacher administrator training***

Each year applications for NEMP's teacher administrator positions have been advertised offering a six week secondment in the monitoring project. Approximately one hundred teachers each year have used this secondment as a time to escape from their own classrooms, visit other schools and classrooms, and become more knowledgeable about effective assessment practices. This six week professional development opportunity has been highly valued by the teachers involved. It has included an intensive residential training week and then five weeks administering the assessments in different schools.

Gilmore's (1999) research on the professional development of teachers through their NEMP experience has shown that the benefits have been "numerous, broad and multi-faceted". The benefits have ranged from "personal and professional, specific and general, immediate and longer-term, related to assessment and beyond" (p.2).

Comments from several teacher administrators have conveyed the following sentiments about the impact of NEMP on their professional development:

*Greater confidence in talking about 'assessment' having had this experience. The whole issue of how we assess has worried me for some time... but now I feel I am able to use this information [PAT Maths] wisely and stand firm with my beliefs about assessment practices and procedures. This experience has helped me tremendously - not only adding credibility when I talk to parents and teachers, but also setting up soundly based policies for the future (p.15).*

'Time out' from their own classrooms has been particularly beneficial for the teacher administrators. Gilmore (1999) has reported teachers as saying it had been "as good as a holiday" and how much they had appreciated "being free from demands and stress for a while" (p.11). Time for reflection and thinking about personal philosophies of teaching were also mentioned with some teachers feeling energized and their "creativity beginning to return" having had a break away from their classrooms.

The value of immediately applying their training in assessment procedures to work with children has also been a clear benefit of the NEMP experience. These teachers have appreciated working with children in small groups or in one to one situations. Comments included saying "this was a luxury" and it allowed them "time to listen to their [children's] ideas without being interrupted".

This working closely with children has provided “insights into different problem-solving techniques” and “allowed the children to perform well in [a] stress free environment” (p.13).

Another significant feature of this professional development has been the support available from colleagues (either the NEMP staff or their monitoring partner for the five weeks of school assessments).

### ***Teacher markers***

For those teachers selected as teacher markers, the NEMP experience can also be described as a professional development opportunity. Once again teachers have received training for their role and worked alongside supportive colleagues. Time has been spent as a collaborative team refining marking criteria and clarifying the various levels of accepted performance. Having a whole week to concentrate on the children’s assessments and what these have meant has provided these teachers with fresh insights into what children actually know and can demonstrate.

### ***Teachers at large***

However, for teachers not involved as teacher administrators or markers, the benefits of the project have been harder to realise. Their learning has been dependent on other teachers, or perhaps their principal, raising their awareness of its possible uses and benefits. Finding time to read and discuss the NEMP material in already full professional development schedules has been a further difficulty. For most schools, participation in the various curriculum contracts has been all consuming and precluded asking teachers to absorb even more learning.

For those who have realised the benefits and possible uses of the NEMP information, and wanted others to share in their knowledge and enthusiasm, this has been a point of frustration. Clearly, the NEMP information needs to be used by teachers for the improvement of their classroom assessment strategies. Just how this can be squeezed in and assessment take a more integral part alongside curriculum development is over to individual schools to resolve. For its part NEMP can disseminate multiple copies of the written reports, provide shorter summaries in the Forum Comments and continue to provide professional development for teacher administrators and markers who keep returning to the nation’s classrooms. If schools are to be seen as true learning organisations, they cannot ignore what information NEMP has to offer. Just how schools might find the time and energy to engage in this learning and development is central to this thesis.

In this study the effects of this commitment to teacher learning and development have been tracked using a sample of schools. These have helped provide a snapshot of a representative sample of schools in one province of New Zealand (Canterbury). This snapshot has allowed study of how the intentions of the project leaders have compared with the reality of classroom learning and teaching practices, through the project having both accountability and educative purposes in its design. Questionnaires and case studies of individual teachers and schools have been used to highlight the ways in which professional development has been delivered and received by teachers. Identification of the conditions which have helped and hindered effective teacher development in the case study schools has led to a framework for determining whether these case study schools have been effective learning organisations for teachers.

## **Evolution of the research**

### ***Research interest***

My personal interest in the professional development of teachers has stemmed from my work as a provider of educational leadership and management courses for teachers and those aspiring to leadership positions, during a decade of significant change in school administration, curriculum and assessment. Programme themes in these qualification courses for school leaders have related to the theories of change management, school effectiveness and improvement and organisational learning. The programme has provided course members with theoretical frameworks from which to analyse both the implementation and outcomes of their school's professional development work. Such analysis has shown that the introduction of new teaching content or approach has relied on a wider range of skills, knowledge and understandings than was ever imagined. Since school leaders have typically gained their positions of responsibility on the basis of teaching abilities, it has been assumed that they have also had the necessary leadership and management skills which promote teachers' professional development. Despite their best efforts, school leaders have often faced considerable difficulty engaging teachers in professional development activities which had the goal of improvements in classroom practices.

### ***Choosing a focus***

When the National Education Monitoring Project was introduced to schools in 1995, I was interested in its design features. Its dual purposes of accountability and teacher learning and development were of particular interest. I wondered how these might work given the stories my course members were telling me about the pressures they were facing with new curriculum documents. My worry was that no matter how potentially useful the NEMP project and its reports might be, there was a real danger that teachers would dismiss them simply because they represented an additional pile of documents for reading and understanding. I wanted to find ways in which the NEMP reports could impact on classroom assessment and learning against these odds of time and workload pressures.

### ***Planned research design***

My initial data gathering was envisaged in four stages. The first stage was a gathering of baseline information to determine the extent to which teachers in Canterbury were using or not using the NEMP reports. Subsequent data gathering planned to explore the assessment experiences of teachers who were making use of the reports as well as those who had not yet managed to find time for the NEMP reports in their professional learning. Observations, interviews and diary notes of intervention meetings were to be the sources of information.

The stages involved:

- 1 Using two questionnaires to determine the impact of the NEMP reports in schools over a two-year period.
- 2 Case studies of teachers who were using the NEMP reports to enhance their classroom assessment practices.
- 3 Professional development offered by the researcher on the NEMP reports to selected schools.
- 4 Observations of staff meetings and/or individual classrooms in selected schools where NEMP was being used.

It was thought that the data gathered from each of these stages would then combine to show what was working for the professional development of teachers in schools.

Design changes were required after the initial questionnaire was analysed. It was discovered that teachers answering the questionnaire had not used the reports to any great extent. This limited any follow up with schools and teachers who might be using the reports. Many teachers had only flicked through the reports on their own or had had the reports waved at them in staff meetings by their principals as good things to read in their own time. Some indicated that they had wanted to read the reports but as yet had not found the time. Others were alerted to their existence by the questionnaire. Schools had had no staff development on the NEMP reports at the time of this initial questionnaire. This reality reduced the possibility of incorporating examples of existing practice in the data gathering. Instead, I had to be the one to initiate interest and activity with the NEMP reports by providing some professional development to a small group of teachers who were willing to participate.

### ***Changes to research design***

A revised structure became:

- 1 An initial and final questionnaire to compare the impact of NEMP in Canterbury schools over two years
- 2 An intervention using a quality learning circle approach with eight teachers
- 3 Tracking the professional development occurring in selected case study schools and reviewing the effectiveness of their delivery.

The intervention at Stage Two showed how an alternative model worked for the eight participating teachers. A quality learning circle model was introduced which allowed the teachers to explore the possibilities of the NEMP reports for their classroom use within a supportive learning group. The eight teachers became a quality learning circle and met in school time once a fortnight over a full year. Classroom visits to each other's schools were included in the design and the sharing of assessment task trialing from the NEMP reports became an important part of each meeting. Interviews with each of the teachers and their principals tracked the learning journeys during this time.

By the end of a full year, the group had been introduced to all of the NEMP reports which had been released. The teachers were then ready to disseminate NEMP within their schools. This became Stage Three. Case studies emerged from each of the teacher's schools using observations of teacher learning in staff development and interviews with individual teachers.

### *Thesis overview*

The structure of this thesis is centred on the three stages of data gathering as discussed above. Chapter 1 provides background information on New Zealand's National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) and introduces NEMP as a framework for exploring possibilities for teacher learning and development.

In subsequent chapters the literature is organised around each of the three data gathering stages rather than as one separate section. Chapters 2-5 are associated with the first stage of data gathering (teachers' experiences of the NEMP reports). Here details of the questionnaires and their analysis feature as chapter 2. This is followed by a discussion of change management theories in Chapter 3 where tensions are noted for those working with change projects whether at

local or national levels. Chapter 4 links the theories of school effectiveness, school improvement and moral purpose to address the 'what, how and why' questions for effective change. Then in chapter 5 the context for teacher learning and development is reviewed to highlight issues concerning current models in use.

Chapters 6-9 are devoted to the second stage of data gathering (intervention using the quality learning circle). Chapter 6 provides a rationale and overview for the Quality Learning Circle Model. Chapter 7 provides a detailed account and analysis of the QLC experience for eight teachers. Then chapter 8 explores the role of 'transformational' leadership for school improvement. This includes the development of leadership theory and the notion that school improvement is a team activity not restricted to a school's leaders. Chapter 9 focuses on principals and their roles in the promotion of teacher learning and development in schools.

The third stage (case studies of teacher learning in schools) introduces the concept of organisational culture and the theory of organisational learning in chapter 10. These are then applied to the case study schools in chapter 11 as a way of determining the extent to which schools have the ability and capacity to improve themselves. Then the final chapter reviews the thesis data to answer the important question of whether schools can be called learning organisations. The call is made for a new paradigm where teacher learning and development is the focus for all school activities leading to enhanced student achievements. Gaps in existing practices are listed along with a set of guiding principles and a reconceptualisation of teacher learning and development.



## *Research questions*

The research questions for this thesis are linked to each of the data gathering stages and include:  
*Stage One*

- 1 Can the National Education Monitoring Project benefit classroom assessment practices?
  - 1.1 To what extent have teachers realised the potential offered by NEMP?
  - 1.2 How widespread is teacher use of the NEMP information?
  - 1.3 What information does NEMP offer teachers in New Zealand schools?
  - 1.4 What sorts of NEMP information are teachers using?
  - 1.5 Is NEMP impacting on the way teachers assess children's work in their classrooms and schools?

### *Stage Two*

- 2 How effective is the Quality Learning Circle Model for teacher learning and development?
  - 2.1 Which features of the QLC model increase the likelihood of teacher learning impacting on classroom practices?
  - 2.2 How well do teachers rate it as a tool for professional development?
  - 2.3 How easy is it for teachers to use?
  - 2.4 Is it suitable for use in schools?

### *Stage Three*

- 3 How successful is professional development in individual schools?
  - 3.1 How do schools use their staff development slots?
  - 3.2 How much do teachers gain from these sessions?
  - 3.3 What hinders the learning of teachers in staff development sessions?
  - 3.4 What would enhance the quality of teacher learning in schools?
  - 3.5 Are schools places where teachers can learn and develop their skills?
  - 3.6 Can schools be called learning organisations for teachers?



## Chapter 2

### Research design and data gathering

A multi-stage approach has been chosen for this research study. This involves a combination of data gathering tools, of which, questionnaires, interviews, and observations feature. The data gathering divides into three stages. As has been mentioned in the introductory chapter, each stage has its own research questions and literature, which provide a framework for the analysis of the data.

This chapter is concerned with Stage One. Chapter 3 then moves into the literature to explore change management theories and the challenges teachers face working in contexts which require constant adaptations for survival. Chapters 4 and 5 are also based in the literature and provide further theoretical bases for exploring the current contexts of teacher learning and development.

#### *Stage One – teachers’ experiences with the NEMP reports*

##### *Justification for survey method*

In writing about real world research, Robson (1999) provides the following justification for the survey method:

*Surveys are well suited to descriptive studies where the interest is, say, in how many people in a given population possess a particular attribute, opinion or whatever. However, survey data can also be used to explore aspects of a situation, or to seek explanation and provide data for testing hypotheses (p.49).*

Jenkins (1999) offers similar comment when he argues that surveys “can be used to describe, to explain, to explore, to predict and to evaluate” (p.1). He claims that surveys have other benefits. One is that the views of a particular population can be obtained. In the case of this survey, questionnaires are used to canvas the views of year 4 and year 8 classroom teachers, deputy and assistant principals and senior teachers with responsibility for curriculum, staff development or assessment. Jenkins also suggests that “surveys allow other areas worthy of further investigation to be identified” (p.2). In the questionnaires, open questions allow information to be gathered about the possible uses of the NEMP assessment information and techniques in classrooms. In this way teachers have the opportunity to supply fuller descriptions of their existing and intended classroom practices through written responses. A further advantage is that teachers are able to respond easily to written questions at times convenient to them and also retain their anonymity if they so desire.

##### *Data gathering*

The data gathering for Stage One included two questionnaires. The purpose of the initial questionnaire in August 1998 was to gather baseline data on the impact of the NEMP reports for teachers in the Canterbury region. A second questionnaire was issued in August 2000 with

similar questions. Again its purpose was to determine whether the impact and uses of the NEMP reports had changed in the two-year period.

The focus for both questionnaires was to discover how NEMP was benefiting classroom assessment practices for New Zealand teachers. Questions in both questionnaires focussed on finding out about teacher access to the NEMP reports and how teachers had come to know of their existence. Teachers were asked to describe the ways in which the NEMP material was being used, both in their school and in their own classrooms. In addition, if the teachers hadn't used the NEMP material at the time of the questionnaire, they were asked to indicate how they might use the NEMP material in the future to address barriers to learning such as gender, ethnicity and socio-economic difference. In both questionnaires, teachers were asked to comment on any existing or planned uses of the assessment techniques used in the NEMP reports. Views were also sought on the ways in which NEMP ideas could be better disseminated to teachers and ideas gained about the most successful types of teacher learning and professional development they had experienced in their own schools. (Refer to Appendix A and B for copies of the questionnaires).

Findings from the questionnaires address the following research questions for Stage One:

Can the National Education Monitoring Project benefit classroom assessment practices?

- 1.1 To what extent have teachers realised the potential offered by NEMP?
- 1.2 How widespread is teacher use of the NEMP information?
- 1.3 What information does NEMP offer teachers in New Zealand schools?
- 1.4 What sorts of NEMP information are teachers using?
- 1.5 Is NEMP or general staff development impacting on the way teachers assess children's work in their classrooms and schools?

### Survey Sample

The population for the surveys was restricted to state primary (years 1-6), full primary (years 1-8), intermediate (years 7-8) and area schools (years 1-13) in the Canterbury region. A 40% random sample of schools was used which targeted three people in each school. Questionnaires were sent to the principal with a covering letter asking that questionnaires be circulated to three teachers in the school. It was stated that these teachers could be either year 4 or year 8 classroom teachers (corresponding to the year groups covered by national monitoring), or teachers with

responsibilities for staff development, curriculum and assessment who worked with other teachers. This gave a total of 106 schools and 318 questionnaires.

The sample schools were drawn from an alphabetical, numbered list of all the types of schools in the Canterbury school population. This was achieved by choosing a number between 1 and 266 (the total number of schools) as the sample starting point and then applying a sample interval 5 to the list. This process continued until 106 schools had been selected. Then the systematic random sample of schools was matched for its level of representation with the Canterbury population of schools. The sample was compared with the population on the basis of three variables, location (city, rural, town), school type (primary, full primary, intermediate or area), decile rating (1-10).

*Table 1: Survey sample representation with the Canterbury school population*

<b>Representation of sample</b>				
	Canterbury		Sample	
	N	%	N	%
City	118	44.3	45	42.4
Rural	89	33.4	37	34.9
Town	59	22.3	24	22.7
<b>Primary</b>				
Primary	109	40.9	42	39.6
Full primary	134	50.3	54	50.9
Intermediate	14	5.2	7	6.7
Area	9	3.6	3	2.8
<b>Decile</b>				
Decile 1	3	1.1	3	2.8
Decile 2	15	5.6	4	3.8
Decile 3	24	9.0	11	10.3
Decile 4	23	8.7	6	5.7
Decile 5	17	6.4	4	3.8
Decile 6	27	10.2	12	11.2
Decile 7	36	13.5	17	16.0
Decile 8	41	15.4	15	14.2
Decile 9	35	13.2	15	14.2
Decile 10	45	16.9	19	18.0

The above comparisons show a reasonable representation between the 40% sample and the actual demographics of Canterbury schools. The same schools were targeted in 2000 for the second questionnaire with two schools being replaced with similar decile schools because the original schools had closed in the interim.

The timing of sending both questionnaires to schools coincided with the annual release of the latest NEMP reports and an interval of several weeks to allow the possibility of dissemination of the reports within schools.

### *Response rate*

While the response rate for both questionnaires was disappointing, the reasons why this might be so have provided a pertinent background to this thesis. It is argued that these reasons can be related to the climate of change and subsequent pressures and workloads facing teachers. This theme is further developed in the literature on managing change, which accompanies the Stage One data gathering.

For the initial questionnaire, a response rate of 37.5% was achieved within a six week return period. Conversely, this was also an indication that 62.5% teachers who were targeted via their principal did not respond for one reason or another. In the second questionnaire, a 29.5% response rate was achieved. Also contributing to this low response rate was the reality that some principals chose not to distribute the questionnaires to their staff.

### *Reasons for not answering the questionnaires*

The teachers frequently mentioned lack of time on their questionnaire scripts. Five principals who returned the questionnaires unanswered in 1998 had these comments to make:

*Sorry, the school has ERO so I can't ask the teachers to do any extras.*

*I am really sorry to tell you that my staff are 'questionnaired out' at present so I am returning your research papers. Your topic is most interesting, but we have been besieged this year, and people are feeling overloaded.*

*I have discussed the survey request twice with the staff and unfortunately no teacher is able to complete the survey.*

*It seems that we live in a climate where schools are under siege from a tidal wave of reports, reviews, more reports, surveys, paper demands etc. We have had enough. Our priority is to teach children the skills that they need. I want to minimise the excessive intrusions on this valuable time. I wish you well.*

Even after the questionnaires had been in schools for a period of six weeks, there were teachers who returned completed questionnaires well after the return by date. Apologies were even scribbled on the back of envelopes. However, the fact that these teachers bothered to respond at all indicated that they did care about the topic even if it was to say that they were too pressured to read or implement aspects of the reports. It was noted that they had nothing to lose by making such comments because they were not required to identify themselves and responses were returned in individual stamped addressed envelopes.

Similarly, the 2000 questionnaire also generated apologies from principals and teachers who sent the unanswered questionnaires back with covering notes. One teacher wrote a response in red pen on the front of the questionnaire, which stated:

*This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> survey I've been given to do this week! Health/PE, I.C.T and now NEMP! I have a class to teach! This involves 50+ hours! I'm helping to plan a fair. I'm leading a syndicate. I'm involved in 2 curriculum reviews. I've been asked to give my thoughts on the Special Education 2000 Report and contribute a submission! My assignments are late! I'm about to be divorced. This is written in blood! Sorry NEMP surveys are not one of my priorities.*

One principal took the time to write a four paragraph apology listing the reasons why the staff would not be asked to respond to the NEMP questionnaires. Much of the letter indicated that this refusal to complete the questionnaires was no reflection on the quality of the NEMP programme but merely an indication that the principal was protecting the staff because there were other priorities in the school at this time. While this principal was familiar with the content of the NEMP reports, he had decided that it would be inappropriate to ask the teachers for their comments as nothing had been done with the NEMP results. The comments were:

*In view of the 'ICT, Special Needs and Count me in Too' development work we are engaged in, I have to say that we are at full capacity right now. I realise that this will not assist you greatly and apologise for that but the reality these days is that we are all getting better at saying no to additional requests. I know that some schools will be in a better position to assist and wish you well with what is clearly a valuable research topic.*

The findings of both questionnaires are discussed according to two broad themes. The first concerns teachers' knowledge about the NEMP reports and what they offer. A second theme explores teachers' current and expected future uses of the NEMP reports in the classroom.

### ***1 Knowledge and familiarity of the NEMP reports***

Four issues are discussed in relation to the first theme. These include issues of access to the NEMP reports, sources of knowledge about NEMP, dissemination methods and the role of teachers in their own learning.

Issues of access to the NEMP reports and teachers' familiarity were addressed in the first part of both questionnaires. While it was known that schools were sent multiple copies of the reports addressed to school principals, it was found that this did not necessarily mean teachers had easy access to these reports. In this respect, teachers were asked to indicate which reports they had seen, how they had come to know about NEMP in their schools, and where they could expect to find the reports should they decide to read them (questions 1-3).

Where findings from both questionnaires are reported as percentages, the 1998 figure precedes the 2000 figure. These showed that the NEMP reports were mostly found in staffrooms (64.7%, 74.4%) and it was over to individual teachers to make use of them. Teachers were used to their principal or another member of staff announcing the arrival of a new resource, waving it in front of them and suggesting that it would be worth reading at a later time (38%, 27.6%). However, this was no guarantee that teachers would find time to read these reports in their own time. One teacher responding to the initial questionnaire described the pattern of mail arriving in the school as:

*Just another booklet that arrives at school and they go on the pile with all the other glossy publications the Ministry of Education spend money on (I, 080).*

Also, despite advertising the availability of free additional copies of the NEMP reports, only 20% of the teachers answering the questionnaire had taken this opportunity.

The questionnaires also sought to discover the extent of teachers' knowledge about the NEMP reports. Here teachers were asked to make choices from a range of options to indicate the ways in which their particular school had introduced the NEMP reports to teachers. These options included being given a report to read by the principal or another staff member, being told about it in a staff meeting, seeing the reports in the staffroom, professional reading, and talking with other teachers who had been involved with NEMP in some capacity or other. Teachers were also asked to provide a written comment if their experience did not match the options on the list provided. A question about whether the Forum Comment had raised teacher awareness of the NEMP reports was included only in the second questionnaire. Table 2 shows the percentage of teachers selecting each option.



*Table 2: Methods by which teachers responded to finding out about NEMP*

<b>Finding out about NEMP</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Given a report to read	53.7	58.5
Being told about NEMP at a staff meeting	51.2	44.6
Reports seen in the staffroom	47.8	53.1
Through professional reading	30.2	28.7
Reading Forum Comment	-	37.2
School sampled for testing and received information	17.6	28.7
Personal involvement as teacher administrator, marker, task designer	4.1	10.6
Talking to other teachers involved in the project	16.8	27.6

NB teachers could respond to multiple categories for this question. The dash signals the absence of this option in the initial questionnaire.

These results showed that the most common methods of finding out about NEMP included a principal or senior teacher talking about NEMP at a staff meeting, seeing NEMP reports in the staffroom or being given a copy to read.

Despite the increasing presence of a further three NEMP reports each year, there were teachers, (albeit a small proportion 7.4%), who said they had not seen any NEMP reports. Indeed it is a matter of concern that some schools and teachers have not realised the potential of the NEMP reports as assessment exemplars across all curriculum areas. Several possible reasons may explain this lack of awareness and teachers' limited access to NEMP reports in schools. One reason might be that schools have not kept good track of mail arriving. Another reason might be their systems for dissemination were at fault, while a third reason might be that teachers had forgotten about NEMP's existence in the midst of their busyness. Regardless of the reason, there is a message for those sending information to schools and this includes NEMP! This is that it should not be assumed teachers see, read or discuss written documents posted to schools.

While the percentage of teachers who had viewed all nine NEMP reports at the time of the first questionnaire was disappointing at just 19.3%, this had increased to 46.8% for responses in the second questionnaire. Where teachers had not seen all the reports, their choices related to a particular specialist area or those focusing on aspects of literacy or numeracy. 'Seen a NEMP

report' meant that the teachers knew the existence of a NEMP report, but it did not mean teachers had necessarily used a report or even knew what it contained.

In many cases teachers relied on actions taken by the school to alert them to new resources. Typically schools' methods for disseminating new ideas or material to teachers included a staff member drawing attention to the new resource by a short announcement or sometimes as a more detailed description, perhaps involving a small presentation, or by circulating copies to individuals or syndicate groupings. It was apparent that schools varied in the amount of time they allocated to such dissemination as is indicated by the following list of strategies.

*Table 3: Schools' methods for disseminating the NEMP information*

<b>Dissemination method</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Staff member preview and share	15.1	15.9
Staff workshop on results	7.5	13.8
Teacher Only Day	-	3.0
Forum Comment handed out	11.7	-
Discussion on the Forum Comments	-	21.2
Incorporating NEMP into school assessment programme	-	19.1
No discussion of NEMP reports	-	37.2
Other comments	-	35.1

NB Some questions were not asked in both questionnaires.

Problems associated with the dissemination of new resources in schools were highlighted by the 35.1% of teachers who took time to add written comments to their questionnaire response. One comment from the second questionnaire was:

*Generally it appears that they have not been widely used. Those that have used them say they got some excellent ideas. Now that I've taken a closer look at them, I will be using some of the activities (II, 069).*

One problem was that despite the range of strategies in use for disseminating the NEMP reports, teachers were still missing out on access and knowledge about NEMP. However, somewhat surprisingly, it appeared that the presence of this questionnaire had alerted some teachers to NEMP's existence and this had sparked their interest in finding out more. A response was:

*Maybe the senior staff and principal have looked at these reports in more detail. I'm now off to have a good look at these reports as I'm obviously ill informed and they could be*

*valuable if I was more aware...a questionnaire like this one would make others aware that they're ill informed too (II, 050).*

Teachers also mentioned the skimpy coverage the NEMP reports received in schools when they were disseminated. A typical response was:

*The principal brought them to our attention at a staff meeting as they came in. They were discussed briefly then made available to staff through the staff resource room library. I think only a few teachers looked at them closely because of the time needed to fully absorb the contents (II, 094).*

However, rather than relying on the school to alert teachers to the NEMP reports, there were some teachers who accepted that it was their own responsibility to find out more about what NEMP had to offer. One said, “we know what and where they are but it is really up to individuals to read and interpret these” (II, 030).

That there were teachers who could be aware of the NEMP reports yet not be using them was an indication that schools were struggling to cope with the quantity of demands for new learning placed upon them. It was apparent that teachers simply did not have sufficient time available to address all the areas which required their attention, and this was a continuing source of frustration.

Throughout all sections of the questionnaires concerns were noted about teachers’ lack of time to try out the NEMP assessment techniques. There were others who expressed feelings of guilt that they had simply not been able to do more with the NEMP material. One teacher’s comment was, “I know we should use them but there seems to be so much we should do and a lack of time to do it” (II, 015). These sentiments were also evident in the following remarks:

*I think they're quite valuable but we are so swamped with organisational tasks; extra-curricular tasks; managing challenging students and meeting curriculum requirements. It's really hard to take in and make use of anything! The clear strengths and needs in terms of a subject area are useful (II, 002).*

Another said, “I don’t have time to read a big booklet so as a consequence it gets put on a shelf. The fact that the information is really useful becomes secondary” (I, 039). A year 8 teacher’s comments captured a similar sense of desperation with the words:

*I strongly believe that with the huge increases in school resourcing, these assessment techniques would be 200% wonderful. However, one teacher with 30 children, lots of*

*objectives and levels to teach and not enough hours in the day, means that I am not able to use the wonderful techniques as much and as well as I'd like to (II, 011).*

The same teacher made a plea for teacher release as one way that teachers could find more time to use the NEMP assessment techniques. Such a response indicates the willingness of teachers to explore the potential of the NEMP reports, if only they had more time available.

## **2     *Extent of NEMP usage***

Classroom application was the focus of the second theme in the questionnaires and included questions relating to the impact and use of the NEMP reports in classrooms. The first of these questions determined the ways in which teachers had been using the NEMP reports and asked teachers to give examples to illustrate their use to date. Other questions addressed the ways in which teachers might use the NEMP reports in the future and what might help them to do this.

Responses to the question exploring the extent to which teachers had made use of the NEMP reports were again extremely disappointing. In the first questionnaire 71.5% of teachers had not used any of the material in the reports, leaving just 28.5% of the remaining teachers saying that they had discovered some useful material which they had been able to incorporate into their programme planning, delivery and assessment practices. One of these teachers wrote:

*It has made me more aware of where children's needs are, i.e. attitudes affecting achievements. I am endeavouring to bring literature into maths lessons where children can see the creative side of maths. Also using everyday experiences. Making children more aware of maths being all around us and how we use it unintentionally (I, 058).*

When tasks had been used, most teachers gave the impression that they were using the tasks as they appeared in the reports. Here there was little, if any, sense that teachers were adapting the tasks to suit their classroom programmes. This had created an immediate problem for the management of NEMP assessment tasks in classrooms because teachers were trying to replicate what the teacher administrators had done with individuals or small groups of four children. It was certainly more difficult, but not impossible to use many of the tasks with whole class groupings. Some teachers weren't sure whether they could even use the NEMP tasks in their classrooms because no one had given them permission to do so. In these instances, NEMP was seen as a programme administered by others outside of the classroom and kept separate from teachers' daily work. It was perhaps quite understandable that such a view was held, because teachers of the children sampled for testing were deliberately not part of the NEMP monitoring

and its administration and they might naturally assume that NEMP did not need to concern them. There were, however, others who had noted some potential uses for the NEMP tasks but said they had been discouraged because the format of the reports had not been suitable for immediate classroom use. These teachers indicated that the absence of the NEMP resources (e.g., photographs, card equipment and video programmes) had made it much harder for them to use the activities. They considered that extra preparation time was a barrier and wanted blackline masters to make it easier for them to use the NEMP tasks.

Teachers' use of the NEMP tasks was also influenced by the role the media had to play in disseminating the results. It seemed that for some teachers it was important to act on whatever the media drew to public attention about the work of schools. In this respect the media had played a significant role in raising teacher awareness of the weaker areas of children's performances through the National Education Monitoring Project. This publicity had prompted more teachers of year 4 and year 8 children to take particular notice of the tasks reported as having produced relatively poor scores than any written documentation sent to schools about NEMP. Often the first tasks teachers had reported using were those which had produced alarming results in the national sample. Not surprisingly, teachers were using these tasks for their own teaching as a way to remedy any deficiencies that might apply to their own children (II, 068). This was particularly true of one of the earlier NEMP reports (1997 Social Studies) where the results of the general knowledge and locational geography questions had been highlighted by the media and questions asked about what teachers were teaching children in today's schools. This was soon interpreted by teachers as being a direct criticism of their work by the community at large. These teachers quickly incorporated these aspects into their own teaching so that they could not be criticised too. One teacher's short comment for this question reflected this concern when s/he said, "everyone knows where Cook Strait is now!" (I, 003). So this had been a catalyst for teachers to find the Social Studies report, repeat the task with their own class and then compare their findings with the nationwide sampling.

NEMP reports do not just feature assessment tasks related to particular knowledge or skills. Information is also supplied on children's performances according to various sub groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and geographical location). Most teachers had still to realise the potential of this information for addressing barriers to learning. Instead, their main interest appeared to be the possibility of gaining good ideas for classroom teaching rather than taking note of the areas of particular strength or weakness for girls or boys or those from other ethnic groups, school types or geographical location.

In both questionnaires teachers were asked if they had made use of any of the information regarding assessment ideas, achievements of the various sub groups, assessment techniques and ideas for marking. Where use had been made, further details were requested. Unlike the first questionnaire when the majority of teachers had left these questions unanswered, the second questionnaire results showed 44.7% had used some of the NEMP information whereas 54.3% had not. While this was an improvement on the earlier questionnaire, it was nevertheless not the figure which the NEMP team would have hoped to see for their work several years into NEMP's monitoring life.

However, despite this somewhat slow realisation of NEMP's potential to help teachers make the most of their classroom assessments, it was apparent from the responses to the second questionnaire that more notice was being taken of the results of the sub groups. One teacher said, "[the reports] brought us back to reality that some children are disadvantaged due to background, race etc., and we need to constantly evaluate our teaching practices and assessment methods" (I, 048). Where the NEMP findings mirrored school concerns, particular notice was being taken (I, 114). One teacher said, "I compared the results to groups that I teach to see how children I'm teaching compare. Then I determine whether I need to change my teaching strategies/programmes" (II, 011). A teacher working in a small school also said teachers were keen to "receive the reports, review their findings and make changes or implement new ideas where [they could]" (I, 033). Two more teachers commented about the ways in which the NEMP reports enabled teachers to make comparisons and have their current practices affirmed rather than criticised. For one teacher, comparisons with the NEMP results were viewed as a celebration of practice (I, 009). The other said:

*[I have] continued to feel very confident about our current assessment and reporting practices through the comparisons to NEMP reports (in spite of the temptation to feel our practices might be seen as inadequate by ERO) (II, 011).*

While refinements to practice were mentioned by teachers who had read the NEMP information, many more teachers signalled their intention to study the NEMP reports at a future time. This should be interpreted as a positive endorsement of NEMP, especially given teachers' current workloads and pressures. One teacher signalling such an intention replied:

*Good question. We get so bogged down with the general rat race of paperwork in teaching, it can be hard to lift your head long enough to give these kinds of issues the time*

*to reflect as we should. Just filling in this form makes me realise I should be looking at these reports in relationship to my planning focuses (II, 093).*

Teachers shared other ways in which they would like to use the assessment ideas from NEMP. One of these was school-wide assessment. One teacher wanted “to get more consistency across the school” and suggested “staff meetings could be opportunities to share ideas” (II, 024). A further teacher indicated that the writing survey was going to be used for school-wide assessment (II, 027). Another mentioned that some aspects of the writing survey had already been used for school-wide assessment, as well as, a parent and teacher questionnaire and these had been worthwhile (II, 058). These comments are indicators of an increasing teacher awareness of the potential of the NEMP information even if this has yet to be translated into more widespread application in classrooms. One teacher’s positive response to NEMP was reflected in the suggestion to “fil[e] the NEMP assessment ideas as mandatory school assessment tools in conjunction with child portfolio work” (II, 001, 012). Others indicated that NEMP information had either been used or was going to be used for school-wide review purposes (II, 005). Clearly, the NEMP information was starting to be acknowledged as being useful and those who had used tasks for school-wide assessments gave NEMP a positive response.

Further questions probed the degree to which classroom teaching and assessment practices had been influenced by the NEMP reports. Teachers were asked to supply details about the ways they had used the NEMP reports. Separate questions asked teachers to comment on the ways they had used the assessment ideas and techniques, acted upon the results of the sub group performances, and used the marking criteria. Sadly, in many questionnaires this question was left blank which would suggest that there were still teachers for whom there had been no perceived impact of the NEMP reports for their practice.

Where comments were offered, these showed that teachers were beginning to use the NEMP reports to learn new ways of assessing children’s work across all curriculum areas and NEMP tasks had become assessment models. Some teachers were able to provide specific examples of tasks they had linked to curriculum themes or topics for special attention e.g., “an extra focus on the calculator, percentages and estimation at the year 8 level” (I, 001) because these had been highlighted as being areas of weakness. Summaries provided in the Forum Comments were also mentioned as being the driving forces behind one school wanting to address a particular weakness, e.g., the estimating concept in maths (I, 028). Another example was of a teacher having gained more confidence in doing art assessments after receiving guidance from a NEMP marker (I, 090). However, there were others who moved beyond links with specific classroom

themes to the assessment process in general. In one instance, mention was made of using the NEMP reports to “look specifically at what to assess and finding different means or ways to assess” (I, 001).

A teacher who claimed that NEMP had had no impact, criticised the NEMP reports on several counts. One was that some of its assessments emphasised factual knowledge rather than a demonstration of skill. The other blamed the media for its negative coverage of the NEMP results (I, 007). Two teachers made it clear that the NEMP assessments did not always match the objectives in the National Curriculum Statements and this was why teachers were finding it difficult to use the reports or their information (I, 031; II, 087). Sadly one even argued that NEMP was “not curriculum based” and therefore “not a priority for schools” to spend time on them (I, 106; II, 006). What these teachers didn’t seem to appreciate was that NEMP’s intended purpose is monitoring what children know and can do so that trends and patterns can be established over time rather than a close assessment of achievement objectives.

However, underlying all these responses about the ways in which teachers might benefit from the NEMP report information, there was still the problem of finding the time to read the information. In this respect, the following comment was quite typical: “I’ve found the ones I’ve read quite interesting. They’d be useful if I had lots of time to read and consider them and perhaps plan accordingly” (II, 002). This was again confirmation that teachers approved of the NEMP reports but did not have enough hours in the day to absorb more learning.

Just one response demonstrated a deeper use of the NEMP information with its reference to having made comparisons between the first and second cycles of NEMP reports in the same curriculum area with the trends in performance between the 1995 and 1999 monitoring (II, 015). Again it was a pity that the majority of teachers had not yet realised the usefulness of these trend data.

But despite the mixed uptake of the information available from the NEMP reports, for some schools, awareness raising had gone beyond the year groups involved in the NEMP monitoring. One teacher talked about awareness raising of the whole staff which meant “teachers from all levels were utilising the information available” (II, 058). Others had used some of the assessments e.g., observational drawing across a whole syndicate and marked them together (II, 062). Curriculum leaders were also reporting the value of the NEMP tasks for curriculum reporting to Boards of Trustees (II, 092). One school even admitted that they had used the



NEMP report on information skills as the basis for their school's programme planning because it had so many good ideas (II, 040). Together these examples show that the information offered through the NEMP reports has considerable value to individual teachers and their schools. What is needed now is more widespread sharing of teachers' experiences using the NEMP information and the assessment tasks with one another.

Teachers' future uses for the NEMP reports were also explored through the questionnaires. Comments suggested that the range of assessment tasks and their resources had appealed to teachers because of the tasks' imaginative design. Some teachers felt that if they could access the resources, they would make use of the NEMP assessments as listed in the NEMP reports. There were other teachers who felt that schools should be supplied with the resources and not have to spend time looking for substitutes or making their own. One said:

*I would like to see the availability of video clips etc. as used in these assessments being available to schools wishing to conduct their own survey within their school so as to compare to published results (I, 006).*

Concerns about teacher time to read and use the reports received repeated mention. A further plea was made for copies of the reports to be sent to every teacher with the comment, "we are very busy people and do not always get lunchtimes to peruse the flood of material that passes into the school" (I, 030). Another said "having to hunt out the NEMP reports" was a barrier to their use (I, 075). Other suggestions were giving teachers non-contact time to read and study the reports and plan how to use their recommendations and procedures (I, 088). Others wanted guidance about how to use the findings and implications of NEMP and requested in-service courses and other people to lead discussions about them (I, 089). Several teachers asked that schools be provided with further people resources. One said:

*At the moment schools are doing this 'on the cheap' for the MOE by getting an already overworked teacher to do it. We haven't the time in our present budgets to address NEMP reports properly. You'll find it'll only get half addressed or not at all. Just reading them alone takes hours! ...Even with release time it's a lot of headspace when one is also running a classroom programme. The Ministry of Education needs to provide a well-trained resource person to come into schools to run seminars and show schools how to make proper use of NEMP reports. Or maybe the about-to-be newly revamped 'assess and assist' ERO people can do this for us (II, 094).*

All of the above suggestions show that despite the busyness of teaching, teachers are realising the NEMP reports warrant closer scrutiny and they would like support provided for this.

In reality it was extremely difficult to make time for the NEMP reports within the already full staff development programmes despite principals' and teachers' best intentions. One teacher made particular mention of the questionnaire's list of ways schools might have used the NEMP reports to enhance assessment practices. These suggested giving the NEMP reports to individual teachers to preview and then report to staff, holding a staff workshop or meeting on the NEMP results, devoting a teacher only day to one or more NEMP reports, staff discussing the Forum Comment summaries and incorporating NEMP assessment tasks in schedules for school-wide assessment. The following comment reflects some despair with existing staff development sessions for one school when a teacher said:

*Unfortunately, our staff development programme does not allow for such strategies. Specific timetabling of these is an absolute necessity – where curriculum leaders lead the discussion, but it is impossible to expect individual teachers to do so because of the huge paperwork overload already experienced. Perhaps the NEMP reports could be incorporated into the staff development programmes for new curricula (I, 034).*

This comment also suggests that the NEMP reports would receive a higher profile in schools, if school advisers and consultants made mention of ways to incorporate the NEMP material in programmes. In-service programmes would be a good start because as one teacher suggested, “they can help teachers know what to do with the information” (I, 110). One teacher thought that the NEMP reports would offer some hope for improving classroom learning if they “could be used to focus teaching on attainment and learning rather than the nebulous nature of the present assessment systems being promulgated in schools” (I, 113). There was an implication here that those involved with NEMP needed to be more proactive in the sharing of its benefits for classroom learning and teaching so that there was a greater chance of an impact on teacher work. There was also a sense that it needed to be more widely known that the NEMP assessment tasks were useful for curriculum reviews and these would save teachers work when the tasks already existed.

Other statements were directed at the Ministry of Education requesting a reduction in the amount of printed material coming into a school. It was mentioned that the volume overwhelmed staff who were already overloaded with assessment documentation (II, 007). It would be interesting to know how the teacher making this last comment thought the Ministry could update the national curriculum without some written information being in the hands of teachers from time to time.

A further suggestion was made that teachers could use the NEMP tasks as models of effective assessment (II, 040) and these would provide guides for teachers making up their own

assessment tasks (II, 059). The sending of videos of children being assessed was suggested as a possible resource for staff development study and discussion (II, 042). Here it was felt that the videos could usefully demonstrate other aspects such as task design, teacher questioning and probing as well as the range of responses, which could be expected for a particular task and how these might be marked. In addition some teachers thought it would be useful if they could select “set activities from NEMP that [were] used each year as standard assessments [for use within their own schools]” (II, 058).

A further two questions were added to the second questionnaire requesting information about schools’ existing professional development programmes. These asked teachers to consider what had been their most effective professional development and to say why this had been the case. The timing of professional development sessions received a frequent mention. Typically schools used time after school for these meetings. Occasionally longer periods of time were used as was the case for teachers who reported having successfully used a block of time from 2pm-8pm by having their school close an hour early (II, 001; II, 035). At another school a teacher referred to issues of staff meeting management indicating a preference for “short, sharp meetings, no later than 4pm and held at fortnightly intervals” (II, 015). An out of school environment was important for one teacher (II, 033), whereas another teacher talked about having “a manageable timeframe ... neither too quick nor spread out over a year” (II, 066). These variations would suggest that schools would be wise to discuss teachers’ preferences for staff meeting times.

Other comments were directed at the quality of the people leading the sessions. One teacher said it was important that the facilitator “understood the realities of the classroom” and could provide “practical, simple ideas which could be incorporated into an existing programme” (II, 002; II, 071). Teachers seemed to appreciate “hands-on” sessions with an emphasis on interaction with one teacher writing, “our best professional development experiences have been when we’ve had an ‘on fire’, enthusiastic expert with deep knowledge and practical applications work with us” (II, 093). Another said facilitators were effective when they were “very creative in their approach and gave teachers resources and ideas that worked to take away” (II, 006; II, 010). Others preferred an outsider coming into the school to facilitate their professional development and praised the work of school advisers (II, 008; II, 077; II, 084).

Delivery styles were mentioned and the plea was made for facilitators to “treat teachers as adults and professionals and draw on their personal and professional experiences” (II, 036). A variation on the theme of teachers having a say in the direction of their learning was apparent in the

comment, “we owned the outcomes, they met our needs” (II, 017). One teacher wanted a tangible outcome or benefit to come from time spent on professional development (II, 030). Teachers were also concerned that when one of their own teachers was responsible for leading a session, the quality of the session depended on them having “adequate release time to prepare properly and knowing how to deliver a successful seminar” (II, 094). This was a further plea for schools to make alternative arrangements, which would allow teachers to prepare professional development sessions within the school day.

Where responses have shared successful strategies for teachers’ professional development experiences, these have highlighted difficulties in finding the right blends of support, activity, facilitation style and content appeal for teachers. Without these blends, teachers have indicated it has been more difficult to be enthusiastic about the new ideas introduced in professional development sessions. The future quality of teachers’ professional learning and development will depend on a way being found to make learning a pleasure for all rather than being a chore and something to be endured at the end of a day in the classroom. Schools would be well advised to review their current systems and procedures for staff development so that they can be satisfied teachers find their time is being well spent.

Chapter 3 addresses the challenge of working with and managing educational change processes for school improvement. This involves an exploration of the tensions surrounding change and their effect on the key players. This chapter provides an initial theoretical framework for understanding why it is that teachers in schools are often struggling to learn and retain their learning in today’s environment.



## Chapter 3

### Understanding educational change

In today's world, change is one of the few certainties we have. It is all around us. Fullan (1993) argues change is "ubiquitous and relentless, forcing itself on us at every turn" (p.vii). While the existence of change is accepted, Hargreaves et al. (1998) maintain that "what is significant and daunting for educators today is the distinctive and sometimes disturbing forms it has come to take at the end of the century" (p.2). They argue that "many of the changes are very different now in both substance and form" (p.3) because they address and affect the core of how teachers teach. Hargreaves and Evans (1997) also add that the speed of implementation has been devastatingly exhausting for educators. This presents a very real challenge for leaders responsible for meeting the compliance requirements of central agencies, often within limited timeframes, and at the same time coping with resistance from some of their own staff members who may not be convinced that change is necessary or desirable.

The scope of this chapter includes discussion on the current direction of theories concerning educational change, teacher experiences, problems of change implementation, implications for leadership and the notion of developing teacher capacity to deal with change and school improvement. The purpose of this discussion is to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the problems of teacher learning and development in general and more specifically within the National Education Monitoring Project. This discussion links back to the results of the questionnaires discussed in the previous chapter for both explanation and as an exploration of strategies that might enhance teacher learning in the future.

#### *A paradigm shift*

Over the years there have been many reports of isolated school improvement projects which have served to highlight particular strategies and problems of implementation. These have formed a useful knowledge base for others embarking on change projects. However, their value for the present environment is now under question. It is suggested that today's environment is being marked by uncertainty, and is not like the more predictable past where a traditional model of change was based on the concept of scientific management using Taylor's three assumptions of stability, rationality and structure (Evans, 1996). Differences between traditional (rational-structured) models and current (strategic-systemic) models have been highlighted by Evans (1996) according to five categories in Table 4. These categories show how these models

emphasise polar opposites in terms of the environment, organisation, planning, innovation, focus and implementation. For example when working with a more strategic-systemic model leaders face particular challenges because of turbulent and unpredictable environments and what this means for the way they can act. Organisational patterns tend to be fluid rather than stable, planning adaptable rather than objective and linear, innovations addressing processes and emerging outcomes, a focus on people rather than structures and implementation a combination of top-down and bottom-up commitment building.

*Table 4: Paradigms of Change*

	<i>Rational-Structural</i>	<i>Strategic-Systemic</i>
<b><i>Environment</i></b>	stable predictable	turbulent unpredictable
<b><i>Organisation</i></b>	stable logical	fluid psychological
<b><i>Planning</i></b>	objective, linear long-range	pragmatic, adaptable medium-range
<b><i>Innovation</i></b>	product fixed outcome	process emerging outcome
<b><i>Focus</i></b>	structure, function tasks, roles, rules	people, culture meaning, motivation
<b><i>Implementation</i></b>	almost purely top-down disseminating, pressuring	top-down and bottom-up commitment-building ("purposing")

(Evans, 1996, p.7)

According to Fullan (1993), this new direction marks a significant paradigm shift which is now reflected in the educational change literature. He has claimed this is a "quantum leap... in how we think about and act in relation to change" (p.vii). Instead of change being viewed in terms of particular outcomes, it is now being seen as a process where learning determines the outcomes. This emphasis on learning has become recognition that the direction of the change process is non-linear. Those working with change have accepted that risks are a necessary part of learning and have adopted a problem solving approach within a community of learners. These new features are described as:

*It is a world where change is a journey of unknown destination, where problems are our friends, where seeking assistance is a sign of strength, where simultaneous top-down*

*bottom-up initiatives merge, where collegiality and individualism co-exist in productive tension (p.viii).*

However, while the literature has taken a new direction, there is a gap between the theory and the practice. Of concern has been the provision of adequate support for teachers facing continuous change. Despite considerable money and resources being allocated to the implementation of a wide variety of educational reforms, the gains have not been what one might have hoped. World-wide, teachers and schools have struggled under the pressures of too many reforms.

### ***Changing the way we think about education***

Fullan (1998) suggests that as well as forming a new mindset for change, guidelines for action are needed to “break through the bonds of dependency” which he argues “have entrapped those who want to make a difference to their schools” (p.6). He states that such “dependency is created by two interrelated conditions: overload and corresponding vulnerability to packaged solutions” (ibid). Here it is suggested that some principals are rendered helpless because they either fear non-compliance or are just overwhelmed by the enormity and constancy of the demands for change. Their ways of coping then become a searching for easy solutions, which might be accepting what others think they ought to do and perhaps even how this could happen. Instead of solving their problems, this dependency becomes a more serious problem because principals dismiss the uniqueness of their particular school’s culture in looking for a ‘quick fix’ solution. Fullan explains this overload in the form of a barrage of disjointed demands which foster dependency as:

*The system fosters dependency on the part of principals. The role of principals in implementing innovations more often than not consists of being on the receiving end of externally initiated changes. The constant bombardment of new tasks and the continual interruptions keep principals off balance. Not only are the demands fragmented and incoherent, but even good ideas have a short shelf life as initiatives are dropped in favor of the latest new policy...This situation...makes principals and other leaders especially vulnerable to the latest recipe for success (p.6).*

It becomes especially difficult for teachers to make sense of the demands for change when a school seems to jump on every passing bandwagon that passes their door. The result can only be confusion and an overload of change projects, time for which will be necessarily limited and superficial. The question which then needs asking is why schools persist with this practice when they know it is not the best way to improve their teaching.



What may appear scary for leaders caught within these “bonds of dependency” is that “there is no external answer that will substitute for the complex work of changing one’s own situation” (p.8). On the other hand, those who accept that there is no answer can feel liberated by this reality. Fullan (1998) explains:

*Instead of hoping that the latest technique will at last provide the answer, we approach the situation differently. Leaders for change get involved as learners in real reform situations. They craft their own theories of change, consistently testing them against new situations. They become critical consumers of management theories, able to sort out promising ideas from empty ones. They become less vulnerable to and less dependent on external answers. They stop looking for solutions in the wrong places (p.8).*

Smith (1995) is even more direct with his comments. He suggests that we should just accept that education is a disaster zone and instead of meddling, teachers and students should be left alone to get on with their learning. He maintains:

*The trouble with the endless concern over “problems” in education is that many well-meaning but often misguided and sometimes meddling people believe that solutions must exist. They waste their own and other people’s time and energy trying to find and implement these solutions. Typically, they try harder to do more of something that is already being done (although what is being done is probably one of the problems). However, if education is a disaster, then it is not a collection of problems to be “solved,” and trying to “improve” what we are already doing will only make the situation worse. You don’t find solutions to disasters - you try to extricate yourself and other people from them. The way to survive a disaster is to do something different (pp.585-6).*

Part of this dilemma is the nature of education. Smith (1995) also has this to say about education:

*Its parts do not fit together into some coherently conceived whole. It is not a consequence of comprehensive planning or even of rationality... Education was never planned; it could always have been different. There is no **ideal** education system. Education has always been too big to control, to comprehend, or even to **imagine** in all its detail. If education now appears impervious to change, it is not because it could not be different – it clearly could and will be – but because it is hampered by the vast inertial mass of its own complexity. Education doesn’t advance; it drifts (p.587).*

This view is not meant to be pessimistic, it is more a plea for teachers to take charge of their own learning rather than continuing to be dependent on those in authority. This is a very different way of thinking which will involve a real element of risk taking. Smith’s (1995) advice is:

*We must simply stop trying to patch up the vessel we find ourselves on. We need to lower the lifeboats and row for new and probably unfamiliar shores. We have to begin by changing the way we think (p.588).*

### *Teacher experiences of change*

As far-reaching educational reforms have been introduced worldwide, it is worth exploring international perspectives on teachers' experiences of change. In writing about teachers' responses to educational reform in England and Wales, Hargreaves and Evans (1997) write:

*There is as yet no consistent view about how 'effective' these reforms have been in transforming teachers' practice. Reluctant rather than enthusiastic compliance among teachers has been one widely reported pattern of response (e.g. Helsby and McCulloch 1996). For many teachers who have reacted in this way, the National Curriculum and other related reforms have created senses of loss, even bereavement, as purposes that teachers value highly such as their relationships with their pupils, and their pupils' broader personal and social development, have been crowded out and cast aside by a narrowly conceived and onerous set of content demands (p.1).*

Others have expressed similar thoughts. Gilmore (2001) describes New Zealand teachers and schools as feeling the "burden of change" (p.2); while Lovett (2000) refers to New Zealand teachers as grasshoppers moving from one change to another rarely looking back or stopping for breath (p.73). Barth (1990) also echoes these sentiments for American teachers, likening today's teacher to a tennis shoe in a laundry dryer with the words:

*Probably no image captures so fully the life of an adult working in an elementary, middle, or senior high school. For educators school work much of the time is turbulent, heated, confused, disoriented, congested, and full of recurring bumps (p.1).*

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) depict North American teachers as being similarly downcast by recent educational reforms and change agendas. They write:

*If anything, overload, isolation, fragmentation of effort, and increasing despair describe the lot of most teachers... teaching is both a caring and an intellectual profession but many caring teachers turn into 'moral martyrs', cheerless workaholics, or disillusioned cynics as they encounter relentless, debilitating odds (p.ix).*

This view is particularly disturbing when even the best teachers are reported as feeling guilty that they are failing the students they teach. In England and Wales, the situation is no better. Hargreaves and Evans (1997) note the effects of the reforms in a similar tone:

*[The] most serious effects have been on the most committed teachers who have been crippled by conscientiousness as they have tried to work miracles and to make profoundly unreasonable reforms work with the children they care for in their classrooms (p.2).*

Given that this is the reality for teachers, there is now an urgent need to find ways which will empower teachers so that they will first and foremost want to, and then be able to, improve their teaching practices for the benefit of those they teach. A growing literature on teacher capacity is offering some guidance in the move towards schools becoming better learning communities making the most of their inner resources. Fullan (1993) suggests that in order to “break through this impasse, educators must see themselves and be seen as experts in the dynamics of change” (p.4). He writes:

*To become expert in the dynamics of change, educators – administrators and teachers alike – must become skilled change agents. If they do become skilled change agents with moral purpose, educators will make a difference in the lives of students from all backgrounds, and by so doing help produce greater capacity in society to cope with change (pp.4-5).*

Similarly, Barth (1985) maintains that teachers should stop complaining and take charge of their own directions arguing:

*If teachers and principals don't want to be the dependent variable in attempts to improve schools, they will have to become the independent variable (p.357).*

Two strategies are suggested for helping teachers make a more public display of confidence in their own abilities. One is getting teachers and principals to close the gap between the way their schools are and the way people *outside* these schools would have them be. The other is closing the gap between the way the schools are and the way those *within* the schools would like them to be. Regardless of the strategy, communication and deeper thinking about the purposes of schooling and the nature of learning are necessary prerequisites.

If the insider voice were present in schools, then Barth (1985) suggests, we would be able to:

- walk into a school, see and hear the mission of that school conveyed with clarity and conviction
- see the professionals who work in schools rally around a common purpose
- see teachers' individual and collective visions formulated and revealed
- see teachers and administrators taking their own visions seriously and acting upon them (p.358).

Currently these elements are largely missing from schools and the question needs to be asked about how schools might be helped to develop these attributes.

Literature themes of teacher capacity and teacher learning receive further attention later in this thesis, as the conditions which promote teacher learning and development in the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) are explored within the challenging context of changing times.

### *Why reforms fail*

Acknowledging the complexity of change is one thing, but working within it and trying to understand the forces which are shaping it are further challenges. Managing the change process requires more than attending to new knowledge and approaches. There is a people element involved, which, if ignored, works against the successful implementation of the change. Evans (1996) contends that too little attention has been paid to the actual implementation of change. He writes:

*With a few notable exceptions, they [policymakers] neglect its practicalities. However accurate their critiques and however appealing their proposals, they show a remarkable naivete about how people and institutions actually behave, about how to get from here to there. Like their predecessors, they generally prescribe combinations of logic and leverage (explanation, training, mandates) to make teachers relinquish the practices of a professional lifetime. Most see change largely as a rational redesign of the school's goals, roles, and rules. They treat it as a product and, concentrating on its structural frame, overlook its human dimensions (p.xii).*

What is needed now is an emphasis on how to lead and implement change. In this regard, Evans (1996) calls for a “conceptual framework for understanding change as a process, educators as people, schools as institutions, and leadership as a craft” (p.xiii). In developing the theme of managing and leading change, Evans notes:

*Innovations begin with content, the actual program for change, but their success depends heavily on the readiness of people, the organisational capacity of schools, and, crucially, the kind of leadership that is exerted. Problems in each of these areas are so pervasive in our schools that they create unprecedented dilemmas for leaders of change (p.xiv).*

Bascia and Hargreaves (2000) have attempted to address two important questions in their quest for the meaning of educational change and its processes. They ask:

- 1 Why does educational reform so often fail?
- 2 Why does so much of it wash over or weaken the very people whose commitment is essential to implementing it?

Their answers relate to two factors:

*[Firstly] most reform efforts fail to understand the depth, range and complexity of what teachers do. They approach teaching in a largely one dimensional way as a set of skills, beliefs and behaviors that can and must be changed – and in doing so fail to grasp what teachers need to help them to change. They fail to understand the good reasons why many teachers persist with what they already do, or change in ways that reformers do not acknowledge.*

*[Secondly] reformers rarely recognize that what must be changed is an interconnected, highly complex and profoundly political system which shapes and constrains the work of teaching and efforts to improve or transform it (p.4).*

In essence, what they are arguing is that in many instances four conceptions are overlooked regarding the nature of teaching and what teachers actually do. These aspects are *technical, intellectual, socio-emotional and socio-political*. The *technical* aspect is a belief that it only takes careful definition of procedures and good monitoring systems in place to ensure that change is implemented. This is a good example of a top-down mandate for change where teachers have little or no ownership of the process. The *intellectual* aspect relates to teachers having high levels of professional judgement which allows them to draw on their new knowledge, personal expertise, and reflect and analyse it with the needs of their learners in mind. It is significant that this acknowledgement of existing teacher expertise has been overridden by a culture of blaming teachers for poor performance and using them as scapegoats for much wider societal issues through the rhetoric of falling educational standards. This rhetoric serves to justify tighter controls on schools, especially national curriculum specifications and increased monitoring of programmes. Apple and Teitelbaum (1986) have cautioned that this “may have consequences exactly the opposite of what many authorities intend. Instead of professional teachers who care greatly about what they do and why they do it, we may have alienated executors of someone else’s plans” (p.180). Such attack on the professionalism of teachers continues to anger many teachers who have been doing their best, only to find it is never good enough. Hargreaves and Evans (1997) have argued that “such a dismissive approach to professional wisdom of teachers and the research community may be interpreted as a sign of toughness by those in power, but it certainly hasn’t won support from the teaching profession” (p.4). It is also difficult to argue against the need for more accountability when schools are viewed as deficient.

However, perhaps the most overlooked aspect is the *socio-emotional*, which Bascia and Hargreaves (2000) write:

*Contemporary reform efforts increasingly engender negative emotional labour that repeatedly puts teachers at the sharp end of change for example:*

- *where teachers' own purposes are overridden or pushed aside by exclusively cognitively driven reform agendas*
- *conditions that create feelings of powerlessness*
- *conditions that prevent, destroy or poison relationships (p.12)*

These are strong words. However they affirm what Bell and Gilbert (1996) argue is of importance in the management of the change process. Bell and Gilbert advocate three areas as deserving attention; namely personal, social and professional needs (p.11). They argue that often professional development programmes fail because one or more of these needs is not realised by the professional development provider. This is especially likely to occur when professional development is instigated by personnel beyond the school site who may not know the teachers within the schools and take a best guess at a starting point, pacing and possible outcome within the timeframe available. Sadly, the pressures of time and influence of outside expertise can mean that those leading professional development within the school also fall into the trap of content coverage rather than addressing other areas of need, such as those identified by Bell and Gilbert.

When considering who drives the change process for schools, it is worth remembering Barth's (1985) view that while most changes in schools may be imposed from without, the most lasting changes come from within. Therefore, the personal dimension in Bell and Gilbert's model should not be dismissed, if Barth is correct with his suggestion that teachers have developed an extraordinary number of elaborate defences with which to ward off new ideas imposed from the outside. Indeed, teacher resistance to change and development may indicate that time is needed to explore attitudes and feelings associated with the change process rather than launching into the new content. If these feelings are overlooked then teachers will not be in a state of readiness to accept new ideas. Development will be restricted to coverage, and information about new ideas and implementation will be left to chance. Thus, it is appropriate to devote attention to the process of change and the feelings teachers may have with regard to change.

The second aspect of Bell and Gilbert's model concerns a professional dimension. This includes the development of teachers' ideas about what it means to be a teacher and how changes can be made to classroom practice. It involves an exploration of personal beliefs about teaching,

learning and learners. Once again, teachers can only reflect on their personal beliefs about effective teaching if there is a safe and conducive environment to support reflection.

The remaining dimension relates to social development. This is based on the belief that knowledge is socially constructed through interactions with significant others. Social interactions shape belief and action systems by either affirming or challenging existing ways of working. It is argued that all three of these dimensions need to be addressed if the change is to have any chance of success in its implementation.

Both the delivery and approaches for professional development could be better than they currently are for many change projects. Bell and Gilbert (1996) convey six concerns which teachers have expressed about professional development. These are:

- 1 Feelings of powerlessness of being told what to do (e.g., some curricula are prescribed to a high level of detail with no room being left for professional decision making)
- 2 The demands made on their own time to undertake the professional activities, which may imply such activities are not valued by the school
- 3 Perceived lack of resources to support the change
- 4 Fatigue from attending too many meetings
- 5 Lack of encouragement for and valuing of innovation in the classroom
- 6 Not seeing how an innovation can be actually implemented in the classroom (e.g, what they have to do differently) (p.9).

These concerns serve to reinforce the three aspects of Bell and Gilbert's model for professional development. Taken together, these statements highlight the necessity for teachers to have ownership of the change process and gain some control over its direction.

### ***Teachers as learners***

During the 1990s the notion of change agency was promoted in the educational leadership literature. Fullan (1993) defines change agency as "being self conscious about the nature of change and the change process" (p.12). In stressing the importance of administrators and teachers becoming change agents, he emphasises the importance of each person developing a capacity for change and taking a part in the shaping of the change.

In addressing the problems of change agency, Stoll and Fink (1996) highlight the importance of attention being placed in equal measure on three crucial questions. These are the “what to change” questions (which address school effectiveness), the “how of change” (referring to school improvement and strategies for change) and the “why of change” (representing moral purpose) (p.xii). Here they argue that concentration on the first two questions often is at the expense of moral considerations. Without a moral purpose, they contend there is little point to the change proceeding because people need to know why they are engaging in change activities and the benefits in store. Achieving moral purpose is, however, not an easy matter. Fullan (1999) writes:

*There are two primary reasons why achieving moral purpose is complex. One concerns the dynamics of diversity, equity and power; the other involves the concept and reality of complexity itself (p.1).*

Fullan (1999) offers two theories which lead us closer to an appreciation of the dilemmas facing change agents within a post-modern world. These are known as complexity and evolutionary theories. Fullan describes *complexity theory* as being “about learning and adapting under unstable and uncertain conditions” (p.6). This represents a recognition that the uniqueness of each work culture makes it particularly challenging to find ways of coping with the demands for change and continuous improvement, simply because each environment will have its own set of key variables which will both work for and against successful change implementation. Furthermore, each change effort will be different, even in the same setting. Fullan argues that successful change agents will be those who realise there will be no blueprints to copy and no shortcuts. While the process of change may be chaotic and lack a closely defined structure, not all people will be comfortable with this approach, preferring change as an event rather than as a learning process.

*Evolutionary theory*, on the other hand, concerns relationships, patterns of interaction and co-operative behaviours, which emphasise learning as being a social activity. Again it is important to acknowledge this people dimension within the context of an unstable and ever-changing environment. Because people can react in a range of ways to requests for change, an astute change agent will address questions of the what, why and how of change and at the same time give equal consideration to task, individual and team needs of those involved (Adair, 1986).

For Fullan and Hargreaves (1996), the challenge has been one of finding answers to questions such as:



- 1 What kind of work communities or school cultures are most supportive of teacher growth and school improvement?
- 2 How do we avoid creating and maintaining negative cultures that inhibit or squelch development and improvement?
- 3 How do we establish more positive ones? (p.37)

Above all, schools need to be seen as learning organisations for all teachers, principals and students. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) maintain that schools have failed to capitalise on the strengths of people, to forge collaborative relationships and to build real senses of community amongst them. They write:

*[To] include teachers in change and help strengthen the cultures that bind them to their colleagues is not to be romantic or sentimental about teachers; it is to face up to the realities of teaching and how teachers change for the better (p.3).*

Since traditionally teachers have been operating as ‘parallel players’ in separate cells, opportunities for learning with and from each other have been limited. Barth (1990) highlights the disadvantages of such isolation by writing:

*In schools, like sandboxes, the benefit of parallel play is isolation from others who might take our time, challenge our practice, steal our ideas, or have us do things differently. The price of parallel play is, of course, that we ward off those who might help us to do things better and with whom together we might do grander things than either could do alone. And the price is isolation from other adults (p.16).*

This learning from others is not to suggest that ‘groupthink’ is better. It is more a recognition that isolated cultures are less effective than collaborative cultures (Fullan, 1999).

