PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT EXPERIENCES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THEIR THIRD TO FIFTH YEAR OF PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Professional learning concerns teachers developing new ideas, skills and competencies that are associated with nationwide reforms, school wide reforms or improvement within the classroom. This study explored third to fifth year primary school teachers' experiences of support for professional learning, the nature of these experiences and how particular practices and processes were adopted to meet these teachers' learning needs.

A qualitative methodology was employed for this research, focusing on three New Zealand primary schools. Across the three data locations, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with six learning facilitators, and focus group discussions were carried out with twelve teachers who were in their third to fifth year of teaching. Performance management document analysis was also conducted at each of the case study schools.

The major findings from this study indicate that no specific programmes of support were experienced or required for teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching, as whole school systems of professional learning, embedded within each school learning culture satisfied these teachers' support needs. Third to fifth year teachers' experiences of support for professional learning varied between schools. Variations concerned the nature of school cultures, the quality of working relationships and the effectiveness of professional learning practices. The findings imply that experiences of support for professional learning are strongly linked to the development of whole school cultures of learning, where practices and processes promote teacher agency, where school vision and values are co-constructed, valued and modelled, where there is genuine inquiry into student learning and teaching practice, and where working environments are collegial. Such cultures are likely to sustain improved student outcomes through supporting teachers' professional learning.

It is concluded that support for third to fifth year teachers' professional learning takes place in the zone where effective practice, school culture and relationships overlap and
inter-relate. The recommendations made from this study have definite implications for school principals and senior leaders that include modelling and reviewing a shared school vision and shared school values, developing third to fifth year teachers’ leadership capabilities and co-constructing processes for reflective teaching and genuine inquiry into student learning.
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INTRODUCTION

A number of significant transitions take place throughout a primary school teacher's career. These include the transition from the place of study to the place of work, and the transition from provisional registration or Beginning Teacher (BT) to Fully Registered Teacher (FRT). Such transitions often involve challenges for these teachers that have the potential to influence the quality of their teaching and consequently the quality of student learning (Cameron, 2007; Ferguson-Patrick, 2011). The support offered to teachers through these challenging transition periods can influence both student outcomes and teacher retention. As Cameron (2007) states, the induction of Beginning Teachers (BTs) is of critical importance for the retention of teachers as well as for the development of quality teachers.

Currently, primary schools in New Zealand receive government funding to support BTs in overcoming the challenges associated with the transition from their place of study to their place of work. Schools receive staffing of 0.2 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for the teacher’s first year and 0.1 FTE for the teacher’s second year. Each school determines the allocation of staffing which should be targeted towards providing support and guidance for the BT. In addition, BTs are assigned a Tutor Teacher to act as a mentor through the whole of their provisional registration period. It has been widely documented that without support for