### ***Planned chaos***

Fullan (1999) argues that just who is leading the change is an interesting question. Hopkins et al. (1994) claim that politicians, rather than educationalists have increasingly set the change agenda. This has resulted in teachers becoming the ‘victims’ of imposed change, with little or no ownership of the direction they might take. Hargreaves et al. (1998) explain this control in terms of planned chaos, maintaining:

*All this can make teachers and administrators feel that the systems in which they are working aren’t just complex but downright chaotic. This chaos is partly inherent in*

*societies and organizations where information circulates and decisions are made with increasing speed. It is also the result of educational policy constantly being shaped and altered by different and competing interest groups in an ideological battle for the minds of the young. And sometimes it even results from a kind of **manufactured uncertainty** that more than a few governments wilfully create to arouse panic, to set pretexts for their policy interventions and to keep educators and everyone else off-balance (p.5).*

Thus, when the context is in a state of chaos, little help is available to those caught within its midst. There are no solutions. Hargreaves et al. (1998) suggest “few of the existing theories and strategies of educational change equip educators to cope effectively with these complex, chaotic and contradictory environments” (p.5). Therefore, accepting both chaos and complexity is a useful starting point. Taking risks for learning is the next step where learners create their own learning communities of practice with their own agendas for growth and development. These develop where both individual and collective learning of the participants is valued.

### ***Change as a journey***

A new mindset of ‘journeying into the unknown’ is significant because it acknowledges life and ways of working as being complex, uncertain, chaotic and frenetic. In this context, there is no place for rational theories of planned change. Hargreaves et al. (1998) state that what worked in the days of single curriculum innovations is no longer suitable given the reality that “innovations are multiple and priorities compete” (p.5). A further factor is the realisation that there are no answers anymore. Educators have to find solutions which work for them in their own unique settings, and this involves high levels of thinking and problem solving skills. Not all leaders welcome such autonomy or have the ability to thrive under such circumstances. Fullan (1993) accuses the conservative nature of the education system as being problematic in times of continuous change. His explanation is:

*The way that teachers are trained, the way that schools are organized, the way that the educational hierarchy operates, and the way that education is treated by political decision-makers results in a system that is more likely to retain the status quo than to change. When change is attempted under such circumstances it results in defensiveness, superficiality or at best short-lived pockets of success (p.3).*

### ***Searching for meaning***

Fullan (1992) emphasises the importance of “individuals and groups finding meaning concerning *what* should change as well as *how* to go about it” (p.xi). In this respect three distinctive stages of change are described by Fullan as being initiation, implementation and institutionalisation.

Rather than studying the factors which help or hinder the latest innovation or policy, and trying to solve the “change problem”, Fullan considers the challenge to be one of learning to live with change more proactively and productively. He writes:

*The secret of growth and development is learning how to contend with the forces of change – turning positive forces to our advantage, while blunting negative ones. The future of the world is a learning future (p.vii).*

One of the real difficulties then, is our mindset for understanding change. For the school sector this means looking at our beliefs about what teaching actually is.

### ***Change Forces***

Fullan (1996) attempts to make some sense of understanding the processes and complexities involved in working with educational change. He accepts that “change is inevitably, empirically, and theoretically nonlinear” (p.496). Perhaps his most significant contribution to the field of educational change is his academic writing on the theme of change forces where he has developed two sets of lessons. These have proved to be a very useful framework for anyone working with change (1993; 1999). In *Change Forces The Sequel*, Fullan (1999) uses a series of lessons to highlight the importance of relationships in the change process. Eight lessons act as a total package to highlight the complexity of the change process and show where emphasis is needed for its successful implementation. While Fullan’s wording of the lessons may seem rather provocative and emotive, this is a deliberate strategy to make the reader uncomfortable and aware of the paradoxes of change in a complex world, which is looking for certainty. Taken together these lessons also provide a possible framework for analysis when difficulties are encountered in the management of a change project.

*Table 5: Fullan’s (1999) complex change lessons*

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	Moral purpose is complex and problematic
2	Theories of change and theories of education need each other
3	Conflict and diversity are our friends
4	Understand the meaning of operating on the edge of chaos
5	Emotional intelligence is anxiety provoking and anxiety containing
6	Collaborative cultures are anxiety provoking and anxiety containing

7	Attack incoherence: connectedness and knowledge creation are critical
8	There is no single solution: craft your own theories and actions by being a critical consumer

Each of these lessons is now described in turn to show their potential value to those engaged in change projects.

*1 Moral purpose is complex and problematic.*

The term ‘moral purpose’ is included in the first lesson. This term is becoming increasingly noticeable in the educational leadership literature and will be explored in more depth in Chapter 4. However, for now the intention is merely to relate the term to the ‘why of change’ and signal the importance of this aspect. It is argued that for teachers at the chalkface the “why change” dimension is often missing in today’s educational reform. For teachers it often appears there has been no choice as to whether they should adopt a new programme or resource because others have decided what they will do, and even perhaps how this might be accomplished. This ‘why’ aspect may not even feature in the change process because compliance rather than choice is the order of day. Rather than enthusing teachers for change, this places them in a ‘victim’ mode as objects to be ‘fixed’ according to someone else’s agenda. This mode is seen to encourage dependent rather than independent learners, and means opportunities are missed for the capacity building of individuals (which in the long term is not healthy).

In focussing on the ‘why change’ aspect (achieving moral purpose), this first lesson highlights the need for top-down mandates and bottom-up energies to work in tandem. This helps to ensure motivation and attachment along with academic achievement. Policy initiatives which combine rigorous external accountability and mechanisms for focusing on local capacity development are considered to be critical for success. Successful change therefore needs to be driven from both directions.

*2 Theories of change and theories of education need each other.*

While theories are generalised statements, it should be remembered that schools have unique contexts. Theories of action must recognise these local contexts and accept that readiness to learn

and local capacity will be different in each context. Those leading change must realise that there can be no blueprint to suit all situations. Theory can only serve as a guide to thinking and action.

### 3 *Conflict and diversity are our friends.*

It is argued that opportunities for problem solving promote thinking and ownership at the local level. Fullan (1999) maintains that better learning occurs when differences are incorporated into the change process at an early stage, rather than avoided until a later stage when they may be unresolvable. In this respect Fullan refers to both conflict and diversity as needing to be friends rather than foes and writes:

*You often learn more from people who disagree with you than you do from people who agree, but you underlisten to the former and overlisten to the latter. You associate with people who agree with you, and avoid people with whom you disagree (p.23).*

Again this lesson highlights the theme of relationships and links can be established with the earlier discussions on evolutionary theory. Here Fullan (ibid) emphasises that successful change implementation depends on working through discomfort, learning from dissonance, and forging new and more complex agreements and capabilities. Working through such uncertainty for learners is challenging, and time is needed to properly address the feelings associated with change as well as the new knowledge it offers.

### 4 *Understand the meaning of operating on the edge of chaos.*

Uncertainty is a feature of life in the world today. This does not mean an absence of structures and rules, but rather the presence of key priorities at certain points in the change journey and trust in the process despite its open endedness. The key element here is trust and seeing learning as a journey into the unknown. Being on the edge marks a willingness to move into the unknown, take risks, and learn from these experiences. With any luck it can also lead to further learning.

### 5 *Emotional intelligence is anxiety provoking and anxiety containing.*

Change is challenging and means facing the unknown. Admittedly this can be a painful process and stressful. In the long term, however, Fullan (1999), argues that there is more to be gained through bearing that anxiety than ignoring its presence. He quotes Stacey (1996), who maintains:

*... denial of uncertainty itself allows us to sustain the fantasy of someone up there being in control and, perhaps, of things turning out for the best if we simply do what we are told, and so it protects us for a while from anxiety. However, because that defensive response involves dependency and a flight from reality, it hardly ever works (p.25).*

The message here is one of uncertainty providing opportunities for reflection and, therefore, improved capacities to manage future challenges. It is suggested that strength develops when these challenges are overcome and one's own strategies are developed.

#### *6 Collaborative cultures are anxiety provoking and anxiety containing.*

This lesson builds on the previous lesson, but is an acknowledgement that innovative organisations are those where people hold differing viewpoints. Again, Fullan (1999) emphasises the quality of the relationships, and the trust, empathy and extent of connectivity, which allow the group to stay at the edge of chaos and at the same time able to contain anxiety. The extent of the emotional support for members is considered to be vital to the success of a learning organisation. This lesson is a recognition that for "collaboration to be effective [it] must foster a degree of difference" (p.26). It is claimed that a community that encourages diversity is a learning community because it knows how to work through issues itself rather than look elsewhere for ready-made solutions.

#### *7 Attack incoherence: connectedness and knowledge creation are critical.*

Organisational coherence is about meaning-making, sharing ideas about directions, values, goals, and what should be done in the organisation. This process develops connections between individuals and helps to ensure continuity. It also recognises that learning journeys need to be individual for a time, but also benefit from connections made with others in order for learning to be evaluated and new directions taken.

#### *8 There is no single solution: craft your own theories and actions by being a critical consumer.*

This final lesson reiterates the importance of one's own journey in learning how to respond to challenges. It is argued that it is individual experience, which develops the capacity and tolerance for coping with change and this experience must be personal rather than copied from elsewhere.

Fullan (1999) reminds us that these eight lessons for understanding the complexity of the change process only have power in combination. This is because there is no point in celebrating diversity

and conflict unless you are also working on connectedness and coherence and developing theories of action, which guide subsequent change. Each lesson leads to the next and should not be followed in isolation.

### **Application of change theory to learning about the NEMP reports**

All teachers are challenged to keep up with the hectic pace of educational change. While there is no shortage of research on how to manage educational change, problems are still evident in the range of delivery modes for change and the effects these have on individuals and organisations. For educational settings, Bascia and Hargreaves (2000) ask why it is that reform efforts have repeatedly failed to engage teachers' commitments and expertise, or faded from the limelight after their early promise. This question is a reminder that commitment to change stems from teachers' active involvement in the planning of changes and perceiving relevance to classroom teaching. Therefore if the intentions of the NEMP project and its reports are to be realised by teachers, practical ways must be found to introduce teachers to how this knowledge might enhance their classroom assessment practices. This is not a simple matter when teachers' awareness is dependent on their finding time to read the written reports sent to schools without the spur of an accompanying professional development programme.

For change to take effect, teachers need more than an awareness of the new knowledge and skills on offer. At a personal level an understanding of change theory will help teachers to work with changes they encounter, especially if their own feelings about the anticipated change are acknowledged in its implementation (Bell & Gilbert, 1996). Accepting challenge and uncertainty is the message given by Fullan (1998) who argues that chaos theory is a useful tool for understanding the complexity of the change process, especially its non-linearity. This is well illustrated through his eight lessons (discussed earlier in the chapter) which draw attention to the competing needs of individuals and the wider society and education system, as each endeavours to make a difference to the lives of students. These are explored through the mindset of treating challenges as learning opportunities (problems as friends), accepting the strength of both individualism and collectivism, and the combination of centralisation and decentralisation. Together these lessons show that a variety of support is required for change to have meaning and take effect.

Fullan has developed these ideas further in his 'What's Worth Fighting For' trilogy which accepts the givens of a non-linear, fragmented and incoherent system, suggesting that capacity building represents 'the only viable defence' (p.222) to the present change overload schools and

teachers are facing. This is explained in terms of the need to develop inner and outer learning capacities, despite the system, to create individual and group patterns of coherence. Inner learning is described as the personal awareness of finding ways to cope and grow from within individuals, while outer learning is about making connections with other learners in order to learn. Fullan argues that individuals need to view themselves as active learners and be wary of their dependence on others telling them what it is they should know and do. This type of response represents a capacity building stance which has the potential to strengthen the professionalism of teachers and draw them together as learners with opportunities to share similarities and differences as they learn. This view is endorsed by Hallinger (1997) who sees the way forward as being one of creating the conditions for effective learning among people and their organisations. In other words, change is less successful when controlled by the system alone. This is an important message for the NEMP project, because, despite genuine efforts to disseminate written information, teachers need more than reading material to convince them of the need to review their current assessment practices. Teachers also need the psychological security of learning alongside one another and being supported when they face difficulties.

Schwahn and Spady (1998) provide five reasons and rules for explaining why change doesn't happen and how to make sure it does. Each of these has significance for the dissemination and implementation of the NEMP assessment information. The first reason relates to the purpose of change which Schwahn and Spady argue must be compelling. For teachers this means improvement to classroom practice must be made obvious. Thus for the results of national education monitoring to have more significance, teachers need to be sufficiently confronted with the national results to question their applicability for individual classrooms and ultimately to plan changes to their teaching programmes, addressing particular problems and barriers to learning. A second reason relates to the active involvement of teachers in the planning of the change and its implementation, allowing ownership to develop. This is about shaping information for teachers' own purposes and not being subject to others deciding what it is they should learn. Schwahn and Spady's third reason is that the change must be an integral part of the strategic plan and associated decision making for it to have meaning for teachers. Therefore, in terms of the information available from the NEMP resources, teachers should realise its potential for enhancing both learning processes and outcomes across the full range of knowledge and essential skill areas. This means teachers must see their leader's commitment to the change made evident through a willingness to take risks to support it. A fourth reason depends on the alignment of people if the change is to be real and lasting. Here people need to have some idea of what the change will look like for them at a personal level. Then a fifth reason extends this alignment to



the organisation as a whole in terms of the structures, policies and procedures required to support the change. This calls for support and a culture conducive to teacher learning where time is provided for teachers to talk and share their ideas and even to observe and plan together. Again, for NEMP to have an impact on the work of classroom teachers, teachers require more than the presence of written reports to make a difference to the quality of their assessment practices.

Change theory contains messages for teacher learning about the NEMP reports. While it is unfortunate that many schools have been slow to realise the potential of the NEMP reports, this is perhaps indicative of teachers' total dependence on the Ministry of Education to signal what they should know and learn. The Ministry of Education has reinforced this expectation by providing a continual programme of professional development to support the implementation of the curriculum documents. Any dissemination of the NEMP material has suffered because it has not been possible to include it amongst the Ministry's already full schedule. This has left the dissemination of the NEMP reports somewhat dependent on the enthusiasm of a small, yet growing number of teachers who have made time for reading the reports, adapting them for classroom use and sharing their experiences with other colleagues.

Teachers have found it much harder to accept programmes not included under the Ministry of Education contract delivery because they do not provide the same certainty of structure, support and content to which they have become accustomed. It is therefore not surprising that five years after the release of the first NEMP reports only 37.2% of Canterbury teachers have spent time discussing these reports in their schools and 19.1% say they have incorporated NEMP assessment tasks into their school-wide assessment programmes.

Leaving the dissemination of NEMP to those at the school level has been problematic. This means that unlike the MOE Curriculum development contracts, teachers have been left to make decisions about what, how, when and if they might address the information offered through the NEMP reports. As dependent learners, teachers have found it difficult to adjust to this independence in their learning (being left to discover NEMP by themselves), since their learning experiences have largely been determined by others who present a structured programme for them to follow. Fullan (1999) argues that mandates for change on their own seldom allow high quality outcomes. An important lesson to realise about working with change is that it provokes anxiety which must be overcome for new meanings to be found. This process requires teachers to develop a greater awareness of the processes underpinning learning and what it means for

them as learners. This is a vital step if teachers are to move beyond their current dependency on others to make decisions about their learning.

The next chapter continues the theme of educational change by discussing a range of issues associated with school improvement projects.



## Chapter 4

### Framework for school change and improvement

This chapter develops three themes introduced in the previous chapter. These relate to questions of *what to change, how to go about it and why* (Stoll & Fink, 1996). Associated with each question is a research field in the educational leadership literature. These fields are *school effectiveness, school improvement and moral purpose*. Each of these will be described in terms of their strengths and limitations as separate theories and together will form a framework for understanding the change journeys of a group of teachers working with the assessment ideas from the National Education Monitoring Project reports.

#### *School effectiveness*

In describing the school effectiveness movement, it is important to begin with an historical account of its emergence. This leads to problems of definition, which highlight the complexity of the field, and a discussion of its legacy detailing both strengths and limitations.

#### *The emergence of the field*

School effectiveness has been a theme in the educational leadership literature since the 1960s and is still prevalent. It emerged as a response to research findings which argued that home background had a far greater influence on a child's development than did the school attended (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972).

In discussing the impact of Coleman's study, Sergiovanni (1995) writes:

*Coleman's study suggested that social inequality, poverty, and segregated schooling were key elements in determining inadequate levels of learning for many students and that improving learning would require the correction of these social factors. Regardless of one's race or religion, it was the home environment (social class and income of parents, exposure to books, need for achievement, and modeling differentials) that was far more important in explaining differences in student-learning outcomes than were school facilities, teacher salaries, or the curriculum itself (p.145).*

While “some principals and teachers [may have] welcomed such news, seeing within it a legitimate excuse for their own results” (Sergiovanni, 1995, p.146), others wanted to prove otherwise. Stoll and Fink (1996) maintained that this acted as a catalyst for a wide range of research efforts in order to combat the view that schools made little difference to children’s learning. They wrote that the aim for school effectiveness researchers was “to ascertain whether differences in resources, processes and organisational arrangements [could] affect pupil outcomes, and if so, in what way” (p.27). This marked a new phase for school effectiveness research, revealing a different picture of the relationship between schooling and the quality of learning.

Significantly, equity concerns were blended into definitions of quality. Stoll and Fink (1996) cite Edmonds (1979), an early proponent of school effectiveness, as saying, “I require that an effective school bring the children of the poor to those minimal masteries of basic skills that now describe minimally successful pupil performance for the children of the middle class” (p.27). Thus the view that all children could learn brought the focus back to what the school could do to promote learning for all its learners.

More recently, definitions of school effectiveness have moved towards an emphasis on the value added by the school. Stoll and Fink (1996) define ‘value added’ as being:

*...the boost given by the school to pupils’ achievement over and above what they bring in terms of prior attainment and background factors. Thus, statistical predictions, the ‘what might be expected’ of later levels of achievement can be made on the basis of detailed information about pupils’ background and earlier attainment, that is, ‘consideration of its intake’. Where pupils exceed these predictions, value added has been demonstrated. This definition allows for intake variations, and therefore attempts to ‘level the playing field’, which is different from the emphasis placed by Edmonds in his definition (pp.27-28).*

A further difficulty for the school effectiveness researchers has been reaching an agreement on the scope of the definition. Stoll and Fink (1996) argue that this “lack of consensus can be confusing for those who want to use school effectiveness research [because it is unclear whether this] should focus on those pupils ‘at risk’ or quality for all children” (p.28). Furthermore they maintain, “a researcher’s definition of school effectiveness affects their orientation to its study, which in turn, may impact the results of such a study” (ibid).

Similarly, Harker (1998) also raises concerns about this lack of consensus regarding a definition of school effectiveness. Harker states, “it is well established that there are quite a few differences between schools in terms of such things as their location, size, growth rates, as well as characteristics of their student populations” (p.1). What needs to be asked then, is whether any of these characteristics are related to learning and teaching in schools and the educational outcomes that result. These factors complicate the definition of school effectiveness. Harker suggests:

*It is not only important to be able to identify the ways in which schools differ in their output performance, but to be able to provide reasons for the differences, whether these be in terms of pupil characteristics, or in terms of school-based differences (p.1).*

If such reasons could be given then learning would be enhanced and new initiatives would be easier to target.

#### *Perceptions of effectiveness*

Stoll and Fink (1996) question whether effectiveness means the same thing to different people and say:

*What educators perceive as important outcomes of schooling may not coincide with views of pupils, parents, governors, the local community, government or the media. It is also feasible that any or all of the above groups may have differing perceptions of effectiveness, and that individuals within any of these groups may not agree with each other on a definition. If a common definition cannot be achieved, how can effectiveness be determined? Clearly, at school level, all those concerned need to come to a shared definition and agreement on expected and desirable outcomes (p.27).*

Clearly consensus is necessary if the school effectiveness research tradition is to be of use. For Harker (1998) this means reaching agreement on answers to the following questions. Namely:

- 1 What are we going to compare?
- 2 How are we going to measure?
- 3 What makes for an effective school or programme or policy?
- 4 Should we use standardised tests... or rely on teachers' assessments?

- 5 To what extent should our measures of “effectiveness” or “progress” include things other than academic achievement? (p.1)

*The importance of school effectiveness research*

Sammons (1999) is somewhat accepting of the controversy surrounding school effectiveness research. She maintains “questions about values in education, the purposes of schooling, the quality of students’ educational experiences, and what constitutes ‘a good school’ rightly remain the subject of much argument and are unlikely to be resolved”. Furthermore she writes:

*Rather than being viewed as a panacea for all educational ills (real or imagined) I believe School Effectiveness is most appropriately seen and used as a method of increasing our understanding of school and classroom processes, and the way these can influence students’ educational outcomes... It should not be treated prescriptively and, of course, cannot of itself engender improvement... School Effectiveness can stimulate reflection, self evaluation and review all of which are essential to the development of teachers’ professional practice as well as for instructional development (p.xi).*

*Lists*

One thing the school effectiveness research has achieved is a proliferation of lists of effective characteristics for all aspects of teaching and learning. Lists have appeared for the “effective principal and school, minimum pupil competencies, behavioral objectives for teachers and new certification requirements, mandates and regulations” Barth (1986, p.294). The very existence of such lists conveys a dangerous belief, which is to say “that schools do not have the capacity to improve themselves” (ibid) and need others to tell them what it is they should be doing. Barth responds by saying:

*Most teachers and principals respond to even enlightened lists not with renewed energy, vigor, and motivation, but rather with feelings of oppression, guilt, and anger. The vivid lack of congruence between the way schools are and the way others would have them be causes most school people to feel overwhelmed, insulted, and inadequate – hardly building blocks for improving schools or the teaching profession (p.294).*

Lists run the danger of encouraging dependency, which, as was shown in the previous chapter, is not the sign of a learning profession. Barth (1986) also maintains:

*Lists tend to be prescriptions for other people and for other people's children. Most external lists constitute a suffocating description of a teacher's job, a principal's job, of a pupil's job. They create roles that few of the list makers are apt to want for themselves or their own children (p.294).*

Sammons (1999) provides a timely reminder that a balance is required in working with the findings of school effectiveness research and writes:

*The question of the coming of age of school effectiveness research thus requires us to balance the positive contribution made by the growing field of increasing knowledge about school and teacher influences on students, against the prescriptive attempts to decontextualise and over-simplify results. School effectiveness cannot provide 'quick fixes' for schools in difficulty (p.xi).*

#### *Further cautions*

Stoll and Fink (1996) urge the users of school effectiveness research to examine the quality, appropriateness and applicability of the research design before using the results. They state:

*Studies that rely entirely on the collection of quantitative data or snapshots of the school may not tell us enough about its inner workings and processes, whereas mixed methodological approaches, incorporating case studies as well as 'number crunching' are more likely to be able to explain processes at work (p.29).*

A further limitation of this research tradition is that its definitions relate to studies dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, which are now dated. With the passage of time Stoll and Fink question whether the same characteristics are relevant. In this sense, Fink and Stoll (1998) refer to 'political hijacking' of research findings where findings of the effective schools research are used uncritically to coerce schools to improve. Also questioned is the "tacit acceptance of the measures of school effectiveness and acceptance of such questionable tools as decontextualized standardized tests, I.Q. scores, and relatively narrow measures of educational purposes" (p.303). They argue that these perpetuate "social inequity and educational reductionism" (ibid). It is interesting to note the ways in which school effectiveness research is being used to justify policy and programme directions. For example, Sammons (1999) writes:



*The topic is now one of the major levers of current government policy in the UK which has set up a new Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), with the explicit intention of leading its school improvement. This strategy provides a bold though controversial attempt to use research results to improve practice (p.x).*

### *The legacy of the school effectiveness movement*

Hopkins et al. (1994) argue that the legacy of the school effectiveness movement is threefold. Not only does this research show that schools can make a difference to student achievement but differences in outcome systematically relate to variations in the school's climate, culture or ethos. A further point is that the school's culture is amenable to alteration by concerted action on the part of the school staff. While this can be a challenging task, Hopkins et al. (1994) suggest it offers teachers and schools "more control than they might have imagined over their ability to change their present situation" (p.44). Discussions on the theme of school culture follow in a later chapter of this thesis.

Finally Murphy in Hopkins et al. (1994) offers four aspects to the school effectiveness legacy which serve as a summary for this section. The first is based on the educability of learners and the idea that all students can learn. The second point focuses on outcomes highlighting a need for rigorous assessments of schooling in order to judge its quality but more particularly the value added to what students bring to the educational process. A third area is one of taking responsibility for students. This is saying that the school shares responsibility for any shortcomings and blame is not solely directed at the student. Attention to consistency throughout the school community is the fourth point. This point emphasises the value of tighter structural, symbolic and cultural links for schools. As a contrast Murphy highlights the loosely linked organisational character of schools by suggesting that they are "a collection of individual entrepreneurs [teachers] surrounded by a common parking lot or as a group of classrooms held together by a common heating system" (p.51). All of these points signify a move towards the school improvement research movement and the notion of 'let's do something' about this situation.

There are parallels between NEMP and the information it offers to teachers and the school effectiveness movement. Both provide a wealth of information for teachers

underpinned by a sound philosophical base about good practice. This presents the 'what to teach/assess' aspect. The 'how to do it' aspect is another matter and relates to the next section on school improvement research. This is where the uniqueness of schools can be problematic. While NEMP shares valuable assessment information in written form, it is significant that its professional development is limited to teacher administrators and markers and not the wider teacher base. This is where the uniqueness of schools can be problematic, for the pathways for successful implementation depend on the identification of the conditions which help and hinder effective learning at the school site and these may vary from school to school. This is where leadership skills are vital and can either make or break the school improvement cycle. No 'quick fix' is available.

These difficulties have not gone unnoticed. Linda Darling-Hammond (1996) states:

*Many initiatives have been launched in local communities with positive effects. Nonetheless, we have reached an impasse in spreading these promising effects to the system as a whole. It is now clear that most schools and teachers cannot produce the kind of learning demanded by the new reforms – not because they do not want to, but because they do not know how, and the systems they work in do not support their efforts to do so (p.194).*

### ***School Improvement***

#### *A shift in emphasis*

The school improvement research movement marks a shift in focus from outcomes to the learning and teaching processes, which help the outcomes to be achieved (Hopkins in Gray, Reynolds et al., (1996). It is also about a school's capacity to cope with change and shape it according to needs and circumstances at the school level. Hopkins argues that this approach moves schools away from being 'victims of change' to taking some control over the process and using the opportunity of external change as a stimulus for further reflection and action.

Above all, the school improvement research highlights the options for change and a framework for analysing the factors which could contribute to its successful implementation. A range of internal conditions is suggested as being significant for building a commitment to a change. These conditions are inquiry and reflection,

collaborative planning, staff development, staff and student involvement, plus coordination and leadership throughout the school (Hopkins in Gray et al., 1996).

Hopkins et al. (1994) argue for a simultaneous linking of a clear and practical focus for development with these internal conditions. This is based on the inclusion of three elements:

- 1 Reconstructing externally imposed education reform in the form of school *priorities*
- 2 Creating internal *conditions* that will sustain and manage change in schools
- 3 Embedding these priorities and conditions within an overall *strategy* (p.96).

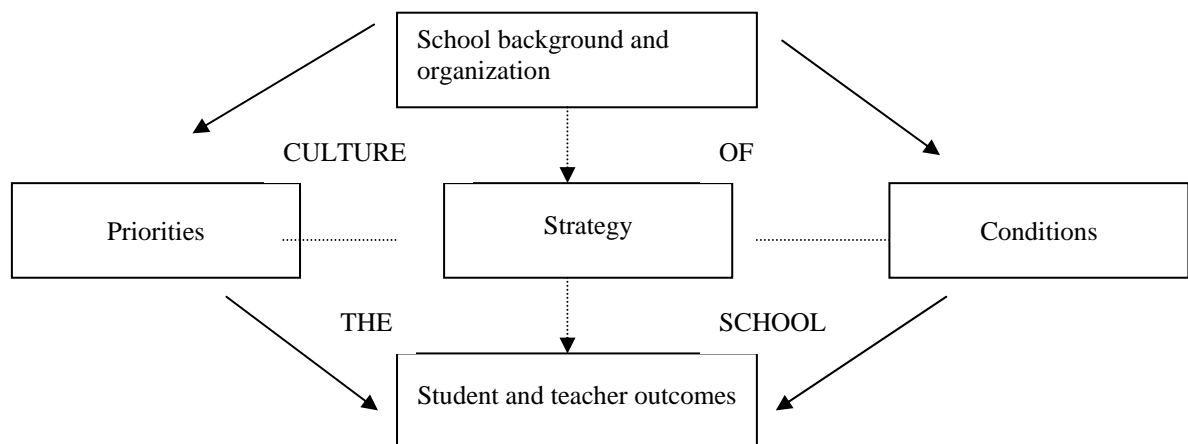
In the setting of priorities, schools often have too many to work on at any given time and it becomes important that these are realistic. In aiding the selection of priorities, Hopkins et al. (1994) add a further principle to those provided by Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991). Together the three principles refer to the manageability, coherence in the sequence of the priorities and consonance between internally identified priorities and external pressures for reform.

In terms of the internal conditions, Hopkins et al. (1994) argue from their own experience of school structures that “though each school is unique,... nevertheless schools share a number of properties” (p.105). It is therefore considered useful to highlight these particular conditions to school leaders and then to help them prioritise them. Hopkins et al. offer a conditions scale questionnaire which serves this purpose.

In their concern for establishing links between the external pressure for change and the internal need for development, Hopkins et al. (1994) argue that a strategy needs to address both dimensions. They see schools as needing to establish a plan which integrates their internal goals, policies and action sequences alongside the threats, risks, or opportunities the external environment creates. This is where they see the potency of the priority-strategy-conditions model as having particular merit in bringing about cultural change in schools. The reasons for this relate partly to the presence of givens, which cannot be changed in the short term. For example, there are three types of external impetus for change (namely, national reform agenda, recommendations emanating from reviews and inspections of school, and local needs

and demands) as well as the school's background, organisation and values. A strategic dimension is a further part of this framework, which reflects the vertical links in Figure 1 between priorities, strategy and conditions. The remaining dimension of capacity building is also a necessary part of this framework for helping schools to sustain change efforts over time.

*Figure 1: A framework for school improvement*



Hopkins et al. (1994). p.97.

### *Criticisms of school improvement research*

The school improvement approach, like school effectiveness, has suffered criticism. Fink and Stoll (1998) argue that “with its focus on organisational planning, school improvement literature imputes a certain rationality and predictability to the change process” (p.307). They argue that this is to assume that “change is linear – that cause and effect are not only knowable but manageable” (ibid) and it also ignores Fullan’s message of the previous chapter which argued a case for the complexity of change and its non-linear appearance.

A further criticism of school improvement research relates to contextual differences between schools. Fink and Stoll (1998) note this is a source of frustration because “since no two schools are the same, there would appear to be no one best way to approach school improvement” (p.308). Stoll and Fink (1996) acknowledge that how to address contextual differences between schools is one of the greatest challenges for

school improvers. They attribute this to the “different change strategies, leadership styles and communication networks [which] may be required to effect change” (p.57). This is similar to criticism of the school effectiveness research.

### ***Links between school effectiveness and school improvement***

More recently there has been a call to link the two theories of school effectiveness and school improvement. Stoll in Gray et al. (1996) argues:

*If practitioners can see and make links between school effectiveness and school improvement surely it is time for researchers studying the two areas to do the same and work with schools to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of research and implications for practice (pp.51-52).*

Citing Reynolds et al., Stoll (1996) comments that school effectiveness and school improvement need each other. She writes:

*School effectiveness researchers can provide knowledge for school improvement about factors within schools/classrooms that can be changed to produce higher-quality schooling, whereas school improvement strategies provide the ultimate test for many of the theories posited by the school effectiveness researchers (p.55).*

This is a recognition that while there are some basic differences between these two research traditions, they also both complement each other and the shortcomings of each approach can be counterbalanced by the strengths of the other.

### ***School effectiveness and improvement research projects***

The following research projects illustrate the directions of the school effectiveness and school improvement movements in the last ten years. Four examples show how schools have used external support for increased school effectiveness. These projects have been selected because they represent a range of ways in which change initiatives have been introduced across several countries. Discussion of key features has included the roles for change agents, processes for shared decision-making, systems for allocating resources and the importance of recognising and addressing local variability in order that schools and teachers can sustain momentum and commitment for on-going improvements to their work practices.

One project, the Rand Change Agent Study in America, has received frequent mention by researchers and writers with an interest in introducing and supporting innovative practices in schools. Subsequent projects in other countries also provide examples of the ways in which researchers have worked with schools in order to help them discover how they can engage in improvement processes that lead to increased effectiveness. One project is Canadian, the others are British and American.

### *The Rand Change Agent Study*

The Rand Change Agent Study, undertaken from 1973-1978 represents a seminal work because of its contribution to understandings about managing planned change in education. This project, sponsored by the United States Office of Education, was a large national study of four federally funded programmes in 18 states and included 293 local projects. The projects were given temporary funds or seeding money to support the introduction of new and innovative programmes at the local level. It was assumed that money and resources would enable local educators to improve their teaching practices.

The Rand Study highlighted several important considerations in the management of planned changes for schools (McLaughlin, 1990). It showed that improving resources did not guarantee the outcome. What mattered more were the processes used to introduce new initiatives rather than details of the project content because processes could either align or alienate those involved in the change project. Other significant factors included the on-going support required at the local level to sustain change. This challenged the type of support offered through one-shot workshops, reliance on outside consultants and the extent of teachers' involvement in the project development planning. Instead it showed the value of teacher participation in decision making, extended training for teachers and the importance of making links to classroom practice through direct assistance and opportunities for classroom observations and regular discussion of practical implementation issues. Above all this study showed mutual adaptation was essential for successful implementation at the local level. Signs of mutual adaptation were evident through the presence of collegial interactions, two-way communication and opportunities for professional growth matching the needs of individuals.

In 1990, McLaughlin revisited the Rand Change Agent Study to determine which of these findings were still relevant or required revisions. This allowed a closer analysis of the variables considered helpful for managing and implementing change initiatives at the local level. McLaughlin argued that current reform strategies were not able to recognise differences in the nature, amount and pace of change at the local level. Such variation at the local level was the reason why direct policy fixes were inappropriate and did not work across settings. More successful strategies were deemed to be those which showed teachers working with one another to clarify expectations and gaining a stronger sense of coherence within the school and its programme to ensure relevance to the local setting. In this way teachers were able to shape programmes themselves but still work within the new content guidelines.

Rand findings which were still relevant in 1990 continued to be those emphasising the importance of local factors which could help and hinder the implementation of national policies. McLaughlin (1990) noted Rand's conclusion that local choices about how or whether to put a policy into practice had more significance than the actual features of the policy. Thus, motivation, commitment and capacity of personnel at the local level were the crucial factors determining the level of policy implementation at the school level. Since local variability was more common than uniformity it was even more important that a range of contextual factors was considered by those working with schools in change projects.

Findings requiring further revision related to the motivation of teachers to engage in change projects, the role of external consultants or externally specified projects and the structures available to provide resources and support for teachers' professional growth. These are all themes which continue to challenge the role of central agencies as they endeavour to enhance and maintain student learning at the classroom level yet do so within constraints of time, money and energy for all participants.

What has been learned from the Rand Change Agent Study is that further work is required at the individual level of schools to address the issues of local variability. Schools need help to address these local level issues which adds a further challenge to those providing the support because these issues will not be the same for all schools.

The following research project shows how the Halton Board worked with schools to analyse their effectiveness and make plans for improvements

### *Halton's Effective School Project*

In 1986 the Halton Board of Education approved a Task Force to set up an Effective Schools Project in Ontario, Canada. This project included an extensive review of effective schools research undertaken in a variety of school systems world-wide. This review helped to shape a model of school effectiveness which was determined by twelve characteristics. These formed the three broad areas of a common mission, an emphasis on learning and a climate conducive to learning (Fink, 1991). The project's team included Louise Stoll as the coordinator of research and assessment who worked alongside Dean Fink, the Superintendent of Instructional Services for the Halton Board as well as a number of other curriculum coordinators.

Fink and Stoll (1991) have noted the considerable time, effort and resources that have been expended on staff development throughout this project. Such programmes have included a Learning Consortium (a collaborative partnership between school boards and a university), Summer Institutes, the Partners in the Classroom programme for first year and mentor teachers, Leadership Effectiveness Assisted by Peers (L.E.A.P) and the School Growth Plan Team Training.

In addition, an effective schools questionnaire was also developed to assist schools to identify areas of strength and weakness for school growth planning. System-wide norms were established for each research instrument by sampling students, teachers and parents across the system. This included sampling over 4000 parents to establish perceptions of the system and its schools. These results were reported to the Halton Board and then used to shape subsequent communication strategies for the system. At the school level, schools were able to get their individual results and analyse them to plan future actions and make comparisons with the rest of the system (email communication with Dean Fink, 20 May, 2002).

The importance of developing collaborative cultures was a key feature of the Halton project. Researchers and facilitators worked hard to nurture relationships within the schools so that learning agendas belonged to the schools. They aimed to help teachers



to articulate and develop a shared vision. Exercises in strategic planning formalised three important aspects which were the growth planning process, classroom instruction and an emphasis on staff development. This framework provided support from a range of sources allowing the school to become the “centre of change” rather than continue as “an isolated unit of change” (Stoll, 1996, p.59). A collaborative planning network was even developed to enable a group of nine schools establish a self-help network for grade and division team planning during the school day. While this network received funding and encouragement from the system leaders, it had been initiated from the schools themselves showing that schools and systems could work together.

Attention to the teachers’ feelings about the change process, the gathering of school-based data, and time to talk, reflect and plan all served to move these teachers through each of Fullan’s stages (e.g., initiation, implementation and institutionalization). Like the Rand Change Agent Study, the Halton project also highlighted the combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies, which contributed to the success of these change initiatives. While the project provided schools with additional resources and time for staff development, there was also a requirement for five teachers, including the principal, to be actively involved in the development work. This ensured there was a groundswell of expertise being developed at each school site that would provide schools with the long-term support they required to develop their full capacity for learning and coping with change. Giles (1998) refers to this as a school growth plan team.

As a researcher in the Halton project, Giles (1998) noted five key strategies that contributed to the success of the school growth planning in the Halton Board. One strategy was the long-term investment of resources. A second was for individual schools to interpret system-wide strategic directions so that they could still set their own priorities and ‘buy into’ the improvements as a whole school. A third strategy involved the acquisition of new knowledge that linked planned change with research into school effectiveness and school improvement. A fourth strategy focussed on the provision of LEA support at the school site not as an end in itself but as a learning process. Then the remaining strategy drew attention to evidence-based change in teaching and learning to encourage meaning making and commitment from teachers.

The shift of impetus from the Task Force to groups and individuals at all levels of the system and its schools in four years indicates the success of the Halton Effective Schools Project. This project has clearly demonstrated the use of strategies to effect change at the school level moving through stages of adoption, implementation and consolidation.

The next project to be discussed is a further example of an external agency helping schools to gather and analyse data for school development planning.

### *Lewisham School Improvement Project*

The Lewisham project began in 1993 and was a partnership between Lewisham schools, the Lewisham Local Education Authority (LEA) and the London Institute of Education. Like the Halton project, the aims of this project were based around capacity building for school change and finding ways to support school data gathering for school development purposes. It was thought that the LEA had an important role to play in providing this data for schools which would lead to schools being in a better position to act upon the information and plan for improvements. Schools were also aware that they were now more accountable under local school management and there was a corresponding need to have processes in place that would indicate where improvements had been made or were being actioned. Training was given in the areas of leadership development, data collection, developing and measuring success criteria and ongoing evaluation of project process and progress. A series of workshops supported each of these areas which then formed the basis of qualification credits for teacher work and involvement.

This project has demonstrated the value of external support (such as LEA) for schools in the school development process. Such support has been described more in terms of a working partnership based on the development and clarification of shared values and beliefs, collaborative negotiation and planning, support, joint evaluation and critical friendships (Stoll & Thomson, 1996). This approach has been viewed as an alternative to school inspection as the means to raise educational standards.

*Schools make a difference (SMAD)*

This project represented a combined effort of two LEAs (Hammersmith and Fulham) which worked with eight secondary schools to address concerns about the standards in secondary schools. Once again the project's guiding principles were based on school effectiveness research findings but also included those of school improvement, managing change and action research.

Myers (1996) in describing her two year project writes:

*Hammersmith and Fulham took the brave step of mounting a well resourced initiative aimed at empowering schools to look outside the immediate and, based on their own individual needs, plan and implement strategies to lay the foundation for raising student levels of attainment, achievement and morale (p.5)*

This project also highlighted the tensions faced by external facilitators. These were evident when attempts were made to balance pressure and support, respond to local and national demands and work with the varying states of readiness to address issues of improvement in each of the schools. The project depended on a project manager working with schools to determine the structure and procedures. Regular visits were made to each of the schools by this project manager. In addition senior management teams from each school visited other schools and participated in in-service programmes. Each school also appointed a project coordinator who received accreditation for their course and project work through the Institute of Education.

Several learning points were noted from the schools involved in the project. Stoll (1996) mentions the importance of:

- coordinator enthusiasm and an emphasis on action
- pupil and teacher learning and involvement
- time for the development process
- external events e.g., OFSTED visits interrupting the development cycle
- schools developing their own success criteria and performance indicators

*Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA)*

This project is one of the more publicised, perhaps because it reflects a blending of the approaches and methods from the improvement and effectiveness paradigms. Although it began with just nine schools in 1991, it has continued to grow. In 1996, it involved 30 schools in East Anglia, North London and Yorkshire and was led by Hopkins. The aim of this project was to strengthen schools' abilities to provide quality education for all pupils by building on existing good practice. Its project researchers argued that this could be achieved when schools adopted ways of working that were consistent with their own aspirations as well as with the current reform agendas. In this way the schools were able to use the impetus of external reform for their internal purpose by adopting a school development model.

These projects involved all staff members and the Cambridge Institute of Education trained two teachers from each school as school project coordinators. Schools were invited to identify and work on their own projects and priorities while embodying a set of core principles from research findings on school improvement. These principles became the expected and agreed way of working for both the schools and the project's researchers. Hopkins and West (1996) describe these principles as:

1. A vision of the school to which all members of the school community contribute
2. The school using external pressures for change as opportunities to secure internal priorities
3. The school creating and maintaining the conditions to help the learning of all members of the school's community
4. Encouraging collaborative practices to empower both individuals and groups
5. Having all staff share responsibility for monitoring and evaluating quality (p.181).

What is important is that these principles characterised an overall approach rather than prescribed a course of action. As in the previous projects, each school selected its own priorities and methods for development. Researchers acted as critical friends providing support from the side and focussed on integrating the work of the school, its

teachers and working groups to effect change. The contracts for this improvement project required the consultation of all staff, the appointment of in-school coordinators, a critical mass of teachers actively involved in development work and sufficient time made available for appropriate classroom and staff development activities.

This project has made a useful contribution to knowledge about school improvement by suggesting the relevance of six conditions that determine the effectiveness of school improvement efforts. These relate to staff development, involvement of all stakeholders, leadership roles, coordination, inquiry and reflection and the process of planning for improvement. These conditions are explored in more detail in subsequent chapters of the thesis in the interviews with teachers.

### ***Conclusions***

These projects reinforce the notions that change cannot be forced and neither centralization nor decentralization can work on its own. Schools need support to develop their capacity to help themselves as they address their own needs. This develops from partnerships that value the existing work within schools. Fullan (1993) maintains:

*The centre and local units need each other. You can't get anywhere by swinging from one dominance to another. What is required is a different two-way relationship of pressure, support and continuous negotiation. It amounts to simultaneous top-down bottom-up influence (p.38).*

Schools, are therefore, caught between pressures from two directions as they endeavour to comply with legislative requirements and at the same time develop skills in their own change agency which develops commitment, shared purpose and relevance to the school's culture.

The following summary presents a useful comparison of the school effectiveness and school improvement research traditions. It has been adapted from the work of Stoll (1996) in Gray, Reynolds, Fitz-Gibbon and Jesson (1996, pp.55-58).

### *School Effectiveness*

#### **A focus on outcomes**

- viewing accountability as proof that schools do make a difference to student outcomes
- developing a broader range of academic and social areas of student development (Harker, 1998)

#### **Use of data for decision making**

- gathering information which relates to the current situation allows needs to be identified and addressed.

#### **Knowledge of what is effective elsewhere**

- having sufficient overlap of elements to suggest some consistency of impact across situations (Stoll & Fink, 1996)
- accepting that it is useful for schools to have access to this information to explain important contextual differences and areas where it is possible to generalise (Fink & Stoll, 1998)

#### **An emphasis on equity**

- paying attention to ensure disadvantaged students progress (Coleman et al., 1996, Jencks et al., 1972)

being aware of the background of the student population before assessing the value added by the school's change effort (Stoll & Fink, 1996)

### *School Improvement*

#### **Focus on process**

- advancing understandings of initiation, implementation and institutionalisation (Fullan, 1991)
- accepting that change takes time, considerable patience and a price is paid for 'quick fix' solutions.
- extending focus of research studies to include ineffective schools (Fink & Stoll, 1998)

#### **An emphasis on school-selected priorities for development.**

- emphasising the importance of teacher involvement in change efforts and ownership of the process.
- involving staff members in the selection of priorities for future development (Fink & Stoll, 1998).

#### **Orientation toward action and on-going development**

- moving towards the vision of the problem-solving or thinking or relatively autonomous school rather than accepting imposed solutions (Fink & Stoll, 1998)

#### **An understanding of the importance of school culture**

- being aware of the powerful impact of school culture on change effort.
- promoting norms of collaboration, trust, the taking of risks, and a focus on continuous learning for students and adults (Hopkins, et al., 1994)

***School Effectiveness*****Understanding that the school is the focus of change**

- believing that if schools have a unique population and context then they will need to take responsibility for their own change efforts (Fullan, 1993)

***School Improvement*****A view of the school as the centre of change**

- viewing the school as the focus and centre of change not isolated from the context around it (Fink & Stoll, 1998)

**The importance of a focus on teaching and learning**

- focusing on the classroom
- having meaning for teachers
- having a focus on collaborative efforts and engaging in joint work around classroom topics

**Quantitative research methodology**

- increasing the sophistication of research techniques

**Qualitative research methodology**

- getting below the surface to study processes
- using the in-depth case study approach, qualitative data gathering and analysis techniques

***Moral Purpose***

The remaining research field to be discussed in this chapter addresses the question of *why change*. This question is particularly important for gaining commitment to a change and if overlooked can hinder the successful implementation of a change project. It is timely that Fullan (1999) devotes a chapter of his book, *Change Forces The Sequel*, to the theme of moral purpose and complexity. He believes that “in postmodern society, more than ever before, a strong commitment to the role of moral purpose in educational reform is crucial” (p.1). He writes:

*But because of worldwide diversity, and because of chaotic complexity, figuring out moral purpose, getting or staying committed to it and making progress in achieving it are enormously difficult. At the very time we need more of a moral*

*commitment to the public good, the forces of change are creating confusion, frustration and discouragement (ibid).*

Fullan (1999) defines moral purpose on two levels. These are the micro and macro levels. At the micro level this is about ensuring that a difference is made to the life-chances of all students and more of a difference for the disadvantaged because they have further to go. Moral purpose at the macro level concerns education's contribution to societal development and democracy.

Having defined moral purpose, Fullan then provides two reasons why achieving moral purpose is complex. The first concerns the dynamics of diversity, equity and power; the other involves the concept and reality of complexity itself. Fullan (1999) cites Slee, Weiner and Tomlinson (1998) who suggest issues of equity and power are largely ignored in school effectiveness research and suggests these issues warrant closer attention. In all these comments serve to confirm the complexity of the change process and the wide variety of issues which need to be addressed in any change project for the good of others. Thus discussion on the limitations of school effectiveness and school improvement research serves to highlight the value of complexity and evolutionary theories which recognise that there is no certainty or predetermined outcome. The challenge is to work with teachers and schools so that they become more skilled at addressing all three areas of the change process. Namely the 'what, how and why' dimensions.





## Chapter 5

### Teacher learning and development

The purpose of this chapter is to draw upon the principles underpinning adult learning theory in order to explore the factors which both contribute to and hinder effective teacher learning and development. These factors will then become the basis for reviewing the Ministry of Education's models of professional development to determine the effectiveness of teacher learning and development for teachers in New Zealand schools. Issues will be identified and these will form a framework for the subsequent analysis of teacher learning and development as experienced through the quality learning circle approach and staff development programmes in the case study schools which feature in the later chapters of this thesis.

#### *Adult learning theory*

Adult learning as a field of study is complex (Brookfield, 1986). Adults bring a variety of pertinent backgrounds to their learning. These include personal factors such as knowledge, academic experience and qualifications, level of intrinsic motivation and attitude towards learning, and the impact of previous learning experiences. In addition, the contexts for learning also matter. Systemic factors as well as these personal factors impact on adults' ability and willingness to learn. Decisions about what it is adults might learn, how this learning might occur and why the learning might be considered helpful or desirable are key issues to address in adult learning. Questions of how to motivate, enthuse and support learners are important if learning is to be a life-long endeavour.

The field of adult learning, sometimes given the name of andragogy (see Knowles, 1980), is characterised by interest in a number of sub-fields. These include notions of the reflective practitioner (Smyth, 1989, Schon, 1991, Moon, 2000); experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1995); transformative learning (Cranton, 1996); self-directed learning (Brookfield, 1986); and problem-based learning (Boud & Feletti, 1997). Several key principles for adult learning can be derived from these emphases: links to experience, involvement in decisions about learning, reflection, dialogue, application, support offered by significant others, and the role of theory.

### *Links to practice (experience)*

Adult learners have a strong preference for learning centred in practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). This is often termed *experiential learning* to emphasise the need for active engagement in situations that mirror the work contexts of adult learners. In particular, Kolb's (1984) work is useful because it draws attention to learning being a continuous process grounded in experience rather than merely a product or outcome. He argues that ideas are neither fixed nor immutable elements of thought but are rather formed and reformed through experience. This also suggests that learning should be seen as a journey, which although at times unpredictable and uncertain, is centred around the needs of its participants.

Kolb's learning cycle represents four phases that contribute to a deeper learning. While Kolb accepts learners will have strengths in particular parts of the four dimensions, he maintains that effective learning depends on attending to all four phases. These phases evolve around concrete experience, reflection on that experience, abstract conceptualization of the experience and active experimentation. Each of these four phases translates into approaches to, or modes of, adult learning which are described as being active, reflective, theoretical and pragmatic.

Boud, Cohen and Walker (1997) argue that the role and relevance of learning from experience deserves more recognition in adult learning. This is worth remembering especially given the constant pressure to respond to learning agendas within known limitations of time and energy. Learning opportunities therefore need to be focussed and useful for the learner if there is to be any long-term impact. Five propositions are offered to highlight the value of experiential learning. The first is that experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for, learning. In saying this Boud, Cohen and Walker contend that experience cannot be bypassed and all learning builds on and flows from experience no matter what external prompts to learning there might be. A second proposition is that learners actively construct their experience whether they realise it or not. Following this, a third proposition gives recognition to learning as being an holistic process. Two remaining propositions show learning as being socially and culturally constructed and influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs.

### *Involvement in decisions about learning*

Involvement in decisions about learning agenda is another important principle. Boud and Walker (1997) refer to this as appropriation, where the learning is made one's own. When learners are involved in making decisions about their own learning, particularly the nature, scope, and purpose, learning becomes more productive, meaningful and relevant to those closest to the action. Active involvement increases adults' commitment to and enjoyment of learning. A degree of self-autonomy is important for adult learners. This is about being able to make choices about what to learn, and how and when this might take place. Unfortunately, adult learning is not simply a matter of individuals determining their own agendas. Legislative controls, compliance demands and financial constraints also impact on these decisions and so a compromise is often required. Particularly in times of change and economic uncertainty, the education system often becomes the target of blame for society's problems and results in change agendas being set by others. When this happens, teachers can become resentful and lose their enthusiasm for learning because they are removed from the decision making process.

### *Reflection*

A further guiding principle is the role of *reflection*. Schon (1991) distinguishes between reflection in practice and reflection on practice. This distinction serves to highlight the kinds of knowing and thinking in which adult learners engage. Reflective practice helps learners to articulate their theories in use and to recognise espoused theories that may be largely intuitive. Thus, reflection can be viewed as a process of consciousness raising that can either affirm or confront existing practice and may act as a catalyst for further improvements to practice.

In the context of teacher education or teachers as learners, Smyth (1989) develops the notion of reflectivity into four forms of action which can improve teaching practice. These are listed as sequential stages and link to a series of questions:

- 1      What do I do? (describing)
- 2      What does this mean? (informing)
- 3      How did I come to be like this? (confronting)
- 4      How might I do things differently? (reconstructing)

While individuals may reach the stage that they can internalise these questions, others will benefit from having these stages and questions modelled by other teachers. These questions also relate to Cranton's (1996) questions about the professional development of adult learners which indicate a growing awareness of process rather than outcome. The first of these questions is about finding out how adult educators learn about their practice. The second concerns how they can continue to grow and change over time and thirdly how they can go beyond the acquisition of simple techniques to reach a deeper reflection on and understanding of their work. These questions are also key questions for this thesis which explores the current reality of teacher learning and development in New Zealand, and in doing so aims to raise teacher awareness of the ways they learn and its effectiveness.

Boud and Walker's (1997) model of reflection on experience adds a number of features. These include attending to feelings that might help or hinder the reflection, making links to previous experience and learning, integrating the new experience with previous learning, and testing the validity of the learning. Similarly the notion of praxis is mentioned by Brookfield (1986), who argues "explorations of new ideas, skills or bodies of knowledge do not take place in a vacuum but are set within the context of learners' past, current and future experiences" (p.15).

### *Dialogue*

Theorists such as Brookfield (1986) and Shor and Freire (1987) support the *importance of dialogue* in learning. They argue that dialogue can challenge learners to identify and clarify their personal beliefs, values and actions when they work alongside colleagues in real or simulated situations. Focussed dialogue about work practices can be a particularly powerful learning tool when teachers join together as a learning community. The more diverse these communities are, the greater opportunity there is for learning as practices are both challenged and affirmed. Shor and Freire describe such dialogue as "a way to recreate knowledge as well as the way we learn. It is viewed as a mutual learning process where the teacher poses critical problems for inquiry" (p.11). Shor and Freire also view dialogue as a liberating process because it allows the participants to shape and own the learning process. However, if this dialogue is to motivate learners to question their practice, trust and respect must be developed first.

### *Application*

Critical reflection, is however, not a panacea for improved practice. Action is also required, and this is where learners need time and a reassurance of psychological safety to plan for and

experiment with new ideas. If learners are to do this then risk taking and the making of mistakes must be an accepted part of the learning process. Smyth (1989) suggests that it is not enough to just talk about new ideas, these need to be applied to real situations for meanings to develop and changes to practice considered. He describes this as a process of:

*[opening up] dialogue between teachers about actual teaching experiences but in a way that enables questions to be asked about taken-for-granted, even cherished assumptions and practices, the reformulation of alternative hypotheses for action, and the actual testing of those hypotheses in classroom situations (p.5).*

### *Support from significant others*

Learning support can be offered from a number of sources. These include colleagues, senior teachers and principals and advisers. Research by Joyce and Showers (1995) has been particularly useful for showing what quality teacher learning and development looks like, why it works, and with what results for both teachers as learners and those who provide professional development programmes for them. While acknowledging the complexities and difficulties of teachers' learning and development, Joyce and Showers claim that what is needed is a "giant but simple self-learning system of inquirers in which every educator is implicated" (p.xii). Their five-step model is an answer to this challenge. The five steps, beginning with theory, include the remaining steps of demonstration, practice, feedback and support.

As the final step in this model, support from others represents more than a linking of theory to classroom practice. Continued forms of classroom assistance are essential if new practices are to be added to existing teaching repertoires. Elements of all five steps are evident across the range of Ministry of Education professional development approaches that feature later in this chapter. However, for the moment, discussion remains with Joyce and Showers' preference for peer coaching as being one way to create norms of collegiality and experimentation that allow the transfer of learning to the classroom. This practice is one of teachers teaching one another. The quality learning circle is a variation of this model.

Showers (1985) describes peer coaching as serving several purposes. The first is that it encourages learners to connect with one another and engage in focussed study of their craft. The second purpose emphasises the importance of collegial study of new knowledge and skills developed through shared language and common understandings. A third purpose depicts coaching in terms of the structured support or follow up to training that helps teachers acquire new teaching skills and strategies. This involves teachers coaching each other and visiting one another's classrooms for the

purposes of observation, feedback, and conferences. However, teachers must be open to experimentation and be willing to persist and refine their teaching skills if this approach is to be successful. Showers, Joyce & Bennett (1987) argue that teachers must be able to transfer their learning directly to a classroom setting for it to be truly effective.

### *The role of theory*

There are differences of opinion regarding the place and relative importance of theory in explaining and guiding practice (Rentoul, 1996). While some note the ‘potential’ for theory to inform practice (Bush, 1995), this view is not the commonly held view of teachers who value practical rather than theoretical activities. Dearden (1984) claims that teachers have a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards theory saying:

*Teachers themselves commonly regard theory with a varying mixture of respect and suspicion: respect because it is thought of as difficult, and suspicion because its bearings are unclear on the detailed decision as to what to do next Monday morning (p.4).*

It is then interesting to note that Joyce and Showers’ (1995) model of teacher learning and development has placed the role of theory as its first step. From my experience as a teacher educator I have found that while classroom practitioners may not necessarily value theory to the same extent as those providing professional development support to teachers, there is no doubt about the importance of theory. I argue that teachers can benefit from theory but that this has more meaning when it comes after demonstration and practical application because teachers relate to problems of practice which are their predominant learning agendas. Theory has the potential to raise awareness of work practices and to confront learners. It need not be seen as something remote from the day-to-day experience of the practitioner (Bush, 1995). The challenge professional development providers face is helping teacher learners to appreciate the connection between theory and work practice so that gaps between current and ideal realities, beliefs and practices can be identified and then addressed. If Rentoul (1996) is correct in assuming that many practising school leaders are unaware of the theory guiding their action, then this may be a reflection that theory is not valued as highly as practice by practitioners. However, even though practitioners may not admit to theory guiding their practice, Morgan (1986) writes “practice is never theory free, for it is always guided by an image of what one is trying to do. The real issue is whether or not we are aware of the theory guiding our action” (p.336). This is where the teacher educator plays an important role in raising teachers’ awareness of their practice and helping them to be reflective practitioners. It is for this reason that the role of theory needs to be included as a principle underpinning adult learning and development.

### *Application of adult learning principles to the QLC model*

The quality learning circle model is based on the principles of adult learning. It begins with a shared learning experience that has relevance and meaning for a group of teachers. The teachers make decisions about what that learning might be and how it will develop. Throughout the learning experience opportunities for dialogue are encouraged. These opportunities are the focus for reflection where teachers not only observe one another but also teach each other by sharing their ideas and providing feedback and support.

The following sections continue this theme of teacher learning and development by extending the focus to the roles played by professional development providers. In doing so it is necessary to highlight the subtle differences in terminology between teacher learning and development and professional development before beginning to discuss the range and effectiveness of professional development programmes on offer in New Zealand schools.

### *Definitions*

Teacher learning and development, and professional development are two related but different concepts. Professional development tends to have a fixed content and delivery mode and is based on the assumption that teachers will automatically benefit from the learning offered to them. On the other hand, teacher learning and development suggests a more dynamic and evolving approach in which teachers engage in more open-ended learning experiences more akin to a journey into unknown territories than to set destinations. This may even necessitate mistakes being made for learning to occur.

### *Evaluations of professional development programmes*

Sources for evaluating the effectiveness of professional development programmes include the on-going milestone reports prepared by the regional providers in each programme, external evaluation reports and those produced by the Ministry of Education itself in their annual publication called "The Research Bulletin". This bulletin reports participants' opinions and perceptions across a range of programmes and explores their effectiveness as learning opportunities for teachers. For example, Donn's (1995) report canvassed a total of 15 programmes, Dewar and Bennie's (1996) report 369 programme participants and Scott and Murrow's (1998) study a further 600 participants throughout 64 programmes. While acknowledging the range of existing evaluation data, discussion in this chapter uses the broad themes identified in the Research Bulletin across programmes.



While teachers' views have been canvassed about the effectiveness of the content and delivery of the various curriculum contracts, teachers have not been asked for specific comment about the viability of the professional development models used. This is further evidence of the Ministry of Education making decisions for teachers and teachers passively accepting what is offered rather than considering the possibility of there being alternative models which could better address their needs. However, despite this omission, teacher ratings from annual samplings of Ministry of Education professional development contracts reflect high levels of satisfaction, for example, 81-95% (Donn, 1995), 91% (Dewar & Bennie, 1996) and 80% (Scott & Murrow, 1998). It is then interesting to note how Bell's (1993a) research on teacher development draws attention to the development of teachers' social, personal and professional needs as being significant factors contributing to the quality of professional development programmes for teachers. Not only has this emphasis on metacognition about the teacher development process, change processes and how teachers themselves learn been a major part of Bell's work in the LISP project, but it is also a central focus for this thesis where teachers are learning about classroom assessment practices and their own preferences for learning.

The discussion in this chapter combines the evaluation data from teachers participating in these professional development opportunities as well as programme providers to highlight what New Zealand teachers value in their professional learning. Teachers' experiences of their learning within the Ministry of Education curriculum contracts are compared with those teachers seconded into the NEMP programme as teacher administrators and markers. Both of these sets of experiences help demonstrate what teachers want from professional development.

### *Issues*

While the topic of teacher learning and development has always been fraught with difficulties of timing, relevance, and delivery, it is also acknowledged that career-long learning for teachers is important (Lovett, 1995). Teachers need to view themselves as learners and take deliberate steps to ensure they are learning on the job. Bell (1993a) suggests:

*The prime purposes of teacher development are to help teachers feel better about themselves as teachers and to improve teaching and learning outcomes in the classroom...it is not something to be left to chance (p.5).*

Bell also argues that rather than empowering teachers as learners, teacher development providers need to be careful they do not encourage dependency in their learners. Programmes need to be set

up in ways that teachers can contribute ideas about what works in the classroom and admit to their concerns in a safe environment. Bell justifies this need for teacher talk and involvement by saying:

*Teacher development is enhanced when teachers are able to talk with each other about what they are doing in the classroom as an integral and key part of the programme. ... Their contributions may include talking about what they are doing in the classroom, providing their ideas and opinions for discussion, giving support and feedback and negotiating the content and ways of doing the activities. Once the teachers contribute, they can be given support and feedback (p.5).*

Comments from teachers in Donn's (1995) evaluation of the Ministry of Education professional developments endorse this need for teachers to be talking and sharing one with another. One teacher's preference is clear with the words:

*[I] would have liked to have worked a lot more in each area of the curriculum subject we were studying – to exchange ideas and experiment using our peer groups for evaluation and springboards and sounding boards, to get a more thorough overview and understanding of the depth of change and understanding necessary and intended in the document. I felt we barely scratched the surface, although each session was well planned and covered a range of theoretical and practical ideas (p.44).*

Another said:

*I felt it useful to be able to 'bounce' ideas off other people in the programme, and it was good to know that I was not the only person unsure about implementing the new curriculum and who didn't understand the jargon (p.46).*

The theme of teacher talk is also discussed by Day (1999) who refers to the deeper levels of reflective practice which are possible through high quality teacher talk. Teacher development programmes have the potential to offer and model ways of reflecting on practice so that teachers begin to develop some self-help skills and strategies. Day (1993) suggests that reflective practice occurs within a social context and cites Argyris and Schon's (1976) definition of teacher talk as being, "the means by which teachers deconstruct, test out and reconstruct their beliefs and 'espoused theories' of education" (Day, 1999, p.46). This definition is important because it gives emphasis to critique as a way of moving teachers beyond the practical arena to the consideration of alternative practices. Day expands these ideas by saying:

*Most 'co-construction', whether it takes place through anecdote, ideas, information and material swapping, or the sharing of problems, issues and opinions will need to challenge teachers to move beyond exchange to critique, and the success of this depends upon the level of individual trust and institutional support. Critique,...involves both disclosure and feedback. The way communities use talk as a means of probing meanings and uncovering*

*diversity is crucial to their growth. Making time for sustained reflection and dialogue is a primary challenge in building professional learning cultures (p.46).*

Thus the role of the professional development facilitator is crucial. A facilitator who adopts a training-focused perspective rather than a learner-focused perspective can negatively affect the professional development of teachers. In this regard, Lieberman cited by Day (1999), suggests there is more to teacher development than the introduction of new content and maintains:

*[It is important to move] teachers beyond simply hearing about new ideas or frameworks for understanding teaching practice, to being involved in decisions about the substance, process and organisational supports for learning in school to finding broader support mechanisms (such as networks or partnerships) that provide opportunities and innovative norms from groups outside the school (p.3).*

A comment from a teacher in Dewar and Bennie's (1996) evaluation supports this view by expressing an appreciation of the way the facilitators had worked to connect teachers as learners one with another:

*The facilitators created a great atmosphere, full of opportunities to learn in many ways. They were also very flexible and listened to us about what we felt we needed to focus on as well. They fed in ideas when we were lacking too. (p.76)*

Like the previous comments, this comment reiterates the value of teacher talk and interaction in the learning process. However, the provision of professional development is by no means a straightforward exercise because it remains caught between the need for the education system to guide support programmes, (often within short timeframes to maximise coverage) and the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own learning to ensure immediate relevance. Professional development models have difficulty meeting both of these needs.

Whatever the approach taken, a further challenge for an education system lies in how it can provide learning opportunities for all its teachers and at the same time meet the needs of teachers who have very different skill and knowledge levels, and attitudes to learning. As a provider of professional development courses for teachers, I have encountered this same difficulty. While accepting that teachers vary in their career experience and stages, it is another matter being able to recognise these differences in the mode of delivery given the real constraints of time, resources, staffing and finance. When these differences are realised and taken into account in teacher learning and development with curriculum documents, some learners, particularly those in the early stages of their teaching careers, may require more structured learning opportunities and have a preference for content to be determined by others. Providers should be careful that they do not get trapped into making these learners dependent on them. Other learners will be

sufficiently motivated to determine their own needs and find ways of achieving their goals. This independent behaviour should be cultivated so that more time is available to help those who lack this capacity for learning themselves. This is where teacher development programmes can serve as opportunities for teachers to build their capacity for data gathering and subsequent analysis if these processes are modelled.

Bell (1993a) argues that teacher development can be maximised for all teachers “if teachers are convinced and accept that an aspect (but not all) of their teaching is problematic and [they want] to improve it” (p.5). This statement reinforces the message that teachers need to be convinced about the need for change and involved in planning its direction before they will make significant progress in their learning. Collaborative planning presents a way of modelling the learning process so that when ready, teachers actually know how to be independent learners. A comment from a teacher included in Donn’s (1995) report, shows this concern regarding a lack of consultation with the participants over the direction of the learning. The teacher said, “there seemed to be a lack of overall plan and direction – ideas presented were not always relevant or focused on our school’s needs” (p.44). Clearly this situation had hindered learning for the teachers involved.

However, in accepting that teachers have their own particular learning styles and preferences, professional development programme providers still need to accommodate these differences as best they can. In 1988, Kingston reminded those responsible for guidance and support programmes for beginning teachers that it was dangerous to adopt a single approach to suit all participants. She argued that where teachers were treated as having identical needs this was likened to being placed in a straitjacket within a “restrictive zone” and learning output and performance were limited (p.20). It is argued that this also applies to professional development programmes for more experienced teachers. Teachers welcome input into aspects of programme content because relevance to their classroom programmes is particularly important. The following comment from Donn’s (1995) evaluation offers advice for other facilitators when it states:

*In response to the question on the needs of programme participants, respondents again mentioned their belief that teachers’ existing knowledge and understanding of a particular area was not taken sufficiently into account during the programme. Respondents who made this point suggested that, in the future, participants should be asked what they needed or wanted or expected of the programme, either before and/or during the course” (pp.42-43).*

Similar comments have been made in subsequent evaluation reports. For example, Dewar and Bennie (1996) stated that 11% of respondents suggested courses needed to focus more on the individual needs of participants and their schools. These concerns were repeated again by Scott and Murrow (1998) who claimed a small proportion of respondents were critical of the nature and content of the workshops or cluster meetings and made complaints that the focus of the programme or the levels covered did not meet their needs.

### *Definition of professional development*

It has been argued that the task of helping teachers to learn and develop is extremely challenging. While various professional development programmes can attempt to enhance teacher learning and development, they are a vehicle for rather than a guarantee of learning. Broadly speaking professional development has been defined by the OECD (the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) as being “any activity that develops an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher. This may include personal study and reflection as well as formal courses” (p.18). This definition serves as an acknowledgement that opportunities for learning exist with provisions driven by others (sometimes as mandates) and those sought by teachers themselves. It will be shown that the current practice of most professional development being determined by the Ministry of Education rather than the teachers themselves is a significant problem and continuing source of dissatisfaction for teachers. Whether professional development opportunities come from within or beyond a school makes a considerable difference to their overall impact, including the short- and long-term gains to classroom learning and teaching practices. An important point to note is that dependence on others to provide the necessary learning will not necessarily increase levels of professionalism amongst teachers. Sachs (2000) offers five principles as a platform on which teachers’ professionalism can be renewed and developed. These principles include learning, participation, collaboration, co-operation and activism and reflect the need for professional development models to empower and energise teachers rather than control what it is they should be learning.

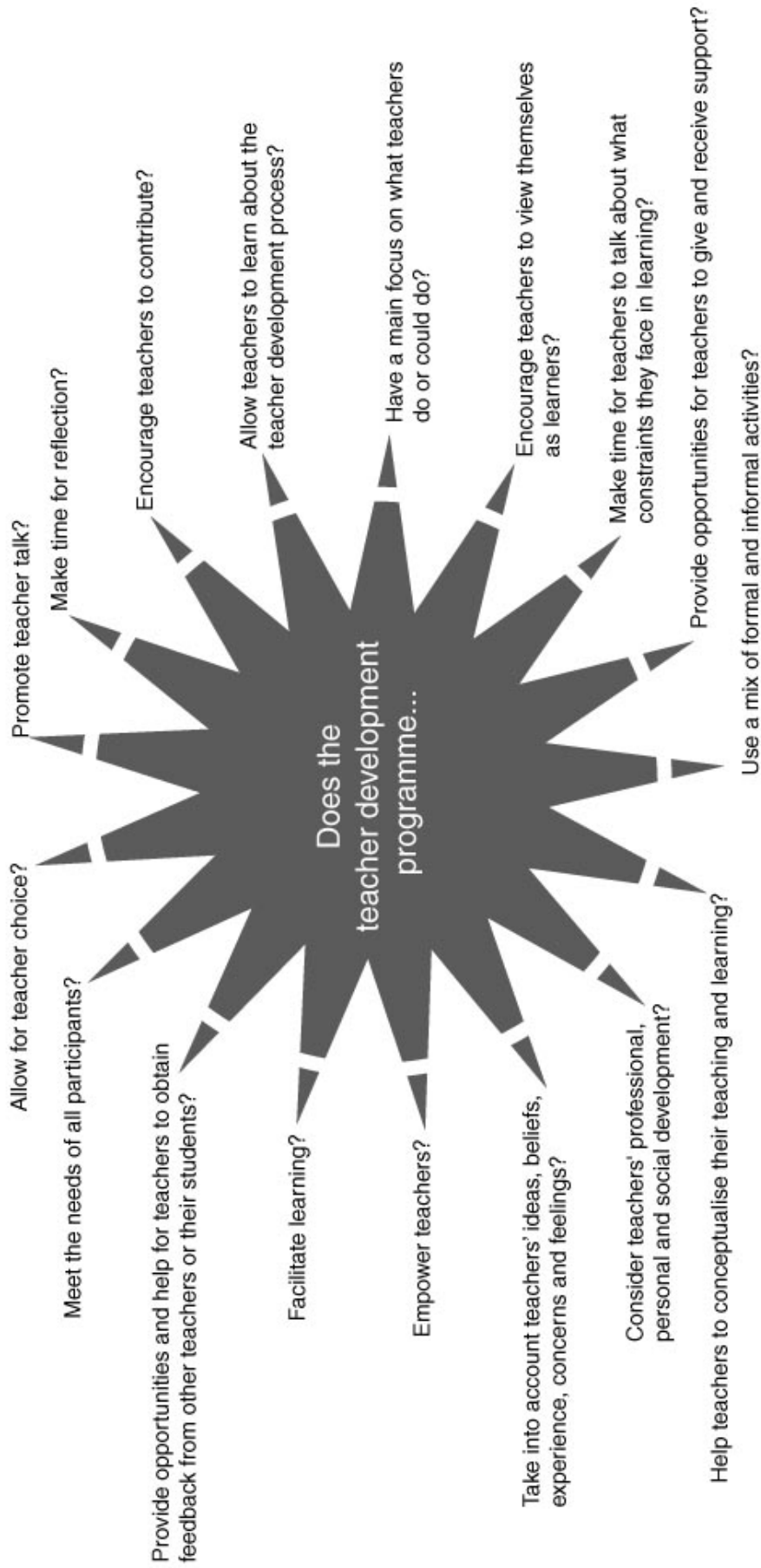
### *What is an effective professional development model?*

Just what is considered to be an effective model for professional development is also problematic. Gilmore (1999) argues that the number of intangible aspects contributing to professional development make it hard for teachers to specify what has helped them to change their teaching practices. This is because it becomes much easier to describe any changes made than to analyse why

these have been possible. Professional development providers face this same dilemma of uncovering why it is that some models are more successful than others in promoting teacher learning and professional development. It is for this reason that regular evaluations serve a useful purpose in highlighting what teachers find effective for their professional learning. The Ministry of Education has endeavoured to meet the range of teacher need by offering programmes targeting individual teachers, whole schools and lead/key teachers as well as funding in-service courses.

Regardless of the professional development model used, Figure 2 represents a series of useful evaluation questions which have been adapted from Bell (1993b). These questions serve several purposes. Bell suggests that they may be useful for planning and monitoring a current programme or evaluating a completed programme. While the questions are primarily intended to guide future programme delivery by facilitators, Bell (1993b) suggests that another value is raising teacher awareness about ways teachers might take more responsibility for their learning. Figure 2 is a summary of Bell's evaluation framework but does not include the recommendations which accompany each question.

**Figure 2: Questions to Evaluate Teacher Development Programmes.**



### *Professional development in New Zealand*

Professional development in New Zealand schools is driven from two sources. One is from the school site and the other from central agencies (e.g., Ministry of Education). Both share responsibility for ensuring that professional development is available to all teachers on an on-going basis and provide regular reports on the programmes on offer and their effectiveness. Such programmes are offered on the assumption that professional development improves the quality of the teaching profession. However, because so much curriculum change has been mandated by central agencies, schools are now finding that considerable time is being spent meeting these requirements. Little time, space or energy is then available for schools to decide on issues that they consider merit attention.

#### *Sources of professional development*

Nationally, an annual \$60 million budget has provided for professional development funds. This has been allocated in three ways. The first has been through the work of the School Support Services, to support government priorities and meet needs that have been identified in local areas. A second approach has been an allocation through the schools' operational grants of an approximate amount of \$500 per teacher on professional development. The third approach has been through contestable professional development contracts. This funding has ensured that professional development occurs at several levels; nationally, at each school, and by teachers themselves in a variety of ways. The focus for most of this development has been development to support the implementation of revised curriculum documents which is why it is useful to explore their delivery modes and impact.

#### *Timeframes for professional development*

It has been unfortunate that not all professional development programmes have allowed sufficient time for learning. Teachers involved in the LISP programme (Learning in Science Project) as reported by Bell (1993b) found that the gradual process of change had helped their professional development. The spread out nature of their programme over two years with weekly sessions had given them time to try out new activities, rethink their ideas, talk with others about their work and manage their feelings about the change process. This extended timeframe meant that their development matched the change process. Bell (1993b) explained this as teachers accepting that they did not change everything all at once but could adapt the new teaching ideas in their own ways. Clearly the LISP teachers wanted more control of the pace of their learning as



well as the details of that learning. Both of these features are important when considering teachers' feelings about the change process.

### *Models used for implementing curriculum documents*

Since the early 1990s, New Zealand schools have been inundated with curriculum changes. For primary school teachers, teaching every curriculum area, the pressure to keep up with the changes has been unrelenting. In recent years teachers have been introduced to the new curriculum documents in a variety of ways. Four broad categories of professional development have been adopted by the Ministry of Education. These relate to individual teachers, whole school, lead/key teachers and in-service programmes. Each of these categories will be discussed in terms of their advantages, disadvantages and lessons learnt.

#### *The individual teacher approach*

Developments associated with the initial curriculum documents, e.g., mathematics and science (1992), adopted an individual teacher focus, where teachers were taken out of their schools for intensive workshops. This approach allowed for direct targeting of individual teachers and meant that over a period of six weeks individual teachers received an induction into the ways of a new curriculum document before another cohort went through the same process. However, there were more disadvantages than advantages with this delivery mode. One particular disadvantage was that teachers could be denied collegial support from other teachers at their own schools because they were the only ones attending the programme at a particular time. This isolation also meant that it was harder for teachers to relate the new knowledge to their classroom practice and trial new approaches and content when others were not engaged in similar projects. Gilmore (1994) noted some of these limitations in her evaluation report which said:

*Teachers and facilitators felt that the teacher development should be available to every teacher. Where whole schools, departments or syndicates were involved in the same cluster, there was noticeably greater progress towards implementation (p.115).*

Such a comment draws attention to the benefit of having larger numbers through the programmes from a particular school or cluster in terms of support and knowledge on the ground. Here tensions were evident between the Ministry of Education wanting many teachers involved in the professional development programmes before funding of specialist support services was depleted and a growing

realisation that teachers' learning needs were not simply in the realm of new content. Teachers also had personal and social needs which were equally important (Bell, 1993b, Bell & Gilbert, 1996).

From my personal involvement as a seminar workshop facilitator for the PDCL (Principal Development Curriculum Leadership) contract in 1992, I was well aware of the isolation teachers experienced in their learning. At the seminars teachers appreciated being able to talk about their personal feelings as they worked with various changes. This was particularly important because new learning could easily overwhelm teachers, and they were reassured to know they were not alone and that there were others who were also feeling unsure of directions and their ability to cope with similar changes. It was here that action research methodology had considerable appeal for the contract providers because it offered a way of catering for individual needs enabling one or more teachers the opportunity to follow their own learning pathways. However, progress for some teachers was hindered when they needed longer to work through the first steps of identifying their needs and choosing a focus for improvement which at the same time matched the scope of the new curriculum documents. It soon became apparent that these timeframes were inadequate for significant progress to be made, especially when the support stopped with the ending of the contract time. A teacher in Donn's report (1995) had also mentioned time as being a problem for teacher learning. This teacher described the professional development as being very intense and wanted more time to work through ideas and aspects with other teachers to clarify ideas. The whole school approach attempted to address some of these problems.

#### *The whole school approach*

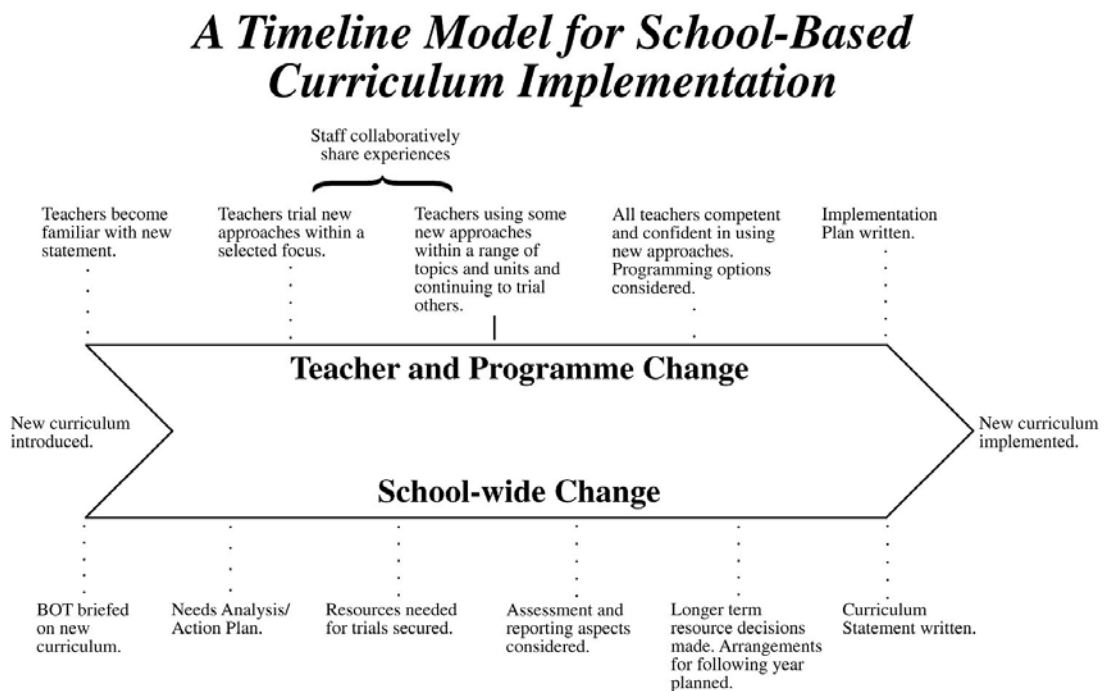
The whole school approach enabled all teachers in the one school to work on the same project at the same time. Not only were teachers required to work with one another on content but this approach promoted stronger support for teachers. Considerable progress was made in the development of curriculum policies, and the sharing of teaching philosophies in the nominated curriculum area. This communication of ideas increased the consistency of approach between teachers and allowed a clearer progression of learning content to emerge throughout the age groups taught in schools. This proved to be particularly useful and had a greater impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

Providers continued to require schools to adopt action research methodology for implementing the new curriculum documents so that work could be directly linked to the programme needs of the participating schools. This made it possible for teachers to develop new teaching topics and units of

work with accompanying resources and assessment tools. These developments were spread over a full year which was an improvement on the earlier, somewhat intense timeframe given for the individual teacher delivery. Nevertheless, even with these timeframes, there were still some schools where teachers were unable to complete their implementation within the calendar year of the Ministry of Education funding. However, despite these difficulties, teachers' confidence with the action research model increased as they used the planning and reflection cycle format to their advantage.

The following diagram highlights the elements which underpin curriculum implementation at the school level showing that it is not merely a matter of teachers being presented with new knowledge. School-based implementation requires further levels of planning, resource development and budgeting to ensure school-wide consistency of approach and philosophy.

Figure 3: *School-based curriculum implementation*



Collins, G. (1994). p.2.

Trialing of professional development models has led to the development and clarification of a set of guiding principles for future delivery. For example, O'Rourke (1992) has claimed that the success of professional developments for teachers in the long-term depends on programmes being:

- appropriate to the needs of the teacher
- ‘owned’ by the teachers involved
- a mixture of practice and theory
- over an extended period of time
- support and guidance as well as professional ‘input’ sessions
- within the context of the school culture
- with the support of the school principal (pp.1-2)

These features show how the programme providers have attempted to address issues of individual needs, school characteristics, timing and support structures over time. As each new curriculum document has arrived, lessons have been learnt and passed on to the next developers. Further refinements have been made to the professional development models in use as a result of the annual evaluations. In addition, better questions have been asked regarding programme usefulness, relevance, timeliness and the extent to which the needs of participants have been met. Subsequent evaluation questions have included asking teachers about:

- the extent to which they had benefited from their involvement in the programme, whether through increased knowledge, skill development, or merely from meeting and sharing with other teaching professionals
- feedback about aspects of the programmes while they were in progress, rather than, in some cases, some months after the end of the programme, in order that participants’ recall was not ‘contaminated’ by events occurring after completion of the programme. (Scott & Morrow, 1998, p.113)

Such questions have allowed for a more thorough evaluation of the strategies used.

#### *Lead/key teacher approach*

Since 1999 Ministry of Education professional development contracts have adopted a lead or key teacher approach. While this model has some features in common with the earlier school-wide, year-long model described above, it is a cheaper version. This model requires schools to nominate two lead teachers for in-depth training in the selected curriculum implementation for support to be more readily available at the school site. This is a reduction of the support level previously provided by the contract facilitators. While cluster workshops are still included, there are fewer school visits to assist the lead teachers share their learning with the rest of their school staffs. These actions have

the potential to increase a school's ownership of the learning process because teachers within a school are responsible for organising their own staff development sessions. By the same token, the success of the implementation requires teachers at the school site to have sufficient skills and knowledge to lead their colleagues and the confidence to be flexible in their delivery approach. Unfortunately, not all the lead/key teachers have had the necessary facilitative skills and content knowledge to perform these professional development roles. It has been clear that many of these teachers have lacked an awareness of the change process and what it means for teacher development. They have not realised the importance of Fullan's lessons for understanding the change process, e.g., that change cannot be forced, problems are our friends, risk taking is part of learning, and both top-down and bottom-up strategies are needed.

A major difficulty of this approach has been the inadequacy of its delivery time for teachers at the school level. While the lead teachers have attended full day workshops introducing them to a range of activities, some lead teachers have then attempted to repeat what was delivered to them in a whole day's course to teachers at the school level in the one to two hour staff meeting time. Thus content has been crammed into an unrealistic timeframe denying teachers the time they need to absorb, discuss or relate the new knowledge to their existing classroom programmes. This practice has overwhelmed teachers rather than enthused them with new knowledge and ways of enhancing the quality of their classroom programmes. Likewise the provision of in-service training also falls into this trap of assuming that a one-off programme can provide the help teachers need to keep up with curriculum developments. Teacher learning deserves a better chance of success.

### *In-service training*

Alongside the three approaches to Ministry of Education funded professional development are the traditional in-service programmes for teachers. These have occurred in areas not covered by the Ministry of Education curriculum contracts and have been the focus of a review by the Education Review Office (2000).

Two purposes have been given by the Education Review Office for this national education evaluation study of in-service for New Zealand teachers. The first is to examine how well in-service training in schools has been managed; the second to provide information about good practice that can assist schools to use in-service training more effectively.

The Education Review Office suggests that this is an important study because it “considers not just the content and delivery of training programmes but also the wider issues of how well schools identify training needs and evaluate results” (p.1). This statement in itself is an acknowledgement that schools have a part to play in making decisions about the nature of professional development for their teachers. This ownership dimension can vary from schools deciding whether to participate in a particular professional development programme, to helping with its design and delivery. Such interest in the quality of teacher learning and development through one day in-service offerings is timely given the amount of change and learning which is expected of teachers. It seems that it is no longer possible for teachers to keep pace with every programme on offer and the question needs to be asked whether teachers are any better off with a wider menu of courses. It could also be asked whether these one day offerings do in fact improve classroom teaching practice.

It is clear that teachers are struggling to find time to read the written materials which are sent to schools on a weekly basis. While schools receive the National Education Monitoring Project reports annually, teachers have still found it difficult to cope with this reading material on top of their existing demands for professional reading. The absence of professional development on the NEMP results and Ministry of Education teacher development contracts to support teacher learning, apart from those for teachers involved in the assessment and marking programmes, have made it harder for teachers to learn about NEMP. Unfortunately without the focus of a Ministry of Education contract, the NEMP reports currently stand little chance of widespread use because teachers are already committed to other projects and have accepted the pattern of the Ministry making decisions about what and when they should learn.

### ***Teacher professional development and the National Education Monitoring Project***

Some teachers have received NEMP training through their roles as teacher administrators and markers. The timing of these professional development programmes outside of the teachers' own classrooms and schools has been a clear demonstration that teachers benefit from more in-depth training. Here they have enjoyed focussed time, free of interruptions and this has enabled them to develop their understanding of good assessment practices. Teacher administrator secondments to concentrate solely on the NEMP programme for six weeks, during the school day and not in 'tired' times, have resulted in better quality learning (Gilmore, 1999).

Not only have these teachers been fully supported in their NEMP work at all times, but also, opportunities have been provided for teachers to work alongside other teachers as learners. This has

proved to be a particular bonus as these in-depth discussions have added to the teachers' knowledge and enjoyment of assessment roles and activities. Gilmore notes the following comments from teacher interviews in her 1999 evaluation study.

*Teachers are independent people who get used to working alone and being self-sufficient. It's good for us to work alongside one another from time to time (p.9).*

*Great professional discussions. Having a buddy really makes this project. You have time to share, reflect and analyse what you do. Having the time means that we are more reflective and more likely to utilise our experiences elsewhere (p.9).*

In evaluating the experiences of the teacher administrators and teacher markers, Gilmore (1999) has demonstrated the resounding success of this professional development for teachers. A wealth of data gained from weekly diaries, a series of questionnaires and interviews with case study teachers has shown that the benefits of this six week experience have been "numerous, broad and multi-faceted." Benefits have ranged from being "personal and professional, specific and general, immediate and longer-term, and relating to assessment and beyond" (p.2).

The need for relevance to classroom learning and teaching is important for teachers. In many cases the NEMP experience has acted as a catalyst for more self directed learning and experimentation by these teachers. For example, learning gains have been made from accessing the instruction manuals, reading the questioning techniques and instructions and reading about the management of assessment activities. Teachers have also asked their own questions as a result of working with different groups of children. Gilmore (1999) reports teachers as saying:

*I have found it very interesting to observe different groups of children and the strategies they're using to solve the same problems. I have been interested in finding out more about learning styles and would like to pursue this when I return to my class.*

*I've also found it interesting to observe how important the teacher's role is to keep some groups focused on the task and how well other groups can do when given the time to follow their ideas.*

*One to one gives a nice picture of a child. It doesn't take long to find weaknesses, strengths, etc. This is so important to establish rapport. I discovered that I can do this with any child... This was a nice discovery and confidence enhancing.*

*Allowing children even more time for thinking seems the most significant idea this week, highlighted by one child. Too often in normal classroom practice we are unable to give extended time for this purpose because of time constraints and the pressure of getting everything done. Perhaps this should be reconsidered (p.10).*

### *Current understandings of the factors hindering quality professional development*

Teachers and schools are all conscious of pressures for change coming from within their midst and also from central agencies. This inevitably creates tension in terms of the professional development provisions for teachers, as choices need to be made. Decisions regarding content and delivery styles have particular effects depending on their source of origin. It is also unfortunate that teachers receive on-going blame for poor performance when in fact there are many factors which contribute to the quality of teacher work.

Barth (1990) suggests that many attempts to improve learning in schools have dwelt on adult working conditions, the control of students and student achievement. He claims that the emphasis should not be one of “what should students, teachers, and principals know and do and how do we get them to know and do it?” (p.45). It is this same mindset which is driving much of the current professional development for New Zealand teachers. Barth argues this can only encourage dependence and learners whose actions will be driven by compliance rather than personal reflection and any desire to improve practices. Lieberman (1995) shares this concern regarding learners who expect to be told what it is they should learn. Her concern relates to the growing number of teachers who have come to believe that other people’s understandings of teaching and learning are more important than their own and that knowledge gained from the daily work with students is of far less value. This passive acceptance can mean that teachers dismiss their own problem-solving capabilities and their dependence on others is reinforced. Furthermore, Barth argues that we should be finding ways to promote independent, self-motivated learners. Our efforts should, therefore, centre around identifying the “conditions under which principal, student and teacher will become serious, committed, sustained, lifelong, co-operative learners” (p.45) who reflect on their daily work and plan for change and improvements to their practices. This is about building the capacity of teachers for learning.

Joyce in Hoyle and Megarry (1980) supports this interest in identifying the conditions which promote the professional learning of teachers. He suggests that current barriers to professional learning centre around issues of resourcing, structures, the nature of schools as social systems and the work situation of teachers. In this sense schools are not conducive to teacher learning. It is argued that this situation ought to be taken more seriously if teachers are to be seen as professionals who continue learning throughout their working lives.



### *Resourcing professional development*

Providing for professional development involves making decisions about cost and getting value for money. Other resourcing issues relate to personnel and the perceived quality of the professional development provider. Facilitation skills, expertise and credibility are important. Having one style or message is unlikely to meet the multiple needs of adult learners. Such an approach is to ignore teachers' problems of practice and the potential for building on experiential learning. Lieberman (1995) argues that providers need to move beyond delivery in "bite-sized pieces of transferable knowledge" to approaches which can be shaped around the needs of teacher learners throughout the programme's delivery. (p.592). This will involve being sensitive to the needs of adult learners and in particular issues of pacing, direction, and relevance to context and outcomes.

### *Structures*

The *design of schools* is considered a further hindrance to the professional learning and development of teachers. Fullan (1995) refers to the school as a learning organisation as being a 'distant dream'. He argues that "schools and teachers have become stalled in their efforts to become more learning oriented and are not currently learning organisations" (p.230). He also contends that the recent developments, e.g., site-based management, restructuring and systemic reform, have failed and diverted attention from the very issues they have claimed to address. In order to move forward, Fullan suggests a "radical reculturing of schools as institutions and the basic redesign of the teaching profession" (p.230). Starratt (1994) suggests that the "bureaucracy of school systems is now seen as an enduring problem and not simply a contemporary phenomenon." (p.46). Further questioning about the purposes of schooling is needed. Questions to determine whose needs are being served, who exercises power and whose agendas are being met by present structures are necessary. Criticism of present structures is increasing. MacNeill and Silcox (1996) also question whether schools can be called learning organisations. They argue that just because teaching occurs in schools, this does not mean that there is learning.

*Time* is another structural obstacle for teacher learning. Often the time devoted to professional learning occurs at the end of a school day when teachers are exhausted and largely unable to absorb or reflect on new knowledge or issues of practice. Other opportunities such as teacher only days can be more productive. However, these occur on an infrequent basis and require the school to close or relieving teachers to be employed. Mostly schools depend on staff meetings for professional development and these are juggled with administrative matters and other topics that need to be kept

‘on the boil’. This often means that insufficient time is devoted to the main topic. Momentum can also be lost with the passage of time between meetings, staff being absent, and the receptivity of the staff at any given time in the term and energy levels.

Time is needed for effective learning. This means that timeframes need to be flexible to adjust to the readiness and ability of teachers as learners. The 1994 report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning captured the frustrations of teachers well when it was named “Prisoners of Time.” Fullan (1995) reinforces the importance of time when citing the Commission as having said:

*Teachers, principals and administrators need time for reform...Adding school reform to the list of things schools must accomplish, without recognising that time in the current calendar is a limited resource, trivialises the effort. It sends a powerful message to teachers: don't take this reform business too seriously. Squeeze it in on your own time (p.232).*

The Commission suggests new structures and uses of time which involve changes to the culture and organisation of schooling. These include:

*Reinventing schools around learning, not time; using time in new and better ways; giving teachers the time they need; establishing an academic day; keeping schools open longer; investing in technology; developing local action plans to transform schools; sharing responsibility for learning and ending the finger pointing and evasion (p.233).*

The New Zealand Review on the length of the school day and school year is another acknowledgement that time is considered to be an obstacle for learning (Ministry of Education, 2000). However, it would be easier said than done to change the existing structures and use of learning time in schools.

#### *Nature of schools as social systems*

Despite working in a school setting where there are other adults, teachers and principals can feel isolated in their work. Rosenholtz (1985) considers *isolation* to be one of the greatest obstacles to the professional development of the teaching profession. She claims:

*Teachers spend a large proportion of their time deprived of the benefit of seeing or hearing others in the act of teaching. Indeed, many report no adult contact at all in the course of a normal working day. In such an isolated setting teachers come to believe that they alone are responsible for running their classrooms and that seeking advice or assistance from their colleagues is an open admission of incompetence (p.350).*

Thus, the challenge is to find ways that promote teacher communication and interaction to benefit teacher learning and development. Special care should, therefore, be taken with the planning of staff meetings and staff development sessions to maximise opportunities for teacher interaction and dialogue. It is not sufficient that these be information giving sessions. Meetings can be opportunities for modelling collegial ways of working to show staff that these can promote learning.

Metaphors are now being used to highlight the degree to which collegial practices are evident in organisations. Barth's (1990) metaphor of a child's sandbox captures this lack of collegiality amongst teachers because it matches the essence of many adult relationships in schools and can be likened to parallel play. He writes:

*The benefit of parallel play is isolation from others who might take away our time, challenge our practice, steal our ideas, or have us do things differently. The price of parallel play is that we ward off those who might help us do things better and with whom we might do grander things than either could do alone. The price is isolation from other adults (p.16).*

This metaphor of parallel play is of increasing concern given the competitive state of staff relationships, in the present climate of accountability and performance management that rewards individuals rather than the performance of teams of teachers.

The preferred metaphor of honeybees is more collegial. This conveys a sense of belonging, working together and being in a community. When translated to the school setting, the honeybee metaphor is an acknowledgement that teacher growth and development is a social activity and teachers relate their own behaviours to what other teachers are doing in their classrooms. If this learning is denied then a valuable opportunity is missed.

#### *Work situation of teachers*

*Finding time for talking with other adults* is important for teachers. Time needs to be made for interactions about learning and teaching matters, for teachers to engage in learning. When the time for interactions is restricted to staff meetings and where the agendas are set by the principal or senior staff, additional opportunities need to be made for teachers to discuss their burning issues of practice. This is a further challenge because such time is not easy to find in and amongst other meetings and duties. Graham and Fahey (1999) suggest that teachers need to practise a way of talking with one another which will promote reflection and learning. They argue it is important that

teacher talk allows for judgements to be suspended and time is given for listening, questioning and wondering. Facilitators also need to practise these behaviours and model them to teachers.

Garmston and Wellman (1998) offer seven norms to enhance teacher talk. The seven norms include pausing, paraphrasing, probing for specificity, putting ideas on the table, paying attention to self and others, presuming positive intentions and balancing advocacy with inquiry. In working with schools on communication, Garmston and Wellman report positive outcomes from groups that balance advocacy with inquiry. Time devoted to these process skills may reap more benefits for the teachers as a unit, than time devoted to absorbing new content knowledge on their own. Such benefits are explained as:

*When advocating, group members make their thinking and reasoning visible by stating their assumptions, distinguishing data from inference, and giving examples. Members also test their assumptions and conclusions by revealing what they are least certain about, staying open to other interpretations, and encouraging others to explore their thinking. When inquiring into others' views, members check for understanding, ask others to make their reasoning visible, invite introspection, and explain their reasons for inquiring (p.33).*

And so the dilemma facing professional development providers and leaders in schools is whether to continue fighting against the odds. Pressure of time, differences in career stages and needs will not go away. These are givens which cannot be removed. We now need to decide whether professional development is worth the effort if the learning is so suspect. Maybe the time has come to accept that current professional development is not working, and often amounts to merely going through the motions in order to satisfy system compliance, rather than any real learning by teachers.

New Zealand's National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) has addressed some of these concerns in its design. Ways have been found to allow teachers time for in-depth learning away from their classrooms by seconding them for blocks of time. Teachers have been trained in a residential setting which has fostered professional networking and provided the necessary support for learning about the testing role. Then the actual testing in schools has involved pairs of teachers working together and again further opportunities have been available for teachers to talk about their work as issues have arisen. The usual patterns of teacher isolation and not seeing beyond one's own classroom door have similarly been addressed with teachers testing in schools other than their own workplace, or in the case of markers, viewing video excerpts from a range of school types and locations. Furthermore, examples of children's work are discussed allowing teachers the chance to see the full range of ability at a particular age level and how this is reflected in the marking criteria and descriptors. All of this has enabled teachers to extend their assessment repertoire, identify

weaknesses in the children's performances, be more precise in their feedback, and better able to plan future teaching towards the meeting of real needs and not just teach to the curriculum content of the documents.

Since critics have started using the word 'joke' to describe a good deal of what schools do in the name of professional development (Miles, 1995), it is now time to take notice and look for alternative practices. Miles writes in the foreword to Guskey and Huberman's book that professional development is:

*... everything that a learning environment shouldn't be; radically under resourced, brief, not sustained, designed for 'one size fits all', imposed rather than owned, lacking any intellectual coherence, treated as a special add-on event rather than as part of a natural process and trapped in the constraints of the bureaucratic system we have come to call 'school'. In short, it is pedagogically naive, a demeaning exercise that often leaves its participants more cynical and no more knowledgeable, skilled, or committed than before. And all this is accompanied by overblown rhetoric about "the challenge of change", "self-renewal", "professional growth", "expanding knowledge base", and "life-long learning (p.vii).*

Stoll (1999) suggests that if we are serious about addressing the problem of professional development not necessarily resulting in learning gains for teachers, then we need to focus on ways that teachers can help themselves and drive their own learning. This view recognises that teachers cannot learn if they are "victims of change" (Fullan, 1993) or resistant to what others think it is they should know or do better. If ways can be found to help teachers accept the need for change, engage in learning and even become "agents of change" (Fullan, 1993), then studying and sharing knowledge about the internal conditions which develop teachers' capacities for learning and improvement may prove to be beneficial.

Support for this emphasis on internal capacity is gathering favour in the school effectiveness and school improvement literatures through the writings of Garmston and Wellman, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Hopkins and Harris, 1997; Lambert, 1998; and Stoll, 1999. As a result a new field of study is emerging with its focus around schools as learning organisations. This is a recognition that schools all have their own set of internal conditions or variables which help and hinder learning for students and staff. If these can provide a framework for schools to analyse their own settings and choices, then the future of teacher professional learning and development will be promising. The theory of organisational learning is discussed in Chapter 10.



## Chapter 6

### **The quality learning experience overview**

The next four chapters include details of an intervention study, which follows a quality learning circle approach, to facilitate teacher learning for a group of eight teachers over a year. Two major themes, leadership and collaborative work cultures, are used to illustrate the complexity of teacher learning in the schools where these eight teachers work. These themes also provide a theoretical framework for analysing the merits of the quality learning circle approach.

In Chapter 6, the origins and rationale of the quality learning circle approach are discussed. These are followed by a justification of the modifications made to use this approach with a group of teachers who worked in different schools. A profile of each of the teachers sets the scene for the remaining data gathering in this thesis and my role as a researcher is also explained. The chapter concludes with a general discussion of qualitative research methodology and how I used this methodology for my data collection and analysis.

In Chapter 7 data from the teachers' QLC journeys are discussed. This serves to highlight a range of factors which have value for these teachers as individual members of the QLC, the QLC as a collective entity and draws upon existing opportunities for learning within their schools. The QLC approach is presented as being a useful tool because it is based on teacher ownership, enthusiasm, commitment and time for learning, all of which are in short supply with existing modes of teacher learning in schools.

In Chapter 8 the role of 'transformational' leadership provides a framework for understanding how decisions are made for school improvement at all levels of the school. A portrayal of principals' views on current provisions of teacher learning and experiences of Ministry of Education funded professional development programmes is the focus for Chapter 9. In this chapter discussion is made of the principal's role in creating and sustaining learning for teachers.

#### *Origins of the QLC approach*

The QLC that is used in education today had its origins in American industries of the 1960s which allowed people to select a common focus or issue within their organisation or profession, and then to use one another to explore ways of effecting improvements in work practices. The QLC required colleagues to share experiences and to talk with and work alongside one another in order to learn from each other. Each participant was seen as an equal, and that was essential for members of the circle to work together.

In 1993, Stewart and Prebble adapted the industry-based QLC model for school settings in New Zealand. They described their model as having the following features:

- Selection of a common theme for exploration
- Discussion and story telling within the group about experiences related to the theme
- Observation in classrooms to enhance the meaning of the stories (the visitor to the classroom is the learner)
- Discussion of these observations in pairs and then with the whole group

- Sharing examples of practice with the group

These features are evident in the QLC model chosen for my research study, with some minor modifications which I will mention later in this chapter. However, first it is necessary to explain why I selected the quality learning circle approach as the means by which a group of teachers could be introduced to the NEMP reports.

### ***Rationale for the QLC approach***

The idea of having such an intervention arose when the baseline data from Stage One of this thesis showed that the majority of teachers surveyed were unable to find the time to read the NEMP reports. I considered that teachers were missing out on vital information which would address many of their concerns about the design of meaningful assessment tasks, the practicalities of assessment and criteria for marking. This was why I was attracted to the quality learning circle approach. It seemed to me to offer a possible way forward which would allow teachers to absorb new information around the daily concerns of classroom practice and at the same time allow teachers to enjoy the support of colleagues who were also wanting to learn. I considered that if a structure could join teachers together for the purpose of learning, there would be more gains as learners supported each other in a combined learning journey rather than leaving teachers to learn by themselves.

The QLC approach was also an attempt to demonstrate how teacher learning could be enhanced when it was based on the principles underpinning adult learning and change management theories. The main difference was a conviction that teachers needed to be active participants in the shaping of their learning pathways rather than being on the receiving end of information. This matched Fullan's (1999) view that successful learning depended on an element of uncertainty and being on the edge of chaos. Here the process of change was also viewed in a different way. It was no longer seen in terms of a neatly structured linear pattern with a pre-determined end point. Rather it depended on its participants being 'change agents' and not 'victims' of change who waited for others to determine what it was they should learn. For Fullan (1999) this learning involves journeys for both individuals and groups of learners and is an acknowledgement that learning is more involved than the simple introduction of new learning content. Effective working relationships with other learners are an important consideration for quality learning. Fullan (1999) writes, "working through the discomfort of each other's presence, learning from dissonance, and forging new complex agreements and capabilities is a new requirement for living on the edge of chaos" (p.23).



### *Learning on the edge of chaos*

The idea of a learning journey into ‘unknown waters’ and perhaps even to the edge of chaos understandably does not have immediate appeal. It is also accepted that teachers are already busy, overworked and stressed and because of this, may have a preference for readymade solutions rather than finding their own. Yet while experiencing this stressed and busy state, teachers know that effective learning requires the commitment and active involvement from all participants. This time and effort cannot be substituted by the work of others who present learning as a completed package. Hence a very real tension exists between teacher beliefs and what can be managed in practice given the constraints of time and energy in the current context of continuous change. When facing many demands for compliance and adhering to implementation dates for new programmes, it is not surprising to find that teachers have become dependent learners with little voice for determining the nature or timing of their learning. In this sense teachers are ‘victims of change’ which, while attractive for short-term survival, is ultimately counterproductive for their long term development and professionalism.

A quality learning circle addresses many of the problems associated with current teacher learning in schools. It represents a learning community that is able to draw its members together through a shared commitment and focus for learning, meeting on a regular basis to enhance their work practices. It promotes a collegial culture where members support and sustain one another as a collective entity. In terms of my research, the QLC approach is able to provide a structure that matches what Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) write about when promoting the desirability of collegial and collaborative work cultures. They argue that schools should be rewarding collective rather than individual learning for the enhancement of schools as learning organisations.

### *Modifications to the QLC model*

While the above features guided my thinking about the QLC approach, the teachers in the QLC were encouraged to shape the model as they began working with it. This was necessary because it was clear from the initial questionnaire that the teachers who were willing to have further involvement in the study came from different schools rather than from within the same school (as was the usual pattern for a QLC). If a quality learning circle model were to be used, its membership and processes had to cater for the different work environments across these schools. This required considerable discussion to satisfy all members of the circle that their learning would actually benefit their particular needs and circumstances. Such broadening of the QLC’s

membership was one of the main modifications we made and was both a strength and an issue to be overcome (refer to chapter 7 for details).

The main differences were that members were classroom teachers in the Christchurch City area in different schools, and they differed in the class levels they were teaching. These covered the whole range from years 1-8. School types were also different, with some teachers teaching in the higher socio-economic areas (decile 9 and 10 schools) while others worked in lower socio-economic areas (deciles 2 and 6). The teachers themselves ranged in teaching experience from 5 years to 20 plus years. While all of these factors added to the diversity of the quality learning circle, it is worth noting that Fullan (1999) has argued for the importance of diversity in his most recent set of lessons for understanding the complexity of the change process. This comment provides a justification for the diverse membership of the QLC because conflict and diversity are seen as opportunities for learning.

### *The sample*

Six months after the initial questionnaire on the impact of the NEMP reports was sent to teachers in Canterbury, work began on developing a QLC with a small group of teachers. Contact was made with twenty-six teachers who had completed the initial questionnaire and indicated a willingness to have further involvement in the project. The original intention was that these teachers would form cluster groups in their areas as quality learning circles. However, for pragmatic reasons (travelling distances and associated costs), a single group was formed. The geographical spread of teachers willing to be involved covered North, South and Mid-Canterbury as well as Christchurch City. Unfortunately teachers in the outlying areas were either not clustered in close proximity to each other or were insufficient in number to form a quality learning circle in a particular region. This created an immediate dilemma because the involvement of teachers working outside the Christchurch City boundary meant additional release time and money would be required to make their attendance possible. The reality was that the project's budget could not extend beyond a \$100 payment to the schools for teacher release and an additional amount to the teachers for their car travel for the fortnightly meetings. I considered that payments for teachers requiring a full day's release would compromise the frequency of the meetings and it was therefore more viable to work with teachers who did not require further release time and the more substantial travelling expenses. Thus the sample was restricted to those teachers who could travel across the city in 15-20 minutes and would only require an afternoon's release to attend the meetings. Letters were sent to the teachers who were not accepted as part of the project explaining why it was not possible to include them in the project because of the additional expense involved.

The Christchurch teachers numbered eight and were contacted at the end of the 1998 school year and asked if they were still interested in being involved in the research. Each teacher replied in the affirmative but not without some concerns about the impact on their already full workloads. These issues were discussed and one subsequently had to withdraw because she had been appointed acting principal over the Xmas holidays. It was important to fill this place in the circle to enable pairings of teachers for the school visits. I asked the teacher who was unable to join the circle to suggest a possible replacement because I had no other possibilities to explore from teachers responding to the questionnaire from Christchurch City. I was given the name of a teacher, who, despite being somewhat over-committed with extra study, had an established interest in the NEMP project through her involvement as a teacher administrator in 1998 and when approached welcomed the opportunity to have further involvement with NEMP.

In February 1999, the eight teachers met together as a group for the first time. All were strangers to each other except for two teachers who had met before on in-service courses. This opportunity to work with a new group of teachers appealed to all of the teachers who saw it as another network which would take them beyond their own school's gates. The purpose of the first meeting was to explain and clarify the purpose of the quality learning circle, the teachers' involvement and my expectations of them. More detailed descriptions of this first meeting are provided in Chapter 7. It was necessary however, to provide further clarification through two written communications to the QLC teachers after this initial meeting. The first memorandum (written immediately after the first meeting) reminded each of the teachers to think about how they might match their experimenting with NEMP with their existing school staff development projects. It also included a framework for reporting any NEMP tasks for the next meeting. Following the individual interviews (held before the second QLC meeting), I sent the teachers a second memorandum. This was in response to key issues raised by the teachers in the interviews which I felt needed airing before the group met again. In this memorandum (dated 3 March 1999), I acknowledged the teachers' difficulty with a "journey into the unknown" with no apparent structure by saying:

*I sense that your recent experiences in the Ministry contracts follow a different pattern from the one I am introducing to you. It is my hope that by addressing these concerns we may all feel more comfortable about our involvement and clarify a direction to follow.*

Furthermore I reinforced the notion that the quality learning circle was a support structure for gaining confidence with the NEMP reports through the trialing of assessment tasks in classrooms and sharing these details at the QLC meetings. My role in the QLC was also documented and I said:

*I have a dual role in the group both as a group member and as a researcher documenting the QLC as a tool for professional development. One of my difficulties is that I do not*

*want to be in charge or be seen as a lecturer. By the same token I need to ensure that the project is based around teachers finding ways of using the NEMP reports and not getting side tracked! This is particularly difficult when the group is forming and looking for direction. I need to be careful that group members are comfortable with the group, its purpose and don't feel anxious about what is expected of them. I am not wanting to cause more stress.*

At the first meeting I explained my distance from classroom teaching and that I should not be seen as the person to lead the group through the NEMP reports. I considered that this honesty about my background was necessary and would save me getting into curriculum areas beyond my expertise and currency. Further details of how I established a working relationship with the QLC teachers are recorded in Chapter 7. In the meantime, it is important to introduce each of the teachers who joined the quality learning circle.

### ***Profiles of the circle's membership***

Each of the circle's members has been given a nom de plume for this research and is introduced through a brief profile. I argue that it is helpful to appreciate the variety of school contexts in order to understand the impact of the NEMP reports and other initiatives that the schools have faced. Later chapters will demonstrate the need to place these schools within their communities rather than try and generalise for all regardless of difference.

*Sarah* had taught for 8 years when she joined the research project. She already held senior teacher status and was responsible for a senior syndicate. Sliding doors from her classroom opened into the adjacent classroom indicating a close working relationship. The two classes operated as a unit sharing many of their activities with the children, with the teachers doing joint planning. Sarah worked long hours and was also adding to her qualifications with study for the National Diploma in Educational Management. She conveyed a genuine commitment to on-going learning and relished opportunities to share her knowledge with others as well as learn from them. The notion of visits to classrooms of the circle's members appealed greatly to her. Sarah subsequently moved to a new school and position of responsibility at the end of Term 1. In her new role of deputy principal, she took on particular responsibility for assessment and ran several staff meetings on school-wide assessment and incorporated the NEMP material into this.

*Mary* had trained as a teacher after having a family and doing other jobs. At the time the QLC began, she had taught for three years and was an associate teacher for student teachers on their professional practice. In addition to her classroom teaching, Mary had a very busy study programme, which included three upgrade papers for her bachelor's degree. She was the member of the circle who joined as the replacement for the teacher who had become acting principal over

the Xmas holidays. She was anxious about another commitment knowing that the school was to have an ERO visit and what she could offer the circle. Because she had been a teacher administrator for the NEMP project she added an extra dimension to the circle and her experiences were particularly useful in discussions.

Since Mary taught in a six-teacher school, opportunities for staff development were largely as a whole staff. Smaller groupings of syndicates met on an infrequent basis. Mary looked for networks from beyond her school because she found them to be more useful. She felt that staff resented her energy for taking courses for qualification updates and found that she was better to keep quiet about what she might offer the school. Staff meetings were a source of real frustration for her. Her attendance at courses and additional study were therefore deliberate strategies to better her chances for a promotion out of the school.

*Mavis* had been teaching a number of years and had had breaks for having her own children. She was another dedicated teacher who was ready for promotion and was the current staff representative on the Board of Trustees. As a syndicate leader she had responsibilities both within her syndicate and also across the whole school for Social Studies. She prided herself in having taken either a university or advanced studies for teachers paper each year as her own professional development outside the school.

*Lois* was another syndicate leader, associate teacher and a tutor teacher for several beginning teachers at her school. As a senior teacher, she had responsibilities for leading curriculum development in health and physical well-being. She was also a very dedicated teacher who welcomed opportunities for networking with other teachers and regularly attended in-service courses and meetings for teachers. A particular feature of her syndicate meetings was the sharing time, which she had instigated. Teachers were given five minutes each to share a successful teaching strategy or a new resource and this practice had developed an atmosphere of learning from each other as equals. Of all the teachers in the QLC, Lois was the one who brought the most samples of work from her work with the NEMP reports.

*Katrina* was another experienced teacher who took an active part in staff development at her school. She had a particular passion for resource development and was able to report back to her staff after each QLC meeting. Subsequently she developed resource boxes for themes and one-off activities from the NEMP reports. Throughout the QLC meetings, Katrina provided lots of ideas for resources which could be purchased at low cost to make teaching more interesting. She

saw the potential for the NEMP ideas as adding an extra dimension of variety and fun to her classroom programme.

*Harriet* was relatively new to her school, having been recently appointed a senior teacher and syndicate leader. She, like the others, welcomed opportunities to talk about classroom concerns with assessment. Ambitious for further positions of responsibility, Harriet saw her NEMP involvement as developing strengths in assessment. She later had a turn at being a teacher administrator for NEMP.

*Diane* was both the Deputy Principal and a Reading Recovery teacher. She had recently moved to the junior school having taught the older classes for many years. Working in a small school, she had adopted a team approach and had her whole school trialing aspects of the NEMP reports. When she heard that a class was doing a new special topic, she went and offered NEMP ideas, even to the extent of arriving with a bag of ‘goodies’ for the teacher. Later in the year Diane became an acting principal at another school which was in considerable strife, and subsequently stayed on as the principal appointing an entirely new staff.

*Lara* was a part time Scale A teacher who joined the QLC circle because she felt disadvantaged as a part timer not having access to professional development opportunities. The opportunity to learn more about NEMP through the QLC experience appealed to her because she did not teach in the afternoons. Lara found it more difficult than the others to trial the NEMP tasks because her time was limited to particular curriculum areas in the mornings when she worked with her class. Her attendance at the QLC also fluctuated with the onset of her first pregnancy. She opted out of the school visits because of her part time status, which meant that three teachers worked together and had an extra visit to schools. This if anything was an advantage for these teachers who were able to divide their classes into three smaller groups.

All of the circle’s members shared a commitment to on-going learning. They actively sought opportunities for learning and were prepared to move outside their schools and use their own time. While all maintained busy schedules, they still welcomed new ideas especially if they could see ways of applying them to their classroom programmes of work. They liked nothing better than talking about ideas for classroom teaching.

### ***Researcher’s role in the QLC***

My role in the QLC was planned as a participant observer. This was problematic for several reasons. I could not be considered a full participant in the quality learning circle because I did not participate in the school visits, did not trial the NEMP tasks in a classroom and therefore could not contribute to the sharing of NEMP dissemination in the classroom. I was also an observer in the circle who at times participated in discussions to keep the teachers on task or responded to questions the teachers asked me. Thus my interactions with the teachers contributed to the functioning of the QLC and I was not an observer in the strictest sense. As a researcher I could also claim an affinity with the teachers being researched because of my work in schools as both a classroom teacher and a teacher educator working in the field of curriculum development and educational management. The teachers had been informed about this background. Undoubtedly these roles have influenced my thinking about what it means to be a teacher, what constitutes effective teaching and assessment practice and how teachers might respond to curriculum development initiatives in times of considerable change. It is because of this sensitivity to the busy world of teachers that I wanted the quality learning circle to proceed at its own pace rather than impose my direction on the circle's learning pathway. As the ninth member of the circle, I faced tensions because no matter how much I tried to be accepted as one of the teachers, I could not escape being seen as a researcher who was trialing a quality learning circle with a group of teachers. For the teachers this meant adjusting to an outsider who firmly resisted taking the lead and determining the direction of the circle's learning agenda. This was a difficult role to enact as the teachers wanted the security of knowing what was expected and how this would be achieved. Their response was "we are busy people, tell us what to do and we'll do it". I wanted the teachers to be equal learning partners shaping the direction of their learning with no one person acting as its leader. I endeavoured to model this stance by showing the teachers that I was a NEMP learner so that they would not continue to see me as someone who could shortcut their learning by providing ready-made solutions. This was important because the quality learning circle approach was somewhat experimental and required both the teachers and me as the researcher to acknowledge that we would be learning as we went. Thus it was important for me to reinforce the two notions of a learning culture and learning as a journey into 'unknown waters' from the circle's inception. I believed that if the QLC model were to help the teachers to use the NEMP material, then it was particularly important to establish a pattern of the teachers' sharing their NEMP learning experiences one with another so that the circle did not rely on me to deliver information and create a situation of dependent rather than independent learners.

### **Qualitative research methodology**

I have used qualitative research methodology for the next two phases of data gathering and analysis in my thesis. This is because qualitative research methodology provides abundant data for understanding the richness and subtlety of human experience, which for my study allows me to capture teachers' experiences of learning and development. In a general sense, qualitative research methodology is used to interpret the lived experiences of people in a particular context. This methodological approach enables the researcher to listen to the people involved talk freely about their experiences and highlights the features that they consider to be of importance. Burns (2000) suggests that qualitative forms of investigation recognise the importance of the subjective, experiential 'life world' of human beings and help to make sense of one's world.

Challenges facing the qualitative researcher are twofold. The first relates to the extent to which research participants can articulate their experience and the second relates to how the researcher can select appropriate methods to achieve this articulation (Walsh, 1996). The first challenge means grappling with the problem of unconsciousness to bring knowledge to the surface. Walsh contends that to address this challenge, the researcher "will query a participant in order to foster the process of looking within. The participant's elaborations, clarifications and associations then become the data for analysis" (p.378). Thus, the second challenge is partially addressed when qualitative researchers use interviews to draw this information from their research participants. This second challenge is further addressed by scrutinising the data. When researchers use a qualitative approach, they can record interviews to identify common themes that give meaning to the shared experience of participants. They can also use transcripts of these recordings for the participants to reflect on their experiences.

### The interpretive paradigm

Questions of paradigm are of primary importance when interpreting research findings. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that guide action. Paradigms give consideration to epistemology, ontology and methodology. Denzin and Lincoln have framed these as: "how we know the world, what the nature of reality is and how we gain knowledge about the world" (p.99).

An interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to capture what people say and do in order to interpret the world from a participant's viewpoint. This is a particularly useful tool because it can serve to confront participants with the reality of their worlds in ways that otherwise may not be possible.



Several principles are important to consider when using the interpretive paradigm. These include reciprocity, reflexivity and reflection. *Reciprocity* is an acknowledgement that knowledge is co-constructed and is a mutual exercise of exploration and discovery. This has implications for the way the research should be designed and interpreted because both the researcher and the researched will influence each other's thought patterns by what is said and not said. *Reflexivity* allows the participants to carefully examine their own actions including their implicit aspects. Walsh (1996) writes that for the participant this "entails recollection of a lived experience, with attention to details that might typically be ignored" (p.378). For the researcher, experiences will be understood through personal frames of reference and an awareness of the social and historical meanings of the participant's experience. Finally *reflection* is acknowledged as being a process of thinking about one's experiences either during or after a learning episode. Involvement in the research project will have helped the participants to consider the meaning of their experiences and these can be explored through their responses to interview questions. Holstein and Gubrium (1998) maintain "both parties to the interview are necessarily and ineluctably active" (p.114). Furthermore they argue:

*Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge- treasuries of information awaiting excavation, so to speak- as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers. Participation in an interview involves meaning-making work.*

Thus, in using qualitative methodology for my study I am able to interpret the teachers' experience through a variety of lenses. Rich descriptive data can tell me what the teachers know about teacher learning and development, the factors or conditions they consider help teacher learning and development, and how this knowledge might inform existing practices. I have addressed the challenge of interpreting this data by acknowledging the principles underpinning an interpretive paradigm. When documenting my contributions to the QLC meetings and responding to the teachers' concerns raised in the individual interviews, I have acknowledged the principle of reciprocity. This has allowed me to explain my role in the quality learning circle as more active than a passive observer able to assist the teachers in the formation of a quality learning circle. One example of this was when I responded to the teachers' concerns about the lack of initial structure to their learning by bringing this to the attention of the group as an issue which needed to be addressed. When Mary suggested that one way forward might be for the group to settle on studying one report in-depth per meeting, I shared this with the other members of the QLC. When the QLC met and decided that this structure was appealing, I then offered to prepare a summary sheet of the main points as a framework for discussion. I did this because the teachers had told me that they liked to work from a structure. My attempt at providing a written summary drew attention to the grouping of the NEMP tasks according to the strands in their

associated curriculum documents and this reassured the teachers of their usefulness. My summary served as a link between a national assessment task and an idea for classroom assessment.

In addressing reflexivity, I asked the teachers to keep a journal of their NEMP trialing in an exercise book. I provided the teachers with a possible format for recording their NEMP trialing. These headings included subject area, task name, reason chosen and a comment on its usefulness. Only one teacher (Diane) listed details of her trialing in the exercise book for the duration of the QLC. This included samples of tasks she had used, brief comments on the types of response the children had given and how useful the task was for a curriculum area or age group of children. She was particularly interested in the usefulness of the NEMP tasks across the school and the full range of curriculum area. This approach did not work with the other teachers who merely used the exercise book as a place to list the various tasks they had used without making additional comments about their usefulness. As a source of data, the journal was of limited use. I soon realised that the interviews provided me with a better source of data through which to gain an impression of how the teachers were making use of the NEMP tasks and their levels of satisfaction with the quality learning circle as an approach to professional learning. In my analysis of the interview transcripts, I also made notes to myself about my reaction to what the teachers had told me and these served as reminders for subsequent interview questions.

Reflection was included in my research method when I invited the teachers to read the transcripts of their individual interviews. The teachers were informed about the return of their transcripts when I set up the interviews and knew they could make any changes to the script. Interestingly enough, the teachers were only worried about the language (ums, ahs, and okays) they had used rather than any content messages they had conveyed. I considered that the interview situation was a useful time for the teachers to think about their learning experiences and I acknowledge that this was an exercise of joint meaning making.

### ***Methods for investigating the quality learning circle experience***

Cohen and Manion (1998) define the term 'method' as being the range of approaches used to gather data which are then used as a basis for inference, interpretation, explanation and prediction. My study uses multiple sources for its data. These include: interviews and observational notes of meetings which were always written up immediately after each meeting. Other sources include the documentation of the interview transcripts and textual data supplied by the teachers themselves. For example, Mavis and Sarah gave me their planning notes for staff

meetings on assessment and dissemination of the NEMP information to other teachers at their schools.

### *Interviews and interviewing*

Burns (2000) describes interviews as being verbal interchanges in which the interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs, and opinions from another person. These may be unstructured (open-ended), semi-structured or structured.

Interviewing is a skilled activity. Altrichter, Posch and Somekh suggest that an interviewer's listening skills are as important as their questioning skills. They contend that the interviewer can show respect for teachers being interviewed by remembering not to interrupt trains of thought, accept pauses as a natural part of reflection, and accept whatever is said, however unexpected and regardless of their own views as the interviewer. When asking questions, the interviewer also needs to make it clear what they want to know, while at the same time helping the teachers being interviewed explore their own thoughts. While it will be necessary to seek expansion and clarification of ideas from time to time, the interviewer should be careful that such a request is not giving a contradictory message. For example, a request for more details can be interpreted as a strong acknowledgement of the importance of what has been said, or as an indication that the truth is being questioned.

In my study, I chose a guiding approach and asked teachers semi-structured questions. This was because I wanted to capture each teacher's perceptions of her QLC experience. By using semi-structured interviews as my research tool, I was able to explore the critical issues for the teachers as learners and yet allow the teachers sufficient scope to reflect on their recent experiences. This meant treating the interview as a conversation and being flexible so that I could ask additional questions where I felt teachers could usefully expand their responses. This enabled me as the researcher/interviewer to develop a reciprocity with the teachers which would determine the direction of subsequent questions in our combined search for knowledge about what constituted effective teacher learning and development. In asking the teachers to recall details of their previous experiences of teacher learning and development, my interview questions prompted the teachers to be reflexive and identify particular features that had been seen to contribute or hinder their learning. Thus my questions helped the teachers to reflect on their experiences when they were asked to describe their learning, explain its meaning, discuss its degree of success and suggest alternative practices in the same way as Smyth (1989) had developed reflectivity for improving teaching practice (see Chapter 5).

Taking account of Altrichter et al's concerns, I gave careful consideration to both the content and sequence of the questions for the interviews tracking the teachers' experiences of the QLC. Copies of the interview questions are included as Appendix C. My intention throughout all the interviews was one of affirming the teachers' experiences regardless of the extent of their familiarity with NEMP and to accept their accounts as they were told. There were however some limitations with these semi-structured interviews. Where I kept to the exact wording of my interview schedule I was able to compare the teachers' responses one with another but any other questions were specific to individuals and their unique contexts and thus could not be compared.

#### *Recording and transcribing the interviews*

Interview data was collected at three points in the QLC intervention to track the learning journeys of the teachers as individuals and as a group of learners. I decided that it was important to gather baseline data at the beginning of the journey, to interview at a mid point in the QLC journey and then again at the end of the QLC intervention to determine its ultimate progress. Verbal permission was obtained from each teacher to tape record the interviews as the raw data for later analysis. This saved the need for notetaking during the interviews and enabled me as the interviewer to take part in the interview conversation in a way that did not disrupt the flow of the conversation. Full written transcripts were developed from careful listening to each of the tapes and returned to the teachers with an invitation to amend if necessary and gain their approval as a true and correct record of the interview conversations. This allowed the teachers to see that the transcripts were indeed authentic records of their spoken words and served to verify the accuracy and trustworthiness of the transcripts. I believed that this viewing of the transcripts also helped to make my research interests even more explicit to the teachers and thus strengthened our rapport.

#### *Identification of themes*

As I read and interpreted each transcript, I identified key words, sentences and phrases. The generation of themes was guided by the questions I asked and my knowledge of the literature. While themes generally related to a particular question, there were also recurring themes appearing across the various questions. Two examples of these recurring themes concerned the pressures of time for quality learning and the teachers' feelings of isolation from adequate stimulation in their own schools.

To aid my analysis I developed a summary sheet in which I brought the interview transcripts of individual teachers from each interview round into one document question by question. I found Bell and Gilbert's (1996) model of teachers' personal, social and professional needs a useful starting point for developing my key words of this summary document. This model allowed me to focus on issues relating to the teachers' personal attitudes and feelings about their learning, the development of satisfying working relationships with colleagues and the benefits of that learning to classroom teaching and learning. I was also guided by my reading of the literature on the management of change, adult learning theories and models of professional development which have been addressed in Chapters 3 and 5. I looked for comments which indicated particular difficulties or strengths in the approaches used for the teachers' learning and development and how the teachers had responded to them. This allowed me to compare the teachers' previous experiences with the QLC intervention and subsequently develop four major themes. These themes emerged from the interview data with the teachers and indicated significant phases in the QLC journey. The phases concerned the structure and pattern of the QLC meeting time, the sharing of ideas and concerns about practice, classroom visiting and the dissemination of learning. Key words and phrases were then inserted as quotations to support the themes and are illustrated in Chapter 7. These themes were related to the questions I had asked about previous learning experiences, the teachers' involvement in decisions about learning processes and agendas, their reflections on practice, opportunities for sharing ideas with colleagues, classroom application and the type of support provided for new learning.

In extracting meaning from the interview transcripts I paraphrased each response with the teacher's name alongside and supplied a page reference to the interview transcripts for later selection of quotations on my summary sheet. My next step in analysing these responses was to look for responses which were endorsed by more than one individual and to place these together. The remaining responses not mentioned by the other teachers were kept to one side for later consideration. I used a highlighter pen to draw attention to those responses which related to the themes appearing in my reading of the literature. Details of this process are explained through the following example from an interview question relating to the uniqueness of the QLC model (see Appendix D, question 3).

In this example, the responses showed that teachers' enthusiasm was dependent on an active involvement in their learning. This is illustrated by responses such as, "you'll get out of it what you put in" (Lois), "it's putting the onus on those in the circle to make contributions" (Lois), "everybody has to do something" (Mavis), "having like minded people who want to be there and are willing to share their experiences" (Harriet), "having to do an equal amount to bring to the

group” and learning “being dependent on the energy and interest of the participants” (Mary).

For Diane, it was the sharing of what worked in other people’s classrooms that had helped her to become enthusiastic and committed to the NEMP tasks. Her comment was, “it has prodded us [to say], oh that looks alright. Oh I think I could handle that one and I’ll give it a go”. Taken as a whole, these responses highlight the importance of teachers spending time with one another and sharing what works in the classroom.

My selection of quotations was made from this clustering of responses to reflect the range of response across the teachers. I was careful to be inclusive of each of the teachers’ responses. Where responses fell outside what had been said by others in the QLC, I added details of the contextual circumstances to explain their significance. For example, Mary’s comments about liking the input of others and developing a professional rapport with others indicated important differences in the way the QLC operated from her school’s usual pattern of professional development in its staff meetings. She commented that in her own school environment, the other teachers showed little, if any interest in professional conversations about the craft of teaching. I considered that it was important to record this comment because it explained why Mary found the QLC such an attractive alternative. Similarly, Katrina’s comments about valuing other people’s ideas were important for a different reason. There were no other teachers at the year 8 level to exchange ideas of practice. Given this reality, it was no wonder that the QLC had some appeal for her because she was able to interact with year 8 teachers in the group and gain new ideas. The attraction of the QLC for the remaining teachers was the enthusiasm of a group of teachers committed to learning and sharing ideas of practice. These teachers did not share the same enthusiasm for meeting with colleagues at their own schools where typically teachers attended meetings with some reluctance.

I am confident that my selection of quotations and commentary of the QLC experience for the eight teachers is indeed a balanced and fair reflection of their experiences and views. My analysis has allowed me to match the teachers’ responses with themes from the literature and at the same time to note any responses which have been bound by contextual differences. My coding has accounted for these differences so that the unique contexts for teachers’ learning and development have been appreciated and understood. While my starting point was one of identifying broad literature themes, individual responses have highlighted the need to acknowledge differences in the nature of learning, its processes and the conditions under which learning might be possible. Thus it was entirely appropriate to base my selection of quotations around the teachers’ experiences of what they had learned, how this had happened, their frustrations and successes and what they would like to see done better in the future.

The data presented in Chapter 7 includes the teachers' experiences of teacher learning and development in general as well as their experience as members of a quality learning circle. It shows the developmental stages of the QLC and its overall value as a professional development strategy for teachers.





## Chapter 7

### The QLC experience

This chapter includes details about the planning and progress of the QLC experience. It is told through a combination of the researcher's observations of the circle and interviews with each of the teachers at three different points in the life of the QLC. Emerging themes are presented and discussed at each of the interview points to highlight the QLC as a learning journey, both about the NEMP reports and the teachers as learners themselves.

The word 'journey' was an apt description of the QLC experience, but it was one which had no set destination. As the researcher I had no preconceived notion of an end point for the journey that could be conveyed to the teachers. I merely hoped that the process would increase teacher confidence in the planning and implementation of classroom assessments through a focus on the NEMP reports.

The QLC design had considerable appeal because it allowed room for experimentation, discoveries and the opportunity to learn as individuals and as a group. However, just how the learning journey might be planned by a group of relative strangers from different settings was another matter and proved to be a particular challenge. This began by sharing a willingness to explore the NEMP reports with the sole purpose of expanding knowledge about what good classroom assessment meant. This was a very broad goal given that there were at this time nine NEMP reports covering a range of curriculum areas and essential skills. This pile of unfamiliar reports was daunting for the teachers who did not know what lay ahead of them. Before the journey of discovery could begin, some agreement on a 'game plan' was needed to allay these fears and satisfy everyone's needs including the concurrent areas of development focus in each of the teachers' schools. This step marked the beginning of the QLC journey which is unfolded in three distinct stages covering the journey's beginning, mid and end points over the time span of the year in which the QLC meetings were held. These appear as:

Section 1: Beginning the learning journeys

Section 2: After 5 months journeying

Section 3: After 8 months journeying

### *Section 1: Beginning the learning journeys*

The notion of a quality learning circle was new to all eight teachers. This approach was totally different from any professional learning or development programmes of these teachers had ever experienced. Until their QLC experience, these teachers had been accustomed to attending highly structured programmes, which told them what it was they had to learn and subsequently implement in their classrooms. When they met as a QLC the tight structure of previous models was missing and they faced the dilemma of having to find their own structure for learning to begin. Thus considerable negotiation was required amongst the QLC members to clarify the nature of the task, the QLC's features and what involvement would mean. For them a clear structure meant they could proceed with the task of learning about NEMP without delay, and so this was an obstacle to be overcome in the first few meetings of the circle as members came to terms with a structure they determined themselves.

Details of the model were conveyed using extracts from a video of New Zealand teachers engaging in professional development with the QLC model. This became a starting point for discussion and was useful because it included teachers talking about their learning experiences with a QLC model. However, the examples portrayed on the video did not include teachers using a new resource such as the NEMP reports and so the circle's members began exploring ways in which they could adapt the model viewed on the video to suit their focus on the NEMP reports. The researcher's suggestion to the circle was that this might involve:

- Attending 4 meetings a term
- Visiting the classrooms of the other members of the circle
- Keeping a record (in a notebook) of all staff/personal development using the NEMP tasks
- Reporting to each QLC on trialing with the NEMP material and showing samples of work to the circle's members
- Agreeing to individual interviews with the researcher at the beginning and end of the project.

Because the meetings were to be held in school time at a venue away from each of the schools, reimbursement was needed for travelling expenses and the employment of a relieving teacher for each of the teachers for an afternoon. This generous support from the Ministry of Education through the NEMP project made their involvement possible in school time.

Following the initial meeting of the circle, a memo was circulated to all members as a written record of the expectations for the next meeting. Amongst other things it said:

We agreed at today's meeting that each person would give consideration to how they might match experimenting with the NEMP tasks with their existing staff development in their schools.

Reporting to the circle on 24 February should include one or more of the following:

- How the associated NEMP report content might fit with classroom/school development plans
- Comments about a particular NEMP report e.g., test content, results, implications for classroom practice
- Any trials or adaptations of the NEMP tasks
- Sample of work (if appropriate) from NEMP trials or adaptations.

In between the first and second meetings of the circle, interviews were held with each member of the circle in their schools. As all but one member of the quality learning circle were unfamiliar to the researcher, this was a valuable opportunity to gather individual impressions about the first QLC meeting, the teachers' backgrounds and familiarity with NEMP, constraints on their school/classroom trialing and to establish a rapport with the members.

After the first meeting of the QLC, the eight teachers admitted that their looking at the NEMP reports had been more of a 'flick through the pages' and now they realised that there was much more to the programme than their initial 'flick' had provided. It seemed that even at this early stage of the circle's existence, the teachers preferred learning in the company of others rather than being left to their own devices with a document to read. Since they had not had opportunities for focused talking about NEMP in their schools, it was no wonder that they were largely unfamiliar with the assessment ideas offered to them and were anxious about any expectations placed upon them.

#### *Initial viewpoints from the QLC teachers*

Interviews were held with each of the teachers following the first QLC meeting (refer to Appendix C for the questions). This collated data is now presented under five themes to reflect each of the teacher's viewpoints according to their:

- current context for professional development
- satisfaction with professional development
- views about an ideal programme

- current barriers to effective professional development
- hopes and dreams for the QLC as an alternative professional development opportunity.

*The current context for professional development*

For each of the QLC teachers the dominant approach to professional development was whole school development which had in all cases been associated with the Ministry of Education development contracts and the implementation of new curriculum documents. Here the overriding message was one of too much change in too short a timeframe.

Yet despite this reality, positive attitudes towards these changes were evident amongst all of the teachers who it seemed actually welcomed new learning opportunities. Diane even saw a funny side to the arrival of documents in her school when she referred to this as being a bit of a joke. In making this comment she was not denying the necessity of the document in question but rather its timing which had not taken into account the existing overload for teachers who had not absorbed their previous documents and yet here was another one arriving on their doorstep requiring attention.

Thus the question of how teachers would find even more time for the developments expected of them was a shared concern. They were all in agreement that there was insufficient time to become fully familiar with a development before the staff moved on to a new area. The only solution they could see was for teachers to come back in their holidays and this was not favoured. Mavis indicated that teachers were already coming back in weekends and having long meetings after school and would not want more of their personal time used for the job. She felt that all schools could do under these circumstances was to develop their own coping strategies, being sensitive to staff and taking each development slowly. Her advice was, “keep it in proportion. Make sure you are doing something and whatever you do, do it properly and then move on to the next one. There’s a lot to do.” Stopping the number and flow of documents and programmes to implement was not even mooted as it seemed that all the document development was needed if schools were to respond to the changing needs of society and their learners.

While Mavis acknowledged that it was hard keeping up with all the developments and extremely time consuming, she also said she was fortunate to have the temperament to keep going with it. In this regard she could not be seen as a ‘victim of change’ as her words indicate:

*I'm interested and always have been in learning what I can and adapting and being a better teacher. That's what I'm here for and that's why I'm evaluating all the time... I always say to my student teachers, I'm not a perfect teacher and I'm always looking for better ways and if I said to you, well I've got it now, I've learnt to do it, that would be really worrying. No my philosophy is I'm a learner... Once I had a teacher here say to me, 'how long are you going to go on learning for? I thought, well, we'll be learning forever, won't we, you know?*

Mary also mentioned being positive about change. Her suggestion was to look for the long term gain and get in there and give it a go. This view suggests that she accepted some personal responsibility to make changes work and did not expect others to do the work for her. She said her approach was:

*If it doesn't work first time, well, try and work out why it didn't work. See if you can make it fit... I think, oh well, there must be something I could do that would make it easier to work out or whatever. Try and find the way.*

Similarly Sarah indicated that she found change exciting but admitted that it had taken a toll on her personal life. She said of herself, "I think I have the energy and enthusiasm to absorb the changes and be open to lots of new ideas and new ways of doing things." Together these comments demonstrate how committed teachers are to doing their best even when overloaded with constant change. It is therefore no surprise to find schools trying to do everything and as a result completing nothing to any real degree of satisfaction.

At another school Lois mentioned the dilemma of multiple themes and having to maintain two or three projects at any one time and said:

*I think time is always the greatest factor in all these things. That we keep up with the things, the demands are huge. Things keep coming and we know we're doing one thing but another document arrives and we think perhaps we should know something about that so it's external forces and there is only so much you can do. So we're often juggling that.*

For Lara the role of external agencies was another factor which contributed towards the pressure to keep up with the new documents. She saw her school's development as being purely to satisfy the Education Review Office. Her words were:

*That's all we're doing making sure all the profiles are up to date and when ERO comes along everything can be...They can say oh that looks good. We're happy with that. Your school has the right kind of objectives. We're not learning much about how to teach anything because the teachers are busy...It's all we're doing fixing up for ERO...It just seems ridiculous to me that we have to spend all that time into making everything look so*

*good for them. There is a purpose to it, so that we're all doing the same amount of things, you know, but yeah, we don't get much time to do other things, like NEMP. It would be last.*

Lois referred to teachers being on a treadmill. She had expressed a real concern for the lack of on-going monitoring once new learning had occurred and said:

*We go to a lot of trouble in one year and put it all in but a year later does anyone go to see what was actually happening? Had we made a difference? Had there been any value added to the way we are teaching or have people fallen back to their old habits? So perhaps some monitoring of staff development, one or two years down the track.*

Diane also talked about the frustration of having lots of loose ends in curriculum development and said that her school had chosen not to launch into anything new for 1999 in order to consolidate. Mention was made too of the need to keep it all in proportion and do something well before moving on to the next.

Katrina spoke about the tiredness factor saying:

*We are too tired and too busy to develop things from scratch. We are more than happy when it comes to October when a teacher comes back from a teacher development course with a scheme that's been used by a couple of other schools and it's presented at staff meeting...and say look I've come up with this, are you happy with it?*

In case anyone thought that Katrina and her teachers were lazy she added that this was not the easy way out but simply the most practical way to go about things and keep up with the demands.

So the message to be gained from this discussion about the current reality of professional development in these schools is that quality is being compromised for quantity and teachers are caught between keeping pace with the developments or falling behind and having to justify their non-compliance.

#### *Teacher satisfaction with professional development*

All of the teachers had stories to tell of their experiences (both positive and negative), with the Ministry of Education contracts. One popular topic of conversation was the quality of the facilitators. Harriet mentioned the delivery skills of the facilitators as being especially problematic and referred to some facilitators "spitting the information out with little vim".

However, not all her experiences had been in this vein. She could also recall positive experiences where a facilitator had used an imaginative approach to win staff attention and had made the learning interesting and worthwhile.

Two other teachers also made mention of the quality of the professional development presenters and facilitators. Sarah talked about having really good presenters with practical ideas who motivated staff and regenerated their love of the job rather than merely giving teachers just another thing to try. Lois indicated:

*It's the calibre of the people who have led in a contract that sways your staff... One thing had to be that you led with passion and you had to believe that this was the best thing since sliced bread and deliver it with total belief so you sell the product.*

It appeared that the QLC teachers appreciated opportunities to lead professional development themselves and their levels of satisfaction were related to their principal's willingness to involve other staff in these leadership roles. For example, at Lois' school, teachers were assigned to curriculum teams and worked alongside a key person to lead a curriculum development. This also served to strengthen the support base available in a school and was an example of leadership being shared at the teacher level rather than remaining with the principal, deputy or assistant principal.

Syndicate level professional development was also important for these teachers. Here syndicate leaders such as Sarah and Lois appreciated having a small amount of freedom to choose other projects for attention, especially those which would permit a sharing of practical classroom strategies. In this regard Sarah mentioned the professional reflection time she had been able to introduce with her syndicate's small action research projects and Lois referred to her five minute sharing of a good resource or teaching strategy.

In determining the overall satisfaction with current professional development offerings, it is significant that the teachers' criticisms of professional development programmes were not concerned with the content of what was being delivered but how this learning was being presented to teachers. This would suggest that the 'how' dimension of learning requires better handling by those training the trainers if the needs of reluctant, tired or overwhelmed teachers are to be better met in professional development sessions.

### *Components of the ideal staff development programme*

This was deemed to be a hard question by those interviewed, who seemed to have just accepted what had been offered to them and had not considered other possibilities. After some initial difficulty listing the components of what they considered the 'ideal' staff development programme would look like, the teachers began thinking about how this staff development time was currently being used and this led to improvements being suggested. They gave examples from their existing programmes that they considered were working well. Katrina for example mentioned the need to have a group of teachers who provided ideas, shared concerns and were available when needed. While others might have a group of teachers serving this purpose at their school, Katrina was aware from her own situation teaching in a smaller school that she needed to look further afield for this professional talk and be proactive about networking opportunities. Regular attendance at in-service courses had partially met this need and this was evident when she said:

*What they taught on the course was irrelevant, but talking to teachers and they go 'oh yes, I have that problem in my class. What do you do about it?' That's what's important. We've lost the camaraderie of teaching, that we support each other.*

What she was saying now was that it was up to individual teachers to find additional networks for learning support.

Better use of the available staff development time was thought to be highly desirable. Harriet wanted more meetings which focused on actual development rather than housekeeping matters. She argued:

*I find it to be here at 5 o'clock and be just starting to look at, you know, appraisal, is just, I mean ridiculous. I'm not even, really, my mind is not operating on, you know, full power at that stage. For me it's not, for other people they may not mind so much, but I don't think we're gaining as much as we possibly could.*

Lara considered a recent teacher only day with the SES had been a great success because it had been held in quality time. A special feature of this development had been a venue beyond the school where teachers had been treated to a nice meal and outside speakers. Lara warmed to this more professional approach and had also appreciated the gesture of closing the school early on two afternoons to complete this programme. She was careful to emphasise that these extra



sessions reinforced and summarised earlier learning and were not ‘heavy stuff’ at the end of a day’s teaching.

Likewise Sarah also referred to the need for more quality time for professional development with the Ministry Contracts. She used an example from her school’s involvement in the ABeL contract to highlight this point. Teachers at her school had opted for a 4-9pm session rather than give up a Saturday in order to satisfy the time commitment. While she personally preferred the Saturday option rather than a later finish on the top of a day’s teaching because of concentration and quality reasons, she had been out numbered. Her ideal was therefore time for development when teachers could concentrate and did not resent their attendance.

Mary talked about staff development being needs based as well as being interactive. She referred to the amount of passive sitting and listening at the end of an already long day. She wanted:

*Really useful material to digest and implement... I get a wee bit frustrated at the amount of paperwork we actually come back and file somewhere and probably don’t look at again until a need arises, unless it really is dynamic, interesting and useful.*

Time without interruptions was Mary’s ideal for the professional development of teachers. To this end she admitted a willingness to give up her own personal time to have a solid day of working.

Factors contributing to the effectiveness of professional development can be summarised under four headings: dispositions of teachers, and issues related to time, the delivery of professional development sessions and the broader role of the education system.

*Figure 3: Factors for effective professional development*

#### **Teachers**

- willing to share ideas and concerns
- opportunities for talk about teaching

#### **Delivery**

- credible presenters
- quality
- teacher engagement
- relevance to classroom
- content adapted to the context, needs and abilities of teachers as learners

#### **Issues of Time**

- managing staff meeting slots
- timeframes for dissemination
- time for consolidation
- competing agendas for staff development

#### **System**

- meeting compliance demands
- quantity of learning

*Hopes and dreams for the QLC*

Each of the teachers wanted the QLC experience to help them as individuals and also benefit others within their schools. Thus dissemination of any learning gained through the QLC experience was considered to be of prime importance. As syndicate and curriculum leaders they each had a firm commitment to ensure that other teachers also kept up to date with new developments and this meant acquiring ideas from beyond their schools, either in terms of reading material or networks of other learners. It was important that they actively sought opportunities that gave them this new knowledge so they could maintain the upper edge and therefore had something to offer other teachers. This was certainly the case for Harriet who viewed the QLC as an opportunity to strengthen her own knowledge base about effective assessment practices so that she had practical offerings for her syndicate. Katrina admitted that assessment was not one of her strengths as a teacher and saw the QLC as an opportunity to remedy this deficiency. She wanted to link her assessments more closely with her teaching as diagnostic tools which would be of benefit to her teaching and her learners, and not just for the sake of compliance and accountability.

For Lois, the QLC offered a new learning group beyond the confines of her school environment. She was particularly concerned about most of her professional development occurring within her school where she was normally on the giving end of the spectrum as one of the more senior teachers amidst a preponderance of beginning and inexperienced teachers. For her own stimulation she recognised the need for input from further afield and this is where the QLC offered her another group of enthusiastic practitioners who shared a similar commitment to learning within a restricted focus about the NEMP reports. Her quest for additional learning opportunities is apparent in the comment:

*We are never sure what others are doing. I think it is important to know what is going on across the city...the opportunities to do anything outside the school are so rare really, unless you go to AST courses.*

Lara also expressed feelings of isolation from ideas. She reflected what she was missing from her own school as a learning environment when she said:

*I'd like to get some really good ideas for teaching and I'm already getting some new assessment ideas. I think it's great being with a variety of different teachers. To me that's enough to get out of it, just talking with other teachers about something and getting their ideas.*

It was not just talking to other teachers that appealed to Sarah. She wanted to see other classrooms in action and gain ideas from classroom observations where the children were working with the NEMP assessment tasks. She saw her learning as a sequence of reading, talking about the NEMP reports with other teachers as learners and then seeing how this information worked in the practical settings of classrooms and said:

*I really firstly would like to get a better knowledge of the reports and what they contain and also with the support of the rest of the group (QLC) see how we can apply those. So upskill myself in being able to apply what's here. The other thing I'm really looking forward to doing is getting out into other classrooms and seeing a different style of teaching, a different way of using them. That part is really exciting.*

The application of the NEMP material for personal and wider use in the school was important for two other members of the QLC. Diane hoped that she could show other teachers how they could use the NEMP assessment tasks to benefit their teaching. Similarly Mavis said:

*I would like to see if I could make more use or if teachers could be motivated or helped to make more use of the NEMP reports as they come into the school system... I think we haven't used them as a working document and teachers who sort of need to be helped a bit, need to find easy ways which they can make use of them.*

That the teachers' hopes and dreams for the QLC moved beyond what happened at the QLC meetings was particularly encouraging for the wider dissemination of the NEMP reports. Not only did the teachers want to disseminate their learning but also they were able to suggest ways in which this might be achieved. Team teaching was suggested by Sarah as being the most practical way to support teachers to try new things in the classroom. She mentioned the ease of giving and receiving support from a colleague in the next door classroom. She also suggested that someone needed to draw attention, highlight the relevance and practical value as well as make it exciting for teachers to want to take on new learning.

Mary saw a place for the development of teaching resources to make up for the learning deficits noted in the NEMP results. Her view was that the results would have little impact unless teachers were supported with further resources and training. She did not see this as just more written material being sent to schools. She said:

*You are so pressed by time and junk mail. I think it needs... a personal approach... You don't often read exciting material unless there's sort of a front up with it. Make it easy, not time consuming, hands on or readily accessible at a reasonable cost.*

To this end both Diane and Katrina were packaging some of the NEMP tasks according to classroom themes to make them more accessible to teachers and were deliberately finding time to show these to teachers as they noted a possible and relevant teaching moment appearing.

This approach was endorsed by Lara who believed that teachers were influenced by what they saw other teachers doing, especially if they could see relevance to their own classroom programmes. Her response was:

*You can try and push it (NEMP) down their throats but they're still not going to use it unless they can see the value in it, like someone taking them through it. Just showing them the books is not going to do the trick.*

For her the 'show and tell' approach was not sufficient to engage teachers. This is worth remembering given the large number of principals in the initial questionnaire who were reported as having disseminated the NEMP reports through a waving of the covers rather than any indepth discussion.

Harriet hoped that future NEMP reports would be more user friendly for teachers. Her suggestion was for a different kind of presentation, perhaps on cards or publishing the tests in a separate book. While she thought that the media had played a useful role in highlighting some of the results at the time reports had been released, she was also worried the reports were not being used. In this regard she thought teachers needed some direction with assessment and saw the NEMP reports as having the potential to address such needs by presenting assessment ideas for teachers in a more practical way.

Mavis saw more hope of successful dissemination of the NEMP reports occurring at the syndicate level than at the full staff meeting. It was her opinion that these smaller groupings of teachers allowed more opportunity for practical support to be given to teachers. Perhaps also teachers could not ignore attempts to introduce new material or approaches when they were part of a smaller group that emphasised classroom planning and monitored its collective performance. She said:

*Like anything, you can make suggestions or motivate and inspire but once it goes to the individual teacher's classroom, some teachers, unless it is required of them, it won't get done. That's life isn't it?*

Thus there is a delicate balance between bringing an awareness of new knowledge and skills to staff and then going the next step with an expectation that new learning is developed in practice. It is clear from these initial interviews with the QLC teachers that many teachers partake in staff development determined by others and as individuals feel little commitment to something which is imposed on them. It was therefore rather interesting to witness the way these QLC teachers were so determined in their desire to spread the word about NEMP, yet do this in ways which would impact on classroom practices. They believed commitment developed after seeing other teachers work with the new material in exciting and meaningful ways to enhance learning.

### *Section 2: After 5 months journeying*

Data for this section comes from a combination of observational notes from QLC meetings and a round of interviews with the QLC teachers in June 1999. At the time of this second interview round, the circle had met over two school terms. Eight meetings of the quality learning circle had occurred and the circle had studied a total of six reports. In addition, there had been some school visits, in which the teachers had both visited another's school and in return had that teacher visit them.

The questions asked in this second round of interviews revisited some of the themes discussed in the earlier interviews. The extent of each teacher's familiarity with the NEMP reports was explored as well as their use of the reports and ways in which sharing had occurred within the teacher's own schools. Additional questions related specifically to the model of the quality learning circle and its perceived value as a tool for professional development (see Appendix D for the interview questions).

### *Summary of themes*

Four themes became apparent from the interview data. These covered decisions regarding what could be learnt from the NEMP reports but more importantly how this learning was to develop within the structure of a QLC. These four themes refer to the structuring of the learning journey, the need for sharing ideas, making classroom visits and disseminating NEMP related knowledge beyond the QLC.

## 1 Structuring the journey

The biggest challenge was to find a common pathway into the circle's selected theme. Most of the teachers had only a brief experience of the NEMP reports. This meant they were entering 'unknown waters', a situation that in itself took them out of their usual comfort zones. All of the teachers also wanted their respective work in the QLC to benefit their particular school situation. They wanted to make links with existing professional development areas and saw NEMP as a supplementary resource to enhance curriculum delivery.

This wish to link each school's priorities with the NEMP reports proved to be too broad for the circle as a whole to manage. It soon became obvious that if the circle were to bind and provide support for its members, then a narrower, common focus was needed. It was therefore decided, by mutual agreement, that the circle sessions would focus on one NEMP report per session and that members would share any details of trialing the reports' tasks and activities at the next meeting. Teachers often reported on other NEMP reports that they had not yet studied as a circle. This allowed them to link their trialing with classroom units of work.

Initially the circle struggled with its chosen focus because most of these teachers were accustomed to professional development models with a definite sequence and content to be followed. Unlike the usual professional development contracts they had encountered in their schools, the QLC model did not offer a programme of work to be followed from A to Z. The purpose of the QLC was to let the circle decide on the route and destination. If the researcher had determined the destination then the teachers in the circle would have expected to be 'spoon fed'. Instead the aim was to trace the journey of the circle in whichever direction(s) it took and then analyse the reasons for the route and its particular landmarks. This would then highlight factors that either helped or hindered the individual and combined journeys of these eight teachers. As a feature of the journey, the tension between the teachers wanting a structure and the researcher resisting a leadership role played an important part of the *storming stage* of team development. During this stage there was a need to clarify the expectations of the study, the amount of work required of each of the teachers, the structure of the meetings and some idea of an outcome. Diane's words echoed the feelings of the circle when she said:

*I like something structured. I want to know what is happening. I like to know why we're going there, what the purpose is and sort of basically what I then know I'll be getting out of it... I have to know exactly where to go and it will get done!*

The teachers' initial concerns related closely to Fullan's (1999) complexity theory which was introduced in chapter 3. In particular they were worried about lack of structure, of embarking on a journey without a set route and destinations, and they also were uncertain about what they were supposed to learn. One of the teachers' tasks was to become more familiar with the assessment strategies presented in the NEMP reports, and the process of doing this was like opening Pandora's Box. On seeing how much the 'box' contained, they became somewhat overwhelmed with the enormity of the task. As Diane said:

*It was just the content that we were using that I couldn't get my hands around...It was a huge thing because I didn't know where to start. There were six books in front of me and I thought, "Oh no!" I didn't know whether I should be doing something that I liked doing, like say reading, or pick something like technology, which I don't even want to go into because that would expand me more. The picture was just too big.*

What the circle had yet to realise was that the challenge of this diversity, uncertainty and instability would involve a very satisfying learning journey. In the meantime, however, they managed to agree on a structure for subsequent meetings, and this eased their feelings of uncertainty. They agreed that each meeting would follow this format:

- 1 The teachers to share any trials they had undertaken of the NEMP tasks outlined in the report that they had discussed at their last meeting (or any other of the NEMP reports for that matter).
- 2 For the researcher to present a synopsis of the present session's report, highlighting the variety of tasks and assessment strategies in it.
- 3 The circle to comment on either the implications of these tasks and strategies for future classroom practice or their links with previous classroom work (for example, curriculum integration, units of work, suitability for various age and interest groups).
- 4 The circle to determine which report would be discussed at the next meeting.

This QLC experience highlighted the relevance of Fullan's (1999) theoretical frameworks of both complexity and evolutionary theories. It showed that the learning pathway was full of surprises and did not follow a linear pattern. The people dimension was also important as members of the circle came to learn from each other and felt a commitment to helping others in the circle learn more about NEMP. At times this was a painful process and not without risks for the teachers. However, as the members of the circle bonded, fear of risks diminished because of the growing strength of their collective learning and support for one another. The QLC helped

the teachers work through the NEMP reports thus meeting their own individual and school needs for obtaining and disseminating the ideas contained in them.

## 2 *Sharing*

Learning as a community of learners appealed to the teachers. Advantages seemed to be the support available from other teachers. This was knowing that others were also learning and, at times struggling. The likelihood of a reduced load was appealing because if others shared their learning this would save a duplication of effort and time.

Once the circle was comfortable with its structure and the use of the QLC meeting time, the established pattern became one of discussing the layout of the reports and how their content might be shared with other teachers in schools. That they all shared a common desire to disseminate information from the NEMP reports gave an added reason for coming together and discussing how this might be accomplished. It also meant that they might find a better solution, which could perhaps save them time or unnecessary struggles. Lois said:

*I probably wouldn't have done anything as in-depth on my own. It has been a focus and definitely made me look at the exemplars and think which ones I could use. I wouldn't have done it without the meetings.*

Katrina also felt she benefited from the circle focus and commented:

*If I'd just had the reports sitting on my desk, I wouldn't have done any more than dipped. Because you [the researcher] had gone through them and summarised them, which makes it a lot easier, and focussed our attention on a different one each time, I've made a point of using them in the classroom and selling them to other teachers. So they've now become a useful part of my programme, rather than an extra dumped on top of everything else.*

Application of the content of these reports in the classroom was very important to the teachers as comments from my observation notes on 10 March reveal:

*I felt throughout this [introducing the maths NEMP report task by task] that I was doing a 'selling' job on the tasks. I got the impression that they were looking for something practical to take away and use. It was like bells were ringing when an activity appealed. I noticed Harriet was jotting down ideas of things she wanted to follow up later.*

As the number of trials increased, more and more of the meeting time became devoted to sharing information, with the teachers increasingly directing their own learning and becoming less



dependent on me to facilitate the meetings. (In fact the researcher's role was often one of ensuring that the agenda was covered). Diane had this to say:

*I think being able to share with each other the things we were doing... has prodded us into, 'Oh, that looks all right. Oh I think I can handle that one', and I'll have a go at it, you know? I think they've [the meetings] developed into a style that's functional and effective.*

In regard to the fortnightly spacing of the meetings, Katrina mentioned the momentum that gathered as each meeting approached:

*When you know you have another meeting coming, you think, 'Oh I must remember to do something for that', so you get the books out. So they've actually encouraged me to use them, because the others, and you [the researcher], expect something at each of the meetings. And I suppose, in all fairness, it's not fair of me to have my Wednesday meetings unless I have done preparation or follow up... I look forward to seeing everybody and seeing how they've gone on the tasks. I look forward to what we are doing next, and I'm always enthused when I go away to try some of the activities.*

The need for teachers to talk regularly about their teaching practice with interested others was clearly an important feature of the QLC, as is the case with a 'learning community'. These teachers loved talking to each other, and once they started, it was often hard to interrupt them. Lois felt that teachers at her school were becoming less inclined to talk about their professional practice when they sat down with other staff in the staffroom. She said:

*I'm not sure why it is, but they won't talk about the last lesson they took. They never say anything that's going well. They don't talk about children and that is the difference about the QLC. It's OK to talk about what you've done... It's a shame because years ago we used to say, 'look I just took something and it was wonderful' that's a no-no now. You don't hear anyone. In fact you wouldn't even know they had been in a room with kids come lunchtime. That is something that is sadly lacking because if they don't reflect on what they are doing, I think they are going down into a hole and it is so important to be sure that what you are doing is educationally sound. So if they don't ever get a chance to discuss with anybody. It's become a very private business.*

There was a sense of excitement with the sharing of the tasks some of the teachers had used. For example Lois came to a meeting and recalled an evaluation task for a Social Studies unit on the Chatham Islands. Here she had adapted the stamp activity as a group activity whereby children in groupings of four, designed a new set of stamps depicting the Chatham Islands. The children were allowed to use a wide variety of resources to help them make their designs and could refer to books, pictures and video clips. Perhaps what appealed to the teachers was the time this activity took for a high quality result to emerge. Lois had used this activity on the last day of the

term and told the circle that it had lasted for most of the day plus how much the children had enjoyed it. This appealed to the others for several reasons, not just keeping children occupied at the end of a term!

The circle teachers were surprised at the depth of the discussions they were experiencing with the QLC model. This confirmed the researcher's 'hunch' that they were not accustomed to such free flowing discussions in their professional development times. Instead they were used to a more formal lecture type delivery with the information condensed into the shortest possible timeframe. Discussion time was seen as an extra if time permitted. Teachers' conversations on the school visits had been similarly worthwhile. Sarah had welcomed the focused talk, which had not been accompanied by distractions, or what she called 'personal baggage'. She described her school visit in these terms:

*You didn't have any responsibility for any other staff and helping them or supporting them or whatever personal things they were going through. So it was actually just catching up with the professional outside your situation and being able to empathise with, you know the workload and the job at hand. But also we did discuss in quite some depth at the end of it, how we could apply the assessment tasks, how they worked, and what was interesting to note... maybe we should have taped it, as it was really good quality thinking!*

Teacher talk seemed to be the key for these teachers. Since the development of collegiality in schools is closely aligned with teacher talk, the work of Judith Warren Little (1981) is appropriate here. She writes that collegiality depends on the presence of four specific behaviours in schools. By coincidence, each of these can be linked to the QLC approach, even the classroom visits (discussed below). According to Little, adults in schools:

- *[T]alk about practice. These conversations are frequent, continuous, concrete and precise.*
- *[O]bserve each other engaged in the practice of teaching and administration. These observations become the practice to reflect on and talk about.*
- *[E]ngage together in work on curriculum by planning, designing, researching and evaluating curriculum.*
- *[T]each each other what they know about teaching, learning and leading. Craft knowledge is revealed, articulated and shared (pp.12-13).*

When comparing the usefulness of QLC to teacher talk in their own schools, the teachers offered several comments. Mary said:

*I like, actually, professional rapport with other people, and I think the difficulty sometimes is discussing some things that others aren't interested in, whereas here, we all have a common focus.*

All of the teachers felt that they were better able to reflect on their practice outside of their school environment. Katrina spoke about her realisation of a personal need to 'bounce' ideas off somebody else and the value of looking at other people's teaching styles in order to understand her own. Lois (who worked in the largest of the schools represented by the group) developed her earlier comment about needing to move beyond her school as a teacher learner when she claimed:

*As teachers we need time to reflect, and this situation with the QLC is perfect in that it is away from school...It's people who have similar interests or experience...It's actual time to talk to other people about what we do. And as a teacher, I don't feel I do enough of that perhaps in this school. I do have other people in the community I ring and say... "I want to discuss...*

Mavis was enthusiastic about the QLC model for a different reason. Having described her experiences of school professional development as spoon-feeding, she had found the QLC model quite different and indicated:

*Here we are having to do an equal amount to bring to it because we are all helping each other... I think the QLC is good in the fact that we are feeling we have some sort of ownership in it.*

Similarly, Lois also mentioned this theme of having ownership of the circle's direction and content. She said:

*It's really been, you'll get out of it, what you put in... so the more I do, the more I'll have to share. It's putting the onus on the people in the circle to make contributions. So if you have a lot of people who have got the energy, and we are interested, then it is obviously going to be more successful than if you have got people who perhaps are not as committed.*

The sharing component of the QLC meeting also served to address assessment concerns each of the teachers had. At the meetings interest was shown in the following concerns:

- How much assessment information should be passed on to the next teacher or school?
- What does a manageable assessment profile look like for a whole class?
- How do you get consistency between teachers?

- Do we place an additional barrier for children when we ask them to write their answers down on paper rather than verbalise them?
- How much probing should an assessor do in the testing situation?
- How realistic is 1:1 testing for a whole class and how can this be effectively managed?
- When doing group assessments, how do you encourage all children to participate when the group includes some very dominant characters?
- How do teachers know what a high, middle and low range performance is?

### 3 School visits

After a term of meetings, the teachers were ready to exchange classroom visits. While the idea of school visits had been mooted at the first session, this had been a source of anxiety for the teachers. They certainly liked the idea of going to another classroom, but at the same time were anxious about the return visit to their own classrooms. This related to them not being completely confident about NEMP and how it might be used in a whole class setting.

As before with the issue of structuring the meetings, there was considerable discussion. No one wanted to rush into the school visits before they felt secure and comfortable with the idea. The idea of having an observer in their classrooms meant that they needed to reach a certain level of confidence with their NEMP work before they could welcome the visit of a colleague. It seemed that opportunities to talk with colleagues were rarities. Mavis said:

*Just mixing with the other person and visiting another school. We hardly ever do that as experienced teachers either... We don't get time in our schools to talk with our colleagues, let alone go to another school and talk with other colleagues. So I think we've all really enjoyed that as well.*

While beginning teachers had the chance to visit other classrooms and schools, the more experienced teachers did not. Lois spoke about the school visit offering a break from the routine of her classroom. She described it as a refresher after twenty years of classroom teaching without breaks in service and commented:

*I've felt stale and burnt out and I think this opportunity plus the PE contract has lifted my spirits. I've had 2 suspensions in my room so it has been one of the most difficult classroom years that I've ever had. Probably my first ever suspension, but I feel that I'm working longer hours and later into the night and I'm more enthused about the sort of teaching I'm doing than I've ever had before. That is because I've had fresh ideas.*

*Whether it has been the NEMP meeting or going to someone else's school. That's got me through.*

It was fortunate that the teachers gained access to some of the NEMP resources (for example, video extracts, card equipment and photographs). These provided them with a real incentive to trial the NEMP tasks and marked another turning point in their journey with NEMP. Suddenly the arrival of the resources took away some of the anxiety. As Katrina observed at the time:

*Well having the gear has helped. You know, as soon as we got our packs of gear, I could try activities that I couldn't try without it... Before I was picking out activities that I could adapt to worksheet or teacher talking stuff. As soon as I got the equipment, I could try different activities... Also when we went to other schools, we could try tasks that could be taken with a smaller group and we divided the class into three groups of 10.*

This arrival of the resources reduced some of the pressure of preparation work for these teachers. It also answered their initial concerns about whole class management when using NEMP activities because they could now involve the visiting teacher in a meaningful way rather than have that person simply observe. Usually, the extra pair of hands allowed the two teachers to divide the class into groups for station activities, freeing them up to discuss with each other the class, individual children and the success of the activities used. Comparisons were possible across the schools, as several teachers repeated the same activities. Sarah referred to this as a 'reality check' and spoke about the tasks she and Katrina had used with their different year levels. They had noticed the development of the children's group skills in particular.

Most of the teachers experienced four visits, either visiting someone else or having another person visit them. They valued these experiences, seeing them as a rare chance to go beyond their own school gates. By trialing the various activities across age groups and schools, the teachers obtained a good idea of how their children related to those at other schools. Suddenly, when a teacher spoke about using a particular activity at the QLC meeting, the other teachers wanted to try it, even though it perhaps didn't quite fit alongside their classroom themes of the moment. Here was 'movement over the threshold' and a willingness to give anything a try. Earlier caution had disappeared. Having accepted the need to take risks, the teachers were now experiencing real learning.

Spending time in each other's classrooms was important for the circle and the members became closer once they had worked alongside each other. Increasingly, the teachers stayed to talk with

one another after each QLC meeting and further ideas were shared for units of work. Lois spoke of these professional friendships by saying:

*It's valuable in the sense that I have developed some sort of relationship with those people and I think that's most noticeable when I went to the school that I actually felt that, that person had become a professional sort of colleague. So that has worked very well.*

#### 4 Dissemination of NEMP-related knowledge

As has already been mentioned, all of the teachers wanted to share their newly gained knowledge about NEMP with colleagues in their schools. This proved to be a challenge, as the staff development programmes were already full and teachers had no other meeting slots. This created a dilemma for the QLC teachers who firmly believed they should be given time to demonstrate the merit of the NEMP tasks. While one solution may have been to have shared additional written summaries about how to use the NEMP tasks, they were not satisfied that this would have any real impact on their colleagues. Their experience with the QLC can be seen as a reason for this particular stance. The QLC had clearly demonstrated how children's work samples could be used as a focus for discussion when exploring the usefulness of various approaches to classroom assessment.

How each teacher went about disseminating NEMP to their colleagues was a fascinating process to follow. Having faced the same pile of documents themselves, the QLC teachers were particularly sensitive to the feelings of staff who might see it as more work and requiring a total overhaul to their existing ways of assessing children's work. And so always at the back of their minds was the need to ease the teachers into the reports so that they did not feel overwhelmed or inadequate. Lois' sensitivity to staff feelings was evident in her comment:

*I have shared where I felt it wasn't going to bore them or look like I was coming from a position of knowledge and that they might feel, 'oh there's another thing that I haven't done that that class is doing.' So you have to be a bit careful not to put people in a situation where they feel that they are not keeping up with things. It's a tricky one.*

At the same time, the QLC teachers wanted to make the most of any time allocated for their dissemination even if this were only five or ten minutes at the start of a meeting. This was to prove a real challenge because they could not duplicate their QLC experience of learning within such a limited timeframe and yet it was felt that some exposure to NEMP was better than none at

all. They were to face the same problem that every other presenter of professional development encounters in the present context of change overload.

Despite this challenge, ways were found to disseminate their NEMP learning. Katrina and Diane were able to 'drip feed' information to their colleagues after each QLC meeting. For Katrina this involved updating staff once a term on her involvement with the study, and leaving NEMP resources on the staffroom table for teachers to view. Diane would find out who was doing particular units of work and would then rush to each teacher with a bag of NEMP resources. She did this to 'hook' the teachers and made it easy for them by providing typed sheets ready for use. Her enthusiasm for sharing a NEMP task is evident in the way she described her dissemination with staff when she said:

*I whizzed over to the year 4 class and said, 'hey if you try this out (chocolate factory task), you could actually use this sort of model as your assessment model finally for your baking unit. This one will take you 3 minutes today.*

In Mary's case, she was particularly conscious of finding the 'right time' to introduce NEMP to her staff. She was aware that they just wanted to be left alone for a while. Staff development was already onerous and little energy was left for tackling more new things at her school. Above all she did not want to risk having NEMP received like a lead balloon and was aware that the two teachers on the curriculum contracts were having a hard enough time disseminating their message and enthusing staff. This was why Mary had a longer wait before she could introduce NEMP at a staff meeting. Timing was also an issue for Mavis who encountered a similar long wait. Their wait paid off because it eventually coincided with the release of the latest NEMP reports adding further justification for NEMP to be explored. They were delighted to have their colleagues asking for even more NEMP sessions. So all of the QLC teachers, with the exception of Lara, recounted their opportunities for disseminating NEMP in their schools. As a part time teacher Lara did not have the same influence or opportunity to share information with staff. She had seen her involvement with the QLC experience solely as personal development because it offered a new source for professional development when she had limited opportunities for learning.

While the QLC teachers were keen to share their NEMP learning with others at their schools, Lois had been disappointed that staff had not asked her about her NEMP involvement despite her principal's effort to make this public with her name on the staffroom whiteboard. This was further proof that teachers were accustomed to playing a waiting game. If new information

needed to be acquired then the pattern had been for it to be presented to them. They did not need to go looking for it and indeed there was little time if they were so inclined. So both Lois and Mary had reluctantly accepted that NEMP was their project and not that of the other teachers on their staff. These teachers continued to face these challenges of disseminating the content of the NEMP reports at the classroom level to empower teachers to use the information for the benefit of teaching and learning.

### *Section 3: After 8 months journeying*

A third round of interviews with the QLC teachers marked the end of the QLC meetings (refer to Appendix E). This data is presented according to four themes:

- Progress in disseminating NEMP at the school level
- On-going issues for using NEMP at the classroom level
- An evaluation of the classroom visits for QLC members
- Teacher views about principals' roles in staff development

#### *Progress in disseminating NEMP at the school level*

Despite the teachers' willingness and enthusiasm for sharing their NEMP learning with other colleagues, this had not been an easy task. In fact it was a source of continuing annoyance that it was proving to be so difficult to talk about their NEMP or QLC experience with other teachers. Everyone was just too busy and only fleeting moments were possible. Various approaches had been attempted with individual teachers, as well as syndicate and whole staff groupings. In all of these situations there had not been sufficient time to do NEMP justice. All that the teachers could hope to do was to share one or more small snippets from NEMP reports that they thought teachers might find useful additions to their existing classroom topics or assessments. Then if these assessment tasks appealed to teachers, some might try them out and even decide that there were other tasks, which would be worth using as well. So it was very much a motivational, quick sell exercise that needed to be very convincing for there to be any impact on classroom learning and assessment practices in their schools.

It had been easier to disseminate NEMP information at the syndicate level than at whole school staff meetings. Agendas for whole staff meetings were already full coping with the implementation of new curriculum documents and their structures were more or less controlled



by the Ministry of Education contracts, which supported these developments. Since NEMP was interpreted as an assessment exercise outside these developments it did not stand much chance of being included in the whole staff meeting time. Its dissemination was almost totally dependent on the efforts of persistent and determined teachers who had seen for themselves what NEMP had to offer them as classroom teachers. For the majority of teachers, however, NEMP was merely a national accountability exercise far removed from individual classrooms and was something about which they did not need to be concerned. It was a different matter for teachers of year 4 and year 8 children who might find it useful to compare the national data with that of their own children's performance and is where syndicates at these levels really did need to find out about NEMP.

It was interesting to discover that for some of the QLC teachers, a letter and phone call to their principal requesting an interview to talk about the QLC project work had suddenly meant that a slot for NEMP was given at a full staff meeting. Such a slot served two purposes. Firstly it was an expression of interest in the QLC teacher's work over some months and secondly it was a way to alert the principal to what had been done so that they would be in a better position to answer questions.

For Mary, a request for an interview with her principal resulted in a positive outcome for her NEMP dissemination. This arose from the interview situation with her principal, which opened up ways in which NEMP might be linked to existing professional development. For Mary it was real progress to hear her principal talk about the possibility of using NEMP as a tool to assist the process of curriculum review in the school. This was her signal that the 'right moment' to disseminate NEMP had indeed arrived. Her delight was evident when she started verbalising strategies for setting this in place and said:

*So the fact that to you, he was actually quite receptive suggests to me that maybe next year might be a good time to bring it up. And I think I would just ask outright.*

Later in the interview she was saying:

*I could probably say to Kevin, I'm sure, 'look I want ten minutes every staff meeting for 8 documents' and I'm sure he'll probably say, 'yeah that's fine, remind me about it next year'. I mean I could probably programme it in now, but I'd probably have to let him know now that this is what my intention was, which isn't such a bad idea to say to him now.*

This enthusiasm spread to other things she might do to get ready for this dissemination and she talked about finding time in the holidays to gather a box of resources together for staff use. This was an idea she had gleaned from the QLC group.

The drip feed approach was adopted by Lois, Sarah, Diane and Katrina. For Lois this was first and foremost a leading by example showing others what she had used with her own class. She had deliberately made time to share one NEMP activity at each syndicate meeting at which she was the leader. This approach was also adopted by Sarah. While their words were similar, Sarah said she would share her experiences of trialing the activities by saying, “I’ve tried this, do you want to try that?”

On one occasion Lois had had a couple of teachers show interest in a set of sequential pictures from the NEMP writing report and these were taken away to use. However, this giving of tasks to others was not as effective as the sharing of work samples of children’s work with a NEMP task and a discussion about what it indicated in terms of future teaching needs. Her successes with dissemination were small but significant. After having shared some samples at the Senior Staff meeting and explaining how she had adapted their use for full class situations she commented about their response:

*They were enthusiastic but there is nothing like doing something yourself to own it. The response is, hmmm, averagely warm I would say. They are not jumping out of their skins about, ‘we must have this’, but they listened and read the examples and laughed at the appropriate places.*

This need for ownership was demonstrated when Lois noted a change in her deputy principal’s attitude towards NEMP after attending an assessment course led by Terry Crooks. This led to another person advocating NEMP who could reinforce its potential value for classroom and school wide programmes. She commented, “since she [DP] has actually had a taste of it herself, she has shown greater interest in what I was doing and felt that we should try to work with some staff development next year”.

At Sarah’s school, her work with the NEMP reports was able to be linked with the school’s review of assessment and she was identified as the person appropriate to lead this development. This involved leading a series of staff meetings on assessment where she set up a new school wide assessment scheme and managed to build in some of the NEMP activities as some of the benchmarks. In addition, selected NEMP activities in handwriting, information technology, observational drawing and listening and speaking were identified as being ideal for the student

portfolios. This example reflects the deepest level of dissemination amongst the group of QLC teachers. Katrina had also made significant headway in school-wide assessment of written language but this was only one curriculum area as opposed to Sarah's broader sweep of reporting to parents across several curriculum areas.

Harriet had started on a small scale with NEMP sharing within her syndicate. This had given her the confidence to move into small slots in full staff meetings. After several sessions she had found a ten minute slot was sufficient to provide an overview of one report per meeting. Her pattern was:

*I have an introductory spiel. I start with the survey at the back, flip to the front, show them the framework and then basically flick through all the activities... I sell it as a resource rather than an actual assessment.*

This pattern was similar to the one that Mary had used in her two staff meeting slots. She said:

*I've shared a couple of reports with the staff of late at the end of the staff meeting and on one occasion at the beginning, just briefly. I've gone through the booklets with them and had the activities ready for them and most, or actually, they all were quite responsive and showed some interest in what I was doing.*

It was her opinion that it needed to be short, sharp and fairly brief allowing time for teachers to experience it for themselves. Diane reported similar regular sharing about NEMP with her staff. The pattern she had adopted was one of taking the staff through one report shortly after her return from the QLC meeting where it had been discussed. She said:

*I just did a little bit each time. Then if there was a really good activity in there that I thought that the whole staff would use, I typed it out into a user friendly sheet, like the Ashton Scholastic thing. I actually held back the Ashton Scholastic and handed out the sheet with it.*

Working in a smaller school, it was easier to get alongside teachers and know what their current theme was. In this way Diane could highlight particular activities and hand them the activity all set to use. She commented, "they haven't objected to me saying, 'hey' there is a really good activity in whatever".

To help teachers locate topic based activities in the NEMP reports, Diane and Harriet had worked together to produce a planning grid. This was well received by the QLC teachers. Diane

was also planning to add the NEMP reports to the library bar coding system to help teachers locate teaching ideas. She explained how this might work saying:

*Every resource that is coming into the school is bar coded and everything within the resources is noted down. So if someone went and typed in a topic they were doing, out of the computer would come, a list of teaching resources, non-book resources and everything on that topic.*

Mavis on the other hand had found it more difficult to disseminate NEMP across the school. She had the disadvantage of teaching in the junior syndicate and not being amongst the age groups for which the reports were intended. She had shared part of a full staff meeting and provided an overview of the reports as well as introducing the Forum Comments. Like the other QLC teachers, her purpose had been to generally motivate and excite teachers so they would want to use the reports in their teaching. Staff had been receptive and a good percentage of them had ordered personal copies of the reports through her. She felt they had shown an interest and would like more time spent on NEMP in the school. One idea she had in mind was:

*It would be quite a good idea just to put up an OHT, have the resource there, perhaps things photocopied and something that would be generally interesting school wide to motivate people to go off and use. Like here's a quick idea with Santa Claus's feet in the bucket? (Activity from the Writing Report)*

She believed that the staff needed somebody to share ideas with them rather than them being expected to go and read and find out for themselves. This was a view shared by other QLC teachers.

#### *On-going issues for using NEMP at the classroom level*

While sharing some issues in common, each of the teachers had their own particular hurdles to overcome. In each case the teachers realised that NEMP was just another new area to be introduced to teachers and were sensitive to this *overload*. They felt that their first task was to help staff see the possibilities of the NEMP activities as teaching tools rather than assessment. Harriet's sensitivity is summed up as:

*It could go all sorts of places, but yeah, I mean, judging from the looks on their faces, like not another document. However, at the end when you flick through them, there are at least one or two things out of every document that you could use.*

Diane mentioned that the *layout of the NEMP books as reports* had made them appear more difficult than was the case. In saying this she argued that it was the pink colour on the pages where the results had been listed which had made it difficult for teachers to photocopy the pages if they wished to repeat some of the activities. If it were possible to photocopy the pages as they appeared in the reports, then she felt teachers might use them. In the meantime, she saw that her contribution was one of making it easier for teachers and spoon feeding them with ready-made sheets to use.

*Negative attitudes towards assessment* were an issue for Diane as well. For some of her teachers, assessment meant pen and paper testing and they were unsure about assessing co-operative activities. In the reports, the NEMP activities were described as individual or small group tests and this was off putting for some teachers who were concerned about *manageability* in the class situation. They raised questions such as, “how am I meant to do that with a class? Or, NEMP has only one child, how can we get the whole class doing that? Or we haven’t got the video for that anyway or the commercial”.

Interestingly enough, these questions were not unlike those the QLC teachers had themselves expressed at the beginning of the project, yet this was not acknowledged by any of the teachers. Over time, they had moved beyond these concerns and learnt to adapt the activities for full class use. In the meantime, Diane for example would counteract this negative response by offering to tape a different commercial from the television and showed them ways the idea could be used even though the equipment might be slightly different. This extra effort was something she was pleased to make if it meant the teachers used the NEMP activity. She felt some obligation having had release time for NEMP, whereas the other teachers in her school had not.

Of all the QLC teachers, Lois was perhaps the one who was the most disappointed in the uptake of NEMP by other teachers in her school. Working in a large school meant there was also a *significant range in expertise, motivation and teacher knowledge*. Sadly, she wondered whether some of the teachers were even interested in professional development and developing their teacher knowledge!

For Mavis her biggest problem was *finding time* to continue this NEMP awareness raising. She spoke about:

*It's just the fact that our staff meetings are so planned down a term ahead etcetera to what is going to be put into them. Next year has already sort of been planned so it will just be me having some time where I can actually, or even whether I can push in a little bit of each staff meeting time just to give a warm up or motivational type thing out of different curriculum areas that they are interested in.*

Mary mentioned having *flexibility to alter the classroom timetable* to fit in NEMP work. While she had not felt guilty about putting NEMP ahead of handwriting or physical education to trial some NEMP tasks, the next door teacher had not been so willing to dismiss the other teaching. What Mary planned to do for next year was timetable 20 minutes a week for NEMP to keep the momentum going.

However, while this continual drip feeding to keep a curriculum focus 'alive' sounded worthwhile, the difficulty was that this needed to happen with every curriculum area. Primary teachers have a challenging job in this respect with so many curriculum areas to cover.

#### *An evaluation of the classroom visits for QLC members*

Our QLC experience included classroom visits to others within the circle. These were thoroughly enjoyed by the teachers in the group who said they seldom had any opportunity to visit other schools. They did, however, qualify this by saying it was possible for teachers to visit another classroom if this were linked to their professional development goal, but these were generally 'one off visits' rather than a regular occurrence. Both Mary and Lois said that by going beyond their own school, they had picked up fresh ideas. Lois said:

*I went from this school culture to somebody else's and they were both quite different. I was absorbing a different way of school organisation and classroom practice, whereas within this school, we might be very similar from class to class.*

She thought that perhaps 'cloning' was a problem within a school, where teachers wanted to copy someone else's model as being the best model. One reason she gave for this was young teachers tended to stay in the one school once they became a permanent staff member and this lack of movement from one school to another was preventing them from learning other ways of teaching. She saw a real danger of younger teachers getting set in their ways once they had moved beyond the survival stage. It was Lois' opinion that schools had become more inward looking under the self-managing school's regime, and sharing with neighbouring schools had disappeared. This aspect of the QLC model was therefore seen to be refreshingly different

because its membership was drawn from beyond one school and it included teachers from a range of school communities and experience levels.

Following this theme of inward looking schools, Katrina spoke about pooled ignorance, which may have been more of an issue with a small staff of six than in the larger schools. She likened this to being stuck in a forest and unable to find a way out. In this respect she thought that staff development often needed someone else coming into the school with fresh ideas and motivating the staff to try new ideas. Mavis, at a larger school, considered that there was a lot of expertise within her school and it was just a case of making time for the sharing to occur.

In essence, classroom visiting was viewed as worthwhile, but not an essential activity. Sharing was the vital ingredient for staff growth and if time were devoted to sharing ideas of good practice in the staff or syndicate structure, the teachers were contented. For them, classroom release could always be arranged informally between teachers. This was a case of 'where there is a will, there is a way'.

However, there was a difference in the notion of classroom visits for the QLC teachers. The circle had carefully manoeuvred its way around teachers observing each other in action towards opportunities for both teachers to work with the same class in smaller groupings of children. This made the emphasis one of concentrating on what a particular group of learners knew and could do rather than an appraisal of a teacher teaching. It also enabled comparisons to be made between intakes as the teachers spent time with a QLC teacher in their own classroom as well as returning to the QLC teacher's classroom. An additional feature of each visit was the discussion time after the class time. This was considered to be the most valuable part of the exercise and was a further indication that teachers benefited from focused talk about the craft of teaching.

It was rather interesting to watch how the idea of the classroom visits had moved during the time of the QLC experience. Initially the classroom visits had been a drawcard for involvement in the QLC. The teachers expressed delight at being able to visit other schools during the school day. When discussion focused on how this might be organised the teachers were noticeably worried that they were still learning about the NEMP reports and wondered whether they could offer something worthwhile to an observer. Thus a time of reassurance and confidence building was needed before the classroom visits were possible. In the end, the teachers became so absorbed in their trialing that this was not an issue. The waiting period had been sufficient. Harriet's recall of her classroom visits captured this transition from fear to enjoyment as:

*Hell, what are we supposed to do? It was when we actually had to do it, it was fine and it wasn't an issue.... In the groups that I actually was involved with, none of us watched each other... We kept them busy. We divided the class into three and just rotated around.*

For her it had been important to be amongst like-minded teachers who were equally focused on what they could do for the child. Lois, likewise noticed the difference between the commitment and passion for learning evident in the QLC group and the teachers with whom she worked in her school setting. She wondered how teachers could continue to be teachers if they did not get into reflection and questioning of their classroom practice. And so the QLC experience showed these teachers how their learning and development had operated at a deeper level when there was time to talk, share ideas and concerns, experiment in a safe environment with no time pressures. This structure had also allowed the teachers to be planners of their own destinies in learning rather than victims of imposed change which they had come to see as limiting their potential for learning.

#### *Teacher views about principals' roles in staff development*

Since what could be disseminated in whole school staff meetings depended on what the principal could squeeze into the meeting schedule, it was appropriate to explore the processes involved in making such decisions from the perspective of the QLC teachers. It was hoped that this would promote an understanding of the barriers for the dissemination of the NEMP reports in each of the schools and indicate why it was proving so difficult to include the NEMP material in these programmes. This data is presented according to the QLC teachers' impressions of:

- Principals as decision makers
- Principals' roles in staff development

As decision makers, each of the teachers recognised that their principal was torn in several directions in planning the scope of staff development for a school. Not only were there Ministry of Education requirements to meet and deadlines for implementing new curriculum documents to a school, but each school had its own unique needs to identify and remedy with staff and children. While each of the principals tended to be quite definite about their role and commitment to active involvement, this was not always viewed in the same way by staff. Teachers who were not part of the senior management team did not always know how decisions



were made and did not necessarily appreciate the difficulties principals faced trying to please everyone.

Two teachers, in particular, were critical of the way their principals determined the nature of staff development programmes in their schools. For example, when Harriet was asked this question, her initial reply came as a revealing question with the words, “what he runs or what he dictates we do?”

Was this sense of determining what it was that teachers would do the consequence of a non-teaching principal having a voice and feeling the need to be assertive about directions? No doubt the principal concerned would have been horrified at this interpretation, knowing that the staff had been consulted and had reached a consensus opinion. Harriet’s view could also reflect her lack of awareness of the consultation processes and her annoyance at seeing the decision announced in the way it was.

Others, like Lois, referred to their principal basing their decision on other factors. Her principal wanted to see a focus on information technology and it was thought this had developed from the principal’s network beyond the school rather than from within the school. She said:

*It is often not a point for discussion really and we are not at this point asked what we want, so getting your particular subject is often traded off. I know Maori has actually been in the pipeline but it has been pushed off, year after year.*

She was also aware that teachers in her syndicate were asking for help with the 3Rs rather than what were termed peripheral subject areas in the arts. To her this was not a meeting of the teachers’ needs and as a syndicate leader, she felt annoyed that the school focus was overriding real needs at the classroom level. This was also an example of how primary schools could never hope to satisfy personal needs alongside the pressure to meet national deadlines for specific curriculum implementation across all curriculum areas.

Mavis talked about her principal’s system for gathering staff opinion about possible areas of focus. She talked about the staff being given the principal’s suggestions and then having to rank them. These were then collated from each of the syndicates and put on one sheet. Like Lois, Mavis felt that the principal’s agenda was not necessarily the same as the staff’s preference. She said:

*It's not giving everybody a full chance and maybe it is not what the staff wants fully because the staff have shown they have a real interest that they would like to hear more about NEMP.*

It seemed that these principals from larger schools were also very aware of what other schools were doing and wanted to be seen to be up with the latest developments, e.g., multiple intelligences! This was mentioned by three of the teachers! As a staff member, Mavis was critical of developments which followed the principal's whim as was Lois who felt that there was little room for needs identified by senior teachers on their classroom visits to be addressed in the staff development programme. Diane, however, talked about the appraisal system establishing individual and collective needs and seemed satisfied that this was working well. In Mary's school, the principal also talked about the appraisal system as the method for establishing needs, yet she as a Scale A staff member was not aware that this was the approach taken. She simply did not know how staff development needs were identified.

Sarah felt that the consultation at her school made it possible for teachers to influence the decision making. At her school, information was fed both ways through the senior management team, and at times a working party would go away and return with work for the staff to consider. While all of the principals had made mention of the filtering through the senior management team, it seemed that this was a convenient filter downwards but not necessarily upwards. At Sarah's school the principal was very much in the centre of the action, even though not a teaching principal. Sarah said of her principal:

*She doesn't have a classroom but she is still interested in, still at the forefront of learning and how we can do better... Her focus all the time is the children and their learning...I see her as a professional leader, not just an administrator.*

Thus the credibility of a principal helped determine the level of staff acceptance for any new initiative introduced by the principal. Sarah's respect for her principal meant she was completely confident that the data gathering had been a thorough process through interviews and feedback from the syndicates. She realised that her principal was pro-active and would provide input if this were desirable, but at the same time could share the reins with other staff and give them leadership exposure. Such sharing indicated a secure principal who was at one with her staff. Interestingly enough, Sarah was the only one of the teachers who appreciated the principal's perspective, her history in the school and knowledge of where the school had come and where it might go next. This was maybe due to the fact that a lot was shared with the senior management team and the relationship was open. There were no hidden agendas or power games.

Within the group, differences were noticed according to whether the teachers were working with teaching or non-teaching principals. As one might expect, generally speaking, teachers thought the teaching principal was more in touch with the needs of the children and teachers. It was much harder for principals to please teachers in the larger schools where principals did not teach a class. As already mentioned, principals from the larger schools were criticised for following their own interests, or influences from outside the school rather than those inside the school. Being a teaching principal was clearly a real asset in the eyes of the teachers in the QLC group. Diane said:

*It depends on whether the principal is teaching or not. If they are teaching, they are right on board with that, how long it takes to do things and what needs to be done and can I think gauge the stress and pressure of bringing a new curriculum area on board.*

In one school it seemed that the principal had to find ways of asserting himself as the principal at staff meetings. Harriet explained that her non-teaching principal asked lots of questions when other people were leading the session. She said, “he likes to be a bit of the devil’s advocate, not necessarily a focussed devil’s advocate” (laughs).

When asked how important the principal’s role was in staff development, Harriet thought that principals had to be curriculum leaders if they were to keep their fingers on the pulse and know what was going on. This was speaking from the context of her own school, which was not one of the larger schools in the sample. Interestingly enough, while her principal did jump on bandwagons for staff development topics and was another to mention the possibility of multiple intelligences, staff received a good hearing when they took ideas to him.

Mavis thought that it was the staff who had the best idea of what the needs were. She did not consider the decision making was a shared activity in her current school and provided one recent example to illustrate her point. This was in relation to the format of the staff meeting schedule for the following year. She said:

*We were given, told what the change would be and then we were suddenly told, ‘you are to write down on paper what you think about that or it will happen’. People have written down on paper, nothing has ever come back on that. Now it may just go before the BOT ‘this is going to happen’... I think it is really important that the staff get a full discussion. We know we can’t please everybody, but there should be more discussion and consensus on that.*

Examples from this discussion strengthen the view that teachers' activities are controlled and determined by others. Whether this is from within their school or beyond, the pressure to comply is very strong. This continuing sense of overload has already impacted on the quality of teacher learning and is causing teachers to be frustrated and even angry because they are always on the run to meet the demands placed upon them. In terms of teacher learning, too much is happening for too little gain other than to say a school has devoted so many hours to a curriculum initiative. This is a sad state of affairs, and is the backdrop against which the impact of the NEMP reports is measured. Research questions relating to the QLC model show that there is some hope for teacher learning and development practices.

### ***Stage 2 Research questions***

How effective is the Quality Learning Circle Model for teacher learning and development?

#### *2.1 Which features of the QLC model increase the likelihood of teacher learning impacting on classroom practices?*

Comments from the QLC teachers have shown that teacher learning is enhanced when teachers have opportunities to share good ideas about classroom practice. The quality learning circle was set up to achieve this with time devoted to sharing both ideas and concerns in a supportive environment where each member of the circle was on an equal footing.

Teacher ownership of the learning was important. The teachers chose what they would trial and share with other teachers within the general agreed focus of the NEMP reports. This meant that there was sufficient flexibility for the teachers to work their new learning alongside their existing class themes. NEMP was not seen as an extra but rather an integral component of classroom planning. It was not viewed as a burden but as an exciting resource to incorporate into daily classroom practice.

Because the QLC meetings were held during the school day and release time was provided, the teachers felt special and had the energy to devote to their learning. They therefore approached their learning with enthusiasm. Concentration levels for this professional development could also be sustained more than for their usual end of the school day scheduling of professional development.

The circle's joint commitment to learning was a real bonus for the teachers. Not only did they feel an obligation towards the circle's learning but also they were motivated to trial NEMP activities in between meetings in order to have something to share at the next QLC meeting.

Classroom visits added interest to their learning. These visits were a valuable source of practical ideas and helped the teachers to compare their children's knowledge, skills and attitudes with those of another group of children. Talk after the classroom sessions had real meaning when the teachers sat down to reflect on what had happened in the classroom and were able to share of their different perspectives with one another. Sarah commented that there was a real depth to these conversations and noted their focused nature.

## *2.2 How well do teachers rate the QLC as a tool for professional development?*

When the QLC teachers looked back at the progress they had made over the months of meeting as a QLC, they were delighted with their new learning. They had travelled a considerable distance in their knowledge about the NEMP reports and how they could be used to enhance classroom assessment practices. What pleased them also was the strength of their NEMP expertise as compared to other teachers at their schools. This position of strength gave them the confidence to seek ways in which they could disseminate their recently acquired enthusiasm for NEMP with other teachers. The QLC was seen as a sense making experience because the teachers had helped each other to explore various possibilities with the NEMP reports and their associated assessment activities. While they would have liked their teachers to have had the same experience, they soon realised that there simply wasn't time to squeeze in another development for schools and work it within existing budgets. This became a real source of frustration for teachers who genuinely wanted others to benefit from their QLC experience of NEMP.

While the teachers enjoyed the classroom visits, they felt that the model could exist without them. This was because the sharing component at the meetings was so valuable. They were able to glean sufficient information from a teacher recounting a particular NEMP activity and did not necessarily have to see it being used with a group of children.

## *2.3 How easy is the QLC model for teachers to use?*

The model was relatively easy to use. It depended on teachers being willing to talk about issues of importance and share their classroom practices. The most difficult part of the model was for

teachers to accept that they would be taking risks, moving out of their comfort zones and their learning pathways might move in directions they did not expect.

Membership of the circle was important. Teachers accepted that the success of the QLC depended on its members making it work by encouraging discussion, the sharing of ideas and concerns and that all were equal learning partners.

#### *2.4 Is the QLC suitable for use in schools?*

The QLC is a suitable professional development model for teachers in schools because it encourages teachers to talk about their work in a focused, non-threatening manner. This is a real benefit since most opportunities for teacher talk in schools are infrequent, hurried and spontaneous. Where they are planned, as in the annual appraisal cycle, power and accountability issues remove the excitement of the learning.

Since members of the QLC model need to shape the direction and scope of their shared learning, this model is not a recipe set in concrete. Rather it offers a framework which can be adapted to suit the contexts of schools. It is not a panacea for every school to follow because clearly there are some combinations of teachers for whom the joining together would be difficult, and it would be pointless to force teachers to join a quality learning circle under these circumstances. It must be accepted that not all teachers welcome working and sharing with their colleagues yet they can still be effective as teachers. Others develop their expertise by working in a learning community, which supports and challenges them. Thus quality learning circles should be seen as an optional tool for professional development, and may need to include teachers from a number of schools where it is not appropriate to remain within a school.



## Chapter 8

### Leadership for school improvement

Since leadership is recognised as being one of the main characteristics for determining the effectiveness of schools (Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, & Ecob, 1988) it is appropriate to devote a chapter of this thesis to explore what effective leadership is and more importantly how it can be cultivated. The book “Changing Leadership for Changing Times” (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999) is a particularly useful starting point. In their preface to the book, Hargreaves and Goodson argue that “if good learning depends on good teachers, good teaching depends on excellent leaders” (p.viii). However, there are other questions which need to be asked for understanding how schools could be improved. For example, are the leadership models belonging to more stable and conservative times still appropriate for today’s uncertain and constantly changing context? Leithwood et al. have chosen a very apt title to their book, and deserve recognition for their extensive research programme which has addressed these questions over many years.

Leithwood and his team of researchers have advocated an approach called transformational leadership. This approach will be discussed in this chapter to show how a changed emphasis on leadership can help our understanding of what it is leaders can do to promote teacher learning in order to enhance student achievement in changing times. Leithwood et al. (1999) note the particular appeal of the transformational leadership approach because of its ‘fit’ to the school context in which it is to be exercised. They argue that this tailoring to suit particular circumstances is essential because it “entails not only a change in the purposes and resources of those involved in the leader-follower relationship, but an elevation of both – change for the better ” (p.28). This is another way of saying that as times change, what works for leaders also changes.

Just how leaders influence curriculum and instruction is a key issue for teacher learning. In this chapter, the instructional leadership practices of principals are explored along with their partnership with deputy principals. The importance of teacher leaders is also recognised and it is noted that they receive little recognition in the literature on the leadership and management of school change. The chapter ends with a review of the leadership concept as presently known and suggestions for alternative ways of addressing leadership for changing times and more particularly within the context of self-managing schools. Throughout the chapter, examples of



empirical research from case study schools engaged in school improvement projects illustrate this evolving framework.

The following elements are introduced in this chapter:

- Key leadership principles
- Leadership variables
- The move towards transformational leadership
- Instructional leadership roles
- Leadership beyond the principal
- A review of the leadership concept for today's context

### ***Key leadership principles***

While leaders all develop their own styles to suit their particular strengths and workplace differences, there are some common principles that apply to a range of leadership situations. These relate to the leader as a person, the ways they work with colleagues, and how they plan their work and evaluate progress. These principles are of equal importance and need to be viewed as a whole rather than as separate principles. Adair's (1986) three circle model of leadership (refer to Chapter 3) is an acknowledgement of the importance of leaders addressing maintenance needs (also referred to as the needs of people) alongside task completion. The three circles signify a balancing of individual needs, team (organisational) needs as well as task completion. Leaders need to address their own needs at the same time as they focus on the needs of others if they are to succeed in motivating the team to work on the task.

Sergiovanni (1995) writes that leadership roles and responsibilities have changed over time. Ideal conceptions from a traditional viewpoint have included administrative processes and functions such as planning, organizing, leading and controlling. These emphasise the leader's responsibility for setting directions and ensuring that systems are in place to support and monitor progress. While these functions still have relevance, the leadership literature has become more explicit about what guides effective leadership practices. However, despite the preponderance of lists noting effective qualities of leaders in the literature, there are still gaps between theory and practice and organisations continue to have some less than effective leaders. Later in this thesis, perceptions of leadership actions are evaluated using Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach's (1998)

framework and Hopkins, West, Ainscow, Harris and Beresford's (1997) rating scale to determine the effectiveness of four case study schools as learning organisations.

A leader's personal qualities are important. It is argued that leaders can exert a powerful influence if they are able to inspire and motivate others to achieve the organisation's vision and mission (Rentoul, 1996). To do this they must be good communicators who can articulate their beliefs in a persuasive manner. Their message should be communicated clearly and regularly so that it is known and understood. However, while personal knowledge is a necessary starting point, leaders should not assume that they are the only ones who have the ideas and the skill to implement plans for improvement. It is important that they encourage others to share their good ideas and develop personal strengths that can be used for the wider good. Involvement and empowerment of colleagues helps to maximise people's potential and develop synergy within the workplace (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Marks & Louis, 1999; Stoll, 1999). It is also a recognition that leadership is more productive when it is a shared task amongst the workplace. The effectiveness of leadership actions depends on developing the capacity of people at all levels in the workplace to improve its quality (Hopkins & Harris, 1997; Lambert, 1998). Leaders who portray the traits of honesty, openness, a willingness to listen and learn from others, and who admit to their mistakes earn the respect and trust of those who work with and for them.

The establishment of effective and collegial working relationships represents another key leadership principle. Rentoul (1996) contends "the primary focus for the effective leader must be on people and their inter-relationship within the organisation" (p.2). This is about keeping people on task by satisfying their needs. Employees who are valued and supported in their work are more likely to show a stronger commitment to the overall mission of the organisation. Having gathered a range of formal and informal data, astute leaders know when and how much support to provide for their employees. This should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness, or a need to control the work of employees. Sound performance management practice means placing trust in one's employees to do a good job and helping employees to enhance their job capability and capacity. Increased control of work practices serves to stifle commitment, creativity, and weakens job satisfaction.

There is more to effective leadership practice than personal qualities. Leaders also require knowledge and skills to ensure visions become linked to an organisation's strategic plan. This means working through a cycle of making decisions about who might be involved in the process and how, developing organisational profiles, mission statements, statements of values and

beliefs, outlines of goals and strategies and determining processes for internal review and evaluation (Dempster, Kruchov & Distant, 1991). This process is underpinned by leadership which is not only task focussed but is concerned with aligning people with the task, has a futurist mindset, and continually addresses issues of change and development, quality and effectiveness (Whitaker, 1993).

### ***Leadership variables***

#### *Power and control*

Schein (1996) suggests there will be a noticeable difference in the behaviours and actions of leaders in the future with a move away from key leadership roles. He argues that leaders will be more like “perpetual diagnosticians who will be able to empower different people at different times and [who] let emergent leadership flourish” (pp.68-69). This means there will be more leaders within organisations and leadership functions will be more widely shared. These ideas are extended with the comment:

*Instead, the leader of the future will be a person... who can lead and follow, be central and marginal, be hierarchically above and below, be individualistic and a team player, and above all, be a perpetual learner (pp.68-69).*

Such a portrayal also suggests that leaders will have an altered view of power and control. In this respect, Schein maintains:

*Leaders will not always assume that all groups need leadership, they will not assume that leadership means hierarchy and control of others, and they will not assume that accountability must always be individual (pp.68-69).*

Leadership density is the term used by Sergiovanni (1995) when referring to the total leadership available. The desirability for multiple leaders rather than a single leader is very much a central focus for the transformational leadership approach. When strengths are shared and can benefit the school Telford (1996) suggests that this empowerment of a range of people within the school provides a “richness of educational thought and activity” which exceeds that of any single leader (pp.8-9). Building the leadership capacity of others is the key responsibility of today’s leaders and in this respect the school principal can be seen as being more of a leader of leaders than the only leader.

### *Leadership roles*

While multiple understandings of leadership exist, it is nevertheless useful to explore the effects of leadership actions on the development of a school's capacity for improvement even though the contexts for leadership may be very different. For example, Southworth (1998) emphasises the importance of the interrelationship between the three variables (self, colleagues and context) as a way to understand the concept of leadership. In this regard Southworth cites Sammons, Mortimore and Hillan who write:

*Leadership is not simply about the quality of individual leaders, although this is, of course, important. It is also about the role leaders play, their style of management, their relationship to the vision, values and goals of the school and their approach to change (p.11).*

Therefore, approaches to the study of leadership vary according to their emphasis on direct and indirect leadership, the context, reaction to demands for compliance and the role of key players.

### *The task and social dimensions of leadership actions*

While it may be tempting to think of leadership actions solely in terms of task completion, individual needs are also important and when ignored can interfere with the accomplishment of particular tasks. In this respect Southworth (1998) has developed the terms instrumental and expressive leadership to acknowledge the importance of these task and social dimensions. *Instrumental leadership* is likened to managerial leadership, because of its concern for task accomplishment. Of equal importance is *expressive leadership* because it requires leaders to have an awareness of, and concern for the people with whom they are working and serving. This is about drawing on staff strengths for both individual and collective benefit. This emphasis on people parallels a similar emphasis in Fullan's evolutionary theory.

Southworth (1998) suggests that the challenge is to address both dimensions and yet maintain a balance. He writes:

*Leaders who are only concerned with the task dimension may soon antagonise colleagues because they will appear unconcerned about them. Such leadership is often equated with an unyielding approach, which favours mechanistic thinking, calculation and control, where colleagues are ciphers to be ordered what to do. Taken to extremes it becomes dehumanising because people are treated as objects and their subjectivity denied. On the other hand, a leader who only displays concern for colleagues creates an environment in*

*which staff are indulged and over-protected, and where the quality of work diminishes because task success is not valued (p.40).*

Transformational leadership picks up the themes of instrumental and expressive leadership by looking at leadership actions that make a difference to an organisation's performance. This is about empowering colleagues to work together towards continuous improvement. Southworth (1998) describes this type of leadership in terms of its 'electrical effect' and writes:

*Transformational leadership is about upping the voltage of all staff. It is to do with increasing their capacity to make a difference around the school as well as within their own classrooms and workplaces (p.49).*

Mitchell and Tucker (1992) describe transformational leadership as occurring when "leaders are more concerned about gaining overall cooperation and energetic participation from organisational members than they are in getting particular tasks performed" (p.32). For them the emphasis is on commitment rather than competence. This is not to say that competence is unimportant, but rather to acknowledge that commitment is a prerequisite. Commitment is seen to develop through a sense of community where strengths are shared and common purposes evident.

### ***The move towards transformational leadership***

The notion of leadership being a shared activity has been a feature of the educational leadership literature since the 1980s and 1990s. Telford (1996) is one who claims that "leadership at its best is a shared venture engaged by many" (p.9). According to Telford (1996), this debate on leadership theory has developed from a two-dimensional task and relationships focus to one involving even more dimensions.

Telford (1996) has adopted the Bolman and Deal (1991) framework for analysing the strength of leadership in organisations. This represents an extension of the earlier mentioned task and social dimensions of leadership activity. This time however, these appear as four frames or lenses for understanding the complexities of leadership. Telford (1996) describes these frames as follows:

*The structural frame emphasizes the importance of formal roles and relationships where the focus is on organisational direction and goals, roles, policies, procedures, coordination and planning.*

*The human resource frame acknowledges that individuals inhabit organisations whose talents, skills and energy are the organisation's most valuable resource.*

*The political frame addresses the political realities of an organisation.*

*The symbolic frame decodes the embedded beliefs, values, attitudes and norms of behaviour of the organisational culture (p.14).*

What is important about these four frames is that they are all taken into consideration in an analysis of leadership. If leaders have a preferred frame they may have a tendency to overuse this frame to the detriment of the remaining frames. Leithwood et al. (1999) suggest that when this occurs “leaders often fail to see and to address aspects of their problems that remain troublesome for their organizations” (p.22). They cite Bolman and Deal (1991) as saying that principals typically do not employ political and symbolic frames in the interpretation of their problems. This is another reason why the combined use of these four frames is essential for effective leadership. Telford (1996) maintains that this breadth of perspective “enables managerial freedom and leadership effectiveness by allowing leaders to look at the same situation in an organisation in four different ways” (p.14). She argues that this avoids a narrow, simplistic approach and says:

*Ability to move in and out of the four frames brings deeper insights and a broadening of horizons, allowing eclectic use of the current composite body of theoretical knowledge. Reframing, then, is a process of thorough, active, practical analysis and implementation of leadership theory (pp.14-15).*

Leithwood et al. argue that strong leadership, which was a characteristic of the effective schools movement in the 1970s and early 1980s, promoted control-oriented strategies as being appropriate. The present context of school restructuring is very different. If anything there is a lack of clarity and this works against the effective use of control strategies. The move away from a ‘one size fits all’ approach with lists of characteristics for the ideal school signals a realisation that schools are very different and require their own forms of ‘tailored’ leadership. Leithwood et al. explain that under these circumstances, there is a call for ‘commitment rather than control strategies’. They maintain:

*These are strategies that help front-line school staffs to appreciate the reasons for change and that foster their commitment to developing, trying out and refining new practices until those purposes are accomplished (or until they change). Virtually all treatments of transformational leadership claim that among its more direct effects are employee motivation and commitment, leading to the kind of extra effort required for significant change (pp.24-25).*

This working together for a shared purpose of school improvement is the essence of transformational leadership emphasising a collaborative approach. Telford (1996) purports:

*It centres around workgroups of committed professionals who, with shared and directed purpose, have the capacity to work together in a problem-solving way to determine tentative answers to the unknown, to take action on the basis of what they have discovered, and move on. In doing so they make schools better places to be; places of continuing learning for both themselves and their students (p.11).*

This acceptance of challenge into the unknown is also what lies behind learning journeys such as the quality learning circle. Transformational leadership theory is therefore a promising theory because it recognises that there are no answers about how to proceed and it is over to those in schools to collaborate to make a difference, rather than relying on a charismatic leader to produce answers. Thus a determining feature of transformational leadership is the notion of leadership density rather than an exchange between leader and the led (Telford, 1996).

The professionalisation of teachers is another important consideration if schools are to be confident of their ability to make and sustain change for school improvement. This is about capacity building and represents an empowerment model based on commitments drawn from the inside. Once again, this emphasises the importance of a process that teachers shape themselves rather than one which is imposed on them.

While Leithwood et al. have developed frameworks for understanding the complexities of transformational leadership from their own work, they have also done this for other studies. For example, in 1996 when they reviewed 34 studies they discovered 20 of these showed evidence of transformational leadership characteristics. From this they claim “on empirical grounds, there is probably as much support for the effects of transformational leadership as for any of the other approaches on the menu, if not more” (p.38). Their analysis of these studies has portrayed these effects in terms of students, perceptions of leaders, behaviour of followers, followers’ psychological states and the organisation as an entity. Together these categories signal the range of factors that contribute to student achievement based on the actions of leaders filtering through to classroom teachers.

Contributions from their own book, “Changing Leadership for Changing Times,” include case studies illustrating the specific practices associated with the dimensions of transformational leadership according to just three categories. Once again this further categorisation is helpful for our understanding of the role of leadership in school improvement. The first of these is labelled ‘setting directions’ and includes vision building, goal consensus and the development of high performance expectations. The second category is concerned with the development of people, namely the provision of individualized support, intellectual stimulation and the modelling of

values and practices important to the mission and culture of the school. The label for the remaining category is 'organizing' and includes both culture building and structuring, with the treatment of structuring extended to include building relationships with the school community. These three categories portray in more detail the ways in which leaders can generate commitment from teachers, as they endeavour to provide quality learning to match the needs of their students in times of significant change. This leads to a further discussion on leadership practices that enhance classroom learning and instruction.

### ***Instructional leadership practices***

It is not an easy task for leaders to keep abreast of classroom learning and instruction concerns when they also have administrative responsibilities. This section serves to acknowledge this difficulty and explores the concept of instructional leadership as a way of highlighting issues of importance for school and teacher improvement. It includes a definition of what it means to be an instructional leader, as well as examples from research studies illustrating the daily realities for principals in this role. Since leaders are ultimately responsible for ensuring the quality of learning and teaching in schools, it is important that systems are in place which enable them not just to know what is happening, but also, how they might influence or assist teachers in their work, if this should be necessary.

Instructional leadership is the term used when referring to the systems in place for evaluating and helping teachers to improve their work. It encompasses both formal and informal activities. McEvoy (1987) lists these as "informing teachers of professional opportunities, disseminating professional and curriculum materials, focusing staff attention on a specific theme, soliciting teachers' opinions, encouraging experimentation, and recognising individual teachers' improvements" (p.73). Classroom observations and discussions about teaching and learning are also a feature of instructional leadership in schools.

The difficulty of this role, particularly for school principals, is also acknowledged. De Bevoise (1984) offers a further definition of instructional leadership practices to highlight its broad scope saying:

*It encompasses those actions which a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote progress in pupil learning. Such actions include: setting school-wide goals; defining the school's purposes; providing the resources needed for learning; appraising teachers; co-*



*ordinating staff development activities; and creating collegial relations among teachers (p.15).*

Finding the time for this activity is a major challenge for leaders juggling priorities. Sergiovanni (1995) reminds us that some instructional leadership behaviours and expectations of principals make sense in some situations but not in others. Once again an effective leader is able to read the context and decide what is appropriate. He says:

*Being a strong instructional leader may be a good idea in schools where teachers are poorly trained or lacking in commitment, but it is not a good idea in schools where competence and commitment are not issues. In some schools, for example, teachers know more than the principal about matters of teaching and learning. To persist in providing strong instructional leadership in such a situation locks in teachers as instructional followers or subordinates and puts a cap on the total amount of leadership available in the school to promote better teaching and learning...To that end, the principal as leader of leaders may well be a more appropriate role where competence and commitment are not issues, than would the role of instructional leader (p.155).*

Just what leaders, and more particularly principals, do in the name of helping teachers to improve their instructional practices has been a topic of interest in the educational leadership literature for several decades. Leithwood (1992) argues that instructional leadership as a concept, while serving schools well in the 1980s and 1990s, is now not as useful. He suggests that with recent restructuring efforts transformational leadership is a better option. Once again, this is a matter of working towards a balance between top-down and more facilitative forms of power. The more facilitative the power is, the more productive is the result as people renew their commitment to the school. This is why Leithwood (1992) maintains that power is manifested through people rather than over other people. It also reflects the maturity level of the school and the expertise of its teachers. For example, there are some stages of teachers' careers where more direct leadership is welcomed, perhaps more so for teachers in their early years of teaching.

Research over several years at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development provides a rich source of data on the daily routines of school principals. An analysis of these conversations shows that many are brief and informal. In fact as McEvoy (1987) notes, the informal and spontaneous nature of such conversations can make them more appealing and acceptable to teachers. She suggests that "quick exchanges that occur in the familiar surroundings of a hallway or a lounge [staffroom] may convey a principal's message of concern and support on a less threatening manner than a formal meeting" (p.73).

Small actions, such as placing individual leaflets about professional development opportunities in staff mailboxes, also play a significant part, as does the sharing of research articles and seeking staff opinion on them. McEvoy maintains that teachers welcome principals who stimulate and reinforce professional development through informal, yet focused, communication and monitoring. This information could suggest that principals need to increase their informal communications and spend less time in formal supervision or appraisal meetings.

However, crises and unexpected happenings often interrupt a principal's work schedule making it hard for them to engage in instructional leadership actions on a regular basis. In accepting this reality, principals may need to find other leaders to provide assistance or teachers will think that their work is unimportant. Once again, leadership actions convey messages reflecting priorities and values which are noticed by teachers in schools. Whitaker (1997) describes these dilemmas by saying:

*Many principals get caught up in day-to-day office operations, discipline, paperwork, and telephone conversations. They fail to realise that school business of major importance is not found in the office, but in the classrooms, hallways, playgrounds and cafeterias (p.155).*

Principals who are seen beyond the office on a regular basis can influence the work of their staff. Visibility is important for principals. Their daily routine actions of communicating with staff on an informal and formal basis do matter. These are opportunities to both gather and give information. Whitaker (1997) mentions the ways in which principals can communicate essential beliefs to staff through their management by walking around as well as more formal communications. Instructional leadership is therefore more than supervision and monitoring, it also includes a supporting function.

The Reitzug and Burrello (1995) study also highlights the daily practices of principals. This study traces the daily practices of outstanding principals, with observations, interviews with principals and teachers, and the analysis of school documents for evidence of empowering and self-renewing leadership behaviour. It was found that principals in this study could typically:

*Provide a supportive environment that encourages teachers to examine and reflect upon their teaching and on school practice.  
Use specific behaviours to facilitate reflective practice.  
Make it possible for teachers to implement ideas and programmes that result from reflective practice (p.48).*

Accompanying these behaviours are a number of strategies. Firstly, in providing a supportive environment, these principals encouraged teachers to justify their practice. They also welcomed experimentation and risk taking but provided organisational structures to support these practices. Secondly, principals facilitated reflective practice by modelling this themselves. They did this by asking questions to challenge teachers to think and were careful that they were familiar with the context and could therefore ask appropriate questions. This helped teachers to clarify their own visions and ways of thinking which in turn also helped the school's overall vision to be a reality. Thirdly, principals enhanced the implementation of ideas through the provision of resources, e.g., money, materials, time and opportunity. Reitzug and Burrello (1995) concluded that the real difference with these principals was a changed role from "dispensing information to facilitating processes in which teachers could discover knowledge" (p.50). Such actions return attention to the real purpose of schools, which is encouraging the learning of both students and teachers. On the other hand, actions emphasising control and accountability have a different message. If anything, they stifle learning because agendas are imposed on teachers. However, when someone takes the time and shows a genuine interest in a teacher's work, positive outcomes are more likely and the teacher is motivated to do even better.

Sergiovanni (1995) has highlighted useful patterns of leader behaviours and actions by referring to the work of Joan Lipsitz (1984). In her four case studies of successful middle schools a number of noteworthy conclusions are formed about principal leadership and school characteristics. For example, these schools had clear purposes that were articulated in both word and action by all participants. Decisions had meaning and were based on principles showing the principals' commitments for instructional leadership. There was a sense that these principals viewed their schools as "being larger than one person." Caring approaches were evident, as was the lack of adult isolation. Time was deliberately made available for team planning and teacher talk to occur, and as a result these teachers believed in themselves, had high expectations and were highly autonomous. Also of significance was the fact that the principals' authority came from their acknowledged competence and commitment to provide the best possible learning and teaching environment. These principals' behaviours were therefore ones which enabled and facilitated learning.

Similar conclusions have also been noted in the work of Hallinger and Murphy (1985). In their study of the actions of ten elementary school principals, they identified three behaviours as being important for the management of curriculum and instruction. These were the need for a clear definition of the school's mission, management of the instructional programme and the

promotion of a positive learning climate in the school. It was significant that the principals in this study were actively involved in classroom observations, monitoring and reinforcement, thereby encouraging continuous improvements. In commenting about these findings, Southworth (1998) has said:

*I am struck by the emphasis, explicit and implicit, these principals placed on monitoring. It seems to be the case that these principals not only visited classrooms, they closely observed what teachers taught, how they were teaching and how time was used in the classroom. Moreover, they appeared to be knowledgeable about the curriculum and used praise, albeit on a one to one basis to reinforce teachers' hard work and success and to positively reinforce their efforts (p.15).*

Thus it appears that principals play significant roles in school improvement when their daily actions are connected with learning and teaching concerns in both formal and informal ways. When principals distance themselves from these learning and teaching concerns, teachers can lose respect for principals and the credibility of principals may be questioned. Maintaining such involvement, is however, a real challenge given the many tasks and roles which are required of today's principals.

### ***Leadership roles beyond the principal***

One of the drawbacks of the educational leadership literature has been its almost sole focus on the authority figure of the principal. Leaders exist at all levels of schools, beginning at the classroom level and moving through to the levels of middle and senior management. To ignore the existence of these leaders is to deny the worth of people who have leadership roles that contribute to the effectiveness and improvement of schools. Since much of the work schools undertake for school improvement depends on the knowledge and skills of people other than the principal, it is appropriate to recognise the leadership actions of all the significant players. This section explores the leadership roles of the deputy principal and then teachers as leaders to show that principals are not the only leaders in schools.

### ***Leadership roles for deputy principals***

It is significant that Mortimore et al. (1988) included the role of the deputy principal in their list of characteristics determining effective schools. This signalled a broadening of leadership beyond the level of principals to highlight the interrelationships of senior management roles of the principal and deputy, as partners rather than as independent people. Southworth (1998) and

Nias (1987) have made major contributions to this literature with their case study research. Their case studies have shown that leadership roles in schools are multi-faceted and extend beyond the realms of what any one person is capable of achieving. It is therefore important that a study of leadership address these multiple leadership roles even though these roles may not always be formally recognised.

However, having acknowledged that deputy principals have important leadership roles in schools, these roles are not easy to describe. This is because, to some extent, deputies' roles are still dependent on what principals allow them to do. This can be problematic for job satisfaction and job effectiveness, and may be why the research on the roles and responsibilities of deputy principals is meagre in comparison with that of the principalship or headship.

Nias has not been the only researcher to draw attention to the roles of leaders other than the principal. One of the earliest researchers to investigate the deputy principalship role was Coulson in 1976. His research also focused on the work of deputies and to what extent leadership functions were divided between principals and deputies. Subsequently Southworth (1998) has noted the imprecise nature of the deputy headship (principal) role, which he has claimed varies from school to school and person to person, as well as being dependent on the attitudes and expectations of the headteacher (principal). He found that where principals no longer had time for classroom teaching involvement, (particularly in the larger schools), it was the deputies who provided the necessary links with classroom teaching and were important role models of exemplary practice. Southworth has suggested that when this happened, the forces of influence inside the school doubled. This study shows that deputies have more to contribute to the life of schools than managerial functions. Their teaching roles are an important consideration for the enhancement of teaching practices in others.

The managerial role of deputies was also the focus of two further studies by Nias (1987) and Mortimore et al. (1988). Both studies showed that deputies played important managerial roles in their schools. The partnerships of deputies and headteachers were observed, particularly in the Nias study. Here it was noted that the managerial partnership was not a partnership of equals. The deputy always deferred to the head. However, it was the informal nature of the deputy's work which made a difference to the school. The deputy could play a go-between role and thereby keep the informal communication channels open in the school. Above all, the role was pastoral, ensuring that staff morale was kept high and this in turn brought respect from the staff. Nias described this work of the deputy as being more of an expressive leader, whereas the head

largely concentrated on instrumental leadership with the management of teaching, curriculum and school development. Nias also noted that these leadership actions were not exclusive to each person. While some overlap was evident, the deputy felt that her role had meaning and substance even though it was hard to describe.

In the Mortimore et al. (1988) study, “School Matters”, purposeful leadership by the head and the involvement of the deputy were both identified as contributing to a school’s effectiveness. Mortimore et al. report their findings as:

*... indicat[ing] that the deputy head can have a major role to play in promoting the effectiveness of junior schools. Where the deputy was frequently absent, or absent for a prolonged period... this was detrimental to pupils’ progress and development. Moreover, a change of deputy head tended to have negative effects. The responsibilities undertaken by deputy heads also seemed to be significant. Where the head generally involved the deputy in policy decisions, it was beneficial to the pupils. This was particularly true in terms of allocating pupils to classes. Thus it appears that a certain amount of delegation by the head and a sharing of responsibility, promoted effectiveness (p.251).*

The significance of the Mortimore et al. study is that it was the first study to show that deputies could or did make a difference to pupils’ progress in the school. Southworth (1998) claims that this link with enhancing pupil progress moves the idea of involvement and delegation onto a different level. He argues that this involvement is not so much in the managerial sense as a teaching and learning issue and maintains, “heads and deputies need to work together not simply to share out tasks, but because together their partnership can improve the school’s performance” (p.94).

In analysing the deputy’s leadership, Southworth (1998) argues that their pastoral role means they are significant players in terms of cultural leadership in the school. Southworth (1998) comments:

*Alongside their heads, deputies may actively promote and sustain values of care and consideration for one another, sensitivity to individuals and support for groups and teams. Deputies often exemplify in their day-to-day deeds professional collaboration (p.99).*

That deputies are also involved in a lot of transactional leadership helps ensure the smooth running of a school. Such gains for the school are subtle and allow school improvement projects to take hold because foundations have been laid in the ways that staff work together and interact. It is therefore difficult to say that deputies do not engage in transformational leadership responsibilities when much of the transactional base sets the scene for change projects.

Southworth (1998), while recognising that deputies are often stretched combining classroom teaching with management responsibilities, poses the question of how deputies might play a fuller role in leading the school's improvement, without being more burdened. In reply to his own question, Southworth suggests that "the deputy's or assistant head's expertise and understanding of classroom realities should be used to inform and underpin their involvement in monitoring, reviewing and developing the quality of teaching" (p.116). By doing this, he contends the roles are complementary rather than competitive.

This discussion of leadership has highlighted three dualities for principals. Southworth (1998) refers to these as, management and leadership; being a head (leader) and a teacher; and internal and external issues. These concerns also affect what deputies do, for their roles are complex, demanding and time consuming. If, as Southworth argues, headship is still viewed as one person's job, then the deputy is someone who deputises in the head's absence rather than being seen as an assistant head. He adds:

*This view not only circumscribes deputy headship, it also sustains headship as a lone role. It continues the idea that headship is the sole responsibility of one person, with the headteacher, or the deputizing/acting head in their absence. It also contributes to making heads strong individuals who believe in themselves and in their power to make a difference by themselves. On occasions this is perfectly fine, and in some situations, especially when a school is failing, or 'stuck', strong individuals may be needed. But more often than not, lone leadership is disabling. It leaves the head with too much to do and excludes the contribution and restricts, if not denies the leadership of others. It makes leadership 'mine' not 'ours' and it overlooks the finding, ... that successful school leaders work through others, including other leaders (p.123).*

Southworth calls for a reconceptualising of the deputy's role. He argues:

*There is a strong case for headship being seen today as 'a professional partnership between head and deputy rather than in terms of differentiated roles'... It is the headship, which is shared. School leadership is thus something the head and deputy do together and apart. They are co-leaders and will support the leadership roles other staff play as well. Instead of everything piling up on the head's desk and shoulders and them seeing themselves as having to do everything single-handedly, or being singularly responsible for everything, a great deal is shared with the deputy head because they not only work together, but are joint leaders (p.124).*

### *Teachers as leaders*

Recognition of teachers as leaders is becoming more evident in the educational leadership literature (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Walling, 1994; Barth, 1990; Lieberman, 1988;

Little, 1982). Indeed, as indicated earlier, transformational leadership within effective schools recognises the notion of many leaders within the ranks of a school's professionals. Current school structures have teachers assigned to particular leadership roles or responsibilities. These may include membership of management, curriculum or assessment committees, syndicate leadership, or being a specialist in a curriculum area. These leaders need to be acknowledged and supported in their roles just as much as those at the higher levels. Having accepted that all teachers have leadership responsibilities in schools, a matter of greater importance is what can be done to improve schools. In addressing this important question senior managers in schools need to consider the best structure for schools, the role of strategic planning, the place of people in the improvement planning process, how to get and maintain compliance and how to develop motivation for commitment. This is an on-going challenge.

### ***Reviewing the concept of leadership***

It has been argued thus far that leadership has often been interpreted as being the domain of one individual. This not only creates workload problems but also denies leadership experiences for aspiring leaders. Sergiovanni (1992) believes that too much attention is given to direct leadership and this makes the task of improving schools even more difficult. He suggests instead that our understanding of leadership has become outdated and we should be looking for substitutes for leadership.

By substitutes, Sergiovanni means norms, commitments and professionalism. In an interview with Brandt (1992), Sergiovanni explains how he came to abandon his earlier views about leadership to believe that professionalism and leadership are contradictory terms. He explains the term 'professionalism' as being a combination of competence plus virtue. This is because "professionals having a commitment to exemplary practice don't need anybody to check up on them, to push them, to lead them. They are compelled from within" (p.46). He also argues that if principals (leaders) are addressing issues of real substance they can move beyond control, commands and direct leadership. Such issues of substance include asking two important questions. These are "what should we [the school community, principal or leaders] be doing to improve teaching and learning?" and "how can I [as leader] learn more about it?" (p.41). These questions take a different emphasis to the more traditional "how can I get people to do what I [as leader] think is best?" (p.41). In taking this mindset, Sergiovanni (1992) maintains, "the more professionalism is emphasised, the less leadership is needed. The more leadership is emphasised, the less likely it is that professionalism will develop" (p.42).



For Sergiovanni (1992), these substitutes for leadership get to the heart of our views about schools. He applies two metaphors of schooling in order to highlight these leadership dilemmas. These metaphors are ones of schools as organisations or communities. He asks, “should schools be understood as formal organisations or as communities? What is most important when it comes to motivating and inspiring commitment and performance?” (p.41).

These questions beg further questions about what principals as leaders can do to improve schools. Sergiovanni is of the opinion that the term ‘instructional leadership’ has been spoiled. He now calls for a different label and suggests ‘principal teacher’ for its sense of community with teachers. In talking with Brandt (1992) he claims:

*Instructional leader suggests that others have got to be followers. The legitimate instructional leaders, if we have to have them, ought to be teachers. And principals ought to be leaders of leaders; people who develop the instructional leadership in their teachers (p.48).*

Leaders must acknowledge the unique contexts for their leadership when deciding how to act.

### ***Leadership and self-managing schools***

Leadership plays a critical, yet different role within the context of site based managed (self-managing) schools (Wohlstetter et al., 1997). They suggest it will depend on how principals interpret their role, how the school staff responds to their leadership and the emergence of teacher leaders. In their research they also noted significant differences in leadership according to school type. One difference they highlight is that between actively restructuring and struggling schools. They maintain:

*In actively restructuring schools, principals were moving toward the role of manager and facilitator of change, and they worked hard to foster a strong sense of a school learning community (p.38).*

In contrast, the situation in struggling schools was described as:

*Principals in struggling schools often operated from their own agendas rather than building a common one. This stance alienated school staff and ultimately led to the rejection of principal leadership. In many struggling schools, staff members perceived their principals as too autocratic. They reported that the principals appeared to dominate all decisions or, in other cases, were insufficiently involved. Principals of struggling*

*schools often loaded up the site council with trivial details and typically identified, on their own, a vision for the school, presenting it as a fait accompli to the staff. Many times this led to a power struggle between teachers and the principal... Teachers frequently referred to 'the principal's vision' in these schools, and they were unwilling to accept guidance and leadership from the principal because they felt little sense of ownership and accountability to the plan (pp.38-39).*

While these two examples represent extremes, they nonetheless highlight the unique interplay between leadership and school culture. It is therefore clear that no single leadership model has all the answers for understanding the current reality. Stoll and Fink (1996) write, “effective educational leaders attend to both structure and culture, community and change; they are both managers and leaders; they are both transactional and transformational” (p.107).

Being a leader involves constantly adapting to situations and never being completely certain of directions. Despite leadership being a puzzling role, leaders at all levels need to accept that their position will often be near what Fullan (1999) calls the “edge of chaos”. This vantage point can be seen in a positive light if leaders change their current mindset and see uncertainty as an opportunity for learning and development rather than a threat. School leaders of the future will also need to consider their main function as being one of building leadership density where teachers have a strong sense of community and a commitment to learning. The cultivation of teacher leaders will be the key as principals become leaders of leaders.



## Chapter 9

### **The role of principals in teacher learning and development**

Teacher learning and development is dependent on a number of influences. Already mentioned have been the roles played by central agencies at a macro level, specifically the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office. It has been shown that these agencies exert a powerful influence on both what teachers learn and how they learn. This is evident in the ways teachers must address legislative requirements and undertake regular reviews to ensure they meet quality and compliance standards. In this chapter the focus returns to the micro level of the individual school site and the role of the school principal. Data from interviews with principals in the QLC schools illustrate how these principals perceive their leadership role contributing to teacher learning and development.

#### *Interviews with the QLC principals*

Interviews were held with each of the QLC principals towards the end of the QLC experience (refer to Appendix F). The decision to include principals in my research study was for two reasons. Firstly it was considered important that the principals were connected in some way with the teachers' QLC experiences for there to be an impact on teachers other than the QLC teachers. In addition to this looking back over the QLC experience, it was useful to explore how the principals might see learning about NEMP occurring for other teachers within their schools, and this being a future phase of the research project.

An exploration of what was possible alongside existing work with the Ministry of Education curriculum contracts was intended to find out how receptive the principals were to the addition of the NEMP reports in their staff development programmes. This involved establishing how each of the principals made decisions regarding the nature and process of teacher learning, and the extent to which they welcomed experimentation and the trialing of new ideas in a more general sense. It was believed that this would provide additional contextual information for explaining the reasons why schools were able or not able to make time for disseminating and learning about the NEMP reports and their assessment tasks.

The responses from principals are considered in relation to the responses from the QLC teachers. This then enables checks to be made as to how each influences the other within their school learning cultures.

The following table shows the matching of QLC teachers with their principals.

*Table 6: QLC teacher and principal pairings*

<b>QLC teacher</b>	<b>Principal</b>
Lois	Deidre
Mavis	Donald
Harriet	George
Diane	Michael
Sarah	Averill
Katrina	Jack
Mary	Kevin

Until the time of these interviews, the principals had remained on the periphery of the research. Until the interviews, it was unclear just how much these principals knew about the QLC experience and the potential of the NEMP reports and assessment tasks and so it was useful to explore their perceptions. While they had granted permission for their staff member to be involved and released for the afternoon meetings, subsequent knowledge of the project had been dependent on information being passed on by their teacher. Some of the principals had more knowledge and awareness of the project than others. It was clear that those working in the smaller schools as teaching principals had a much greater awareness of NEMP than those in the larger schools. However, the request to be interviewed had in itself ensured that some talking was done with the QLC teacher before the researcher arrived in the school. It was also significant that by the time of these interviews all the QLC teachers (with the exception of Lara who was not part of the interviews) had been given time at a staff meeting to talk about their work in the project. Also the 1998 NEMP reports had arrived in schools and this provided another good reason why the QLC teachers should have time to share information to other teachers.

The principals were asked similar questions to those discussed with the QLC teachers and reported in Chapter 7. These are now collated according to four themes:

- Principals' views of whole school teacher learning
- Issues in managing teacher learning
- Principals' roles in teacher learning
- Work undertaken with the NEMP reports in their schools

*Principals' views of whole school teacher learning*

This discussion of the principals' views of whole school learning addresses three topics, namely their satisfaction with the overall Ministry of Education professional development contracts, particular models of disseminating new learning and any other models devised by schools themselves.

All of the schools had participated in a number of Ministry of Education professional development contracts. These had typically involved assistance from one or more outside facilitators who had trained resource teachers from each of the schools to work alongside teachers in their own schools. Most of the seven principals were enthusiastic about the Ministry of Education contract model because it brought the whole staff together as a learning community.

The idea of having trained resource teachers from within the staff was looked on with favour by three of the principals. They considered that this provided more immediate support and at the same time empowered teachers at the school to reflect on their teaching. George said:

*[It's] definitely an advantage. I think too it is interpreted for people in a way that is practical instead of coming from someone who has perhaps not been in the classroom particularly recently, you know? These two will go away. They'll get information. They'll come back but then they'll present it in a setting that is appropriate for our staff and in a context that suits our kids and everything else.*

George noted the staff's attitude to working with teachers from within the school and indicated that they were "forgiving of presentation glitches and did not shoot the messengers when something was not to their liking." Kevin spoke about the advantages of having a "known, respected and loved" staff member as the facilitator. He said, "when it is coming from somebody everybody knows and relates to and everybody sees that that person is doing it, then their attitude is, then so can we."

In recalling the health and physical well-being contract, Donald talked about the approach used by his two staff members. His words show the importance of facilitators knowing their audience and how to actively engage them in learning. He said:

*They started off with a few fun activities, handed round the peppermints, got everyone reasonably relaxed... They interspersed their activities related to the documents with*

*really pertinent examples of it happening in real life. Situations that related back to classroom teaching and, I think, the staff involved were able to get a better picture of it because they continually pulled it back into a learning and teaching situation in the classroom.*

All of the principals talked about having a major focus for staff development that extended over a good part of the year. For them this allowed for a thoroughness of approach which had previously not been followed until the onset of the changes to curriculum documents. Discussion across syndicate and class level groupings also made school-wide consistency in teaching and monitoring more apparent as well as a shared philosophy.

However, while some of the schools were still participating in these contracts, others had for various reasons moved towards more independent models of professional development. The common pattern though was similar with input coming from someone external to the school. Two of the principals showed how at their schools they had extended the contract model and chosen their own personnel to assist them. This showed that they preferred to work in their own way and timeframe rather than follow the pattern set by the Ministry contract. Deidre said:

*We always have full school development and that normally involves an outsider, probably an adviser coming in and working alongside the staff with staff meetings, working alongside individual teachers in their classrooms and providing feedback as an overall staff feedback and to individuals who are obviously at different stages in their development.*

At Averill's school the staff worked with an adviser over a term in a variety of ways. This included the adviser working with each syndicate in turn and on alternate weeks with the full staff. As well as being economical on staff time, the adviser was able to respond to the needs of particular groups of teachers and yet also keep everyone informed. This approach was closer to a more responsive, needs-based approach where the teachers' needs were met rather than the facilitator just delivering new content.

#### *Issues in managing teacher learning*

It was clear that for each of the schools, *managing time* for staff meetings required special care. All of the principals identified issues that gave them particular concern. These ranged from the management of the learning time, the reality of an overcrowded curriculum, staff turnover and lack of finance. They felt powerless to do much about these issues but they nevertheless affected the quality of teacher learning.

Time was the greatest frustration of all because there was never enough time to deal with both the long- and short-term concerns facing a staff. Issues kept coming and there was no sense of making progress in clearing the 'to do' lists. Aside from the substance of learning, housekeeping matters could easily consume a disproportionate amount of time. To counteract this, several of the schools were dealing with 'housekeeping matters' at other times.

In Averill's school the senior management team held a separate meeting each week to sift through the mail and decide what needed to be shared with the staff. A folder of essential material was circulated amongst the staff and if matters needed to be discussed at a staff meeting, these were kept until the end of the meetings. George also kept 'housekeeping matters' until the last five minutes of a staff meeting and sometimes used a few minutes at morning tea times to convey information. One syndicate leader at his school was using email for communications regarding organisational matters and this was another way to reduce staff meeting agendas and at the same time upskill staff in computing. George described how time for the priority area was maintained for staff meetings. He said:

*Karen gets first whack as the leader (of the priority area) at deciding just exactly which staff meetings are going to have that Social Studies component. We always have it first so that it doesn't get diluted when people are getting tired at half past four in the afternoon and if other things have to miss out that day that were on the agenda, then so be it.*

Averill liked to use working parties whenever she could. While she liked staff to be fully involved and informed, she was also conscious that at times staff would be just wanting something to be done rather than having to spend endless time discussing issues with no action emerging. In this regard, she recalled an example from her recent strategic planning in the school where the senior management team had taken a day off site to put ideas in writing. These were later reshaped by the staff but the process had been short circuited because of this input. She said. "We've got the combination right of letting everyone have a turn but also going off and coming back with something concrete that people could look at and shift."

Donald also expressed concern about time for a different reason. He spoke about a recent initiative he had taken after he had a staff member fall asleep in a staff meeting he was leading himself. This event had caused him to step back and reflect on the value of these meetings and think about an idea an adviser had suggested. This idea was one of removing staff meetings from the after-school slot into weekend, holiday or teacher only time. His very words were:



*We're going to kill our Tuesday afternoon staff meetings for 2000 and we're going to replace it with professional development out of school time... What we are going to do is target 5 days off campus and maybe have Saturday courses or courses in holiday time where we can concentrate specifically on the things we want to do while we're fresh and invigorated and enthused. It will stop us coming into the staffroom zombied after a hard day's work in the classroom.*

Donald explained how this idea had been introduced to the staff. He had calculated that an annual total of 36 hours was spent per year on professional development. He also knew that under the collective contract, Boards of Trustees could require staff to work an additional ten days per year. For him, it was important that the school chose this way of working rather than being required by the Board to return in holiday time. He also wanted professional development time to be quality learning time and not just covering the hours. However, he was not able to make this change because of strong staff resistance.

In commenting about the timing of staff development George had this to say, "... the whole business of when you do your staff development is always an issue with us and collaboratively we've decided that staff meetings are the best." While being aware that other schools were exploring alternatives, these were not possible for him because of married staff who did not enjoy giving up their weekends or own time. Instead there was a quiet acceptance that staff meetings were the only alternative and they would try and make them work. He admitted:

*So okay staff meetings might not be the best way of doing things, but we're all in this and we make sure everyone is there and we do it... We have little things like, a bell gets rung to make sure people are there and it's quite okay to be like the Whip in Parliament and give everybody a yell and make sure they are there and have a bit of a grizzle about it if people aren't.*

Kevin referred to frustrations regarding an *overcrowded curriculum*. He considered that too much was being foisted on schools generally. He found it difficult to fit everything into the term's schedule and still keep the major and minor focus areas going as well as allow time for staff to add incidental things. He said:

*I could facetiously say as well that I understand why they are doing a review of the school day, because, if they don't make it longer, they're not going to fit everything in and I mean that is almost what the reality is going to become.*

Jack also followed this theme of too much to cover. His comment was:

*You have so much on your plate that you have to fit around it...It's just chaotic, but we make do and do the best we can. Unfortunately what happens is that you are not doing justice to the curriculum areas you are introducing, but that is not our fault. It's the way it is being done. It's too fast and too much.*

This comment has highlighted the futility of too much concentration on the 'what to change' rather than balancing the agenda alongside the 'how' and the 'why' of change, as discussed in an earlier chapter (Stoll & Fink, 1996).

Like the teachers responding to the questionnaires, principals were concerned about the speed of change. This sense of being a 'victim' of change was evident in Deidre's comment, "we are forever on the go and we are not really given enough time to get something thoroughly under our belts, so to speak, before we have to move on to the next thing."

Some of the principals indicated that they were either planning for or having a catchup year at the moment. This meant not participating in a curriculum contract that year. Averill spoke about the need to have a catch up year to tie in the loose ends and had done the same two years ago. She said:

*We find we need this. Otherwise I get the feeling you are churning through but you are not actually doing anything... It's coverage, but you are not actually taking it on board and, if you are not taking it on board, I don't see the point in doing it.*

In taking this stand, Averill was protecting her staff and ensuring that what they did was quality work and actually made a difference to children's learning and development in classrooms. It was interesting that principals from the other schools, while admitting to being frustrated about the amount and speed of change, were quietly just accepting that this was their lot. They saw no way of changing this situation.

*Staff turnover* was mentioned by Michael as being a particular difficulty working in a six teacher school. In 1999, this had meant that half of his staff had changed and had not participated in the previous staff development projects at the school. It was unfortunate that one of the departing teachers had been leading the main staff development focus. He considered this to have been a real setback for the school and said:

*It's frustrating in the sense that the previous year, staff had ownership of this particular programme and then we had to go through and train the new teachers into our thinking and why we were doing it these particular ways.*

*Lack of finance* was mentioned by Averill. She was grateful that staff had given up some of their valuable release allocation to make it possible for the strategic planning day to take place rather than have their usual senior teacher release for syndicate responsibilities. This showed just how tight the budget was for teacher release, with no surplus for extra commitments, and this clearly frustrated her.

Other frustrations related to negative attitudes towards assessment and classroom manageability when using the NEMP tasks. In Diane's case, some of the teachers thought assessment meant pen and paper testing and they were unsure about assessing co-operative activities. When they saw that many of the NEMP tasks were geared towards individuals or small groups this was off putting. They raised questions such as, "How am I meant to do that with a class?" Or, "NEMP, has only one child, how can we get the whole class doing that?" Or, "we haven't got the video for that anyway or the commercial".

Interestingly enough, these particular concerns about the manageability of whole class assessments had also been raised by the QLC teachers at the beginning of their QLC experience. Over time, they were to find creative ways of managing the NEMP assessments for larger groups of children.

#### *The principal's role in teacher learning*

Questions regarding current roles for principals teased out involvement at several levels: whole staff, with syndicates, and with individuals. It was no surprise to have all of the principals in agreement about the absolute necessity of principals joining in staff development activities.

In explaining their roles in staff development, the principals made frequent mention of the words co-ordination and facilitation. These words suggested that these principals accepted that leadership should come from a variety of sources and not necessarily rest with them alone. George said,

*I don't think that I am the one to lead a lot of it, because, first of all, I am not practising what I might otherwise be preaching. The job has unfortunately got too administratively big*

He offered sound advice by saying:

*A principal must never walk away from curriculum. It is the most important part of the school in my view. So the best you can hope for is to do what you can to facilitate. Make sure all the ingredients are there and that you are giving support, that you have your ears to the ground,*

*that you are helping to create this atmosphere that makes it easy ... for people to hear what is said.*

Donald spoke of the changing role of principals over recent years and what this meant for staff development. He no longer felt he was the driving force but rather a 'backseat passenger' who was dependent on others to keep him up to date. He said:

*I think that the fallacy of the principal as a curriculum leader and guru of all things curriculum has well and truly gone down the tubes. As the years have gone by, I freely admit that there are probably many teachers here in my school who are far more knowledgeable about individual curriculum areas than I am.*

The remaining principals emphasised other aspects in their staff development roles. Averill described her role as a facilitator, and motivator, and one who encouraged people to say what they needed. Sarah, who was one of Averill's staff members, endorsed the existence of these roles in her principal.

Kevin and Michael referred to school structures that gave support to individuals, namely the school's appraisal system, and explained their role as one of finding ways to develop individual strengths and address weaknesses. Often this meant allocating discretionary funding to send someone on a course or visit another school, and in itself was an admission that they did not have all the answers themselves.

Deidre's motto was leading by example and encouraging others as learners. She viewed this as, "making sure that I am always there and participating and encouraging those people who are actually leading, if I am not leading it myself." She made mention of the number of principals who did not attend staff development sessions and was of the opinion that if a principal was not part of the session, then staff would take longer to progress. George talked about the signals he was giving to staff and said:

*Being there myself. Not just 'no, sorry I've got another meeting', but taking part in a group. You know not just floating around the outside if the staff are broken into groups. I go and sit with them whether it's junior, middle or senior and take a genuine part in it.*

Kevin saw his participation and involvement in staff development as "being seen to give it his blessing." Like Deidre he was there to support those who were leading the development, but he also saw his role as one of adding other dimensions to the proceedings. This was primarily a co-

ordination role because he held the view that principals tended to hold a more global view and were able to relate the parts to the whole picture in ways that classroom teachers could not.

Two of the principals interviewed were teaching principals. In terms of credibility with fellow staff members, these principals thought this was advantageous. Michael said, “because I am a teaching principal, I am seen as having the same problems and frustrations as the staff, and you can say, ‘yes, I’m having this problem’. I think you have better credibility.”

Thus the overriding message from all of these principals was the need to demonstrate support for their teachers. They knew that, given the pressures all were facing, this support was vital to staff morale, their credibility and the outcome of any staff development.

Teacher learning also occurred through syndicate groupings. Unless principals happened to be the leader of a syndicate, they usually stayed outside of these meetings. Communication filtered both ways through the senior management team and principals said they read the minutes of these meetings and would ask questions of the syndicate leaders if necessary. If principals had particular expertise to offer, they might attend, otherwise they would wait for an invitation to attend, perhaps getting a call part way through a meeting for a ruling or a request for some advice.

#### *Work undertaken with the NEMP reports in their schools*

The principals were asked to talk about any benefits they had noticed for their particular staff member involved in the NEMP research project. These discussions added to information on each of the QLC teachers which until now had been limited to observations and what each had told the researcher about their own school situations. By asking the principals to gain further information about the impact these teachers were having in each of the schools, it was possible to determine the impact NEMP had had to date and also judge whether on-going trialing might be continued into the future.

Each of the principals expressed delight in their particular staff member’s specialised knowledge regarding the NEMP resources and possibilities for enhancing teaching and learning in the classroom. Averill said of Sarah, “she is very up with the play with regard to assessment procedures which is important and the philosophy behind assessment and has formed a clear view of that.” Similarly, Donald mentioned the in-depth knowledge Mavis had about assessment and said:

*She has become a lot more knowledgeable ... I think it has given her a lot of credibility as well with the rest of the staff to know that she has actively sort of upskilled or become more knowledgeable... It has tended to give teachers a lot more confidence in maybe asking her about the areas she has shared with people.*

Whole staff sessions were significant awareness raisers in each of the schools. Many of the principals mentioned ways that various curriculum areas could be revisited through a focus on the NEMP assessment tasks. Kevin said:

*It's (NEMP's) something we could pick up and run with in a future year as a subsidiary area for school development... I mean, things like, next year we will be looking at health and physical education, that document. Now I know there had been a NEMP report about that. It would be a good opportunity to tie some of those aspects back into the document.*

In Michael's school where Diane had kept her ear to the ground regarding the topics for units of work and offered information or resources from NEMP to teachers, there had been a lot of active experimenting with the NEMP reports. Michael indicated that initially staff had been slightly negative about NEMP because they saw it as only being relevant to year 4 and year 8 classes. He said:

*Diane has informed the staff of what is there. We've got a box of reports and she has also strongly encouraged staff to actually have a go at some of these activities and popped up and said, 'if you're doing something in maths, you realise there is a maths assessment, page such and such'. This has opened the doors up for our staff to look at how beneficial the resource is.*

Both Harriet's and Lois' principals said that they had spent time taking their syndicates through what NEMP had to offer. Lois' DP had attended her syndicate meetings and had been very impressed with the way she was introducing NEMP to other teachers. Her principal said:

*Next year Lois will have a larger syndicate combining year 3 and year 4. I'm rapped because that introduces it to year 4... The NEMP monitoring is also going to be a module focus which she will take.*

George talked about quality learning circles being mixed groups of staff and how he was preparing staff to share ideas throughout the school by deliberately mixing the combinations for group work at staff meetings. He was unaware that Harriet was actually part of a QLC for the project! He did indicate that he thought Harriet would continue to work with the NEMP tasks with her syndicate and two other staff.

The above discussion has shown that the task for principals of managing and encouraging teacher learning is difficult. Principals alone cannot be responsible for teacher learning. Their role is to provide structures which support teacher learning but in the end it is over to teachers to act in a professional manner and see themselves as active learners. The future quality of teacher learning depends on addressing learning processes alongside curriculum or assessment content so that the factors which help and hinder teacher learning can be identified and best practices worked into professional development programmes.

The focus for Chapter 10 is the school as a learning organisation. The concept of organisational culture is developed as an analytical tool for exploring the important link between leadership and organisational culture. This is followed by discussion of research studies to highlight leadership practices that contribute to the development of collaborative learning cultures.





## Chapter 10

### Organisational Life and Learning

This chapter examines the concept of *school (organisational) culture* and *organisational learning theory*. It is argued that these are powerful influences which make significant contributions to organisational life and learning in schools.

School culture is one tool that allows sense to be made of the ways in which schools operate. The importance of interpersonal interactions, language, rituals and routines are all significant in conveying the prevailing patterns of an organisation's life. However, because manifestations of a school's culture appear in both tangible and intangible forms, it is a complex process to identify the significant features of a school's culture. The difficulty is that each school has its own characteristics which will affect the management of change projects. Application of the school culture concept allows these patterns to be realised. It is from this acknowledgement that alternative practices can be considered. Organisational learning theory represents a further extension of the unique features of a school's culture and the ways in which these features contribute to the enhancement of learning and achievement. Together school culture and organisational learning theory provide a framework for analysing what it is that teachers and school leaders can do to promote their professional learning and in turn enhance student achievement. The following discussion explores the definition and scope of both school culture and organisational learning theory and their usefulness for educators.

#### School Culture

##### *Definition*

Like schools, definitions of school culture also vary. One frequently cited definition is rather loose. For example, Deal and Kennedy (1983) say it is the way things are done within an organisation. Dalin (1993) explains this definition in terms of the differences in organisations. For him these are:

*What we experience as the 'way things are' in an organization, the written and unwritten rules that regulate behaviour, the stories and the 'myths' of what an organization has achieved, the standards and the values set for its members – these and many other aspects of organizations differ (p.97).*

To add further complication to the concept of school culture, Dalin (1993) comments that “values and norms appear at the individual level, the group level (e.g., the classroom), the organisational level, the subculture level (e.g., school versus other organisations) and the society level (e.g., the ethos)” (p.98). These will also vary from school to school and amongst classrooms within a school. However, despite these differences, there is significance to these levels in the ways that this multi layering of individuals and their relations can determine the nature of a school’s culture and shape its life on a continuing basis. This is because a school’s culture is at different times both dynamic and static because of its interrelationship with the forces surrounding it. Sometimes there is a need to change and at other times there is not. This is one challenge leaders face when working with change because it inevitably involves more than the introduction of new content or a new task. Individual and team needs become important and need to be addressed in tandem with the task focus if the change is to be more than a cosmetic one (Adair, 1986). Thus the literature underpinning the school culture concept is about the importance of understanding a culture and then of leaders using this information to make decisions about their need to shape or reinforce it. Leaders will also need to accept that they will face very different challenges because of the uniqueness of their school contexts. The United States Department of Education (1990) suggests that in seeking this understanding there are three questions leaders should be asking:

- What is the culture of the school now – its history, values, traditions, assumptions, beliefs, and ways?
  - Where it matches my conception of a “good” school, what can I do to strengthen existing patterns?
  - Where I see a need for a new direction, what can be done to change or reshape the culture?
- (p.13)

The answers to these questions highlight the need for leaders to build on current practices and relationships in order to plan for improvements. Fullan (1992) provides a useful reminder that heavy agendas for change run the risk of ignoring the vital elements of a school’s culture. This view is also shared by Schein (1985) cited by Fullan (1992) who writes:

*There is a possibility, underemphasised in the leadership literature, that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture (p.20).*

These words are significant because they reinforce the message that culture building matters for the long term rather than the short term of individual change efforts.

### *Shaping a school culture*

Leadership and culture are closely linked. The difficulty about shaping a school's culture is that this is an "indirect, intuitive, and largely unconscious" exercise (The United States Department of Education, 1990, p.17). Leaders can be unaware of the effect their actions are having on others so in order to understand what is happening an analysis is required of the ways in which leaders and followers influence each other. This is where the concept of school culture makes a valuable contribution. Deal and Kennedy (1983) even go so far as to say, "when culture works against you, it's nearly impossible to get anything done" (p.4).

Five roles are suggested for school leaders (principals) as they work with others to shape school cultures. One is *symbolic* where leaders affirm values through their dress, behaviour, attention, and routines. This is because seemingly innocuous actions send signals as to what the principal values and these are accepted as truths. A second role is as a *potter*. This involves the leader shaping and being shaped by the school's heroes [heroines], rituals, ceremonies and symbols. It marks a reciprocity which is important to recognise. A third role is as a *poet* using language to reinforce values and sustain the school's best image of itself. Then a fourth role is as an *actor* who can improvise in the school's inevitable dramas, and lastly the leader as a *healer* who oversees the transitions and changes in the life of the school (The United States Department of Education, 1990).

Others affirm that there is more to the concept of school culture than symbolism. Telford (1996) incorporates Bolman and Deal's conceptual frame to emphasise human resources, politics and structures as well as the symbolic frame. So regardless of the definition, the message is that what lies behind the concept of school culture represents a complex array of variables which are themselves not easy to specify because the variables influence each other in subtle ways. However, when awareness has been raised there is a chance that working relationships can be enhanced.

Principals are responsible for the quality of learning and teaching occurring in their schools. In this role they need to identify and encourage teachers' personal strengths and create opportunities for individual teachers to contribute to one another's learning and teaching

practice. The extent to which a principal is able to establish and maintain such a collaborative learning culture is a key factor contributing to the quality of learning within a school. Schools vary considerably according to their level of collaborative practice. The research studies in the next section highlight the importance of the principal's role in fostering teacher learning and development.

### ***Research on the principal's role in culture building***

Only a few studies have explored the role of the principal as a culture builder (Little, 1982; Dana, 1992; à Campo, 1993). Each of these studies has clarified the relationship between what principals do, the extent to which teachers collaborate and the contextual variables influencing the effects of principals' strategies (à Campo, 1993). However, it is research questions like those offered by à Campo which provide a way forward because they seek detail about what it is that principals can do to promote work cultures based on collaborative practices. It is noted that collaborative practices are more desirable not only for the quality of outcome and sharing of workloads, but also for the enhancement of commitment and ownership by teachers engaged in school improvement projects. Four useful questions are:

- 1 What do principals and teachers perceive to be the extent of collaboration in their school?
- 2 Which strategies are most often used by principals to develop a collaborative school culture?
- 3 To what extent do principals' strategies contribute to collaboration in the school and are all strategies of equal importance?
- 4 Does the way in which the principal uses the strategies affect the extent of the collaboration?

à Campo's research with teachers from Ontario and British Columbia explored these questions and highlighted various implications for practice, using Little's (1982) framework of exploring the nature of teacher talk, observations of practice, and evidence of shared planning and evaluation. The results showed that teachers considered themselves to be relatively collaborative and à Campo (1993) writes, "they all reported being involved in teacher talk and joint planning. However, the practice of joint planning varied among the schools and even within the schools" (p.122). Also, while mention was made of the teaching and observation of other teachers it seemed that few were engaged in this practice apart from those in an expert/novice relationship. Thus à Campo's justification for teacher observation and teaching is stated as:

*[They] create opportunities for improvement, reflection and interaction among teachers. They can be dynamic, challenging and satisfying ways for teachers to collaborate and grow. Collaborative practices should be promoted and become a natural part of the day-to-day activities in a school. However, teachers need to believe in the benefits of working together. They need to see the advantages both for students and themselves (p.125).*

Principals have a part to play in the development of collaborative cultures. A necessary prerequisite is an awareness of teacher motivation and commitment. Other elements include principals having a vision of what a school would look like if it were the ideal school, involving teachers in decision making, modelling self evaluation and putting in place the resources and structures which enable collaborative practices to occur.

Another study to have explored the presence of collaborative cultures in schools is one by Nias, Southworth and Yeoman (1989). What is interesting about this study is that the researchers did not provide a definition of a collaborative school culture for the five schools in their study. Instead they argued:

*We did not know, and wanted to discover, what staff themselves meant by 'working together'. To have used our interpretations of that term would have been to place artificial restrictions upon the limits of our subsequent understanding. Similarly we wished to 'ground' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) our insights into the meanings attributed by participants to 'good' staff relationships and the purposes they served, and not to impose our preconceptions upon them (p.2).*

Also worthy of mention is the way this study was conducted. Data was collected over a full year with the researchers spending time in these schools observing staff relationships and interactions. When the researchers approached each school, they explained that their school had been selected on the basis of the Local Education Authority having recognised them as offering positive models of adult relationships. In return, the researchers said they wanted to become members of staff, albeit temporary and part time, for an academic year, in order to study the ways in which they worked together. Each school then used the researchers in ways that suited the staff of the school. For some this meant team teaching, supply and ancillary teaching. Participation also included joining in assemblies, school camps and other events. The study used an imaginative design so that the researchers could gain insights into staff relationships and ways of working from the inside. Observational notes of key incidents were reported, as well as checks made with semi-structured interviews along the way, which then developed into case studies for each school. In turn these were taken back to the schools for validation, and comment on the interpretation and the meanings attributed to words, events and behaviours.

This study of workplace cultures in five schools where principals wanted to encourage collaborative practices proved to be a fascinating exercise. Certainly each school had its own particular challenges in terms of the development and maintenance of school cultures. Three of those studied had cultures which had been created and were being sustained. The other two represented schools where a previous culture had been destroyed or dismantled because of discontinuities brought about by new principals, and new cultures were being created. Nias et al.'s data is a demonstration that "cultures lie within the control of those who participate in them; leaders and members together make their own schools" (p.186). Thus the real value of ethnographic research on school cultures is captured with the words of Nias et al., who write:

*Coming to perceive, to know, to understand, and finally to participate in a school's culture is neither a swift nor a straightforward process. It requires an intimate knowledge of the school and its staff, based upon an awareness of the significance of many features: history, building, organisational arrangements, patterns of interactions, individual people, talk, humour, the distribution of authority and influence, and the identity and behaviour of leaders (pp.vii-viii).*

Dana's (1992) study is of interest for a different reason. This study is helpful because it is an example of research initiated not by a researcher but a school's principal and the other teachers, who requested help from a university researcher in teacher education. They wanted to replace their school's culture of isolation and seclusion with a culture of collegiality and caring. This then became a project in collaborative action research over a full year in which the researcher gathered data to assist the school to put its vision of change into practice.

This research progressed through three phases. The first involved the university researcher focusing on the salient features of the school's culture. Discussions were also held to determine the practitioners' meanings and visions of educational change. These were developed throughout the second phase using a process of reflective supervision with the teachers and careful documenting of the principal's personal process of change as well as the researcher's part in the process. The third stage returned to the school culture in order to document its change. While these phases are described to suggest a linear development, what happened was far from linear but rather cyclical and overlapping of all three phases.

This study has drawn attention to the importance of teacher voice as a necessary component of change efforts. In this respect Dana (1992) notes:

*The development of teacher voice, and hence, teacher leadership, can occur when spaces are created at the school level for teachers' voices to be heard. A culture of collegiality fosters the development of teacher voice. A culture of seclusion and isolation prevents the voices of teachers from being heard. Therefore, it is not until a school culture is changed to one of collegiality that teachers become empowered to create and sustain educational change in their classrooms (p.3).*

Therefore it was particularly significant that the project's focus shifted from the initial focus on classroom teacher change to one of changing the school's culture. This meant including "idea sharing sessions" and "discussions of professional issues" in the faculty meetings. In fact, what Dana (1992) reports as happening was that the principal's unintentional actions constrained the spaces that had been created for teachers' voices to be heard. This comment suggests that teacher change and school culture change may be linked to changes in the traditional roles of the principal.

In the second phase of the research, where the researcher worked with the principal to uncover his personal process and views of change, various constraints emerged. Through reflection-in and-on practice, the principal was helped to see how his actions sometimes hindered the development of a collaborative culture. Dana said, "Ted, [the principal] realized that in order for teachers to engage in dialogue with one another, his director voice as the principal would need to remain silent at times, and a new facilitator voice would need to emerge" (p.6). Thus reflection is a necessary activity for both teachers and their principals. When principals model such reflective practice they are saying this is an important activity for learning. On the other hand, if they pretend they are beyond reflective practice this sends the message that they no longer need to be a learner and this is not desirable when surviving in times of constant change.

For the school as a whole engaging in reform, Dana (1992) has noted the need for reciprocity involving reflection and change and all participants finding and silencing voices. So while we can try to identify individual roles such as the principal, it is also necessary to see how the teachers and leaders learn as a collective unit. This is recognition that teachers and leaders, while having their own beliefs and practices, develop and shape these through on-going contact with each other. This shaping occurs through both overt and covert actions and is why the concept of organisational culture is a useful tool to raise awareness of these factors.

*The usefulness of school culture as a conceptual framework.*

Despite the problems of definition, a number of writers continue to acknowledge the usefulness of the school (organisational) culture concept as a way to understand the process and impact of change (See Deal & Kennedy, 1983; Beare, & Millikan, 1991; Dalin, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; Stoll & Fink, 1996). After a flurry of writing on the importance of school (organisational) culture in the mid 1980s and early 1990s, these messages have since received less attention. I believe that this concept deserves separate attention rather than being subsumed within discussions about organisational learning theory. This is because it is important to identify the processes which underpin what it is that schools can do to enhance student learning and these differ from school to school. Of particular interest are the questions of why some schools are more successful than others and how schools can be helped to become more successful. The school culture concept highlights factors which both help and hinder successful change projects by taking a closer look at the ways work and authority are organised, people rewarded and controlled. Answers to these questions signal messages regarding prevailing beliefs and ways of working in an organisational culture which may need addressing. These factors contribute to an understanding of the QLC teachers within their school settings.

In any organisation there will be ways of working which emphasise power relationships, roles and procedures, tasks and/or the individual person. Handy (1986) suggests that together these cultural types present a useful framework for analysing strengths and weaknesses of a work culture and determining the reasoning behind a particular emphasis. This interest in why people do what they do is important for determining strategies for school improvement. Given that cultures are believed to be both dynamic and static (Stoll & Fink, 1996), there is merit in exploring ways in which participants respond to differing situations as they seek to create and maintain positive work environments for learning.

The concept of school culture is useful for explaining the large amount of variation in school effects. While schools share the same classification of 'school', it is tempting to assume that they are alike in other ways and offer them similar programmes and approaches for improvement. However, those who work with improvement programmes soon realise that a different approach is required for each setting. The identification of various internal conditions requiring attention helps the school in the longer term because it returns the focus to building a school's capacity for



sustained improvements, so that an organisation can shape and control its own directions for change and development.

Thus, the appeal of the school culture concept is its recognition that all organisations are unique and highly individualised. Any notions of an ideal type or structure for organisational effectiveness are left behind with this concept. For those looking for solutions, the shaping of school cultures depends on the binding of the participants with a commitment to change and improvement. In this sense, culture building is not something which can be foisted on people. It is a collaborative exercise involving leaders and followers who trust and respect each other and can help schools to recognise particular strengths and weaknesses.

The next section of this chapter presents organisational learning theory as a further framework for analysing why some school cultures are more conducive to teacher and student learning than others.

### **Organisational learning theory**

Organisational learning theory begins to answer the key question of whether schools can be called learning organisations for teachers. However, while accepting that teacher learning is viewed as both an individual and a collective activity, the particular focus of this chapter is about teacher learning through staff meetings and whole school development.

A rationale and exploration of the origins of organisational learning theory sets the scene for further investigation of teacher learning in schools. This is then followed by a definition of organisational learning theory and a review of the literature including examples from empirical studies to show both the potential and pitfalls of this theory. Underpinning this discussion of teacher learning is the continuing theme of what and how teachers learn. It is shown how organisational learning theory includes elements of the earlier mentioned theories, namely school effectiveness, school improvement, transformational leadership and school culture. Chapter 11 then uses the framework of organisational learning to analyse data collected from observations of staff meetings and interviews with teachers, giving insights into the extent to which the case study schools are learning organisations.

### ***Rationale for organisational learning theory***

Since the purpose of schools is to engender learning and achievement, it is a natural consequence that schools should be interested in focussing on improving the quality of this learning for individual teachers, students and schools as whole units. This is a complex task and one that provides many challenges, particularly given the present pattern of ambitious and persistent school reforms throughout the world. It is this context of reform which has prompted support for learning communities and a new theory called organisational learning (Louis, 1994; Fullan, 1991). While these terms are both used in the leadership literature, organisational learning is favoured here because it reflects a closer match to the way in which New Zealand schools work where professional development favours whole school projects which are dominated by Ministry of Education initiatives. Since a school's overall quality is determined by the combined performance of all staff it is appropriate to study the processes which enable an organisation to learn.

It is also significant that this is where New Zealand's Education Review Office places its interest when reviewing schools as learning organisations. Reviewers are interested in a consistency of approach, the presence of shared goals and support structures for learning, as well as evidence of value added learning. Given that the recent reforms have altered job responsibilities for both teachers and principals, it is even more important that these processes be carefully scrutinised for their impact on organisational learning (Louis, 1994). This should also involve drawing attention to a school's ability and capacity to improve itself so that it can become more independent in its learning (Leithwood, Leonard & Sharratt, 1998).

### ***An overview of improvement strategies for the school sector***

It is interesting to look back over time and trace the range of emphases used for school improvement. These have progressed from a "fixing" of the parts (e.g., curricula and teaching methods), to people (e.g., staff development), and finally to the school as an organisational unit, where changing the culture has been a way of helping people to solve their problems (Larson-Knight, 2000). These elements continue to have relevance for current change and professional development models for teachers where pressure of time and demands for change, largely driven from external forces, can lead to a desire to 'fix' teachers, curriculum or their ways of working. Such a 'fixing' mindset is in fact counterproductive for those working in self-managing schools

because while they might think this means they are free to exercise choice regarding what to change and develop, what tends to happen is that the compliance pressures dominate and time runs out for other work. An opportunity to help schools become more self-managing is missed when fear of non-compliance drives schools towards an unhealthy dependency on letting others determine what it is they should know and do. This neither develops independence and initiative nor a capacity for problem solving and learning in the long term. Learning does not flourish when such controls dominate.

### *The value of organisational learning theory*

Organisational learning theory offers a useful framework for addressing concerns about the quality of learning in schools. First and foremost, this theory recognises that the processes of organisational learning are complicated by the uniqueness of each workplace, its personnel, ways of working, power plays and past and present practices. The theory of organisational learning is an attempt to work with these individual differences and provide a framework for enhancing learning. This approach also recognises that application of the same model or strategies will not suit every school. Conditions that both foster organisational learning and allow it to flourish are identified from a range of factors, as a menu rather than as a set recipe for improvement. That each school will require a different selection from this menu adds to the challenge of helping schools towards improvement. The following generic questions serve as a starting point for determining possible areas requiring growth or attention.

- 1 Which leadership styles engender learning amongst teachers?
- 2 How can teachers become a cohesive staff group working for the good of the school and its learners?
- 3 What structures will make it possible for teachers to learn from each other, share concerns and plan for improvements to their practice?
- 4 How can higher levels of teacher interactions and dialogue about the practice of teaching be encouraged?

Answers to these questions will indicate the quality of a learning organisation. While lists of desired practices can be lengthy, Sackney, Walker and Hajnal (1995) note just three factors (from their research in a school improvement programme in Saskatchewan) as underpinning organisational learning. These are collaboration, individual learning and alignment of the

school's and the district's goals. These factors will be developed later in this chapter through further discussion of literature on organisational learning including empirical research studies.

Lists of characteristics for quality schools are not a new idea. The real merit of organisational learning theory is the way it moves the school improvement field beyond lists to strategies which underpin the identification of conditions for school improvement which are unique to each school. A difficulty is that the application of these strategies challenges many of the existing structural and organisational arrangements for schools. Until these are resolved, there will continue to be a gap between theory and practice.

### ***A call to redesign schools***

Darling-Hammond (1996) takes a more radical stance towards school improvement and has called for a redesign of schools in order to meet the learning needs of today's students. Informed by the 1994 Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, Darling-Hammond argues that the solution is not one of continuing to blame schools for their inability to be learning organisations, but more one of finding ways to help schools become more learning orientated. It is a positive rather than a negative approach. She writes:

*It is now clear that most schools and teachers cannot produce the kind of learning demanded by the new reforms – not because they do not want to, but because they do not know how, and the systems they work in do not support their efforts to do so (p.194).*

Darling-Hammond is not alone with this plea for a radical redesign of schools as learning organisations. Fullan (1995) and MacNeill and Silcox (1996) also promote this idea. Given these strong opinions, it is timely that research studies have begun to focus on identifying a range of strategies which might help schools find ways to become even more effective as learning organisations. This work is still in its initial stages of development.

### ***The empirical literature base for organisational learning***

It is indeed unfortunate that the field of organisational learning does not yet have a strong empirical research base. Leithwood et al. (1998) attribute this limitation to a lack of "authoritative knowledge about the characteristics of schools that foster organizational learning to guide those responsible for the redesign of schools" (p.243). Other writers also refer to the paucity of educational research on organisational learning (Mulford, 1998; Keating, 1999). Mitchell (1995) also suggests that available work is "theoretical in nature, based on literature

reviews and anecdotal reports [rather] than on empirical evidence” (p.47). She notes, however, that there are “points of convergence in the literature”. These relate to the sharing of trust, understandings, and a vision, collaborative practices, critical reflection and dialogue, experimentation, problem-solving and resolution of difference and an understanding of systemic influences and relationships. These are all indicators of organisational learning.

Like Mitchell, Senge (1990) includes team learning and a shared vision in his set of disciplines for building learning organisations. His other three disciplines offer a different emphasis regarding ways of thinking about systems, personal mastery and one’s own mental modes. Taken together, these disciplines signal a moving away from the traditional ‘controlling’ mode of organisations, towards an emphasis on strengthening people’s commitment and capacity to learn at every level of the organisation. Here emphasis is placed on the need to value individuals and find ways to draw their individual strengths towards the collective good of the organisation. This learning is considered to complement people’s acquisition of new knowledge and bind them together as strengths and weaknesses are acknowledged. It is considered that if resources from within their midst are recognised, shared and developed, then organisations are better placed to develop their capacities for learning (Louis, 1994; Hopkins & Harris, 1997; Lambert, 1998; Senge, 1990).

A special feature of organisational learning theory is the importance it places on the value of interpersonal relationships and the need to demonstrate strategies which will help people find ways of working in teams and thereby create communities of learners. When developments only emphasise tasks and their completion, these are interim ‘quick fix’ measures and do not sustain learners for long term survival. Attention must be given to meeting the personal and collective needs of all learners if learning is considered to be an on-going process (Adair, 1986; Mulford, 1998). However, such an emphasis on meeting both task and people needs represents a marked change from the commonly held view that management systems and structures are the keys to school improvement. Mitchell, Sackney and Walker (1997) explain this difference in more detail by saying:

*Such reliance upon managerial and administrative change is a clear indication that the school is concerned largely with organizational maintenance and efficiency. In practice, this has led to schools defining and redefining roles and responsibilities, introducing monitoring systems and generally concentrating their efforts upon infra-structural change. This approach stresses the administrative arrangements rather than the human factors, neglects the importance of the process of change in schools and, more importantly, underestimates what we call the capacity of the school for development (p.402).*

What Mitchell et al. (1997) are saying is that the current emphasis on accountability and quality assurance throughout the workforce, including the education sector, has been to the detriment of learning. Day, Fernandez, Hauge and Moller (2000) argue that what schools should be doing is creating work conditions in which “competence, creativity, risk taking and learning may thrive” (p.8). Identification of these processes is at the heart of the organisational learning theory. It is unfortunate that the pull towards certainty, organisational maintenance and efficiency is so strong and the alternative made to look weak and lack the necessary rigour of accountability. Mitchell (1995) appears well justified in arguing that it is still largely the structures in which people work that receive more attention. Quality learning to meet individual needs is not part of this equation.

### *The emergence of organisational learning theory*

Progress on developing schools as learning organisations has been slow, which may indicate that this task is more complex than one might believe. While cultural typologies have been mentioned and accounts given of schools coping with new initiatives (Hopkins et al., 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999), little has developed from these studies. The same can be said for the literature promoting the desirability of collaborative cultures (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989; à Campo, 1993; Lieberman, 1995). In practice, few schools have been able to progress beyond congenial and contrived cultures to the more ideal collegial cultures or collaborative culture.

Mitchell (1995) elaborates the notion of shared learning by suggesting that a framework for studying organisational learning belongs in the cognitive and affective domains. Learners need to develop heightened awareness of both their ways of working and personal belief systems. Mitchell argues that while an emphasis on the cognitive domain has already received much attention in the reflective practice literature, attention now needs to focus on the affective domain.

The affective domain extends knowledge and information acquisition into the area of interpersonal relations. Individuals can learn through dialogue with others, particularly if some trust has already been established. At times this may involve conflict and disagreement, with individuals having their ideas challenged. When this happens, an individual either chooses to stand firm or may come to see issues from another perspective. If it is the latter, then the conflict has led to an opportunity for learning. Willingness to have one's beliefs and ways of working made public develops over time, when a certain degree of courage and respect for one's

colleagues is firmly established. It is argued that once teachers recognise that there are benefits to be had from communicating with significant others they will begin to recognise their own craft theories and consider moving in new directions. Without this they are left to their own resources and learning may be stifled or limited. According to Mitchell (1995), positive working relationships depend on the presence of affirmation and an invitation to freely express one's feelings and ideas. This is about finding ways of valuing the individual contributions of teachers within a learning community for the benefit of the organisation as a whole, because this serves to encourage even more learning.

Hargreaves (1998) is another writer who is currently placing emphasis on the affective domain, calling it the "emotional politics of teacher [professional] development" (p.1). He argues that the emotions of teaching and professional development are "absolutely central to maintaining and improving educational quality in our schools, and to the work of educational leaders who are ultimately responsible for producing that quality" (ibid). He states that such emotions are indeed "shaped by how the work of teaching is organised, structured and led" which is why leaders ought to look to their own actions and their effect on others (p.3). It is in this sense that leaders can be deliberate culture builders who look to themselves and others in their decision making about school improvement matters. A successful team approach requires an owning of one's personal strengths and weaknesses and then finding ways to work with others for school improvement. Emotions are an important part of being honest with oneself and others. Hargreaves stresses that if we ignore the emotions of education, then this will be at our peril and writes:

*...we [will] also allow emotion to enter the world of teaching and leading by the back door, in damaging ways, when hyper-rational policies and initiatives alienate, anger, frustrate or sadden those who are obliged to implement them (p.3).*

Hargreaves (1998) points to gaps in the literature on teaching and professional development in terms of the unique contexts in which teachers work. He states:

*In an age when the work of teachers is being restructured all around them (often in ways that make it much more difficult), overpersonalizing and overmoralizing about the emotional commitments of teachers without due regard for the contexts in which the teachers work (many of which are making it harder and harder for teachers to sustain emotional commitments to their students), only adds to the intolerable guilt and burnout that many members of the teaching force already experience... Understanding what shapes the emotional lives and work of many real teachers, not a few idealised or atypical ones, calls for a more sociologically and politically informed perspective (p.5).*

In seeking a way forward, Hargreaves (1998) presents a conceptual framework which addresses seven points to cast light on how emotions are located and represented in teachers' work and professional development. This framework serves as a useful reminder that teaching is an emotional practice and varies for each individual according to their work context. Hargreaves argues that "teachers' emotions are rooted in and affect their selves, identities and relationships with others" (pp.7-8). Therefore, if this dimension is ignored, school improvements may just touch the surface, leaving the people side of change untouched to the detriment of school improvement.

Such a framework highlights the tremendous risk teachers face when working with change. In adapting to new initiatives, teachers are indeed vulnerable. Hargreaves (1998) refers to Fullan (1991) and explains this process as including:

*An implementation dip (where teachers learning a new practice get worse before they get better), to an implementation tip (where a peak of innovative achievement is followed by a precipitous fall into ineffectiveness, as teachers and leaders try to push onwards to the next summit before they are physically or psychologically ready) (pp.19-20).*

In a world where performance indicators dominate, teachers are less able to take risks in their learning. This also means that they are less able to experiment and move far from the status quo of accepted practice. Therefore, in thinking about organisational change, the strength of organisational learning theory can be seen in its return to a focus on orientations to change from all three perspectives; individual, school and system as a whole. Each part needs to be affirmed for cohesion to occur. Gitlin and Margonis (1995), cited by Mitchell (1995), argue that these orientations to change emerge from the research on influencing variables and school culture. These show the competing forces for change and both operate from two assumptions. The first is that people in schools passively receive the wisdom of external reform agents and choose either to support or to resist the proposed changes. This assumption highlights a real dependence on others presenting ideas to teachers rather than teachers seeking new ideas themselves. The second assumption displays a different type of thinking. It asks the question of how successful and unsuccessful change projects can be distinguished. This involves an uncovering of the external and/or internal conditions that facilitate or block the implementation of reforms. Through such uncovering, there is a possibility of a way forward emerging which may help those working with school improvement understand both their actions and choices. This second assumption lies behind organisational learning theory. It is in this sense that organisational



learning theory marks a beginning towards the uncovering of conditions which may enable institutions to thrive on change and become more learning orientated.

***Paucity of organisational learning researchers addressing the school sector***

Organisational learning theory is a further example of the education system following trends in the business world. Leithwood and Louis (1998) highlight the need to treat schools as a different context. They write:

*Virtually none of the substantial literature about the nature, causes, and consequences of organizational learning has been written with schools in mind. As a result, although schools face the same sorts of conditions giving rise to calls for greater individual and collective learning in other types of organizations, we cannot rely on the existing literature to acknowledge the unique conditions and requirements shaping the learning 'styles' of schools (pp.6-7).*

Leithwood and Louis (1998) address the problem of context in their 1998 book, which focuses only on organisational learning in the context of schools. Others have drawn attention to organisational learning across sector groupings through the literature, e.g., Mulford, 1998. Mulford argues that those who have taken up the “organizational learning baton” from the education sector are relatively few in number, and lists Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1995; Fullan, 1993; Senge, 1990; Mitchell, 1995 as some of these enthusiasts. However, following on from this interest, the actual number of studies in organisational learning is even fewer with a mere handful of Canadian researchers undertaking case study research, interviews and observations of schools at work. (Leithwood et al., 1995; Mitchell, 1995; Sackney et al., 1995). In America, Marks and Louis (1999) have added to this empirical literature using a similar framework yet on a larger scale to Leithwood et al. (1998). Even further afield and on a larger scale again, current longitudinal Australian research by Silins, Zarins and Mulford (1998- ) represents an important attempt to relate leadership practices to school improvement and in particular improvement in the learning outcomes of students.

Leithwood and Louis (1998) refer to the lack of empirical research as an evidence problem and claim:

*The rational or logical case for organizational learning is compelling indeed. But empirical support for the claim that increases in such learning will contribute to organizational effectiveness or productivity is embarrassingly slim...Although undeniably*

*rich conceptually, the closest most of the organizational literature comes to providing empirical evidence of its claims are case illustrations (p.7).*

However, despite the paucity of empirical research to date, the field of organisational learning should not be dismissed because it is attracting increasing interest. It has potential and issues for further consideration centre around two areas, “developmental pathways and the limitations of the current literature” (Mulford, 1998, p.617). For significant progress to be made, Mulford suggests that the whole concept of organisational learning needs to be more carefully examined. He argues this should begin with a discussion of exactly what organisational learning claims to be and its definitions. Furthermore, he claims that if schools are to be places of learning, then discussion about guiding philosophies and purposes is important for a shared commitment to take hold.

Mitchell’s (1995) research addresses this point with a case study of Shekina School’s journey to understand the processes of organisational learning. This study develops the field of organisational learning by highlighting three distinct phases. These show that teacher learning occurs through “naming and framing” where description, story telling and the giving of suggestions to one another are valued. A further phase involves analysis and integration with a questioning of practice and a sense of evaluation. The remaining phase includes an application and experimentation emphasis. Mitchell points out that these phases are “cyclical and dynamic and not necessarily linear” (p.129).

Mitchell’s (1995) framework emphasises the need for learning to occur within a community. This sense of a collective is believed to be particularly powerful in moving teacher thinking and practice in new directions. Recognition of the value of shifting learning to include individual and collective learning begins to address Macbeath and Mortimore’s (2001) concern that learning is not a solitary activity. They write:

*We will only make dramatic advances in educational improvement in and beyond schooling, when we develop a deeper understanding of how people learn and how we can help them to learn more effectively (p.2).*

Thus, learning is viewed as a social activity and this increases its complexity. Also the transition from the individual teacher learning to collective learning does not make it any easier to establish key factors underpinning quality learning for teachers. Macbeath and Mortimore (2001) maintain:

*The further we move away from the model of the individual teacher in the classroom towards teamwork, shared responsibility and corporate professional development, the less easy it will be to isolate the specific contribution of the individual teacher (p.11).*

This is both a problem and strength of the organisational learning approach because it seeks to unravel the internal dynamics that may explain the processes which contribute towards school effectiveness and improvement or even declining levels of quality performance. One example of a research project which demonstrates this interest in organisational learning theory is the 1995-7 “Improving School Effectiveness Programme” (ISEP) in Scotland. Here researchers (Robertson, Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore, 2001) state that a key potential recommendation from their research would be to suggest how schools that appear to be underperforming might change their internal conditions to improve and thus become more effective.

To this end the data from the ISEP case studies demonstrate how schools can learn to make a difference to student learning by a heightened awareness of:

- School contexts and their strategies for change;
- Schools’ use of external support and intervention;
- School-based processes of change in relation to development planning; ethos; teaching and learning; and management and organisation;
- Approaches to monitoring change;
- Perceived impact on intermediate outcomes such as teachers’ and parents’ views, and on pupils’ views and achievements (Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001, p.41).

It is important to note that schools’ responses to the above list did not lead to “simple or universal solutions. Rather [they] served to sharpen... awareness of culture and history as key factors in understanding schools. There was, however, a common determinant which cut across all [school] cultures – the interrelationship of the three sets of players who make schools work – teachers, pupils and parents” (Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001, p.viii).

Therefore, an organisation’s capacity to learn is dependent on a united front from all three groups. This is where a school’s mission can move words on a printed page to actual lived practice if the three parts connect.

### *Defining the field of organisational learning*

Definitions of organisational learning are problematic. Current literature on organisational learning includes many variations on definitions. Leithwood and Louis (1998) maintain that there is no “simple way of distinguishing between schools that are ‘learning organisations’ and those that are not” (p.2). For them what matters most are “learning processes in organisations and ways of enhancing the sophistication of these processes” (ibid). This is the step beyond labelling to actual improvement. Leithwood and Louis emphasise the strategy problem in their writing to give organisational learning a “practical face” (p.8). For them strategy is important because it is about moving schools in the direction of improved organisational learning (ibid). Strategy is also about process and includes a wide array of contributing factors, some of which remain hidden from view in the subtleties of organisational life. Senge (1990) develops this notion of process skills with his definition of learning organisations as being:

*...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together (p.3).*

He argues that learning organisations are distinguished through the presence of what he calls the five disciplines (see p.178). Each of these disciplines can be viewed as a developmental pathway for acquiring skills or competencies for lifelong learning. Here the phrase “developmental pathway” is significant. It signals a journey and a sense of creating one’s future having analysed the current reality of the learning context. Mulford (1998) justifies this journeying by saying:

*As we improve our ability to monitor and understand these developmental pathways, we should be able to learn how to respond better to present problems and pressures and to optimise improvement in our schools. In other words, we should be able to establish effective organizational learning (p.619).*

In Senge’s terms this is about creating “a new wave of experimentation and advancement”, as there is never any sense of arriving at a learning destination (p.11). Mulford (1998) writes that some consistency in definition is emerging and says:

*Some of the interrelationships among the characteristics are becoming clearer. For example, the identifying characteristics tend to describe organizational learning as a journey rather than a destination, and to group themselves sequentially and developmentally (p.619).*

The challenge facing researchers is following these journeys and then analyzing what is happening and asking why. In the foreword to Aubrey and Cohen's (1995) book, Peters argues that "we are awash in learning organisation hype [and] almost all of it avoids asking (and thence, answering), THE BIG QUESTION: just what the heck is learning all about anyway" (p.ix). Aubrey and Cohen's (1995) model of the effective learning process highlights two features. One is that managing learning is about "personally helping people to learn, the other consists in knowing who can help you make learning happen" (p.24). Peters describes their model as:

*... a journey and an accompanist-learning manager (accompanying the first five elements in the model). Then it proceeds through sowing (planting the message, probably before the learner is ready to understand it), catalysing (seeking the stressful, "catalytic moment" at which the learner is most likely to have a break through and nudging her or him to do exactly that), showing (rarely achieved via telling and most effectively taught by providing numerous opportunities for dialogue among equals) and finally harvesting (taking advantage of the prior learning, and moving on to the next stage) (Aubrey & Cohen, 1995, p.ix).*

This process of an accompanist-learner manager highlights the need for a sensitive approach. Timing and readiness for learning are crucial for the success of learning initiatives. This example also shows the significance of people in the change process at the individual, team and whole organisational level and their influence in shaping the learning process. This is one advantage of the organisational learning theory because it emphasises the interactions between these three avenues for learning and it broadens the equation to include the views of teachers, pupils and parents who form the wider school environment.

### ***Learning of individuals, groups and the organisation as a whole***

The fact that teachers can be at different stages can complicate teacher learning in schools. The literature in organisational learning focuses on all members of organisations from the leaders (often referred to as principals) and teachers. This means attending to individual differences, particularly those concerning career stages and the various stages of change acceptance. Mulford (1998) suggests that each individual and group must go through a coping cycle, which will vary in length. He describes this cycle as having five stages from denial, defence, discarding of the old, adapting of the new until a state of internalisation is reached. Movement to the next stage is not always a 'smooth ride' and frustration can abound. It is also difficult to separate individual learning from the group or whole organisation.

However, what it does do is focus on the way teachers begin to work with each other in a learning situation. Mulford (1998) highlights this well when reporting the findings of a staff development programme in two elementary schools by Hamilton and Richardson (1995). He writes:

*The introductory stage saw teachers familiarising themselves with each other and listening politely. The following 'breakthrough' stage resulted from a new way of thinking and 'do you?' questions being asked of each other. The third and final stage involved empowerment where teachers 'claimed ownership' of the staff development itself and dominated the conversation (p.623).*

These comments would suggest that raising teacher awareness of ways in which communication with colleagues can be improved could be useful. Organisational learning theory offers a platform for recognising and acting on this awareness.

### ***A framework for research***

Leithwood et al. (1998) provide a framework to address three aspects of organisational learning in their research studies. These include the:

- nature of organisational learning processes,
- causes and consequences of these processes
- forms of school leadership likely to foster such conditions and processes.

These three aspects highlight the desirability of closer links between a school having a culture of continuous improvement and an organisational structure that provides the support necessary for this to be sustained over time. Macbeath and Mortimore (2001) argue that this marrying of culture and structure is the challenge for continuous improvement of schools as organisations. Underpinning this framework is Leithwood's earlier work on transformational leadership which explores the strategies leaders develop in order to thrive in a changing environment (see Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Leithwood, 1994). This work serves as a useful starting point showing eight dimensions of leadership practice.

Figure 4: Leadership practices for organizational learning



Leithwood et al. (1998). p. 80.

Leithwood et al's research work during 1995 and 1996 used both this framework and the eight dimensions of transformational leadership to collect qualitative, multi-case study data in 14 schools and involved 111 teachers. Comparisons were made across very different contexts to highlight any similarities of organisational learning conditions and particular questions were asked about leadership practices in each of these studies. These questions reveal the practical direction in which the field of organisational learning was moving and included asking:

- 1 What sorts of leadership practices on the part of school administrators contribute significantly to OL and to the conditions which foster OL?
- 2 Are these practices consistent with the initial model of transformational leadership, or should this model be revised or abandoned?

The variables influencing organisational learning in each of the three studies are listed as including 'out-of-school' (district, community and Ministry), 'in-school' (vision, culture, structure, strategy, and policy and resources) and 'school leadership'. This indicates that organisational learning often depends on a stimulus coming from beyond the school as a call for a response to new initiatives or specific problems requiring attention. A further stage involves the people at the school site grappling with the change and attempting to motivate others to accept the need for that change. Leithwood et al. (1998) acknowledge that this sequence of activity demonstrates how the "complexity of the postmodern environment demands full use of the intellectual and emotional resources of organisational members" (p.252). Again this is a plea for processes and relationships to determine learning rather than structures and rules (Mitchell et al., 1997). It is also a further justification that research into the specific conditions which foster organisational learning is required.

### ***Key studies in organisational learning for schools***

Research work in Canada (dominated by Leithwood) and in Australia with the Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOLSO) project offers increasing insight into the usefulness of organisational learning theory. This section explores the scope of this research and its usefulness as a framework for understanding how people learn and how they can be helped towards more effective learning.

The frequency of Leithwood's name appearing in the organisational learning literature shows that he has been and remains one of the key players in this field. His 1998 book, "Organisational



learning in schools”, co-edited with Louis, signals the active presence of an organisational learning research community. The book draws research studies together in one place and at the same time addresses the existing limitations of the field, namely the continuing problems of *context, evidence and strategy*. However, while this book draws together more recent work in organisational learning, an earlier study has had even more impact on this field of study.

*Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach's study*

One of the most cited studies has been the British Columbian longitudinal study of policy implementation for school restructuring initiated by Leithwood et al. (1990-1994). It has been used as a framework for replication in other studies in different countries and as such has helped to broaden the impact of organisational learning theory. The value of this particular study is that it is school based research and enables responses to be shown from a range of school types and locations, highlighting the extent to which they have been successful in their restructuring implementations. A focus on the conditions supporting both the individual and collective capacities for teacher learning makes this research particularly valuable to others interested in the future development of schools as learning organisations.

This study concentrates on six schools and addresses six themes. These themes relate to the stimulus for learning, organisational processes, out-of-school conditions, school conditions, school leadership and outcomes. The themes have corresponding questions, which allow for an in-depth analysis of how and why organisational learning occurs in these schools. A copy of these themes and corresponding questions is included as Appendix G.

What mattered in these schools were interpersonal relationships and the ways in which teachers worked with one another, gave support, shared information and celebrated learning. These were helped by open and inclusive school structures for decision-making where teachers had a voice. Other structural features included being able to plan in small groups, having work spaces conducive to interactions with colleagues, holding regular meetings and feeling able to experiment with new ideas and approaches. Thus, the ‘marrying’ of school culture and structure was clearly in evidence in these schools.

Other strategies were important also. These included having clear systems for the identification of needs, the setting of priorities, keeping developments manageable as well as on-going review and monitoring. Teachers in these schools were actively encouraged to team-teach and observe

each other teaching. In addressing matters of policy and resources, these schools used both physical and human resources to good effect. Teachers had easy access to a professional library, each other's expertise, and technical support and community facilities. However, despite all of these features, it was the school's leadership practices that had both the strongest direct and indirect influence on organisational learning. What mattered were leadership actions which nurtured and sustained the school's culture for learning and ensured that the structures also made learning possible. The following study extends these findings to a different setting.

*LOLSO (Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes)*

The longitudinal Australian study of Silins et al. (1999) is significant because it relates leadership practices to school improvement and, in particular, improvement in the learning outcomes of students. Here a multi dimensional definition of learning organisations is applied to a large survey of 2,000 teachers and principals to assess whether these dimensions correspond to the reality of learning processes leading to school improvement in South Australian and Tasmanian secondary schools. This project develops the field of organisational learning because of its attempt to 'operationalise the concept of organisational learning' in terms of developing professional development and learning for educational leaders.

The significance of the LOLSO project is the way in which it addresses a gap in the research on schools as learning organisations. Its seven dimensions of learning organisations form a framework from which it is possible to explore the perceptions of teachers and principals, particularly their views on school management, principal leadership and organisational learning. The seven dimensions are:

- Environmental scanning which includes the activities related to information bases to inform the school's development and decision-making processes
- Vision/goals to highlight a sense of direction which is forged through daily practices and shared commitment
- Collaboration within a climate of trust and openness to support the functioning of the school
- Taking initiatives/risk for personal and whole school improvement
- Review
- Recognition/reinforcement of effort, initiative and achievement

- Continuing professional development opportunities and resources to support the on-going learning of teachers for the good of the school

In their research, Silins et al. (1998) promote the philosophy of a learning organisation as a way of working rather than as a “spasmodic flurry of professional activity each time new demands [are] made of the school, curriculum or practices” (p.7). When translated into practice this signals a growing maturity and sense of independence because an organisation has its own repertoire of coping strategies. It is then argued that organisations have a better chance of becoming learning organisations because they have developed their capacity to improve and are not dependent on others telling them what to do. This message is important for those working with change projects for school improvement.

### *Conclusion*

Improving the quality of teacher learning in schools is an ongoing responsibility for educational leaders. It has been argued that teacher learning has a better chance of being sustained when task and people needs are addressed. Mitchell (1995) supports the organisational learning approach because she believes “the nature of the relationships among staff members has a profound impact upon people’s ability to work effectively and to improve their work techniques” (p.284). This includes processes of conversation, affirmation, invitation and reflection, which are all considered helpful in increasing teachers’ sense of effectiveness and their professional well being in general. These are particularly important considerations given the constant changes facing teachers today within a climate that questions the quality of teacher’s work.

Organisational learning is an approach which is considered likely to improve the professionalism of teachers. It is claimed that when organisational learning theory is applied to schools, teachers are better able to act as “agents of change” (Fullan, 1993) who can shape their own learning journeys. Teacher commitment and enthusiasm may also be enhanced. This is because the approach is proactive rather than reactive (where teachers and schools are likely to be “victims of change” dependent on learning demands imposed by others whose sole emphasis is the acquisition of new knowledge).

Organisational learning theory offers schools a framework for planning their futures. It includes a range of conditions and strategies which can be used to identify current needs that are unique to each school. The challenge is now over to schools to demonstrate a renewed confidence in their

ability to build their own capacities for promoting individual and collective learning. For New Zealand teachers, this will be evident when schools show increasing levels of independence and strength in their own coping strategies working within and beyond Ministry of Education mandates for professional development and learning.

The next chapter closely examines the dissemination of professional development in case study schools to portray the New Zealand context and reality of organisational learning. It features both an analysis of the current situation and alludes to areas for the on-going professional learning which closely follow the direction indicated by organisational learning theory.



## Chapter 11

### The Case Study Approach

The case study approach has been selected for the remaining data phase of this thesis. This is an appropriate choice because the purpose of this phase is to gain an in-depth understanding of teacher learning and development for whole school settings, not just for individuals. A case can be defined in several ways. Gillham (2000) suggests a case can be a unit of human activity embedded in the real world which can only be studied or understood in context, exists in the here and now and merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw. A case is also not restricted to an individual and can apply to a group, an institution or a community. Case study research can even include multiple cases, for example several schools, and this study has included four schools as its cases. A further feature of the case study is its design which is neither tight nor pre-specified. Robson (1995) notes this flexibility and describes case study researchers as having to adopt:

*a looser approach where the questions to be asked, the data to be collected and the appropriate conceptual and theoretical framework emerge (if at all) only after a prolonged involvement in the field with the phenomenon being studied (p.148).*

When attempting to define a case study, this flexibility becomes problematic. While the name 'case study' can draw attention to the question of what can be learnt from a single case and help our understanding of that case, the methods of inquiry are less clear. Stake (1994) has specified three types of case study. These are called intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The intrinsic case study is one which is important for its own sake and not as a representation of other cases or because it might illustrate a particular trait or problem. For the instrumental case study, the case is important because, when examined, it can provide insight into an issue or serve to refine theory. Collective case studies involve studying a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into the phenomenon, population or general condition. These cases may be similar or dissimilar but have been chosen because of a desire to gain a better understanding or to theorise about a still larger collection of cases. Thus the concept of case is itself subject to debate as well as its study being ambiguous (Kemmis, 1980 cited by Stake (1994).

Despite these difficulties three main techniques are associated with case study research: observation (both participant and non-participant), interviewing (structured and unstructured), and document analysis. These combine to form a 'chain of evidence' (Gillham, 2000) which in my study include observations of staff meetings, semi-structured interviews with individual teachers and principals using a rating scale, and document analysis of the interview transcripts. These sources provide a rich description of reality.

Yin (1994) suggests "the case study is the preferred strategy when 'how', 'who', 'why' or 'what' questions are being asked, or when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life cover" (p.460). These concerns match my research interest, the aim of which is to identify the factors that help and hinder effective teacher learning and development. The advantage of this approach is that the data are based in the real world and are therefore 'strong in reality' (Cohen & Manion, 1998, p.123). This means that as the researcher I can share the reality for each case study school in a manner which captures the unique subtleties and complexities of each case. Using the naturalistic style of case study research is considered to be particularly helpful for this kind of study of human action (Gillham, 2000). However, at the same time, there are some challenges with the case study research approach that need to be addressed, and seen to be addressed, by researchers. Discussion of these follows in the next section.

### ***Challenges facing the case study researcher***

Case study research has faced criticisms as 'soft' research because the procedures are not set and predictable. As a consequence, the rigour of case study research can be questioned. Yin (1994) notes that case study researchers must exercise great care in designing and doing studies to overcome the traditional criticisms of the method.

Since the researcher accepts her influence on the construction of meanings, she must use particular techniques to access the subjective world of the people being studied. In order to answer specific research questions using a variety of evidence gained from the case setting, Gillham (2000) claims the challenge is to *extract* the information and then *collate* it to get the best possible answers to the research questions. This is

however, problematic when data gathering extends over time and the quantity of information is large. Case study researchers must therefore make decisions about how much data ought to be recorded and how and when this should be done. Case study research is challenging because the researcher does not know in advance what to expect from the participants and their settings. Gillham (2000) argues that until researchers get into the setting, get to understand the context, they don't know what theories or explanations work best or make the most sense. This uncertainty adds interest to the research exercise as well as challenge.

### *Extraction*

Two challenges are apparent in the extraction of case studies. These are the role of human subjectivity and interview bias. Burns contends "it is easy for the case study investigator to allow equivocal evidence or personal views to influence the direction of the findings and the conclusion" (p.477). This makes it all the more important to establish reliability through the interview phase. Burns suggests this is made explicit when the investigator reports any possible personal bias, presents an audit trail to indicate how the data has been obtained and then shows how decisions have been made about the data and its selection of categories. Such clarity then makes it possible for others to replicate the same steps.

Thus, for my study, I addressed the challenges related to extraction by treating the interviews with the teachers as 'conversations with a purpose' (Robson, 1997, p.228). I followed Robson's tactics and took particular care to ensure that the teachers were able to talk freely and openly about their experiences of professional development. This allowed me to alter the sequence of my questions, alter their exact wording and vary the amount of time and attention given to different topics. Because I wanted the teachers to do the talking, my questions typically took the form of probes. I used silence to encourage the teachers to say more, gave enquiring glances, responded with minimal encouragements (e.g., hmmm, nods and smiles), asked the teachers to elaborate and say more and on occasion even paraphrased their responses to bring them back to the topic if they had moved off on a tangent. I believe that by adopting these tactics, I avoided the interview being seen as a series of test questions. So rather than taking the opportunity to share my thoughts or opinions on the topic, I took Yin's



advice and tried to appear genuinely naïve about the topic to allow the teachers the chance to provide a fresh commentary from their perspectives in school settings. In this way I was able to remain neutral and not influence the teachers' responses in any particular direction.

The interviews were held away from interruptions and the teachers knew that their real names would not be used in the reporting of their responses. They also knew that they would receive copies of the interview transcripts for checking and could make amendments should they wish. Time was spent at the beginning of the interviews to explore each of the teachers' teaching backgrounds and the time spent at their present schools. This enabled me to place the teachers in a context and put them at ease before the main questions were asked. Issues relating to my personal bias have already been noted (refer back to Chapter 6).

### *Collation*

In collating case studies researchers face two further challenges. These are generalizability and internal and external validity. The first challenge relates to how generalizations can be made from a single case. Case study researchers, however, aim to expand our understanding of particular phenomena rather than to generalise particular findings to the general population. Yin (1994) expresses this clearly in the following statement:

*Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample' and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization) (p.10)*

The second challenge concerns the validity of the case study method. For internal validity, researchers must be sensitive to the impact of their presence on the data collected and their objectivity when they have close involvement with the group being researched. Cohen and Manion (1998) suggest that it is important that "observers do not lose their perspective and become blind to the peculiarities that they are supposed to be investigating" (p.111). External validity is also an issue. This concerns whether the findings can provide an adequate base for developing and answering the research questions and have application to other situations. This is well summarised in Burn's

(2000) statement which argues case studies have value for subsequent major investigations because they are “intensive and [can] generate rich subjective data [which] may bring to light variables, phenomena, processes and relationships that deserve more intensive investigation” (p.460).

I addressed the challenge of collation in several ways. One was through the depth of the material, particularly in the interview situation where I had eighteen questions which required a rating on a four-point scale and then asked at least five further questions. These probed each teacher’s views on the effectiveness of their school’s leadership practices for organisational learning according to Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach’s (1998) framework (details are provided later in the chapter). A second way was through the breadth of my material where I undertook observations of staff meetings in each of the schools, made tapes and transcripts of the actual interviews and used questions which were both structured and semi-structured to allow more individualised responses pertaining to the culture of each school. In asking each person interviewed to read the transcript of their interview, I attempted to include an element of personal reflection from the teachers and two of the teachers made corrections to the transcripts when given this opportunity for further reflection. In collating profiles for each of the schools, I took particular care to interrogate the data question by question to be certain that each theme was ‘real’ and not just something I wanted to see. I selected the quotations from my summary sheets where the teachers’ responses were coded according to the pattern already established with the QLC interviews (refer to Chapter 6). The rating scales also helped me to identify points of agreement between the teachers and from there it was possible to note areas for further attention for each of the schools (refer to section on data collection from interviews for further information later in the chapter).

In addition to collecting and analysing the data, decisions need to be made about what and how much of the data to report. Stake (1994) lists a number of stylistic options which case study researchers need to consider. These include:

- how much to make the report a story
- how much to compare with other cases
- how much to formalize generalizations or leave that to readers
- whether to include a description of the researcher as a participant in the report

- whether or not and how much to anonymize (p.244).

In making decisions about how I might report the data for my study, I have written snapshots of each school from my observations of staff meetings and then recorded the interview data under the headings of the eight leadership practices of Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach's (1998). These are followed with a general discussion of leadership strengths across the four schools and then related back to the research questions for this phase of my research.

At a more general level, Stake (1994) argues that case study researchers face major conceptual responsibilities. These concern the setting of boundaries for the case, selecting the research questions to emphasize, seeking patterns of data from which to develop issues, triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation, and developing assertions or generalizations about the case. For each of my case study schools, I was careful to acknowledge the differences in the teachers' experiences, the schools' histories and unique circumstances, and their types and levels of leadership involvement. This acknowledgement allowed me to optimise my understanding of each school as a separate case rather than attempt to generalize beyond each case study school. I am confident that this approach has provided a depth of insight into the functioning of each of the schools. Triangulation of my data has ensured the authenticity of my data through member checks on the written transcripts and the use of more than one data gathering method.

#### *Data collection from observations*

To further address the challenges of reliability, I complemented interview data with other data. Over the period of three school terms, I observed principals and staff working together on a range of development programmes in each of the case study schools. These programmes were linked either with a curriculum development associated with a Ministry of Education professional development contract, or were on topics that the schools selected themselves. Support for the teachers was available from advisers and the lead teachers who were responsible for facilitating regular staff meetings at the schools. These lead teachers had received additional professional development to help them fulfil this responsibility.

Gillham (2000) suggests there are problems for the researcher's role with both participant and non-participant observation. He writes:

*Unfortunately research on 'witnessing' what people have seen and what they report shows that observation is both fallible and highly selective. Becoming anything like an accurate and balanced observer requires discipline and effort... A major objection to unstructured participant observation is the effect of your presence on those you are observing (p.47).*

Cohen and Manion (1998) argue that although the observer may be accepted as one of the group, they may in fact become very noticeable, especially within a small group. My safeguard as a researcher, was to join in the group activities where possible and to avoid looking like an observer. This meant I did not record notes during the meetings and relied on my memory to record the events as I had experienced them. While this introduced the problem of selective recall, this was preferable to the alternative, notetaking observer. I ensured that my notes were written immediately after the meetings and because of my sensitivity to the teachers I also believed it was important to be an unobtrusive presence making no demands on the schools during the observations. With repeated visits to each school, the teachers also became accustomed to an additional presence.

#### *Data collection from interviews*

Interviews were held with 4-5 teachers working in schools A to D, reflecting a range of responsibility level and experience (refer to Figures 5-8 later in the chapter). In letters sent to each of the principals some names of teachers were suggested as possibilities for teacher interviews. The selection of teachers was explained as being in terms of those who had responsibility for curriculum leadership or a syndicate and who collectively represented all levels of the school. The principals were asked to confirm these names or suggest other alternatives. The duration of each interview was typically 30-45 minutes and occurred on only one occasion with the teachers from the case study schools.

The overall purpose of these interviews was to explore teachers' personal experiences of professional development in each of the school settings. The hope was that their responses would identify the factors that were helping and hindering their learning as

teachers. The principals were also included in the interviews to see how they influenced teacher learning. These interviews augmented the observations and provided in-depth responses from individuals. Teacher release payments were also offered and accepted by each of the schools to allow the teachers to be interviewed in class time. The interview questions were based on statements of conditions for school and classroom improvement provided by Hopkins, West, Ainscow, Harris and Beresford (1997). These statements were also matched against the eight leadership practices (mentioned earlier). Through the discussion of issues, teachers were asked to give ratings for some of the questions using a 'rarely, sometimes, often or nearly always' scale. This schedule was taken directly from Hopkins et al. The remaining questions did not require a rating and were therefore less structured. In this section of questions I asked the teachers to talk about their personal experiences of professional development. The interview format meant that each teacher was able to talk freely about the issues concerning their professional development and their school's approach. Each teacher was asked the same questions in the questions requiring ratings which allowed for a comparison to be made between teachers at the same school and across the four schools. Comparisons could be made on a number of levels by looking for the principal or senior management team member's responses and those of the remaining teachers, or comparing the more experienced staff with the less experienced. A copy of the interview schedule is included as Appendix H. The following table shows how the interview schedule linked with the eight leadership practices.

*Table 7: The relationship between the 8 leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 1998) and the interview schedule for teachers*

<u><i>Leadership practices</i></u>	<u><i>Interview themes</i></u>
1. Identify and articulate a vision	Talk about improving the quality of teaching
2. Foster the acceptance of group goals	An expectation to improve student learning Clarity of purpose and direction for learning
3. Convey high performance expectations	Teachers are expected to be active learners and maintain high performance standards
4. Provide appropriate models	Teachers learn by observing others teach Teachers are actively encouraged to lead professional development
5. Provide individualised support	School goals are achieved by teachers working in pairs or teams Senior management staff make time for individuals Support is available for those leading professional development for other staff The learning needs of staff are assessed before professional development sessions are planned and delivered
6. Provide intellectual stimulation	Time is provided for critical reflection within professional development sessions

	There is programme relevance to classroom application
7. Build a productive school culture	There is enthusiasm for learning gains Improvements are made to teaching skills
8. Help structure the school to enhance participation in decisions	Staff share in the planning and delivery of professional development sessions Teachers are able to initiate topics for further professional development

A request was also made for the interviews to be taped and copies of the written transcripts were promised to each of those interviewed for verification. Anonymity was guaranteed to all individuals and their schools.

#### *Data collection – documentation*

Written transcripts from each of the interviews became my documentation for analysis. Copies of the transcripts were returned to each of the teachers for verification and some of the teachers chose to insert additional comments or correct the language used.

The triangulation of three data gathering methods (observations, interviews and documentation) helped to produce an in-depth appreciation of the quality of teacher learning and development in each of the schools in answering the research questions for Stage 3 of this thesis.

The data are presented as summaries of the meetings observed in each of the case study schools and then according to the interview schedule held with teachers in each of the schools and reported school by school.

#### *Observations of meetings*

Data gained from observations of meetings are presented as statements describing the contexts for learning at each of the five school schools to highlight the very different

contexts for teacher learning. The following table is used to place each of the QLC teachers within their school settings, enabling links to be made with data discussed in the QLC experience (refer to Chapter 7).

*Table 8: Teacher and school pairings*

<b>QLC teacher</b>	<b>School</b>
Lois	A
Avis	B
Harriet	C
Diane	D
Mary	E

#### *School A*

As a large school with 25+ staff, School A had a lot of meetings. These included meetings for senior teachers, three syndicates, pods (teachers of year 1-2 and year 3-6 children), beginning teachers, curriculum groups and any other special projects) as well as the full staff meeting. I observed a total of ten meetings at this school. Four of these meetings involved the full staff working on curriculum projects. Other meetings included three meetings for the beginning teachers, two syndicate meetings and a behaviour management subcommittee. Little time was left for teachers to spend on classroom preparation and this was a source of frustration for many of the teachers. The staff included five beginning teachers as well as a high proportion of teachers in their first six years of teaching. Observations included attending all the possible meeting groupings in the school and these highlighted the very strong support structure in the school provided by a conscientious senior management team.

The more experienced staff generally held curriculum leadership responsibilities but younger staff were often included in the curriculum delivery pair. Different combinations of teachers were observed leading developments in science, special needs, health and physical well being. Without exception, all teachers took their roles



seriously and offered well planned sessions ensuring particular relevance to classroom programmes. Frequently these sessions included a practical component with teachers being required to complete a task in a group situation and report back to the full staff. Essential information from the curriculum documents was also highlighted as were planning formats. Sometimes teachers were guided through the document page by page and at other times they were asked to locate the information themselves as part of an activity. All presenters were confident with their material and had an established credibility with the staff. It was also noted that the principal participated in the staff meetings and completed the activities with the other teachers.

School A's meeting schedule was planned to include several projects at the same time alongside the major focus. This organisation allowed the school to complete developments from a previous year, undertake annual curriculum reviews and generally keep a number of curriculum areas in front of teachers. Although they were careful to only allow one focus per meeting, the gaps between meetings meant it was hard to remember what had been covered at a previous meeting. Even a week's gap was no guarantee that all staff would remember what the previous meeting had included. Most presenters did their best to make links with previous learning in the limited time they had for their sessions. However, this was not easy given how much material they were expected to share from their full day workshops in the Ministry of Education contracts in a one or one and a half hour's staff meeting. Their goal was to help teachers make sense of the documents and find ways of using the information for classroom programmes. As facilitators, the presenters desperately wanted to make this learning as straightforward as possible so that teachers were not overwhelmed or confused by the information.

Despite the well planned sessions, there was just too much going on at this school for the learning to be sustained over time. The principal expressed some concern about the contract model but was nevertheless caught with pressure to meet compliance demands. She was aware that staff were feeling the strain of such concentrated development week after week and that their existing pace could not be sustained for the long term. In the meantime, they were caught until a satisfactory alternative could be found. Abandoning staff development was not an option they could take.

*School B*

School B was another large school but was set in a more affluent community with little staff turnover. Like School A, it had multiple projects for staff development. These included carryovers from the previous year as well as new work in Maori, gifted and talented learners and computers. Staff notices were kept to a minimum at the beginning of the meeting and one curriculum focus maintained per meeting. Meetings kept to time and emphasised strategies to improve classroom teaching, often with new resources introduced. Observations were made of four full staff meetings.

While the principal participated in staff meetings alongside the staff, curriculum leadership came from teachers with particular expertise. However, with the developmental work in Te Reo Maori and gifted and talented learners, it was necessary to supplement the limited expertise available from within the school with outsider input. In these cases a staff member worked alongside another presenter, having briefed the visiting presenter about the teachers' needs and existing knowledge levels. Staff responded well to the injection of enthusiasm provided by the 'expert' who added an informed perspective to their policy writing, giving examples of how other schools were reacting to the same process. There was still an opportunity for ownership at the school level and staff were given tasks as homework for the next meeting. This developmental work in Te Reo Maori was thorough and progressed from policy writing and review to curriculum overview statements and discussions of what could be expected from children at each year level of the school in Te Reo. Teachers worked in smaller groupings focusing on aspects of Te Reo Maori in the oral, written and visual language strands of the curriculum. These discussions were fed back to the staff, subsequently discussed and collated, saving individual teachers from having to do the same work. These opportunities for smaller group discussions with different combinations of teachers helped to make the meeting time worthwhile and particularly classroom oriented.

Other observations of meetings in the area of programmes for the gifted and talented learner similarly showed how the staff meeting time was organised for maximum teacher talk. At one meeting a school adviser focused on the characteristics of these learners. She introduced two card activities in which staff were asked to relate their

own experiences of working with children and consider how they matched the card statements. These were worded in ways to encourage discussion and debate and teachers who had taught the same child moving through the school had particularly useful talks.

A further meeting about a new computer programme was also hands-on with staff working in smaller groups in different spaces around the school. Once again, teachers worked in pairs to experience the resource with support provided from the other teachers present and discussed how they might use this with children in their classes. Strategies for managing individual learners on computers while teaching other groups of learners were exchanged making this a useful sharing time.

While the staff development programme covered multiple projects like those at other schools, the staff at School B accepted this demanding reality and were able to draw on their combined expertise to make learning worthwhile. The fact that School B's staff was not dominated by teachers in the early years of their careers may have meant they were more willing and able to share concerns and examples of their practice with one another. Such sharing takes time, but School B appeared to be more relaxed in its use of staff meeting time because it was not responding to agendas from Ministry of Education contracts to the same extent as School A.

### *School C*

School C had a decile 10 rating and the staff were comfortable in their teaching. There were fewer problems with children, although, as at School B, the parent community was vocal and made particular demands on teachers. On the whole teachers were less enthusiastic about full staff meetings at this school and preferred their syndicate meetings.

Teachers were upskilling in Maori language and tikanga alongside information and communications technology (ICT), with a major thrust on their computer literacy. At the same time the English curriculum was being reviewed and this included all strands (speaking, listening, reading, viewing and performing), which represented a

mammoth task across the school. I made three observations of full staff meetings in these curriculum areas.

An ERO report had identified Te Reo Maori and Tikanga Maori as areas of non-compliance with requirements so the school was addressing these areas. While there were teaching resources for these areas in the school, no one really knew what was available and they were scattered around classrooms. At one meeting these were all brought to the library and staff made lists of what was available according to vocabulary or classroom themes. This proved to be a chore rather than good motivation for future teaching or learning. Other meetings reviewed policy and the curriculum overview to satisfy the non-compliance but without the enthusiasm generated by the conversation cards used for practising sentence patterns at School B. This school needed someone from beyond the school to enthuse its staff and build their confidence in Te Reo Maori.

In the area of ICT, the school paid for additional tuition from an outside consultant who was able to work with staff in their own homes. In-school sessions were set up as mastery learning experiences in recognition of the varying levels of expertise with computers. This meant that staff who had the expertise were not wasting time as others caught up to their level.

Observations of staff meetings at School C showed that the end of the day was not a conducive time for learning. On one occasion a teacher struggled to stay awake and did not try to hide the fact that she could not keep her eyes open. Another showed she did not want to be at the staff meeting and had brought along other work to do during the meeting. She spent the time listening to the meeting but concentrated on covering cards with acetate. Another volunteered to answer the phone and others sat in a passive manner letting the more dominant members of staff do all the talking. Those in the more comfortable armchairs sat in reclining positions!

Staff meetings were opportunities for the principal to canvas staff opinion and reach a consensus. This strategy, however, often meant that too much time was spent on discussing organisational matters, which did not warrant huge amounts of staff

meeting time. Unfortunately this was a pattern that was firmly established and one which the staff made no attempt to change.

### *School D*

School D was the smallest of the five schools. It had experienced a chequered history with continual staff changes and the Education Review Office was making very frequent visits. The school was run down. Previous principals had not filed mail and all communications were in a jumbled state in various cartons lying on the floor of the principal's office. When Diane was asked to be the acting principal in the previous term, she faced challenges on all fronts.

On her arrival the secretary went off on sick leave. Everything was in a mess with no systems for anything. Any resources the school should have had were either not to be found or scattered around the school and usually incomplete. Even the free issues of curriculum documents were missing and had to be ordered and there were no curriculum plans to indicate what should be taught at each class level or how these might be assessed. Only one member of staff was permanent and was clearly struggling to cope. It was a nightmare to say the least.

To Diane's credit, however, during the term of her contract she was able to begin developing the necessary systems and appointed a very capable deputy principal and secretary. When the principal's job was advertised, she applied and won the job. New staff were appointed to the remaining vacancies and she had systems in place to support the only remaining staff member from the previous regime.

Fortunately the new staff members shared a real commitment to turn the school around and make it a better school. Diane's energy, work ethic and knowledge of the curriculum impressed them. At the same time they were aware that a lot of hard work lay ahead of them to get the school up to scratch, and, that it would need everyone's commitment. They were willing to work hard, just like their principal.

Despite the number of tasks which needed to be completed, Diane set about clarifying a vision for the school and ensuring that resources were available to teach the

essential skills. She produced a week by week staff meeting schedule which addressed key administrative matters such as parent interview preparation and the revised National Administration Guidelines. In addition there was a curriculum thread which began with policy development and moved through to skills and specific learning objectives, with suggested topics and resources. The schedule from May-December signalled such work in science, maths, social studies and the health and physical well being contract with the Ministry of Education. In all it was a huge undertaking but one about which there was no choice. A quality curriculum had to exist!

Staff meetings ran according to the nominated focus, which was usually a curriculum development. As a small staff, teachers could not hide their lack of knowledge and felt able to express their doubts and concerns, knowing that support would be offered. Diane and her deputy were also very sensitive to the teachers' needs and provided considerable moral support. They were not there to tell the teachers what they had to do, even though this might have been an easier option. Instead their beliefs matched their actions. This was evident in the way they worked with teachers, encouraging questions and constantly relating ideas from the curriculum documents to the practical reality of classroom planning and the meeting of children's needs. I was able to attend two of the full staff meetings to observe their work in curriculum development.

The detailed work involved to implement one strand of the science curriculum was both impressive and daunting at the same time. At one session the teachers spent two hours systematically producing a planning grid to determine which topics would fit alongside the various achievement objectives, skills and specific learning objectives at each teaching level. This was a huge task, but one that would ensure teachers were not repeating the topics from year to year because an odd and even year framework was developed. It also meant that teachers reached an agreement as to why they might include some topics and not others and everyone knew what was to be taught throughout the school, allowing a logical progression. This work on just one strand was not over with the grid. Further meetings were needed to select resources to accompany each of the topics and their objectives and then the whole process would be repeated for the remaining three strands of the science curriculum. This work was clearly very relevant and worthwhile for all the teachers, who at no time complained about what was required of them!

Having seen all this work being done, it was particularly interesting to attend a further meeting when the principal shared feedback from a recent Education Review Office visit. While several curriculum plans had been completed in time for the ERO visit, no acknowledgement of this work was made in the report except to say that the same was now required for Maori and technology. The staff were annoyed at this lack of acknowledgement and by further suggestions of non-urgent compliances such as a disaster contingency plan for a tsunami warning or fire in the nearby domain. However, despite this lack of encouragement, for work done against huge odds, the staff managed to maintain their positive outlook and accepted there was more work ahead. This was an example of a school that was focusing on how to achieve quality learning and teaching. It was a learning organisation making considerable progress in this direction.

#### *School E*

School E was another small school but with a higher decile rating than School D. It also had a teaching principal. However, several of the staff, including the principal, were in survival mode coping with family members undergoing serious health problems. This had its effect on the school and as a consequence there were no staff meetings during the first term. In the second term I observed one full staff meeting on the health and physical well-being curriculum document.

It proved difficult to get a schedule of staff meetings for this school. While the principal seemed to have a rough plan, staff were not informed it was their turn to lead on a particular date, and when the day arrived there was no time to prepare and meetings often were cancelled. The only real need for a staff meeting was their involvement in the Ministry of Education curriculum contract in health and physical well being.

The school's involvement in this contract meant that two teachers attended regular workshops. These two teachers were responsible for both disseminating information and leading the full staff through this curriculum document. They were supported with material and training from the contract workshops, which they in turn used with

their full staff. Unlike the careful preparation of the lead teachers at School A in the same contract, these teachers simply repeated a selection of the same activities in their staff meeting session. As a result, the package they presented to staff, while containing some useful activities, lacked coherence because the links to classroom practice were not made clear. Card activities designed to stimulate discussion seemed to have been chosen for their interactive nature more as busy activities, and hadn't worked as intended because the teachers lacked confidence in the terminology. It was a case of the blind leading the blind. These lead teachers were neither sufficiently familiar nor convinced by the material to be responsible for the professional development of other teachers. This model was not serving the school well.

Mary, the QLC teacher, was a frustrated learner. She found staff meetings were a waste of time and looked to other options for her own professional development. While her principal had good intentions, he did not prioritise and attempted to do everything at the same time. For example in staff meetings he was observed stopping in mid sentence to either answer the phone or talk to children and parents who came to the door.

Other staff did not like the way Mary used her personal time for the improvement of her qualifications. In fact there was only one other staff member who engaged in similar learning opportunities and both teachers were disliked by the other members of staff. Since Mary was not satisfied with the arrangements in her school and saw no immediate improvement was possible, she began looking for alternatives. One of these was teaching overseas and she resigned in August to take a job in England. Teachers at School E, in dismissing her contribution to their learning, had succeeded in driving her out. There was no place for a teacher learner like Mary at School E. The staff were comfortable with their existing knowledge and expertise. It was at this point that School E ceased to be part of the study.

Several factors worked against this school as a learning organisation. One was the principal's lack of leadership for teacher learning. Another was that the prevailing culture did not value or encourage teacher learning. In fact, as has already been discussed, it actively undermined teachers who were learners. Staff relied on



information being given to them and as such had no capacity or capability for sustained development because they remained as reluctant and dependent learners.

#### *Data collection from interviews*

Interviews were held with 4-5 teachers working in schools A to D, reflecting a range of responsibility level and experience. In letters sent to each of the principals some names of teachers were suggested as possibilities for teacher interviews. The principals were asked to confirm these names and suggest other alternatives. The selection of teachers was explained as being in terms of those who had responsibility for curriculum leadership or a syndicate and who collectively represented all levels of the school.

#### *Method of analysis – interviews.*

The responses from the principals and teachers at each school can be interpreted in several ways. Both comments and ratings for each of the interview questions can be compared one with another to produce profiles for individuals, schools as collective units and groupings of teachers or senior managers within schools. Summary diagrams provide profiles for each school in turn so that the interview questions can be matched alongside Leithwood et al's (1998) leadership practices.

The criterion for analysis includes whether responses are clustered around similar ratings or are scattered across several ratings. The positioning of responses according to levels of responsibility in the school is a further point for analysis, particularly where there are discrepancies between responses of the principal and teachers or the principal and senior staff with the remaining teachers.

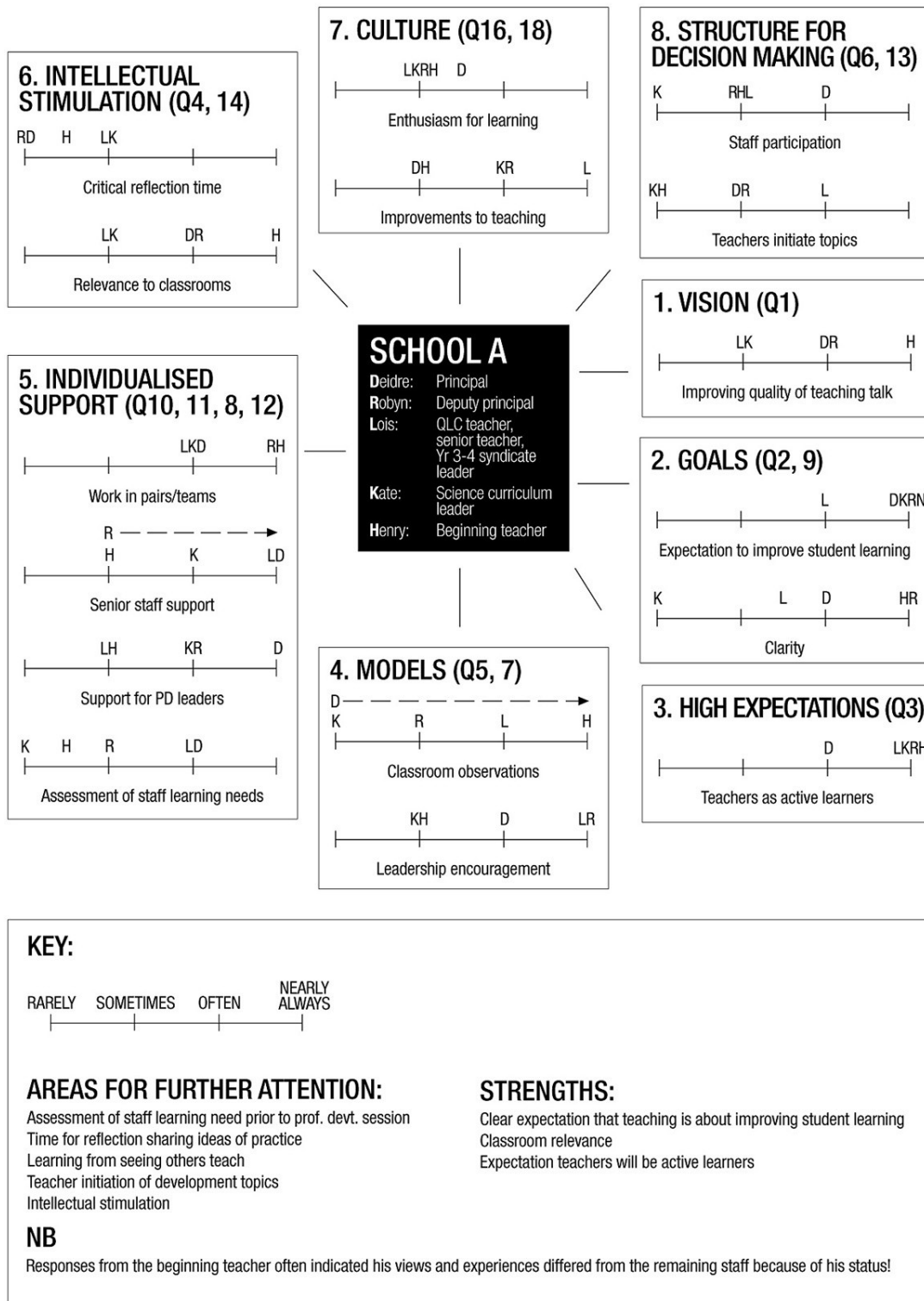
For comparison purposes an initial consonant is allocated to each teacher and principal. The positioning of the initial consonants on the rating continua then indicates where particular aspects of leadership practice appear as strengths or areas requiring further attention for each school. While comparisons are possible between the four schools, it is argued that these are of limited value because their histories and ways of working as well as their unique mix of teachers' influence each school's

responses. Each school is deliberately treated as a separate entity to acknowledge these differences in context. It is Leithwood et al's framework which is important because it allows strengths and weaknesses to be identified at each school. This is a necessary step if schools are to work as collective units for better learning outcomes.

#### *School A*

Five staff, including the principal were interviewed from School A. Figure 5 gives a profile for the school.

Figure 5: Summary of School A Interviews



## 1 Identify and articulate a vision

Ratings for this question about the extent of focus on quality teaching varied across the five staff members interviewed. Henry, as a beginning teacher, considered that he was surrounded by people talking about ways he could improve his teaching or courses he could attend to gain more knowledge and rated this statement as ‘nearly always’. He appreciated the ways in which his tutor teacher affirmed his teaching practices and yet also offered suggestions for further improvements. Others were less sure. Deidre and Robyn rated their responses as ‘often’. Deidre thought this vision for quality teaching was something people worked towards but was not necessarily always vocalised. For Robyn, this topic was more often than not a focus for the senior management team meetings but she qualified her answer by saying, “it’s probably quality of curriculum delivery” rather than quality teaching as such. Lois and Kate felt that this talk about improving the quality of teaching occurred mainly at the syndicate level and gave this a ‘sometimes’ rating. Lois said:

*We do it in pockets and we do it in curriculum areas from time to time but because we lack time, we don’t follow up enough on new innovations or curriculum changes. We think they are in place and we just leave it there.*

She also questioned the quality control and how teachers knew they were making a difference to student achievement. She said:

*A lot of things are left to the discretion of the teachers. Just saying my class is improving but you can’t always be sure that the standard one person has is going to be the same as it is in the next room.*

## 2 Foster the acceptance of group goals

The first area investigated was the extent to which all the teachers worked towards improving student learning. Deidre gave an example of the special needs programme to illustrate how learners at both ends of the spectrum were the focus of professional development discussions at the school. Lois wasn’t as confident of the ‘nearly always’

match between belief and practice as the other teachers and rated it 'often'. For her it was one thing to read about improving learning opportunities for all students in the National Administration Guidelines but another to see how this occurred in practice.

Clarity of purpose and direction varied depending on the curriculum area but generally was perceived to be high. Robyn felt that because staff were involved in writing the goals and reviewed progress twice a year, this helped to focus staff attention. She considered it was harder to vocalise a definite direction for a curriculum development when it was delivered in bits other than to say, "you'll assume that teachers will be able to plan a unit and have the resources". This was a generic expectation and had appeal because of its relevance to classroom teaching.

### 3 Convey high performance expectations

The school had several ways in which it actively supported professional development of its teachers other than by its formal programme of staff meetings around curriculum development. For example the Board of Trustees had a policy of supporting the payment of one Advanced Studies for Teachers paper per teacher and this was appreciated. All but Deidre considered high performance standards were maintained through teachers' various involvements in the learning programmes on offer and rated this statement as 'nearly always'. Deidre rated this statement as 'often'. The school's appraisal and attestation systems were also mentioned as ways to ensure that staff identified learning goals and set about meeting them.

### 4 Provide appropriate models

Ratings for this statement depended on the career stage of the teacher as was apparent in the varying responses from all of the teachers interviewed. Deidre suggested that these ratings would range from 'sometimes to nearly always' and they did! Those in the early years of their careers, such as Henry, had plenty of opportunity to observe more experienced teachers in action. Lois and Robyn had opportunities to visit other classroom teachers on a regular basis because of their appraisal and senior management roles within the school. Others were able to request visits if these

matched an appraisal goal but the overall response was that teachers welcomed opportunities to see others in action and wanted more opportunities for this.

Ratings for the statement on “leadership encouragement” were scattered between ‘sometimes’ and ‘nearly always’. The two teachers who gave it the lowest rating were the junior staff members.

## 5 Provide individualised support

Teachers welcomed opportunities for working with one another, to save on their preparation time and for the support it offered. This was where syndicates and teachers teaching at the same level of the school served a useful purpose. This was given a rating of ‘often’ by all but one teacher who gave it the higher rating of ‘nearly always’.

Support for individuals was certainly provided whenever teachers requested help. There were two aspects to this statement. One related to a teacher being able to ask for help when this was needed while the other was whether other teachers were proactive and offered help when they were not necessarily asked for it. Deidre suggested that teachers had networks within the school which they used for curriculum support rather than the senior management team members. Lois was conscious that sometimes teachers were reluctant to impose on syndicate leaders or those more senior to them because they were aware they already had too much to do. She said, “If anyone asks, I am more than willing to help. Whether I go out looking – I should be doing so, but it’s having the time [even with] a small release time component in my job”.

Support for those leading professional development in the school was available in various forms. In most cases this was time to attend courses during the school day as part of a Ministry of Education contract. For some teachers who were leading a major curriculum focus for the school a financial incentive was available. Sometimes a limited amount of teacher release could be arranged as preparation time for staff meetings, however, teachers generally had to ask for this time.

In terms of addressing staff needs in the professional development this varied according to the curriculum area and whether it was part of a Ministry of Education contract. Deidre said:

*If we are part of a contract the expectation is that it is linked with a new curriculum document, and we seem to start from scratch every time, so prior knowledge really isn't taken into account... However, in other instances, like ICT, we have found out where the staff were at and where they need to be taken and have met this through one to one assistance.*

For Kate, leading the science development, she felt constrained by having to introduce a booklet in just one staff meeting and said, “it’s probably over to me and my professional judgment and knowledge of what is going on in the classroom [that I know] what would be best [or] appropriate”. Robyn gave one example of a teacher learning needs assessment prior to its development when she mentioned the behaviour management survey. Here teachers were asked to identify their priorities for development and this information was used by the subcommittee for planning its future work. Henry, on the other hand, was critical of repetition for beginning teachers with planning formats and new document content. He said:

*With the big cluster of beginning teachers this year, a lot of us are actually already familiar with the new document and as such we sort of felt like we’re sitting there going over something that we’d done until, you know, it’s coming out our ears at College. So maybe in a situation like that, we could be given something else to do or be exempt from some meetings, or checked up on to make sure we do have a good understanding. Instead... everyone’s involved, doing the same thing.*

## 6 Provide intellectual stimulation

There was minimal time for critical reflection when the professional development agendas were so full. Mention has already been made of Lois’ concern that there was a tendency to focus on what has to be completed next rather than a looking back to see how successful the learning has been. She illustrated this with the comment, “we

shut the book on each curriculum area and quickly get on to the next one". Kate indicated that there was more opportunity for reflective practice in the syndicate meeting time where the pace was not as frantic. Henry similarly referred to the unrelenting pace of staff meetings by saying, "there's so much to take in... the meetings run overtime anyway, and it [reflection time] gets cut short and there's not a whole lot of time during the sessions for actually sitting down and thinking about what you're actually doing in your classroom". Both Robyn and Deidre also expressed regret that there was little time for such reflection and wished there could be more opportunity. So intellectual stimulation was seen as needing reflection time for the information to be properly processed by teachers. However, given these time constraints, presenters of professional development programmes were doing their best. The worry was whether the presentation on its own, no matter how well done, was sufficient to ensure that teachers would implement their newly acquired ideas in the classroom.

## 7 Build a productive school culture

The lower rating for staff enthusiasm for learning was indicative of a staff development programme which had covered too much. While appreciative of the efforts made on their behalf, teachers expressed concern about the demands placed on them. Kate said, "the people [presenters] are very dedicated, very professional and ... enthusiastic [themselves]". Deidre indicated that professional development had always been something that teachers just accepted and did as a matter of course. She did, however, say:

*There have been moments when they've been overwhelmed with the work and this happened during the health and physical well being contract. I couldn't say there's been a positive attitude, but they know that it is expected, that they have to get on with it, and at the end of the time they feel satisfaction at having completed the professional development and look forward to actually trialing it with their class. But that positive attitude comes and goes.*

Robyn was also aware that there had been problems with too much going on in the name of professional development. She said:



*In particular this year we've had so much that you lose the continuity and sometimes it is more frustrating when you come back, 'now where were we?' and you've got to review what you've done to catch up... If we are going to keep teachers' enthusiasm, we've got to keep the interest level high in that curriculum area, and at times, that didn't work this year... It could have been enhanced more if there hadn't been the, you know, things in between.*

## 8 Help structure the school to enhance participation in decisions

Deidre felt that the school's organisational structure allowed those with an interest in leading professional development the opportunity to do so. However, the remaining staff were not as positive in their response. Lois didn't think it was practical to involve all teachers in the planning and delivery of professional development sessions in such a large school. She said that current delivery was dependent on staff undergoing professional development outside the school for this role and those who wanted to be part of curriculum teams were also able to join and assist in any way they could. Robyn indicated that staff involvement in professional development planning and delivery was an expectation for those with a recognised curriculum expertise or senior teacher status at either a syndicate or whole school level. The decision makers also shifted as the curriculum focus moved from one area to another and it was Deidre who maintained staff had opportunities to share their strengths and be involved if they so wished.

As for the initiation of additional topics for professional development, this was possible, but in reality, there was very little time for extras. Kate, for example, was allowed five minutes in each staff meeting to provide an injection of some Maori language or teaching resources. Deidre suggested that staff only sometimes initiated topics of their own and said, "they are very welcome to initiate topics for further professional development, it's just that they don't often come up with things". This comment suggests that perhaps the teachers had enough work to do with their existing programmes. Kate also saw this as a rarity and blamed the Ministry of Education for its full and directed agenda for schools, which left no chance of other topics being included in the time available. However, having said this, a structure did exist for

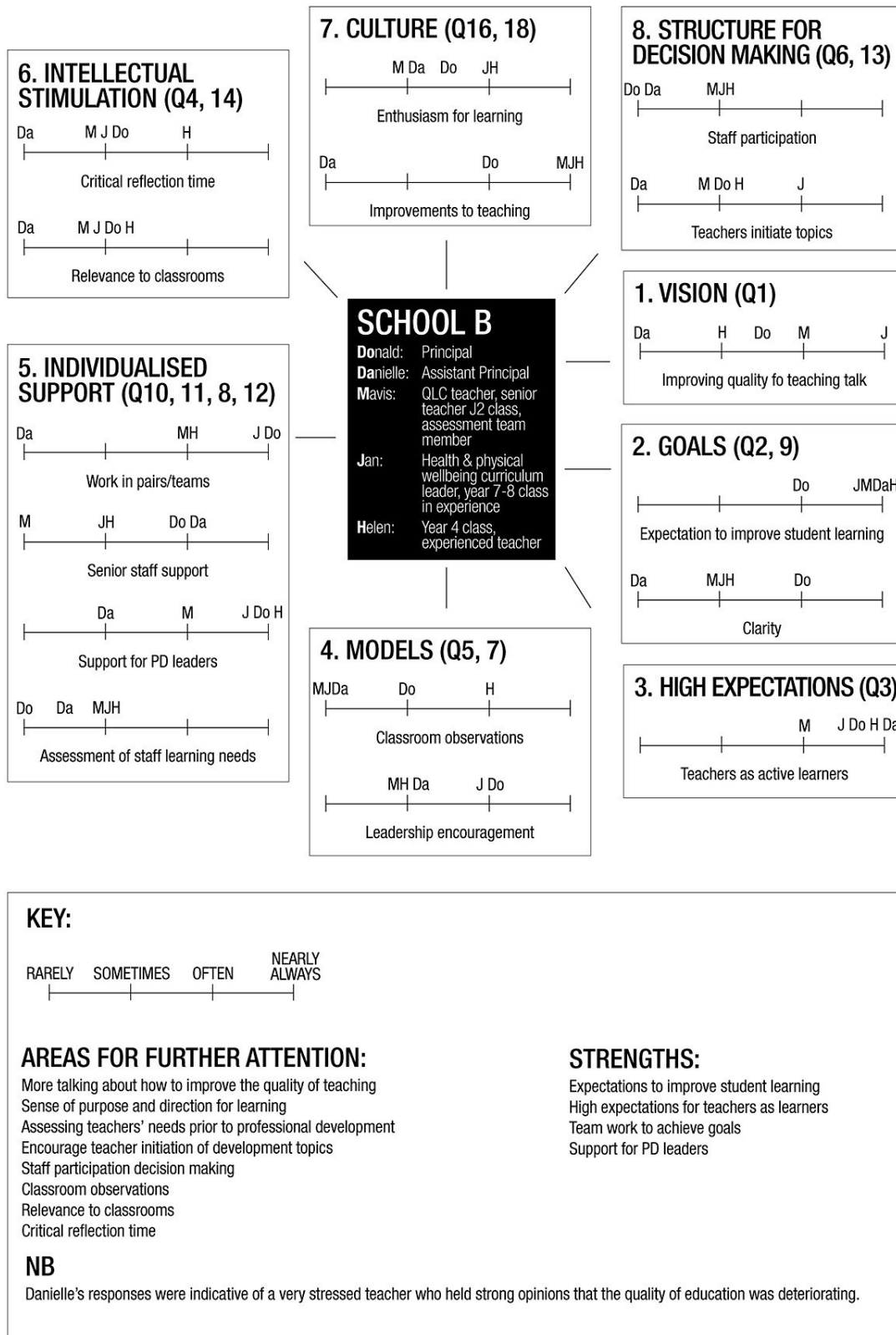
teachers to put forward proposals for an area of interest with a request for “R” (responsibility) units”. But sometimes this meant a reshuffling of other “R units” and was difficult to manoeuvre.

Overall these responses from teachers at School A indicate their acceptance of the need to engage in teacher learning as part of the teaching role no matter what the constraints. Such behaviour is a mark of real professionalism.

### School B

Five staff including the principal were interviewed at School B. Figure 6 gives a profile for the school.

Figure 6: Summary of School B Interviews



## 1 Identify and articulate a vision

As at School A, there was a sense that talk about improving the quality of teaching was occurring all the time in a variety of meeting encounters. Although the ratings were spread across the full range of responses, three responses were in the ‘sometimes’ to ‘often’ range. Helen said she couldn’t be specific about when such talk happened but she was conscious of this focus for syndicate meetings when teachers were doing their shared unit planning. She also indicated that the whole staff addressed their vision when there was a major curriculum focus and there was often talk about it in a paired situation within the staffroom environment. Mavis made comments similar to Helen’s views. Whenever issues did arise, they were not dismissed. Jan mentioned the processes of staff problem solving with her rating of ‘nearly always’ and said:

*I think where we have some sort of concern with how something is organised or run we have the opportunity to bring it up and discuss it and it doesn’t get forgotten about. We go through the processes of how we can improve it or what help do we need to do that...[Sometimes] Donald or the person involved in that area will look at getting an adviser in to talk to us.*

Danielle, however, was adamant that a lot more could be done. She said that prior to “Tomorrow’s Schools” she would have given this statement a rating of ‘nearly always’ because teachers were “collegial, enthusiastic and motivational”. However, even with a very able team of teachers in her syndicate she had reversed her rating to “rarely” to describe the current situation. Her words were, “now we are so busy with what’s imposed bureaucratically with systems, ‘getting things done on paper’... just to get them out of the way”. This comment was an indication that most talk was not about how to improve the quality of their work, but how to meet compliance requirements, which clearly annoyed her. Even Donald, the principal, admitted being frustrated that often the general “business of the school tend[ed] to take precedence” and staff meetings suffered and were not as he would like them to be.

## 2 Foster the acceptance of group goals

Donald firmly believed that the various curriculum contracts had helped to establish a shared commitment to curriculum planning and delivery in the school. Teachers had worked together to write policies, design programmes of work for a progression throughout the school and were clearer about how the parts fitted into the whole school picture.

Others like Mavis and Helen made mention of the school's emphasis on assessment and record keeping as a way to reinforce the message that there was an expectation to improve student learning. These assessment records were then analysed to identify individual needs for teaching purposes. Jan described this drive towards the improvement of student learning as coming from two sources, the teachers themselves and from parental pressure to know their children were succeeding well at school.

Concerns were expressed about the school's clarity of purpose and direction of learning. Danielle laughed at this question saying:

*“We are all floundering around just treading water, thrashing our hands trying to keep above water... it's a strain trying to survive. There is no vision. It's just a totally reactive process”.*

Jan and Mavis suggested achieving clarity was dependent on individual professional development leaders being able to convey a sense of purpose and direction. Donald appreciated the various guidelines published by the Ministry of Education and considered that these helped clarify a sense of direction for the school.

## 3 Convey high performance expectations

Professional development was strongly encouraged and supported in the school. Mavis and several others spoke about the funding provided by the Board of Trustees for teachers to attend professional development beyond the school. Helen and Danielle made mention of this professional development occurring in teachers' own

personal time. Helen accepted this expectation to study and upgrade her qualifications in her own time. Despite a strong commitment to learning herself, Danielle was still critical of the expectation that teachers studied in their own time and largely at their own expense. She claimed that the school's financial support for teachers was minimal. Over the years she had spent a lot of her own money on additional learning at the university level and was now increasingly critical that this learning was not offered in school time and teachers had to look for it themselves. She described this as "being raped by the government" and felt that teachers in responding to these pressures to study were putting their mental health at risk because there was just too much to do. Donald expressed some disappointment that learning opportunities remained with individuals and could not be shared with the staff because of a lack of time.

Other responses included a mention of the performance agreements for every teacher as a way of ensuring that high standards were reached. This process required teachers to form personal objectives around an area of improvement to their teaching skills or classroom programme. Jan indicated the meaning of this process for her when she said, "we have a whole process of briefing and debriefing and evaluating that sort of thing". In saying this she was not seeing it as a mere paper exercise, but one which helped her on-going development as a teacher.

#### 4 Provide appropriate models

Like the teachers in School A, the response to this statement varied according to whether a teacher was in the early years of their career and had teacher release for classroom observations. Mavis' response was typical of an experienced teacher who could see the value in moving beyond one's own classroom. She said:

*I'd say rarely. We know this is good and we'd like to do this but we just don't have the time or the money to put into this or the resources for someone else to look after our class while we observe in somebody else's classroom.*

Donald's response as the principal was interesting for this statement. While recognising that this practice was useful for year one and two teachers, he did not see it working with more experienced teachers. His reason was:

*I don't think some of my staff would take kindly to me saying, 'I want you to go into Mrs. Smith's class and observe her teaching reading because she's doing it really well and I believe your programme is a little flawed'. There has to be some very gentle persuasion there. We have done that on some occasions. It is a practice I would love to see operating in our school because we have got some outstanding role model curriculum teachers but there's a little bit of professional reluctance to be placed in a 'so called model teacher's room' to watch them taking a maths or a reading lesson... I think those teachers, rather than seeing it as professional development, feel that they are being picked out because they have demonstrated a weakness in a curriculum area and the boss is making [them] go and see someone who is doing it the way he feels it should be done.*

##### 5 Provided individualised support

All of the teachers spoke about the good team support structure in the school. Teamwork was considered essential to their survival as a teacher and was particularly evident at the syndicate level. Helen thought that the schools' goals were achieved because people had the same goals and actively supported one another. Jan's rating was 'nearly always' because she felt no one was left on their own without support. However, Danielle held an opposing view and said, "I would say we don't achieve *our* goals. We try to achieve distant goals *imposed* on us... which are often irrelevant to good teaching".

In terms of the senior management team making time for individuals, this was considered to be a rare practice by Mavis. The reason she gave was similar to Lois' response in School A. This was that teachers knew these more senior people were already fully stretched and had enough to do with running their own classrooms as well as all their additional responsibilities.

Donald's response was affirming of his senior managers with his words:

*I would like to think I could say 'often' with a great deal of confidence here. The hierarchy in the school works in that sort of down-flow situation where syndicate leaders are responsible for the education delivery in their particular syndicate. I think I have a good team of syndicate leaders on board who do make time to help teachers on an individual basis. Probably a couple of teachers in this school require that help to perform and need to be, not necessarily bullied or cajoled, but certainly strongly encouraged to meet things like performance standards and objectives. Our management team has the capabilities to do that. I think from within the management team themselves, there are a lot of different dynamics and people might feel they might be giving more of a contribution than others, but from my position as principal, I see them making a good contribution to what is going on.*

Danielle showed that she gave freely of her time when there was a need but that this impacted on the quality of her own work and the children in her class were the ones to suffer. She commented:

*I watch the corners being cut and the corners that are being cut are usually in the senior manager's own classroom... For instance with me, I hate coming to school everyday into my messy classroom. I just hate it and I mean I'm not a fastidious person. I can put up with a good amount of busy mess but being behind the eight ball all the time. It's awful.*

She continued making sure her words were all clearly captured by the dictaphone saying:

*And I think one of the worst things teachers have done is prop a system that is so blatantly not working: so the innocents, namely children, don't suffer from it. And if anybody hears this in government or not, you've got the cream of the profession leaving because they have had enough!*



For those taking a lead in the school's curriculum development, support was available. Usually this included a release component, which was used for going to development courses, writing up programmes and organising staff meetings. There was even release time to work with an adviser who visited the school during class time. Danielle thought that this release was not commensurate with the amount of work required to fulfil the curriculum leadership role. Everyone else was more than pleased with the support offered! Donald's view was:

*Well not 'nearly always', 'always' because in my opinion they can't deliver those sessions effectively unless they've had the background support from me as principal or from a financial base which allows them to become a bit of an expert in that particular area or grow already from a position of strength in that curriculum.*

Staff development programmes could unfortunately not be planned around the learning needs of staff. Donald said this was because of the Ministry directive for teachers to 'be on board with a [particular] document before a certain time'. He said:

*It's heads down and bums up and we're working our way through these documents as quickly and as effectively as we can. And even in a large school like this, I think that in some years we have put too much of a workload on ourselves and it hasn't been as successful as we would want it. This year it has been because we have targeted appropriate areas and appropriate amounts of professional development we can handle. I wouldn't have a clue how smaller schools ever accomplish what they need, especially with a staff of five or six. I think they must be under tremendous stress.*

Helen perhaps summed this up more succinctly in one sentence with her rating hovering between sometimes and rarely. She said, "I mean it is just assumed that we need to do it, so we all just do it". Mavis also saw the agenda as being Ministry driven with its set idea of what all teachers needed to know. She did not see any provision for the individual needs and career stages of teachers and said, "I guess we all get put into the same stage and we all cover the same to know that we have met the

requirements”. Similarly Danielle argued that professional development was done, but she added, “not done properly!”

## 6 Provide intellectual stimulation

Time for critical reflection in staff meetings was rare. Donald indicated that it was very difficult to deviate from the term staff meeting schedules because these were so full. Danielle also mentioned the lack of time and the timing of staff meetings as being the reasons for limited reflective practice. Her comment was:

*Rarely... Professional development, generally speaking, comes at the end of a totally overloaded day where people are at their lowest ebb to intake. The next session doesn't happen for another week [often it's another topic]. Then the next session is not timetabled for another week. By then you've forgotten what you have to do because you were so tired and under so much pressure coming from a busy classroom with a lot of unfinished work. The information is not retained. There is a big loss factor.*

Jan, while considering reflection to be important, described it as a ‘Catch 22 situation’. Her list of barriers included similar themes such as time factors, stress, and attention spans. All of these meant that teachers could only just manage to sit down and accept what was presented to them. Nothing more was possible.

Relevance to classroom programmes was another area that was discussed. Here again, it was clear that there was little if any evaluation of the professional development to ensure it had relevance to classroom life and application. Time and Ministry agendas were blamed for this. Passive acceptance of this was evident in Helen’s response which was to say, “I daresay with the professional development we have been doing is so focused on the curriculum document and the New Zealand Curriculum Framework that it certainly has relevance to the classroom, otherwise we wouldn’t be doing it”.

Danielle saw much of professional development as being a paper exercise, which she considered, was a waste of time because it made no difference to the quality of

teaching. She gave an example of unit planning for physical well being which had been a requirement of teachers in the Ministry of Education contract to produce a planning format on A3 sheets of paper. It was just a paper exercise to prove that teachers could use the new planning format. She was angry that this was all that was required to sign off for appraisal purposes rather than implementing the unit in classrooms. She, therefore, did not see much relevance to classrooms with such practices.

## 7 Build a productive school culture

A mild level of enthusiasm for learning was evident amongst the teachers interviewed. Mavis said that while teachers sometimes grumbled, they did realise the importance of on-going learning and were generally positive about this work. When teachers could clearly see that they were gaining useful knowledge and skills they were positive about their experiences. Helen referred to recent work in Te Reo Maori which she had initially thought was another chore but admitted that as it progressed she had increased her confidence and actually enjoyed it despite being tired at the end of a school day when the meetings were held.

Jan said a positive attitude for professional development was totally dependent on whether the topic presented a threat to a person's teaching ability and how much upskilling was required. She said it was easy for teachers to think, "we are so busy and, no, not another one!" As a presenter she claimed her reward was when teachers showed real enthusiasm having actually managed to implement some of the new ideas in their classrooms and finding that the children enjoyed them too.

Despite her own commitment to learning, Mavis was dubious about professional development programmes actually making a difference to teaching practice. She said:

*I don't see teachers openly running around and being enthusiastic about it. I think that is probably because we are having too many curriculum areas covered in too short a time. It's just sort of, that's what happens and we take it on...It's probably losing its excitement because it is too much for us.*

Danielle replied in terms of her ability to motivate others for learning. Once again in the interview situation she was emphasising her concern that it was her own teaching skills which were suffering because of all the extra demands placed on her as a senior manager in the school. She said:

*I'm angry that even my own health, for someone who is so committed to education, [and] is so conscientious. That it's me that's going down the tube. My greatest skill is to motivate teachers, to be able to guide them, to be able to increase their professional development. What is angry and frustrating is I can't even do that now to the degree I'm capable of doing because the system has totally ground down... I'm talking about [being] actively held back from implementing what I do know, and what I could do... not only in my own school, but in other schools... because I'm working through till 11 o'clock every night of the week...doing 10 hours here on a Sunday and teaching a class full time. I get 1.5 hours off a week from class contact and you know what I'd like to do? I'd love to have the Minister of Education ball and chained to my ankle. I'd like him to see what a conscientious manager does in a school for a week. He'd be screaming to go home. I'm quite sure he'd be absolutely shocked at the workload but that's the only way to make him see.*

## 8 Help structure the school to enhance participation in decisions

It was agreed that while staff could have input into professional development, this was usually left to the members of the particular curriculum committee who had accepted this role. Danielle said there was not enough time available for teachers to adequately plan and deliver these programmes. She said:

*The effectiveness and quality of the professional development varies according to how totally self sacrificing and conscientious the delivery team is and probably whether they have a family, a life at home, or whether they are single or married. A lot of the young ones tend to get it 'dumped' on them as an extra responsibility because they have more time.*

Mavis admitted that quite often it was the same more experienced teachers who took these curriculum leadership roles. However, both she and Donald, the principal, were pleased to say that there were some younger teachers coming through who were now able and willing to accept these roles in the school and had much to offer with their infectious enthusiasm.

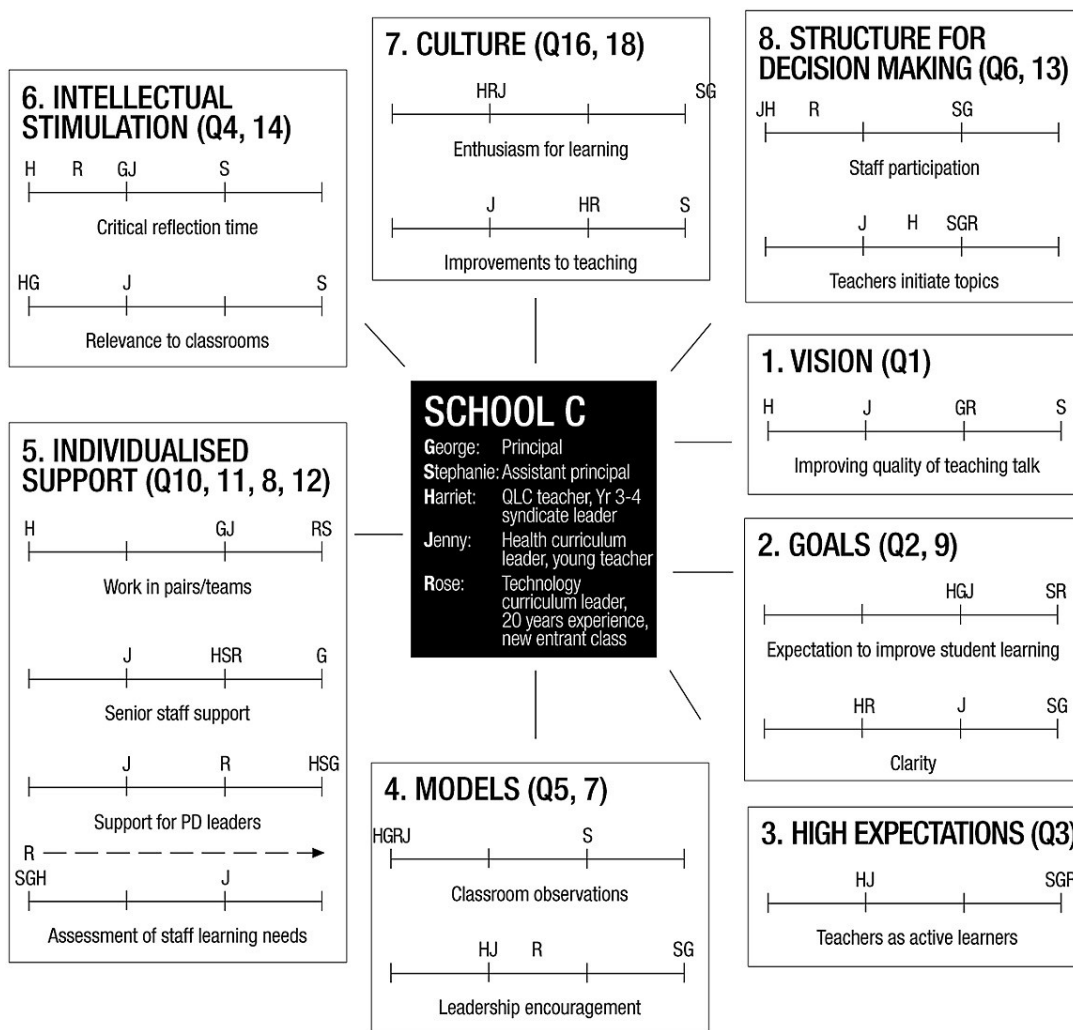
It is probably also no surprise to know that teachers had one opportunity a year to initiate their own topics for professional development at School B. Once the programme was finalised and the term schedules prepared, there was little room for anything other than a five minute slot. Donald suggested that if several teachers expressed an interest in the same topic, then they made time for this extra development as had happened when a teacher was learning about multiple intelligences through a teacher qualification course. However, usually all that could be managed was a one-off session in these instances.

And so the teacher learning community at School B is one that responds to Ministry of Education initiatives, compliance requirements and the concerns raised by a demanding parent community.

### School C

Five staff including the principal were interviewed at School C. Figure 7 gives a profile for the school.

**Figure 7: Summary of School C Interviews**



**KEY:**

RARELY    SOMETIMES    OFTEN    NEARLY ALWAYS

**AREAS FOR FURTHER ATTENTION:**  
 More talking about how to improve the quality of teaching  
 Learning from seeing others teach  
 Assessment of teachers' needs prior to professional development  
 Time for reflection and sharing ideas of practice  
 Ensuring relevance to classroom programmes

**STRENGTHS:**  
 Expectation to improve student learning  
 Team work  
 Senior staff support for teachers

**NB**  
 There are discrepancies between the staff and Principal/AP in matters of staff participation in decision making, enthusiasm for learning, clarity of goals, expectation that teachers, leadership encouragement and support for leadership

## 1 Identify and articulate a vision

When asked about the frequency of talk about improving the quality of their teaching, the teachers had varying responses. George, the principal, saw this occurring throughout the school and made mention of the syndicate minutes where this was a strong focus. He even suggested that the budget process acted as a catalyst for teachers to start thinking and discussing their priorities. For him this sense of vision pervaded everything even though it might not be obvious all the time. His comment was, “it mightn’t be there in the headlines, but we are talking about curriculum and kids”. Jenny’s rating was one of ‘sometimes’. Like George’s comment, she saw this vision of a quality school and quality teaching as being something that was just accepted by teachers. She said:

*I think it is left up to us a lot of the time and also peer pressure that is brought upon us to do our best... I’m not always sure that it is talked about but it’s like an unseen thing. You always want to do your best.*

Harriet, thought there was more talk about curriculum content rather than the quality of actual teaching in the school. Teachers knew that they could go and further their own skills and attend courses but generally the emphasis was on curriculum content related to the documents rather than anything else. Stephanie, on the other hand was adamant that one of the school’s major goals was to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the strategic plan provided details of how this might happen. It was interesting that no other teacher referred to this document except George when he made mention of this goal being enshrined in the school’s charter. His comment was, “it says we are there to get kids to their potential. It doesn’t promise that we’ll do it, but that is the name of the game”.

## 2 Foster the acceptance of group goals

As a school with a decile 10 rating, School C was very conscious of the need to keep the parents satisfied. Teachers were expected to attend professional development courses outside the school and an equitable amount was available to all. Several

initiatives were mentioned by George to highlight how the school was improving learning opportunities for its more able students through additional assessments and he was excited by the discoveries they were making about these children. Jenny summed up the expectation to improve student learning by saying, “it goes without saying. We are all here to take children from where they are and move them on. I think that is part and parcel”.

### 3 Convey high performance expectations

At a formal level the appraisal system was once again mentioned as being the motivator and standard keeper for the school. Some of the teachers did not share the same confidence in this system as their principal. Jenny felt she was able to be an active learner and maintain a high standard of performance but was not so sure about some of her colleagues. She wondered how rigorous the system was and hinted that some staff did a good deal less than others and seemed to get away with this. Harriet held a similar view and wanted more pressure to be placed on these staff rather than leaving it over to individuals to determine their own needs. She suggested that help was needed for staff to know what their best options were.

### 4 Provide appropriate models

George suggested that the school was not set up to encourage teachers to observe one another in their classrooms as a matter of course but said:

*I acknowledge it is a great thing to do...we seem to think of staff development as going somewhere else to get it. I think there is a long way to go before we develop a climate that will allow people to do that within the school [with classroom observations].*

Stephanie thought that perhaps teachers learnt more from talking with other colleagues rather than a classroom visit. She described what happened in her syndicate time when she encouraged teachers to swop strategies by saying, “what do you do? I do this. That’s good. Show me what you have done”.



The remaining three teachers wanted opportunities to visit other classrooms. One of these people, Rose, had visited another school just twice in her seven years at the school and referred to another teacher who had been at the school for 15 years and never observed in another classroom. As a newcomer, Jenny had no idea how anyone else taught in the school and was dependent on impressions gained from listening to others talk about their practice in meeting situations. Harriet has some opportunities as a senior teacher in her role as an appraiser, otherwise she depended on her wet day duty walking through classrooms. And so not having these opportunities for learning, the teachers were left to their own devices and what they could gain from course attendance outside the school.

There was active encouragement for people to be leaders of curriculum projects. Harriet saw this as “a case of pulling the short straw”. Sometimes this work attracted an “r” unit and at other times not. Stephanie thought that most people in the school had a chance to do some sort of leading of other staff if they so wished, even if this were only at the syndicate level. Rose said personal approaches were often made to individuals who could then decide against this responsibility and sometimes an announcement was made to staff for any volunteers to come forward. George referred to a glitch in the school with the present “r” units. He even said he had heard them called ‘resentment’ units! This was because some staff thought they should be paid extra to do the work while others did not want the responsibility it carried and thought this was the senior management team opting out of their work and responsibility.

## 5 Provide individualised support

George liked to think that 80% of the staff worked well in team situations and said this was one of the factors they considered with staff appointments. Rose and Jenny both said that they had syndicate planning but there was no team teaching. It appeared from most responses that the syndicate structure created a consistency of approach and philosophy within the school. Harriet was less sure of this and said some went their own way at times. Stephanie signalled a change with vertical groupings for professional development clusters in all subject areas for the following year. She thought this would add variety to the groupings and ensure that each syndicate had a representative who could keep others informed.

All syndicate leaders provided support to their staff and the responses to this statement were rated as 'often' by three of the five teachers. Harriet explained her syndicate leader role as one of keeping a finger on the pulse and being sensitive to her team, knowing when someone was under pressure and how to ease that pressure if she could in some small way. Jenny gave this question a lower rating and said the senior staff were available and willing to help but she was aware they were busy too. However, she had been pleased with a recent encounter with her syndicate leader over using the computer to write school reports and had been pleasantly surprised that "[she] had been able to talk as if she wasn't up there and could share things together". This was a barrier she had just overcome because of her status in the school as well as being a relative newcomer on the staff. Release time for staff support was included in the deputy principal's job description, which George said, was a signal to staff that help was available. Just how this worked was over to individuals but he had tried to create an expectation that support was part of this role.

Support was also available for those leading staff development. Rose indicated that people had to be quite pushy to get sufficient release time. She explained her strategy for the technology curriculum, which had been to say, 'If this is what you want, then we expect this... We'll lead it if we get this'. She also said you had to know to ask for this support and if you were turned down the first time to demand it again. Jenny had concerns about the help she might have for the following year as the staff facilitator for the health curriculum because the school was not part of the Ministry contract. She was worried about access to advisers and whether any money would be available for release time. It sounded like she needed to take heed of Rose's advice!

Jenny's experience of the school assessing its learning needs at the start of a development focus had been positive. This had happened for ICT. Those who knew what to do had been given permission to disappear and do something else while the others had stayed behind to learn. For her health development she planned to do a needs survey but said her expectation was that because it was new, the staff would need to start at the beginning and she would lead them through what was required. Was she missing the point here?

George made an interesting comment with regard to staff choices about appraisal goals and his role in summative appraisal. He mentioned the funding available to support everyone's projects but admitted that he had not checked whether these were projects best suited to his teachers' actual needs. He said:

*I actually should have checked as part of the summative appraisal. What were your goals? What did you do? But I didn't. I just found out what they had done and talked about that rather than go back and say, 'what was the reason for it?'*

## 6 Provide intellectual stimulation

Stephanie's responses said it all when she remarked, "I wish". However, on consideration she thought this was a bit harsh and admitted they did have questionnaires and discussions about what they were doing and why on a frequent basis. Others didn't have this same confidence. For example, Jenny said, "I suppose we critically reflect on where we are up to and what we are doing, but I am not sure how it affects the daily classroom programme as such. There is a bit of a gap". Harriet even went as far as to say the staff meetings were a "bit of a mismatch – curriculum development, housekeeping and everything all sort of mingled" and this was why there was no time for critical reflection.

George was honest too. His comment was:

*Sometimes. I think reflection is one of the most important tools we can have for any professional development and the one we give the least time to. We are all so busy getting stuff out in front of people that we don't actually sit down and evaluate good practice and chew the fat... the agenda, it's all written out before you sit down and start.*

Alterations to schedules were generally not a possibility because most staff development stemmed from agendas imposed at a national level with their limited timeframes for curriculum implementation. Harriet said there was no evaluation during a project but did argue that those leading a development did their very best to make it as practical and relevant to the classroom as they could. Stephanie indicated

that it had been tough working through a review of the English curriculum after their developmental work had been completed. No one could give a satisfactory answer about what this should involve and she found there were different opinions as to how this review should progress which didn't help the situation at all. And so it was largely over to teachers to take a guess at what they thought might be relevant and work for their particular development focus and hope like mad they had made the best choices.

## 7 Build a productive school culture

Stephanie was confident that most teachers approached their learning with a positive attitude and benefited from it. To her their attitude was one of "OK we need to do it, so let's get on with it". Rose said it was getting harder and harder to lead professional development for teachers. She suggested several reasons for this. One was that each professional development area had the same sort of game, which was how to match up the strands with the objectives. She found this insulting that teachers were not expected to absorb this information in any other way. One example of an alternative practice which appealed to her was when a North Island school had taken a different attitude to teacher learning and the use of staff meeting time. She described it as taking the attitude that a teacher had the ability to read the document themselves so the school's job was to provide support people who would be available but not necessarily lead staff meetings week after week for directed reading in a spoon feeding manner. This comment on the repetitive delivery approach is worth remembering if teachers are to respond with continuing enthusiasm.

George was a little critical of the interview statements, which seemed to him to be questioning the effectiveness of what was being done in professional development! His response was, "I think you have to have a 'suck it and see attitude'... and then perhaps you can ask people to use a bit more of a refined approach to what is done". However, the problem with this stance is that those responsible for each curriculum contract, its model and delivery are not the same each time and everyone is having to make the same mistakes in order to realise what works and what doesn't. It is now somewhat alarming that after a raft of curriculum contracts we are still struggling to find a satisfactory approach to professional development which is affirming of

practice and yet also able to introduce new knowledge and material at a realistic pace for busy teachers.

#### 8 Help structure the school to enhance participation in decisions

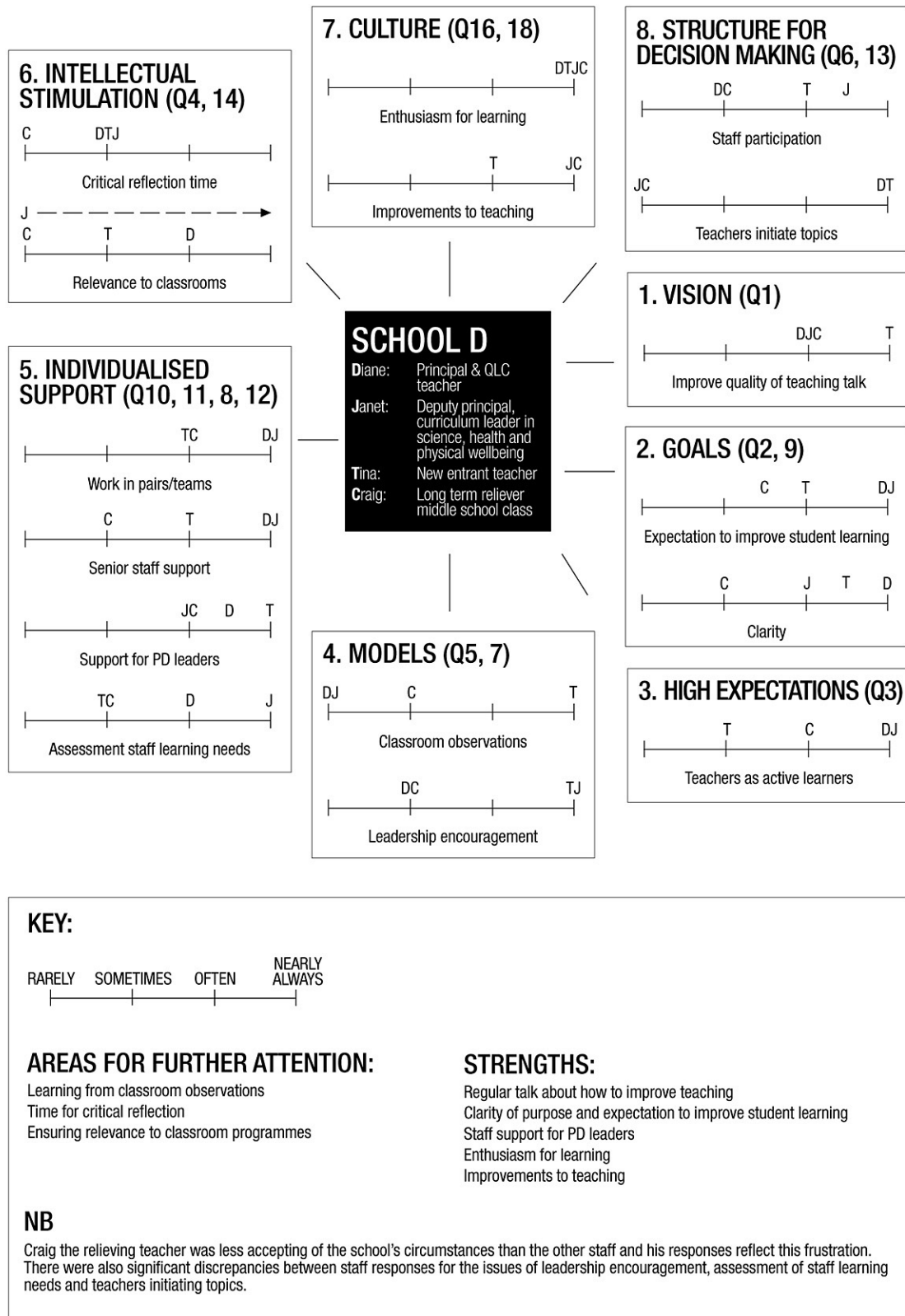
Because many teachers were aware of the huge workload involved in leading a curriculum development, it was getting harder to entice staff into these roles at School C. Rose indicated that while all staff were given the opportunities to lead staff development, there were some staff members who just refused to do it and would not volunteer under any circumstances. Jenny saw decision making for staff development as being led from the top. She said, “we are told what is happening and then pockets of teachers are responsible for it... as far as having any input into it, we just leave it in whoever’s hands it is to facilitate it”. This was another indication that staff were pretty accepting of what was being given to them and preferred to keep out of decisions which might involve an increased workload for them. Individual staff members could initiate topics but often this had the effect of adding more meeting time which was not popular.

Many of the responses from teachers at School C indicate a tired staff who did what was required but didn’t go looking for extra work. Their attitude could be described as one of ‘wait and if it is important, someone will tell us all about it’.

#### *School D*

It was only appropriate to interview four staff including the principal at School D. The remaining staff member was a beginning teacher and had only been in the school a few weeks at the time of the interviews. Again, a school profile of the interview responses is offered in a diagrammatic form as Figure 8.

Figure 8: Summary of School D Interview



## 1 Identify and articulate a vision

There was a high frequency of talk about how teachers at School D might improve the quality of their teaching in the school. Three teachers gave ratings of ‘often’ while Tina said ‘nearly always’ adding the comment:

*Well because of the situation that we are in at the moment in this school and the huge changes, we are always talking about the quality of teaching and what we can do to improve it. So it is sort of an on-going thing really and the fact that we are all geared up towards the changes, wanting to make changes within the school...I think it started with Diane. She’s such a major instigator...we are professionals and we want to do well. We want to see children succeed and especially at my level [new entrants] where the progress is so vast and huge.*

Craig also mentioned having a personal commitment to improvement and said, “I nearly always think about it. I strive to be, not necessarily the best teacher, but the very best teacher I can be”.

Being a small school was an advantage because the staff knew all of the families and could offer a viewpoint that was often useful. However, it was the informal talk which was really valued. Janet said:

*We do this in staff meetings and I also think some of the most valuable time is when we come in here for general chit chat or when we see each other in the playground and where we have concerns about a programme or something like that and bring it up.*

Diane’s comment referred to the new culture that was emerging in the school. Since all of the teachers were recent arrivals, they needed time to get to know each other on a personal as well as professional level for trust to develop. Opportunities for talking were therefore extremely important.

## 2 Foster the acceptance of group goals

All of the teachers had a clear expectation that they would improve student learning. Craig did, however, add that an influencing factor was whether the students wanted to learn in the first place. For the others this was the sole purpose of their job and why they were teachers. Their individual comments showed that they did think about what they were doing as teachers. Tina for example, as a new entrant teacher, talked about the need to put the children first rather than teaching to the bag or the book in maths and reading. Diane mentioned having one staff member who kept reminding everyone about the need for specific learning objectives. This was being clear about what the children were to learn and then how this could be assessed. These were two good examples of how regular talk and thinking as a staff group kept the focus on the improvement of student learning.

The school was also achieving clarity of purpose and direction through the teachers' commitments to improvement. Tina said:

*We have very clear ideas as to where we are going. I think just because of how the school is, or how it was, and how there is a huge need for change. Our purpose is to get it back on track and to have parents, children and staff working together.*

Diane and Janet in different ways talked about staff needing a basic understanding of curriculum to appreciate what might be enhanced. In appointing staff, Diane had looked for people with similar philosophies to her own. This showed a different starting point from the other case study schools who did not have to establish a cohesive unit. Newcomers just fitted into the existing systems. Janet alluded to the progress made when she compared the very real difference in staff understanding with the new team, which was making it possible to move the school forward. This basic understanding had not been present with the previous staff and had contributed to the school's earlier problems.

### 3 Convey high performance expectations

Teachers were clearly expected to be active learners at the school. With very few curriculum documents to be found in the school on their arrival and no curriculum



plans, there was a huge need to determine school-wide curriculum goals and programmes of work. This task had to be a team effort. While it was hard work, the teachers certainly became more knowledgeable and confident as the process continued into more curriculum areas. Standing still was not an option for these teachers as Janet's comment makes apparent:

*I don't think that you can teach unless you are learning at the same time because there is always something to learn and teachers don't know everything. That whole climate within the class...if you profess to know everything, then all you're doing is shoving information at the children. You are not learning with them.*

A further example of being a learner was Tina's mention of having successfully completed her nine Advanced Studies for Teachers courses for her degree in two years whilst teaching. While admitting that the workload had been horrendous she appreciated the link with classroom programmes and the homework tasks they had each week. She said this had 'kept her on her toes' and how course attendance was one way of preventing teachers from getting stale. An expectation of one paper a year per teacher was her suggestion to maintain high standards of teacher performance. It was then somewhat surprising that her personal rating for this question was stated as 'sometimes'.

Unlike the other schools' responses, there was no link made to the school's appraisal system as being a way of ensuring that learning was occurring. It appeared that these teachers were driven by their own sources of motivation rather than responding to attestation requirements.

#### 4 Provide appropriate models

Given the school's lack of finances, release for classroom visits was difficult to provide if this required money for relievers. Diane believed as the others did, that teachers learnt from observing one another teach. She said:

*I can say this year it's done rarely because everyone's new and they wanted time to settle in and we didn't know the strengths of each other. But next year I can see that happening.*

Janet thought it was important for teachers to see how others planned and coped with different situations. Similarly Craig mentioned how much he had learnt from watching another teacher working with his class at a previous school. He was keen to move beyond the school but appreciated that the school's finances needed to be in a better shape first.

However, Tina's request to visit a year one class at another school had been approved. It was appreciated that this would be useful given the absence of other year one classes at the school and she was excited at the prospect.

Leadership of curriculum development at School D was a shared activity. It had to be with a smaller staff but it was clear that most of the leadership was coming from the principal and deputy. Janet mentioned the huge responsibility that being a lead teacher was. She also indicated it was important for teachers in these roles to realise their own limitations and call for assistance from advisers when they lacked the professional knowledge themselves. It was a pity that the lead teachers at School E hadn't realised this when they worked with terminology they did not understand!

## 5 Provide individualised support

Teamwork was a strength at School D and was rated as 'often' and 'nearly always' by the staff. Without doubt all staff considered that they worked together to achieve the school's goals. Tina missed cooperative planning with teachers of the same class level but was developing networks with teachers at other schools for this purpose.

It was also evident that the principal and deputy made time for helping teachers on an individual basis. Tina had high praise for Janet's support saying:

*It just stuns me the amount of time that Janet will stop what she is doing and say 'how are you getting on? I saw this. This will be useful for you'. And it is not*

*only the professional side. It is that taking time to find out about you too. I think you need that in a school. The teacher is stuck in that classroom and there is no adult contact. Sometimes it's a bit much. It's nice to actually come to the staffroom... and release that tension.*

In a small school, Diane thought staff knew when someone needed extra support. She said:

*They don't have to ask [for help]. It's offered freely because we know what's happening all the time. No one can just hide behind anything. You know if someone is not up to scratch with someone or something or when they are having a bad day, and so we're just...like a little family really.*

Some support for leading professional development was available in the school. It was also appreciated that staff with these roles needed to be up to date with the latest innovations and this required additional time and sometimes monetary support to attend courses. At School D most of the available release time was given to Janet as deputy principal, because she was the one who led most of the developments. This was only one and a half hours a week but nevertheless was an important recognition of the time and effort required to prepare this work. Tina suggested that without release for such activities, teachers might “get a bit resentful that [they were] the one putting in the extra time and people [were] just feeding off [them]”.

Comments about the extent to which learning needs were assessed before a development varied. Before the last staff changeover there had been one member of staff who had needed everything taken back to a basic level. This had determined the starting point for everyone. It appeared that School D was no different from the other schools in its freedom to adjust the nature and scope of curriculum learning. Tina's comment matched those of teachers at the other schools when she said, “we don't have the time. We just go in boots and all...we are sort of dictated by what is happening at [that] moment”.

## 6 Provide intellectual stimulation

Time for critical reflection was in short supply. Craig blamed the intensity of the demands for curriculum compliance with the implementation of the new documents. Janet thought this lack of time for reflection was indicative of where the school stood in relation to the amount of work it still had to complete. Her words were, “we’ve got so much that we have to get done that often we concentrate only on looking forward and we don’t look back”.

Diane saw things changing for the better in the future. She had already asked staff what they wanted to do for professional development in the following year and to think about the timing of this development. Staff had been asked to think ‘outside the box’ and consider nights, weekly sessions, weekends or holiday time. She thought that once this structure was clear they could start to make future plans. In the meantime she was happy with the paired reflection occurring with the staff. Staff had to talk to each other about what they were doing because another staff member regularly spent a few hours each week teaching in their rooms.

To some extent the immediate relevance of staff development was questioned because of the need to meet ERO non-compliances. For example, the school had wanted to look at the English curriculum, but ERO was coming in ten weeks and Social Studies was one of their targets. And so there was no choice for the staff but to get the Social Studies development completed in time. This aside, the staff were satisfied with the programme offered in the school and despite the short and often concentrated timeframes for all this type of work, no one questioned its value to them as a classroom practitioner.

## 7 Build a productive school culture

Tina described the staff as being enthusiastic and said, “not only do we learn in a professional development session but we learn from each other”. The social studies development was a prime example of how the staff had gained new ideas and ways in

which to plan units of work and had immediately implemented them in their classrooms.

There were other factors which contributed to the on-going enthusiasm for learning at School D. Janet mentioned deliberate strategies from the senior management level which showed appreciation of staff effort and achievements. She gave several examples of this to show how her principal had given her unexpected classroom release after particularly intensive spells of additional school commitments and what these small gestures had meant to her.

Tina indicated that just how much teachers gained from their professional development experiences was also dependent on the effort they put in themselves. She wanted to see mandates for the professional development of teachers and said, “teaching is a bigger learning process. I think we have to learn like our students and keep that going ourselves. Otherwise we sort of peter off”. The last thing she wanted was to be teaching the same thing the same way for thirty years. To her there was no interest or satisfaction in that. An earlier comment from Janet had also supported this need to be responsive to the setting and always look for ways to improve one’s knowledge and teaching.

## 8 Help structure the school to enhance participation in decisions

Unit planning was a shared endeavour at School D. Tina indicated that this had been the only way they had coped with the workload of organising long term plans for all the curriculum areas across the school. When it came to decisions about the planning and delivery of professional development sessions, Janet was confident staff did have a say about the directions that future sessions would take and how important this was. There was always enthusiasm for new ideas, no matter who suggested them and if possible a way found for them to be shared with others in the school.

In looking back over her time as principal at the school, Diane was pleased with the progress made and the shared commitment to the school’s direction. The new staff had made it possible to move forward. She said, “we can say anything and no-one gets offended because we all came in at the same time... there is no nitpicking of staff

because we are all brand new”. Perhaps this was why they could be so focused in their quest for school improvements to be made.

The question about teachers being able to initiate topics for professional development received a mixed response with two staff providing a ‘nearly always’ rating and the other two a ‘rarely’ rating. This variation may have been indicative of the tension between the need to satisfy compliance requirements and some teachers being frustrated that little time was left for them to initiate topics of special interest.

### *Summary of leadership strengths in the case study schools*

In summarising the various leadership strengths promoting school improvement, it is noted that data collected from a limited number of observations and interviews presents an incomplete picture. At best, this summary can only highlight my impressions as the researcher who depended on conversations with selected people at each school and did not delve into any associated documentation on school improvement initiatives.

While every school was required to have a vision, this was largely taken for granted. Teachers differed in their opinions regarding the time spent talking about improving the quality of teaching in all of the schools except School D. Teachers at School D knew only too well that their school could face closure if improvements were not made. This, more than anything else, focused their attention on how improvements could be made. The other schools did not have this worry and seemed to accept that what they did was making a difference to children’s learning. It appeared that vision statements remained the domains of the senior management teams rather than classroom practitioners. Teachers had their own commitment to improving student learning without it being a school focus.

Syndicate structures were more tightly knit groups than the staff as a whole for fostering the acceptance of group goals. In School D’s case, with no syndicates, the staff did have clear goals for the whole school. For School C, there was more confidence in the syndicate structure even though it was thought that some syndicates were better than others. Schools A and B were confident that they had systems in

place to ensure information flowed down from the senior management level and back to show that programmes were linked to the school's goals. The mixed ratings for clarity of school purpose and direction across these schools is indicative of the difficulties schools face in developing and maintaining a sense of collective commitment as a whole school.

Professional development, beyond what the school provided, was accepted as a way teachers could keep up to date and improve their teaching. However, what this meant in practice was merely that the schools would pay for one course and its choice was made by the teacher rather than the school. When this happened, professional development was of more benefit to the person rather than the school. Teachers certainly appreciated these opportunities and gave this question a consistently high rating, particularly in Schools A and B.

Teamwork was also considered to be important by teachers across all of the schools. Accessing individual help was often more difficult because teachers were sensitive to the workloads and commitments of their senior teachers. The senior teachers themselves did what they could but largely depended on teachers being willing to ask for help rather than offering it to them. For those leading curriculum development, support was available and appreciated. The most welcome support was release time for planning the staff meeting sessions.

All schools claimed to provide individualised support at both personal and professional levels. It was acknowledged that teachers had their own networks within schools, which did not always depend on the senior managers for the support they required. This widening of support was mentioned by the principals at Schools A and B, who acknowledged the curriculum specialists amongst the staff. In Schools A, B, and C teachers did not consider their needs were sufficiently taken into account prior to the professional development delivery. It was only in School D that staff felt the starting point reflected their actual needs. This broadening of support is another reason why opportunities need to be made available to teachers so that they can access networks which best serve their needs.

Levels of intellectual stimulation varied across the schools. In School C there was dissatisfaction with staff meetings because organisational matters seemed to interrupt the process. In Schools A and B, staff meetings were accepted as being opportunities for learning. Presenters structured their content in ways which emphasised the reasons why teachers might find the new material especially relevant and useful. There was no question about the intellectual stimulation offered at School D. Teachers valued all the assistance and the effort made to keep it focused.

Productive school cultures were another matter. Each school was being driven by the need to meet compliance requirements and there was a sense that quality was being compromised for coverage. School A had come to realise that it was trying to do too much in its staff development programme and needed to slow it down. School B had learnt this lesson and had established a more comfortable pattern, which enabled teachers to retain their enthusiasm for staff meetings as learning opportunities. School C was in reactive mode with its concentration on ERO proofing and School D could certainly show that it was productive and thorough in what it had addressed in curriculum development so far. The responses to both questions relating to teacher enthusiasm for learning and acknowledgement of learning gains reflected a sense of frustration amongst many of the teachers in Schools A, B, and C simply because the time allocated could not produce the quality learning they desired.

The success of teacher learning in these schools was clearly dependent on the expertise being available from within the schools. Principals needed classroom teachers to take responsibility for curriculum leadership in the larger schools and provided moral support and teacher release where this could be managed. Classroom teachers undertaking these roles faced an unenviable task because their time and energy were already stretched by their classroom teaching responsibilities.

So while each of the schools faced similar pressures to comply with Ministry of Education mandates for curriculum implementation, their learning processes needed to address the features underlying their individual school cultures. Responses from these case study school interviews clearly demonstrate that schools would benefit from closer scrutiny of the issues raised by the interviews if they are to ensure better quality learning outcomes for teachers and students.



### *Triangulation*

The triangulation of three data gathering methods (observations, interviews and documentation) helped to produce an in-depth appreciation of the quality of teacher learning and development in each of the schools in answering the research questions for Stage 3 of this thesis. Namely the answers to the following questions:

- how do schools use their staff development slots?
- how much do teachers gain from these sessions?
- what hinders the learning of teachers in staff development sessions?
- what enhances the quality of teacher learning in schools?
- to what extent are schools places where teachers can learn and develop their skills?
- can schools be called learning organisations for teachers?

### **How successful is professional development in individual schools?**

#### *3.1 How do schools use their staff development slots?*

All of the schools had difficulty matching their learning agendas with the time they had available. Multiple projects were evident at each of the schools and attempts were being made to find a suitable balance between addressing developmental work with the implementation of new documents and reviewing or completing unfinished developments from previous projects. Having accepted that this was the only way to operate, the case study schools then faced the added challenge of trying to move at a realistic pace and carry the staff forward in their learning.

I soon realised that careful management of the meeting time was important if the agendas were to be completed. Observations of staff meetings showed that all the schools were making valiant attempts to keep a clear curriculum focus for staff meeting and restrict general business matters to five minutes at either the beginning or the end of the meetings. In general, the observations of staff meetings in each of the schools showed a tight structure of five-minute notices, some revision of Te Reo Maori (in School A) or a brief mention of a new teaching resource which was followed by the major curriculum agenda item for the meeting. Bells were rung to

hurry people to meetings and a careful eye kept on time to ensure that meetings finished at the appointed times.

Typically staff development sessions included activities that aimed to familiarise teachers with the curriculum or assessment documents. The usual delivery format was for one or two teachers to plan and present the information to the staff and take teachers through new planning formats. Where possible, the schools endeavoured to provide release time to the presenting teachers for their preparation. On occasion, guest presenters were invited to contribute to the meetings where staff needed additional expertise. This was most evident in the areas of the gifted and talented learner and Te Reo Maori at Schools A, B and C. These meetings were more successful when the lead teachers took time to brief the visiting specialists on the school's context and progress to date in the chosen curriculum area. More effective learning occurred when attempts were made to include activities that allowed teachers time to share ideas with others. It was my observation that more often than not the teachers failed to realise the purpose of these activities because the presenting (lead) teachers were rushing to cover as much as they could in any one session. At other times, I also considered that these interactive activities seemed to be fillers that merely prolonged the meetings and could be resented by teachers who saw little meaning in them.

I was aware that the driving force for meetings in the case study schools was coverage due to the constant pressures of compliance and this left limited time for checking teachers' understandings. Here the presenting teachers were heavily influenced by what the facilitators of the Ministry of Education contracts had presented to them in the contract workshops and did not readily adapt the material and delivery style to meet the needs of those within the school. In observing the same activities repeated across several of the schools, I was also conscious that the impact of these activities was variable.

### *3.2 How much do teachers gain from these sessions?*

At School A, the principal and senior staff were very aware that maintaining momentum for teachers' learning and development presented an on-going challenge

in times of change overload. All of the schools were aware that meetings held at the end of the day were in the teachers' tired time and thereby their effectiveness reduced. Deidre, the principal at School A, even told me that she was tempted to abandon staff meetings for a period because the staff seemed so stressed but then added that it would be difficult to meet the required deadlines for implementation. Donald, the principal of School B had similarly considered rescheduling staff development as blocks in holiday time to capitalise on teachers' energy but had not met a favourable response from the staff who were not in favour of this suggestion. Thus, if teachers were either too tired or stressed to absorb the learning offered, it would seem pointless to persist knowing that learning gains would be temporary at best.

Overload was a considerable problem and was affecting the teachers' retention of their learning. This really worried Lois, one of the lead teachers at School A, who made every effort to reassure teachers that the learning was within their grasp and made continual links with previous learning as well as signalling what was yet to come. Her concerns were not replicated by the other presenters who tended to focus on the task and the coverage of new material at the expense of the teachers' individual needs. At School B, a more realistic pace had been set while still acknowledging the quantity of work to complete. There was a noticeable difference in teachers' enthusiasm at this school when they saw links between these activities and their own future classroom planning. This highlighted the value of hands-on practical work or the sharing of classroom strategies for teachers' learning. I also noticed that the membership of groups varied according to the activity and this strengthened the opportunities available for learning and maybe this was helped by the teachers being more settled and experienced in their careers than those at School A who were predominantly in their early years. At School C, group activities were not used to the same extent and there was a tendency for discussions to be dominated by the principal and a small, yet vocal minority. This pattern of interaction reduced the opportunity for learning gains amongst the wider group of staff. Then at School D, the teachers were working really hard to ensure the school's survival as a learning organisation for teachers and students. Staff meeting sessions began with document familiarity and worked systematically to focus on resource development and unit planning to give the teachers confidence in their work as well as strategies to meet the needs of the

school's community. It was also easier to meet the teachers needs with a smaller grouping of staff.

### *3.3 What hinders the learning of teachers in staff development sessions?*

Time was the greatest barrier to these teachers' learning. This related to productive and efficient use of meeting time, the actual scheduling of meetings held after a day in the classroom and the gaps between sessions. All of these variables worked against teachers having the necessary energy to accept new learning in the late afternoon time slot.

The ability of the staff development presenters to deliver material according to the capability levels of the teachers was also an issue. While these teacher presenters were curriculum responsibility holders, such curriculum expertise could not guarantee the adequacy of teachers' learning. Rather than treating adult learners as having individual learning needs as they might with children in their classes, these presenters typically assumed teachers needed to start at the beginning with their learning. There was therefore, little if any sign of them using previous experience as the foundation for subsequent learning which would lessen the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning offered.

### *3.4 What enhances the quality of teacher learning in schools?*

The quality of teacher learning in the case study schools was dependent on the skills of the presenting teachers. Here skills varied amongst the teachers in the way that they could respond to the needs and stages of the teachers. The more effective curriculum leaders moved beyond a content-coverage role to one of being increasingly sensitive to the processes that would enable teachers to progress in their learning. Such processes involved matching the unique needs of the teachers as learners and recognising their varying attitudes and enthusiasm for change initiatives alongside their existing knowledge and skill bases.

### *3.5 To what extent are schools places where teachers can learn and develop their skills?*

Outsider input was needed by all the schools. This came in the form of visiting specialist (advisors) or through one or more teachers participating in a Ministry of Education contract and then having opportunities to share their recently gained knowledge and skills with the rest of the teachers at their schools. Just how this knowledge and skill can be imparted is the issue that determines the success of teachers' learning. Observations of staff meetings in the case study schools have shown that the Ministry of Education contract approach has been a mixed success for a number of reasons. Rather than increasing teachers' ability to help themselves, it has instead made them even more dependent on others telling them what it is they should know and do. Constant pressures for teachers have led teachers to look for shortcuts in their learning. One of these has been the replication of ready made resources and ideas from other people but without the time taken to fully understand them or make further adaptations for their use in different learning contexts.

Teachers cannot learn and develop their skills when the structures of schools work against effective learning. For this they require quality time and individualised support that focuses on what works for particular classroom settings. This is expensive because it necessitates classroom release and the opportunity to work in classrooms alongside teachers in order for learning to have immediate practical relevance and meaning. Learning which cannot be applied to practice is of limited value to the busy practitioner facing multiple challenges.

### *3.6 Can schools be called learning organisations for teachers?*

Schools can only be called learning organisations where teachers want to learn, are intrinsically motivated and have cognisance of the factors that allow them to learn and the corresponding structures in place to make this possible. The interview data showed that for these case study schools their structural arrangements were not adequate. For example, it was only possible for the beginning teachers to be given regular opportunities to visit and observe in other classrooms. Other teachers were denied such opportunities because the schools had no budget for finding classroom

release for this purpose. It is for this reason that many schools cannot be called learning organisations because their teachers either resist learning (because they have too much expected of them), cannot retain it or do not have the organisational culture to support collegial interactions which are so important in the development of a learning organisation. This is indeed somewhat alarming if schools are meant to be places of learning and the teachers' own learning is questionable.



## Chapter 12

### Conclusion

In this chapter, thesis data are related back to the three main research questions to show how they contribute to the knowledge base on teacher learning and development. The three questions are:

1. Can the National Educational Monitoring Project benefit classroom assessment practices?
2. How effective is the Quality Learning Circle (QLC) model for teacher learning and development?
3. How successful is professional development in individual schools?

Discussion of these questions also draws attention to themes in existing research and professional development practice and identifies gaps which need to be addressed. I follow this with my own conceptualisation of teaching and learning to indicate future directions and challenges for the further enhancement of teacher learning in schools.

#### **Can the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) benefit classroom assessment practices?**

In answering this question, discussion needs to address three groups of teachers. The first group is the teachers who have been seconded to work with the NEMP project and have received professional development for their roles as teacher administrators and markers. A second group is the eight teachers who joined the QLC experience to learn more about the NEMP reports, and the final group is all the remaining teachers in schools who have been left to find their own way around the NEMP reports.

It has been well documented that the teacher administrators and markers have benefited from their NEMP experience (Gilmore, 1999). This model of professional development has been carefully planned for success. Teachers having six week secondments have made the most of their learning opportunities because they have been able to focus solely on the NEMP programme without having to worry about



teaching a class at the same time. This model has incorporated the best of adult learning practices because it has provided collegial support and discussion around the implementation of assessment tasks. On a less intense scale, with meetings at fortnightly intervals, teachers in the QLC experience have been given similar privileges. The remaining teachers, have not been as fortunate with programmes to support their learning about NEMP. Most of these teachers have been left to do their own learning about NEMP and have received little, if any staff discussion time. This has meant that many teachers have not found time for NEMP. Any discussion regarding the impact of the NEMP reports therefore needs to take into account the available support for teacher learning from both national and local levels.

My study investigating the nature of professional development in schools provides substantial evidence, over a three-year period, to show what teachers experience as learners in schools. These data explore the extent to which such learning is perceived to make a difference to classroom practices in general terms and more specifically in relation to assessment practices stemming from the NEMP reports. What the study makes clear is that too much is expected of schools and teachers, with most teachers unable to sustain the pace set by the Ministry of Education to implement the curriculum documents. This means that much learning teachers do is rushed, incomplete and frustrating because of the pressures of time. Most schools are trying to do far too much, and coverage is taking precedence over the quality and usefulness of teacher learning to satisfy national compliance requirements.

Data collected from the teacher questionnaires (Stage one), interviews with the QLC teachers (Stage two) and teachers in the case study schools (Stage three) capture this reality, showing that teachers are unhappy with the large amount of learning they face and would like to feel it had more impact on their practice. The data draw attention to these difficulties by recording teachers' recent experiences of professional learning. The strength of the data gathering is its strong teacher voice which has the potential to confront existing practice, encourage schools and Ministry of Education officials to reassess current expectations for teacher learning and professional development, and plan for better learning.

While teachers have been slow to realise the benefits of the NEMP reports, this is in substantial part because of the unsatisfactory nature of teacher learning in schools. Many schools' cultures and structures do not seem to be conducive to teacher learning. Leadership styles and actions may also be significant barriers to teacher learning where compliance requirements dominate. The isolated and, at times, competitive nature of classroom teaching also denies teachers a valuable source of learning from one another. It was clear from teachers' comments in the second questionnaire that teachers wanted time to exchange teaching ideas. They were happy for others to signal useful activities for them to try from the NEMP reports, believing that if others had found them useful, then they would also.

Positive endorsements of the NEMP project were evident in the teachers' responses to the second questionnaire in particular. The following comments indicate the variety of ways in which the NEMP reports could help teachers improve their classroom teaching and assessment practices. One teacher made mention of having taken a variety of NEMP tasks and placing them in plastic bags for teachers to use in unit work and school-wide assessment. Another had indicated a future use for the NEMP reports suggesting that they could assist teachers to standardise their marking criteria. A more common response was of schools using the NEMP assessment tasks as benchmarks. In this way comparisons could be made with the national sample as well as within schools to show progression or school-wide progress in a school curriculum review. Where shortcomings in children's performances had been noted in the NEMP reports, some teachers were incorporating these ideas into their teaching programmes. There were also others who had simply seen the NEMP assessment tasks as good ideas for activities within existing units of work, e.g., the postage stamp activity in the Social Studies report. Teachers have listed many examples of specific tasks which they have used from a number of the NEMP reports, particularly the Art, Reading and Speaking, Writing and Social Studies reports. Overall, these responses demonstrate that teachers welcome resource materials which contain practical ideas for teaching. Teachers who have discovered the assessment exemplars in the NEMP reports have found them to be authentic, imaginative and fun to use. One teacher's comment reflects such enthusiasm for future use saying:

*I am keenly interested in this programme and would love to take part some time. My goal for this year is to read more of these assessment results and see how I can use them in my classroom programme... I'd love to use them more often but I need to organise myself to have time to go through the books and sort out. [I've] only used the Maths one so far (II, 089).*

### **How effective is the Quality Learning Circle (QLC) model for teacher learning and development?**

The effectiveness of the QLC model can be judged in terms of the direct benefits to the eight teachers involved and how it has highlighted the processes and conditions which make it possible for teachers to consider making improvements to their practice.

Indeed, one gain from the QLC intervention has been the way it has confronted teachers with features missing from their usual professional development experiences. Here one major difference has been that the teachers were able to choose their own focus for improvement and how this would be structured. While this element of choice was initially rather overwhelming, the teachers soon learnt that there were advantages in being able to shape and pace discussions to suit their needs and not be tied to someone else's imposed agenda and timeframe. There was also less pressure with the QLC model because the end point had not been determined in advance. The teachers knew that they were on a journey and would support each other no matter which direction it took.

The QLC teachers responded well when they were actively involved in the learning process. In particular, having time to talk with one another about their practice meant they could discover that their colleagues were additional sources of learning. Ball and Cohen (1999) argue that such discussions and teaching of each other "about practice in practice" are invaluable (pp.11-12). It was also interesting to see how the QLC teachers' experiences matched Ball and Cohen's view that discussions "centred in practice" did not necessarily require classroom situations in real time. While the QLC teachers shared several classroom visits with one another, they agreed that these had been useful but not essential to their learning. What they did value were the samples of work that the other teachers brought along when discussing their NEMP trialing. This matched Ball and Cohen's suggestion that better learning opportunities can be

created by using strategic documentation, copies of students' work, videotapes of classroom lessons, curriculum materials and teachers' notes. For the QLC teachers, such sharing had motivated them to explore similar activities themselves and then report their findings back to the group. Sadly, such sharing time was often not able to be included in their usual staff meetings because the dissemination of features of new curriculum documents dominated meeting times, leaving little or no time for discussion.

While schools tend to operate under "cultures of separation", the QLC model encouraged "cultures of connection and integration" (Day, 1999, p.79). Here the QLC teachers welcomed opportunities for networking with colleagues and showed a clear preference for what Argyris and Schon cited by Day (1999), call double-loop learning. It is argued that there is better learning when others are involved in the learning loop because they can influence the direction of the learning by asking questions and challenging assumptions held by individuals. Single-loop learning is considered to be less effective because it occurs without the involvement of other learners. Day argues that this more radical approach to learning and the evaluation of one's practice is extremely difficult to achieve on one's own, and learning actually deepens with this added loop.

Such a preference for more collegial approaches, where teachers spend time talking, planning and evaluating as a team, is currently hard to achieve in schools, given the pressures of time and quantity of learning required. Darling-Hammond (1996) is adamant that schools are currently structured for failure because of this isolation and privacy from colleagues who might be able to help teacher learning. She maintains:

*Today's schools are organized in ways that support neither student learning nor teacher learning well. Teachers are isolated from one another so that they cannot share knowledge or take responsibility for overall student learning (p.195).*

The QLC model has also highlighted the need for schools to change structures to enable quality learning to occur. For example, the provision of teacher release to allow the teachers to work together in school-time produced a greater learning productivity. Even the teachers themselves were conscious of their increased energy

levels because the meetings were held within the school day and not in their usual 'tired' time after school. Day (1999) suggests that in supporting a learner-focused perspective rather than a training-focused perspective, there is a need to reconsider the time allowance and organisational structures underpinning provisions for teacher learning and development.

Similarly, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) maintain that professional development is about providing occasions when teachers can reflect on their work and reassess and reshape their beliefs about content, pedagogy and learners. This requires settings that support teacher inquiry and collaboration and strategies grounded in teachers' questions and concerns. More specifically this involves:

*Crea[ting] new images of what, when and how teachers learn, and these new images require a corresponding shift from policies that seek to control or direct the work of teachers to strategies intended to develop schools' and teachers' capacity to be responsible for student learning (p.598).*

The QLC model offers such a setting for effective teacher learning because it addresses concerns about how and when teachers learn as well as identifying the conditions which promote teacher learning. While admittedly the QLC model is an expensive option with its teacher release costs, it does provide teachers with the quality time they so desperately need for learning, one with another sharing ideas and concerns about their teaching practices. Since meetings held after school cannot easily include this element of sharing, it is important to create other opportunities for this to occur. If this means bringing teachers together within the school day and paying for teacher release, then this is the price we must pay for quality learning. A continuation of current practice is a bigger waste of money if teachers are not benefiting from their learning time.

### **How successful is professional development in individual schools?**

The success of teacher development depends on the extent to which schools can cater for variations in teacher experience, expertise and competence. Day (1999) suggests that this is a difficult task for schools because teachers have differing learning needs according to their particular career stages. Huberman (1993) outlines five stages of career progression to illustrate this diversity. These stages are described as launching

a career, stabilization, new challenges and concerns, reaching a professional plateau and the final years of a career. The teachers in the QLC represented several of these stages and were able to draw on each other's strengths. In this way diversity was viewed as a strength rather than a nuisance. The same cannot be said for whole school professional development where typically teachers are treated as one and the same. For reasons often difficult to change (e.g., constraints of time, budgets, numbers, and power relationships), schools find it harder to address individual differences and needs. Observations of staff meetings in each of the case study schools affirmed this practice of treating teachers as one and the same. Compulsory attendance was noted as a source of frustration for some teachers, who felt they were wasting their time revisiting material they already knew.

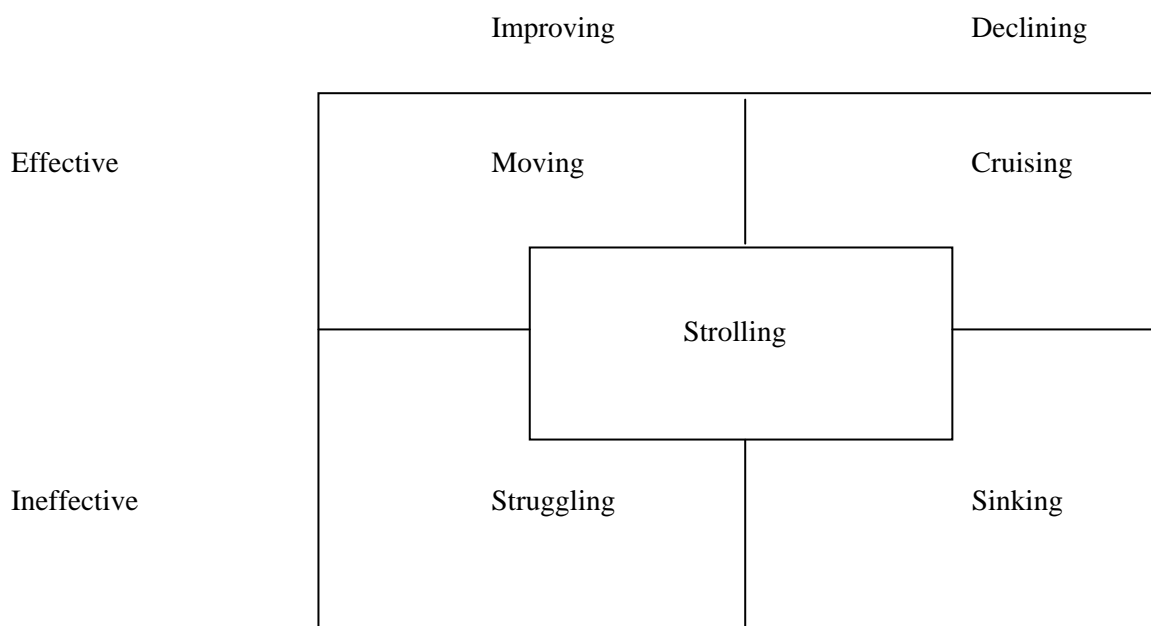
Rather than adopting the same approach for all learners, Stoll and Fink (1996) argue that schools need to address particular internal conditions to maintain the necessary support and improvement to address current and future challenges. Since the essence of schools is that they are learning organisations, it is important that every effort is made to ensure that learning is facilitated. The interviews with teachers from the case study schools have provided useful individual and whole school profiles according to the eight leadership practices for school improvement as identified by Leithwood et al. (1998). Once again, these highlight differing perspectives amongst teachers at the same school and between schools which suggests it is a challenge to satisfy everyone's needs and expectations.

As learning organisations, none of the four schools managed to achieve a consensus in ratings for all eight leadership practices. This lack of consensus suggests that there is still a significant amount of work to be done before these schools can be described as fully-fledged learning organisations. An analysis of the eight leadership practices shows that school improvement depends on learning environments being collaborative and focused, with clarity of purpose and direction and plenty of support and encouragement for learning. It is also important for school cultures to be continually shaped and nurtured so that the conditions that make organisational learning possible are realised. To this end, Hopkins et al. (1994) maintain that the real agenda is not implementing single innovations but changing the culture of the school.

Schools can also be classified according to their cultural typology. It has been argued that such classifications have served a useful purpose in terms of targeting support and funding towards those schools needing it most. Whether schools can be placed neatly into these cultural types is, however, another matter. The labels used for these cultural types have signified the variation of activity level in schools beginning with Rosenholtz's (1989) "stuck" or "moving" schools. These classifications are stark and emphasise extremes. However it is Hopkins et al's (1994) extension of these classifications which is even more helpful in the consideration of the differences between schools as learning organisations. They offer two continua to represent measures of effectiveness and ineffectiveness and the degree of dynamism in the improvement process. Such a typology may be useful for identifying which schools need to become more effective (Stoll & Fink, 1996). However, it also suggests schools are static in their status as a learning organisation.

Stoll and Fink argue that because the rapidly accelerating pace of change makes standing still impossible, schools are either getting better or they are getting worse. Schools need to keep pace with their changing contexts and make continual adjustments to their coping strategies. Figure 9 shows Stoll and Fink's typology for schools. For example, the ideal typology for a school as a learning organisation is "moving" where a school is currently effective but simultaneously seeks to improve. By contrast, a "sinking" school is ineffective and does not accept the need to change, believing that nothing can be done to rescue the situation. In between these extremes is the "struggling" school which while ineffective, at least wants to improve and can accept help, while a "cruising" school has reached a state of effectiveness and smugly rests on its laurels. A "strolling" school is neither particularly effective nor ineffective. It makes movement towards some kind of school improvement but at an inadequate rate to cope with the pace of change and in doing so is neither a disaster nor a success. It could be considered as an average school.

*Figure 9: Effectiveness and improvement typology of schools*



Stoll and Fink (1996, p.85)

Interview and observational data gathered from the case study schools has shown that these classifications fit sensibly with the reality of schools as learning organisations. While none of the four case study schools could be described as “sinking” schools, there were varying levels of meaningful learning activity occurring for all staff members. School D was the closest to a moving school. Admittedly it had experienced a chequered past and there was still a lot of work to do in all areas but there was a real sense of a shared mission to improve learning and student achievement. While this school was behind the other schools in its programme and policy development it had a very clear direction and considerable progress was being made. The other schools, while still complaining about heavy workloads, did not share the same urgency for improvement and were in more comfortable “strolling” and “cruising” states. Learning was certainly occurring in these schools but with less enthusiasm. The staff appeared tired but accepted what work was required to satisfy compliance requirements. While there were individuals in each of the schools making strong contributions to teacher learning and development programmes, the actual benefits of their work were largely disappointing. For example, at School A the staff development sessions were very well planned and well presented but the programme



was too full. As a result the teachers could not remember details of their learning from one session to the next, despite every effort from the facilitators to consolidate the material in their minds. Schools B and C shared the same dilemmas to a lesser degree.

Discussion of these cultural typologies highlights the importance of schools being able to build and sustain teacher commitment with positive attitudes to learning. It was very clear from the four case study schools that all of the schools faced further work in order to address the various internal conditions relating to the eight leadership practices for school improvement (Leithwood et al.,1998). So until schools realise that there is more to school improvement than satisfying the Ministry of Education requirements, gains from most professional development activities will continue to be incommensurate with the money, time and energy spent on them. Radical change is required.

### **Main themes for research and practice on teacher learning and development**

Themes are identified and discussed according to three topics. These are:

- Control of teachers' work
- Capacity building
- Teacher learning communities

#### *Control of teachers' work*

The most significant factor influencing teacher learning and development in schools is the role played by the Ministry of Education through its legislative controls, curriculum document mandates and deadlines for implementation. It is a requirement that both schools and individual teachers set goals and demonstrate how these are being met. Regular checks are made by the Education Review Office and school principals to ensure on-going professional development and quality of teaching occur. However, while audit, appraisal and attestation practices can signal unsatisfactory performance, they do not provide the support for teachers to make improvements to their practice. Time, money and energy would be better spent finding ways to help

teachers rather than continuing to persist with the making of judgements on their performance.

Data collected from the teacher interviews and observations of staff meetings at the case study schools confirm that teachers' work is controlled by such activities. It is significant that teachers are struggling to keep pace with the changes imposed by the Ministry of Education and resent not having sufficient time to address their own needs. For example, Diane, the principal at School D, mentioned the pressure created by a forthcoming visit from the Education Review Office saying:

*Professional development was guided by the last ERO report... they identified two areas for attention... and we knew they were coming in 10 weeks... Even though we didn't want to do science... ERO dictated that that was what they were coming back to see. So we just had to do it. We wanted to get on to the English component but this had to wait.*

These feelings were shared by other staff members at the same school. Janet commented,

*We've got so much that we have to get done. We haven't got to the stage of looking back because we've got all these pressures. You have to do this. You have to do that. You have to do that... and we just need to calm down I think.*

Similarly Craig was also critical of his school's inability to reflect on its practices and evaluate programmes and blamed this on the intensity of curriculum expectations.

At School C, the Education Review Office came under further criticism from Harriet who said:

*The learning needs of the staff are incidental really. It's more what is on the agenda for the [Ministry of Education] contract work and what is being offered and ERO. We are doing Maori because ERO mentioned it, not because there was a need for the staff or community.*

These comments confirm the power belonging to outside agencies (e.g., ERO and the Ministry of Education) over the nature of teachers' work and in particular the scope of professional learning and development. When such controls prevail, it is no wonder that teachers' energy is expended on compliance and little is left for them to address any learning agendas of their own. Controls tell teachers they are deficient and need

to be 'fixed'. Rather than being helpful, this is counterproductive for a learning profession. An alternative approach is long overdue.

Fullan (1999) also considers this approach to be ineffective, arguing that educational change and professional development are not rational processes which can be controlled. Human beings are not like factory objects to be moulded into set shapes. Hargreaves (1997) considers the management of change and development is more problematic and is more than "getting the knowledge and skill to the right people in the right way ...[because] plan[ning] changes in advance [suggests] a degree of detail that is simply inconsistent with reality" (p.31). These statements have particular relevance for those leading and managing change processes because they emphasise the danger of others continually taking charge of the process. My data also supports such arguments, particularly in terms of the Ministry of Education timeframes and arrangements for professional development programmes which do not allow sufficient time for teachers to absorb the material on offer.

### *Capacity building*

Another important theme is understanding how schools can develop their capacity for development. Hopkins and Harris (1997) argue that the effectiveness of school improvement efforts depend on differential strategies and types of intervention being used because schools have unique cultures, ways of working and are at different stages in their development. These differences have also been acknowledged by Huberman (1993) with his five career stages for teachers, and in comments reported in Chapter 5 by teachers and facilitators responding to the Ministry of Education curriculum contract evaluation surveys.

Hopkins and Harris draw attention to change efforts being mobilised at the level of the whole organisation and how these have tended to emphasise management systems or structures at the expense of human factors. They suggest that where the concerns of the teachers have been neglected, a school's capacity for development is underestimated. Their work with the "Improving the Quality of Education for All" (IQEA) project (refer to Chapter 4) offers a major contribution to our understandings of school improvement processes. This study, like the QLC experiment, demonstrates

the importance of addressing internal conditions at the same time as the curriculum or other priorities the school or learners have set themselves. These conditions are described as “the arrangements that enable [the school or learners] to get work done” (p.402) and provide a working definition of the development capacity of the school. These are stated as:

- a commitment to staff development
- practical efforts to involve staff, students and the community in school policies and decisions
- ‘transformational’ leadership approaches
- effective coordination strategies
- proper attention to the potential benefits of enquiry and reflection
- a commitment to collaborative planning activity.

These conditions relate to the same leadership practices forming the framework for analysis of the case study school interviews (Leithwood et al., 1998). In turn, the profiles developed for these schools highlight the uniqueness of their learning and development cultures. Such information also shows the necessity of varying the type and level of support available to each school so that schools can move from dependent to independent learning states in their quest for on-going school improvements. The QLC experience also met this need through its focus on addressing learning processes alongside content about the NEMP reports. This necessitated time being spent on raising teacher awareness of the importance of teacher talk about shared practice, observation and analysis.

### *Teacher learning communities*

Teacher learning communities have the potential to give teachers opportunities for more meaningful learning which can address both individual and collective needs. Hallinger (1999) maintains “collaboration around the work of teaching acts as a stimulus for individual and group learning” ... and “that teaching, though often an isolated activity, takes place in a social-organisational context” (p.6). In my intervention study, teachers sharing the QLC experience welcomed their new network because it offered stimulation through exchanges of practical wisdom and

opportunities for joint problem-solving around the classroom application of the NEMP report information. For these teachers, the QLC experience helped their learning because it was based around three important patterns of behaviour, namely; collegiality, experimentation and reaching out the knowledge base (Saphier & King, 1985). Katrina indicated the value of group learning offered by the QLC experience when she said, “it’s really lonely plugging on day after day... [I liked] other people’s ideas of things they had done, things that had worked for them”. Regular meetings also helped her to keep learning because she had a commitment to help the other members of the circle.

Teacher support for one another is important as well as being able to admit mistakes and learn from them. However, finding a way forward is not easy. Process skills are needed to analyse teaching practices. Macbeath and Mortimore (2001) argue that if schools are to be described as learning organisations, then they need “to be more confident in the use of their own and other data, more self-critical and more skilled in the use of research and evaluation tools” (p.2). This is where professional development energies are needed rather than in the placement of further controls on teachers’ work. The learning organisation approach builds teacher capacity for learning and school improvement as Hargreaves (1997) maintains:

*Learning organisations not only create a climate for risk-taking, but also build processes into organisational life that foster reflection, joint exchange of information, and testing of new ideas (p.7).*

### **Gaps**

Three gaps are evident in the educational leadership literature pertaining to the professional learning of teachers. These are:

- Models designed to enhance teachers as learners
- Recognition of teachers as leaders
- Strategies for improvement

The first gap relates to inadequacy of current approaches to professional development (e.g., individual, whole school and lead teacher). Despite the trialing of various approaches, no satisfactory model has been found. Elmore and Burney (1999) argue that while we know a good deal about the characteristics of good professional development, we know a good deal less about how to organise successful professional development so that it improves teacher and classroom learning. While schools are recognised as having unique cultures and ways of thinking and working, professional development programmes have not accommodated these differences in their planning and delivery.

The second gap is the lack of focus on teachers as leaders in the literature on the management of change and professional development. Typically, leadership texts discuss leadership in terms of the principals' roles and sometimes their deputies but not teachers. Not only has this been short-sighted reporting but also it devalues the contributions made by those working closest to the action in classrooms. This is a serious omission because principals and their deputies only survive by delegating leadership responsibilities to others. Schools must have leaders at all levels. All deserve nurturing and their contributions recognised in the research literature.

A third gap concerns the lack of progress made in addressing the issue of how schools and teachers might improve their practices. While numerous lists of characteristics for effective schools have been created as well as cultural typologies, these have not made a difference to school performance. Schools are still struggling to discover mechanisms or approaches which would help them to be more successful and plan for improvements with confidence. While many recognise that schools are unique and require different approaches to improvement, just how this can be realised in practice is another matter. Currently a serious omission in professional development programmes is the lack of time devoted to understanding the forces for change and the reasons for resistance amongst staff. Teachers' attitudes and feelings need acknowledgement alongside the introduction of new learning if they are to become comfortable with the directions of a change project.

My study has demonstrated that current provisions of teacher learning remain fraught with difficulties. Data collected from the questionnaires, teacher interviews and staff

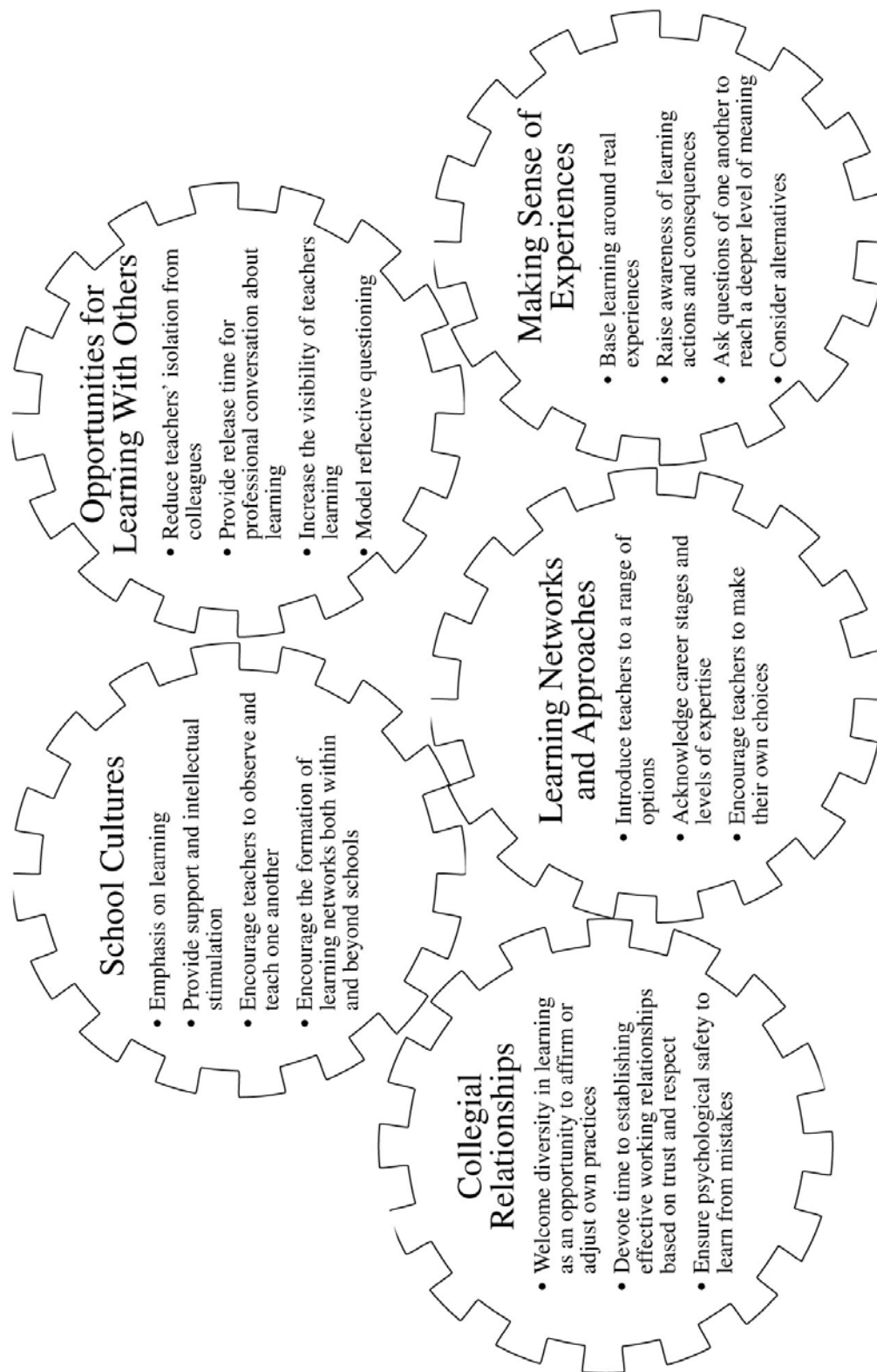
meeting observations have shown that many teachers are overwhelmed with the amount of learning expected of them, cannot retain the information and feel guilty that they are unable to keep pace with what is required. This reality suggests that urgent attention be given to creating more productive learning opportunities for teachers. The QLC has been shown to be a worthwhile approach able to offer teachers a better quality of learning. It has confronted its participants with the realisation that many of their learning experiences to date have produced a lower quality of learning and shown them how they can direct the content and pace of their learning. However, this is only possible when schools can support this way of working by providing the necessary time and teacher release.

The reality of uncertain environments marked by constant change is that there are no ready answers for school improvement on a large scale. Since each school has its own unique culture, a different set of strategies will be required. While the learning content may be similar, it is the processes and organisational supports for that learning which will make the difference to school improvements. The following section develops a set of principles to guide future practices in teacher learning and development.

### ***Conceptualising teacher learning and development***

I have identified five principles which I believe underpin effective teacher learning and development. These principles are integrally related to each other and can be represented as five interconnecting cogs (see Figure 10). These include school cultures which value learning, opportunities for learning with others, collegial relationships, learning networks and approaches and making sense of teachers' experiences.

**Figure 10: Conceptualising Teacher Learning and Development**





The success of teacher learning and development rests on *school cultures* which value learning. Barth (1990) claims the “school need not merely be a place where there are big people who are learned and little people who are learners” (p.162). For him a good school “is a place where everyone is teaching and everyone is learning—simultaneously under the same roof” (ibid). This view matches the intent of a learning community and the QLC approach used in this thesis, where regardless of status, everyone is accepted as a learner, teacher and student alike.

However, just saying that everyone is accepted as a learner is not enough to ensure this is reflected in reality. *Opportunities for learning with others* need to be deliberately created and structured into schools’ programmes because they are too important to be left to chance encounters. Learning can motivate others when it is shared with enthusiasm. In today’s climate of constant change it is even more difficult to enthruse others to engage in learning, because time is a precious commodity and learning agendas seem to be endless, especially those imposed on teachers with set deadlines for implementation.

Teachers are denied a valuable source of learning if they remain in isolation from their colleagues. Even when teachers realise that their colleagues may have different ways of teaching, this diversity can serve as a reason to search one’s own practice in order to justify or amend existing ways of working. Teachers who value interactions with their colleagues can be helped to reflect on their work and also have a source of support for improving their practice.

*Collegial relationships* matter for quality learning. When schools value collegial ways of working, “every teacher is a staff developer for every other teacher” (Barth, 1990, p.54). Collegial relationships depend on the establishment of trust and respect between learners which develops over time. Support is crucial to learning and this extends to being able to make mistakes without fear of failure. Such psychological safety is a prerequisite for further inquiry and reflection on practice which can lead to improvement plans being made.

As learners, teachers may also need to be introduced to a range of *learning networks and approaches* that can promote meaningful interactions with their colleagues. A wider choice of learning networks and approaches may be needed to suit the varying needs and expertise of teachers at different points in their careers both within and beyond schools. For example, peer coaching may offer a suitable structure for working closely with a colleague. Similarly, the critical friend or opportunity to participate in a quality learning circle or a collaborative research project may also serve a useful purpose. The common element underpinning each of these approaches is a plea for teachers to choose their preferred way of learning alongside colleagues rather than just accepting what and how others decide they should learn. Garmston and Wellman (1998) even go as far as recommending the modelling of seven ways of talking to encourage learners to be truly reciprocal in developing their knowledge about the teaching and learning process.

Teachers also need to *make sense of their experiences*. This is in part an exercise in consciousness raising, where teachers as learners are helped to consider what it is they are doing, what it means, how it came to be this way and then how they might do things differently (Smyth, 1989). While some teachers can ask these questions of themselves, others benefit from colleagues' modelling.

### **Reflections on methodological issues**

While the results of my survey questionnaire governed the direction of my thesis and necessitated a change of direction, I am confident that my decision to embark on an intervention study has been worthwhile. I believe that this has enabled me to conceptualise teacher learning and development in a way that gives recognition to the very different circumstances and conditions under which schools and their leaders operate. My conceptualisation of the field draws attention to the importance of a shared commitment towards learning, the importance of collaborative and collegial relationships, and a range of learning networks and approaches which all serve to make greater sense of the opportunities available for learning.

In adopting an interventionist stance, I faced considerable risks when I introduced the quality learning circle approach to the eight teachers. While this role of working with

teachers came naturally to me as a professional teacher educator of 16 years standing, I had to be very careful that my actions would not make the group even more dependent on me for their learning. This was particularly challenging, as the teachers were accustomed to strong leadership and a clear direction for their learning. The QLC was quite different because it was based on shared leadership with the teachers acting as equal learning partners determining the focus and direction for their study of the NEMP reports. I was acutely aware that participation on my part could endanger the way the QLC might operate, turning its open ended journeying into one that was determined by my suggestions.

My response to this dilemma was to ensure that all my actions reinforced the message that it was the teachers themselves who would be making decisions about the nature and direction of their learning. My role was one of facilitating discussion, paraphrasing suggestions and providing time for this exchange of ideas. It was in this way that the principle of reciprocity influenced all my actions and shaped the way we worked together. This was also apparent in the interviewing of the QLC teachers. My choice of semi-structured interviews allowed me to check on the issues that were both helping and hindering learning for each individual and for the circle as a collective entity. Thus each interview round informed the next stage of development in the quality learning experience and our use of the time we spent together.

One area about which I had the least control was their ability to take charge of their learning agendas and engage in reflective practice. While I could certainly create an opportunity for such activity, I was dependent on the teachers being willing and able to act on this reflection in and on their practice. This difficulty is recognised by Day (1999) who claims two problems are associated with the notion of teachers as inquirers. These problems also have particular relevance for the quality learning experience. Day argues that inquiring into one's own practice requires a certain measure of self-confrontation and depends on the extent to which an individual can engage in this activity. Then there is the issue of whether teachers have the ability to cope with the consequences of that self-confrontation by themselves. Furthermore Day writes:

*If teachers are to extend their knowledge about practice over a career, (and thus gain the possibility of increasing their professional effectiveness), they will need to engage alone and with others in different kinds of reflection on both their own thinking, the values which underpin this and the contexts in which they work. To do this they will need intellectual and affective support. They will need to be both individual and collective inquirers (p.26).*

It was this transition from certainty to uncertainty which I have regarded as being particularly problematic for teachers' learning and development. I have argued that it is difficult for teachers to cope with the transition from an almost total dependence on others to determine the scope of learning to one which encourages them to be more independent and autonomous in their learning. While arguing that there is considerable potential for the quality learning circle approach to improve teachers' learning and development, I am less confident that this is possible without the help of an outsider with the process skills to enable teachers to develop the necessary capacity and capability to help themselves in the future. Teachers need to know they can help themselves, but whether they can achieve this without the help of outside assistance is questionable. Thus the value of the quality learning circle is its provision of a structure which creates an opportunity and time for joint reflection and inquiry of teachers' professional practice. I have shown that teachers clearly benefit from interactions about their work as teachers.

The remaining method of data gathering included case studies which involved the collection of observational and interview data from four schools. Observational data was gathered from my attendance at staff meetings over two school terms. These meetings were planned around my work schedule and the schools giving me details and access to their staff meeting schedules. Since it was neither possible nor practicable to attend every meeting, my data was limited to snapshots of staff meetings over a period of time. Ideally, I would have liked to have spent more time in schools and observed a broader range of meetings across all of the schools. My more intense observations at School A showed that of all the different types of meetings schools had, it was the whole school staff meeting which best served my thesis topic. Compromises were necessary in my data collection. I had to balance my schedule around topics which would reveal a variety of approach and at the same time show how each school used its staff development time. In order to maximise my time observing at the staff meetings, I asked the principals to outline the focus for each

staff meeting so that I could be confident that my decision to attend would indeed be worthwhile for my data gathering. Having gained this information, I then had to decide which school's meeting I would attend on a particular day. Typically I had to make my choice from several schools' meetings because whole staff meetings were always scheduled for Mondays or Tuesdays. My data gathering was therefore limited to the sessions I attended and my memory to record significant features once I had left the schools. I was satisfied that I had no alternative but to write my notes up after the meetings because had I drawn attention to my presence, the validity of the observation may have been compromised.

In addition to the observations of meetings, interviews were held with 4-5 teachers and their principals at each of the four schools to capture individual teacher's experiences and then compare these one with another. While the possibility of reaching a total consensus on the rating scale amongst teachers was most unlikely, the actual discrepancies in the ratings signal a need to view such diverse perceptions as reflective of differing ages and stages and as opportunities for discussion about improving the effectiveness of schools as learning organisations. In particular, it is important that schools find ways to structure support so that teachers' learning and development can be enhanced.

On reflection, I had slight misgivings about asking teachers to place their perceptions on a rating scale. This required a lot of discussion in the interview situation to get the teachers to make their ratings. However, I am reasonably confident that the discussion surrounding the ratings did ensure a valid response was gained from all of the teachers and their principals. This was confirmed by my interactions with the principals and the QLC teachers and my association with them as a researcher over a longer period of time and my own observations of teacher learning experiences within the schools.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

My research study has tracked the learning experiences of a group of Christchurch teachers to highlight the difficulties they have faced as learners in a period of continuous change. I have introduced a new element into the study of teacher learning and development by establishing a learning community for teachers which has

included membership from eight different schools rather than being restricted to one school.

This study, despite its challenge and expense of bringing together a very diverse group of teachers has shown that learning communities are important for teacher learning. Interview data has shown that as individual learners, teachers can only get so far without the collective wisdom of colleagues and significant others to take them to the next step. This also highlights the need for professional conversations to provide opportunities for questions to be raised and concerns discussed as well as affirmation of existing practice. When this happens teachers' report greater satisfaction and commitment to their learning. This view supports Adair's (1986) three circle model and also Bell and Gilbert's (1993) overview of teacher development which similarly argue that teachers' learning must extend beyond a task focus to meet teachers' social, and personal development needs at the same time. While professional development has traditionally focussed on what teachers need to know and do and supplied programme ideas and opportunities for teachers to try out new ideas, this has been a short-term measure. Top-down initiatives have typically not shared the same success as those which have been able to combine initiatives planned from the local level. My findings have shown that for sustained learning, teachers must combine their own learning needs alongside mandates for external reform. This has also been mentioned in the school effectiveness research studies reported in Chapter 4 (e.g., Rand Change Agent Study, Halton and IQEA projects) which highlight the success of approaches which empower those at the local level to be change agents rather than as victims of imposed change.

Collaborative ways of relating to other teachers present a further, often forgotten, dimension of teachers' learning. This is about teachers needing each other and gaining support and reassurance from the company of other learners. While teachers joining the QLC had initially been attracted to the group because it offered a new network, it was not until they experienced the depth of their QLC professional conversations that they realised how disappointing their own schools' offerings were. They considered that regular sharing with other learners in the QLC gave them the support they needed to develop as learners. Once they had established a rapport and trust within the QLC, new risks were taken which allowed even bolder experimentation with new

approaches, resources and ideas. This confirms Argyris and Schon's notion of double loop learning where professional conversations create a framework for reflection both on and in practice. It also supports two elements from Joyce and Shower's model of staff development, namely the need for feedback and follow-through support to show that teachers benefit from on-going support which is centered in practice. While Joyce and Shower's model also included the elements of demonstration and practice, the QLC teachers felt that classroom observations were not absolutely essential, provided that teachers talked and shared examples of children's work which then became a focus for discussion.

I argue that the requirements for quality teacher learning should not be restricted to one model. Rather what is needed is an awareness of the principles that guide effective teacher learning and development. These include accepting a menu of approaches which would acknowledge schools' flexibility of circumstance and experience levels of teachers. A single approach to teachers' professional development, while meeting some teachers' needs, will frustrate others. Time for teachers' learning should not be wasted for the sake of coverage, quality is also important.

If teachers are to realise the benefit of professional dialogue, they also need to see each other as equal partners in their learning. This requires a different way of working, where agendas are not determined by others but are developed by the teachers themselves. Where schools can create the conditions that make it possible for teachers to connect and interact, they will be more likely to be collaborative and collegial.

While much of my study confirms the international literature, practices in New Zealand have seemingly ignored these messages. I consider that my efforts to explore teacher learning and development within the New Zealand context have served a very valuable purpose in attempting to understand why New Zealand has not realised the messages conveyed in the international literature on teacher learning and development. The QLC has been an extremely effective approach for teacher learning and development for a number of reasons. One of these is that the QLC teachers have been confronted with the notion that their schools' existing practices have not resulted

in high quality learning outcomes for those involved. As an alternative approach the QLC has provided a much deeper and more satisfying learning experience. The next challenge is how to convince other teachers that their current learning and development could similarly be improved if they adopted or were offered an approach like the QLC.

### *Challenges*

My study has highlighted a number of challenges which schools and those leading teachers' professional development would be wise to consider if they are serious about providing high quality learning experiences for teachers. Firstly, the QLC has enhanced the quality of learning outcomes for the teachers participating in my study. As an approach, the QLC has demonstrated that learning can be more satisfying and beneficial when conscious efforts are made to address the principles that underpin effective learning and development. The QLC approach has shown these teachers that there is more to learning than merely acquiring new knowledge. Learning is enhanced when it is accompanied by regular opportunities for teachers to talk, observe and learn from one another. This approach therefore challenges schools to make time and funding available for teacher release so that teachers can engage in productive and professional dialogue about the craft of teaching.

Secondly, the QLC approach challenges the notion of teachers' dependency on others to decide both what and how they will learn. As a vehicle for enhancing teachers' capacity and capability, the QLC has considerable potential because it supports teachers to inquire and reflect on their practice with the help of their colleagues. This support assists teachers to refocus their work with clearer learning purposes in mind.

Thirdly, the QLC approach is an acknowledgement that leadership exists across all levels of the school and teachers can be leaders for one another. However, it cannot be assumed that teachers automatically possess the necessary leadership skills for this role of supporting their colleagues' learning. Successful leadership extends beyond the introduction of new learning content to teachers and accommodates the unique needs, attitudes and skills of teachers. Thus, teacher leaders who understand the principles of adult learning, management of change and school improvement theories



are better equipped for their leadership roles. Schools also need to encourage teachers to develop this knowledge and skill base by supporting study in educational leadership courses. Schools should not be thinking that they can rely on teachers' initial teacher education qualifications to equip them for teacher leadership roles as well. Classroom teaching and leadership require different sets of skills and knowledge.

Evidence gathered in this study has clearly demonstrated the strength of alternative learning possibilities provided by initiatives such as the QLC which addresses the key principles articulated in Figure 10. While it is tempting for ease of management to continue treating teachers as 'empty vessels' to be filled with new knowledge, this is not desirable for the long-term quality and morale of teaching. Teachers must want to learn of their own accord throughout their careers if they are to remain as committed and enthusiastic teachers. While teachers can be guided by others in their choice of learning experiences, dependence on others should not dominate their learning agendas. Teachers must aim to be agents of change who share the philosophy of:

*Ma te mohio ka ora  
Te ora ka mohio*

*Through learning there is life  
Through life there is learning.*



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## Appendix A

### Initial Questionnaire (August 1998)

#### Biographical Details

What position do you hold in the school?

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

- Year 4 classroom teacher .....
- Year 8 classroom teacher .....
- Deputy Principal.....
- Assistant Principal.....
- Senior teacher with responsibility for .....   
curriculum, staff development or assessment

#### Access to the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) Reports

##### 1 Which NEMP reports have you seen in your school?

*Please tick the boxes for the reports you have seen*

- 1995 Science .....
- Art.....
- Graphs, Tables and Maps .....
- 1996 Reading and Speaking.....
- Technology.....
- Music.....
- 1997 Mathematics .....
- Social Studies .....
- Information Skills.....
- I have not seen any of the reports

**2 How did you come to learn/know about NEMP reports in your school?**

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

The principal or another staff member .....   
gave me one of the reports to read

We were told about it in a staff meeting .....

I have seen it in the staff room.....

I have read about it in the newspaper  
and in my professional reading.....

Our school was sampled for testing .....   
and we received information material

I have been involved as a teacher .....   
administrator/marker/task designer for NEMP

I have talked to other teachers who .....   
have been involved with the project

I don't know anything about the reports.....

Additional Comments:

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**3 Where would you expect to find the reports if you wanted to read them?**

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

In the principal's office.....

In the staff resource room .....

Curriculum leaders hold their curriculum report.....

Don't know .....

Other .....

**Ways in which the NEMP reports have been used**

**4 How have the NEMP reports been used in your school?**

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

Given to individual teachers to.....   
 preview and then report to staff

Someone on the staff led a workshop.....   
 or meeting on the results

We have had a detailed working through.....   
 of the NEMP report(s), e.g., teacher only day

The summaries in the Forum Comments were.....   
 handed out to staff and we discussed them

The reports have not been discussed by staff.....

Other (*please specify*)

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**5 The NEMP reports include a range of information regarding assessment ideas, achievements of sub groups, assessment techniques and ideas for marking.**

**Have you used any of the ideas mentioned in any of the NEMP reports?**

Yes

No

If yes, please provide further details about:

5.1 The *content* you have used, e.g., attitude surveys or actual assessment tasks.

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- 5.2 The *assessment techniques* you have used. For example, video to record children's performances, assessments of small groups and individuals

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## 6 Barriers to Learning

**The NEMP reports address barriers to learning, such as, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic difference, resources and teacher expertise.**

- 6.1 Please list any changes you have already made to your programme planning and delivery as a consequence of the NEMP reports

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- 6.2 Please list any changes you would like to make in the future

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**Impact of the Report**

**7 What is the most significant initiative you or your school has taken in relation to any of the NEMP reports?**

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**8 How would you like to see the NEMP reports being used to improve assessment practices in schools?**

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## Further Contact

Please indicate whether or not you would be willing for me to contact you to discuss the impact of the NEMP reports on assessment practices and staff development in your school.

Yes

No

If yes, please provide your name, plus the name and address of your current school.

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*Many thanks indeed for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire*

**Appendix B**  
**Questionnaire (August 2000)**  
**Biographical Details**

**What position do you hold in the school?**

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

- Year 4 classroom teacher .....
- Year 8 classroom teacher .....
- Deputy Principal.....
- Assistant Principal.....
- Senior teacher with responsibility for .....   
 curriculum, staff development or assessment

**Access to the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) Reports**

**1 Which NEMP reports have you seen in your school?**

*Please tick the boxes for the reports you have seen*

- 1995 Science .....
- Art.....
- Graphs, Tables and Maps .....
- 1996..... Reading and Speaking.....
- Technology .....
- Music.....
- 1997 Mathematics .....
- Social Studies .....
- Information Skills.....
- 1998 Writing.....
- Listening and Speaking .....
- Health and Physical Education .....
- 1999 Science.....
- Art.....
- Graphs, maps and tables .....
- I have not seen any of the reports .....

**2 How did you come to learn/know about NEMP reports in your school?**

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

The principal or another staff member .....   
gave me one of the reports to read

We were told about it in a staff meeting.....

I have seen the reports in the staff room.....

I have read the Forum Comment .....

I have read about it in the newspaper .....   
or in my professional reading

Our school was sampled for testing .....   
and we received information material

I have been involved as a teacher .....   
administrator/marker/task designer for NEMP

I have talked to other teachers who .....   
have been involved with the project

I attended the national regional assessment seminar in Christchurch .....   
(2-4 July) and learnt about the NEMP programme and its resources

I don't know anything about the reports.....

Additional Comments:

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**3 Where would you expect to find the reports if you wanted to read them in your school?**

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

In the principal's office.....

In the staff resource room.....

Curriculum leaders hold their curriculum report.....

Our school ordered a copy for each teacher. There is one in each classroom

Don't know .....

Other .....

## Ways in which the NEMP reports have been used

### 4 How have the NEMP reports been used in your school?

*Please tick any boxes which are relevant*

Given to individual teachers to .....   
 preview and then report to staff

Someone on the staff led a workshop .....   
 or meeting on the results

We have had a detailed working through .....   
 of the NEMP report(s), e.g., teacher only day

The summaries in the Forum Comments were .....   
 handed out to staff and we discussed them

We have incorporated NEMP assessment in our .....   
 school wide assessments

The reports have not been discussed by staff .....

Other (*please specify*)

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### 5 The NEMP reports include a range of information regarding assessment ideas, achievements of sub groups, assessment techniques and ideas for marking.

**Have you used any of the ideas mentioned in any of the NEMP reports?**

Yes

No

If yes, please provide further details about:

5.1 What have you done with any *assessment ideas* so far? (For example, attitude surveys, or actual assessment activities)

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5.2 What you would like to do with *assessment ideas* in the future?

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5.3 What you have done with the *results of any sub groups*, e.g. gender, Māori/ non Māori, socio-economic differences so far?

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5.4 What you would like to do in the future with the *results of any of the sub groups*?

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5.5 What you have done with the *assessment techniques* mentioned in the reports so far, e.g., one to one interviews, small group assessments, or video recording of children's performances?

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5.6 What you would like to do with the *assessment techniques* in the future?

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5.7 What you have done with any of the *ideas for marking* so far?

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5.8 What you would like to do with any of the *ideas for marking* in the future?

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### **Impact of the Reports**

6 What is the most significant initiative you or your school has taken in relation to any of the NEMP reports?

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- 7 How would you like to see the NEMP reports being used to improve assessment practices in your school?

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- 8 What do you think would help schools/teachers to make further use of the NEMP reports?

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### **Professional Development**

- 7 Think about the best professional development experiences you have had in your school. Why were they particularly successful?

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- 8 How have you used information from professional development sessions to enhance your classroom programme? (Please give an example)

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*Many thanks indeed for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire*

**Please return by 15 September 2000 using pre-paid envelopes. Thank you.**





## **Appendix C**

### **QLC Interviews February-March 1999**

This research has a general theme of professional development and a more specific context with the NEMP reports on the assessment tasks used in national monitoring.

#### **NEMP**

- 1 How familiar are you with the NEMP tasks and reports now?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2 Tell me about any NEMP ideas/tasks you have tried or adapted in your classroom (attitude surveys, marking criteria, etc.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3 Have you hear about ways in which other teachers have used the NEMP material?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4 Has your staff development programme included any focus on NEMP? If so, tell me about it.

#### **School Staff Development**

- 5 What are the best features of your school's staff development programme?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6 What would you like to see improved/changed about the staff development programme?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 7 Tell me about any frustrations you have about staff development.

- 8 What do you think are the components of an ideal staff development programme (support, feedback, reflection)?
- 9 How have you dealt with managing all the curriculum change on a personal level?
- 10 How do you personally keep up to date with teaching techniques or content in your teaching programme?
- 11 What have you learnt about managing changes in schools?
- 12 Have you any suggestions about how to get whole schools using or even reading the NEMP reports?
- 13 Do you have any ideas for getting individual teachers using the NEMP ideas?
- 14 Do you have any ideas for helping principals use the NEMP material?
- 15 What is your particular curriculum strength? How do you currently assess in that area and its related essential skills areas?
- 16 What would you hope to get out of this project?

## **Appendix D**

### **QLC Interviews June 1999**

#### **Report Familiarity and School Visits**

- 1 How have the QLC meetings helped you become more familiar with the NEMP reports?
- 2 What have you discovered so far about your own personal development needs through the QLC?
- 3 How has the QLC experience differed from your previous experiences of professional development?
- 4 In what ways are you personally making use of the NEMP reports?
- 5 Tell me about any sharing of your NEMP learning with other teachers?
- 6 What would help you to make even better use of the NEMP reports for your teaching and classroom assessment?
- 7 What have been the benefits of the school visits?
- 8 How did you use the school visit time?
- 9 What would you like to do with the next school visit?
- 10 Any suggestions for the QLC sessions/school visits?

## **Appendix E**

### **QLC interviews October-November 1999**

#### **Disseminating NEMP at own School**

- 1 Tell me about any recent sharing of the NEMP reports you have done with teachers at this school?
- 2 What has worked well when you have disseminated the NEMP reports?
- 3 What have been some of the barriers to your dissemination of NEMP at the school?

#### **Principal's Role in Staff Development**

- 4 What part does your principal play in staff development for teachers at this school? (Tease out involvement at three levels – whole staff, syndicate, individual in aspects of managing, planning and involvement)
- 5 How important is the principal's role in the staff development programme?
- 6 How does the principal know what the needs for staff development are?
- 7 Who contributes to the shaping of the staff development programme each year?

#### **Extension of the QLC Model at your School**

- 8 With your continued access to the NEMP resources next year, how might you work with other teachers to disseminate the NEMP reports and assessment practices?
- 9 How might you modify the QLC model for working with teachers at your school?
- 10 Do you see ways that classroom visits could be included in your model?
- 11 Do you consider that the QLC model is a viable professional development model for your school, and its ways of working? State why/why not?

## **Appendix F**

### **Interviews with Principals      September-October 1999**

#### **Staff Development – General**

- 1      Can you tell me about a staff development session which worked particularly well in this school? What do you think contributed to its success?
  
- 2      How do you manage whole school staff development at this school?
  
- 3      What has been successful/frustrating about implementing a whole school staff development programme for teachers?

#### **Principal's Role in Staff Development**

- 4      What is your current role in this school's staff development programme? (Tease out the different levels, e.g., whole school, syndicate and individual)
  
- 5      How important is it that a principal attends and participates in the school's staff development programme? Say why/why not.
  
- 6      In what other ways do you support the professional development of individual staff members?

#### **The National Education Monitoring Project**

- 7      In what ways do you think your staff member . . . . . has benefited from her involvement in my research study?
  
- 8      In what ways have other teachers at your school benefited from . . . . . 's involvement in my research project?
  
- 9      Do you think there would have been a better way for . . . . . to disseminate the NEMP reports to teachers at this school?
  
- 10     Next year, I would like to continue supporting . . . . . 's work with the National Education Monitoring reports with teachers from within this school. Would you be interested in more of your teachers working with . . . . . and having access to the NEMP resources on a regular basis? This support would not include the teacher release component which has been available this year and . . . . . would not be required to attend  

meetings.



## Appendix G

### A framework for analysing organisational learning in schools.

This framework consists of five sets of ideas and their relationships, which, together, encompass an explanation for how and why organisational learning occurs and what its consequences are.

#### 1 *The stimulus for learning*

- Q: What sorts of internal dispositions (on the part of individuals) or external events trigger organisational learning?
- Q: Are policy initiatives among these triggering events?
- Q: How do such 'official' initiatives compare with other types of initiatives in their power to stimulate organisational learning?

#### 2 *Organisational Processes*

- Q: What individual and collective processes account for organisational learning?
- Q: How can collective and individual processes be distinguished?

#### 3 *Out-of-school conditions*

- Q: What sorts of conditions outside schools have a bearing on organisational learning in schools?

#### 4 *School conditions*

- Q: What do schools look like when behaving like learning organisations?
- Q: What is it about a school's vision, culture, structure, strategies, policies and resources which gives rise to or detracts from organisational learning?

#### 5 *School leadership*

- Q: What sorts of leadership practices on the part of school administrators contribute significantly to organisational learning and to the conditions which foster organisational learning?

#### 6 *Outcomes*

- Q: What individual and collective understandings, skills, commitments, and overt practices result from organisational learning in schools?

Ref: Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R. (1998). Leadership and other conditions. In K, Leithwood., & K.S. Louis. (Eds.) *Organisational learning in schools*. Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger, p.69.





## Appendix H

### Interview Questions for Case Study Schools – October 2000

#### Rating Scale:

- |    | <i>Rarely</i>   | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>Often</i> | <i>Nearly Always</i> |
|----|---|------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| 1  | In this school, we talk about how we can improve the quality of our teaching.   |                  |              |                      |
| 2  | There is an expectation that we will improve student learning.  |                  |              |                      |
| 3  | Teachers are expected to be active learners and maintain high performance standards   |                  |              |                      |
| 4  | Professional development sessions include time for critical reflection of our daily work.   |                  |              |                      |
| 5  | We learn from other teachers by observing others teach in their classrooms.   |                  |              |                      |
| 6  | All staff share in the planning and delivery of professional development sessions.  |                  |              |                      |
| 7  | Teachers are actively encouraged to be leaders of professional development for other staff.   |                  |              |                      |
| 8  | Support is provided for teachers who lead professional development sessions for other staff.  |                  |              |                      |
| 9  | The whole staff is clear about the purpose and direction of our learning.   |                  |              |                      |
| 10 | We achieve our goals by working together in pairs or teams.   |                  |              |                      |
| 11 | Members of the senior management team make time to help teachers on an individual basis.  |                  |              |                      |
| 12 | The learning needs of staff are assessed before professional development sessions are planned and delivered.                                  |                  |              |                      |
| 13 | Teachers are able to initiate topics for further professional development of the school's staff.  |                  |              |                      |
| 14 | Professional development is regularly evaluated and alterations are made to ensure that the programme has relevance for classroom application |                  |              |                      |
| 15 | Teachers show a positive attitude towards engaging in professional development learning at this school.                                       |                  |              |                      |
| 16 | Teachers are enthusiastic about the learning gains from professional development sessions.  |                  |              |                      |
| 17 | As an individual, I am enthusiastic about the learning opportunities offered through the school's professional development programme.         |                  |              |                      |
| 18 | The professional development programme has improved my teaching skills.   |                  |              |                      |

**Additional Questions:**

- 19 What currently frustrates you about the professional development in this school?
  
- 20 What would you like to see changed or improved in the provision of professional development?
  
- 21 How much do you rely on the professional development programme to keep you up to date with new documents, approaches and knowledge?
  
- 22 What professional development have you personally been involved in this year?
  
- 23 What do you consider works particularly well for the professional development of teachers in this school?



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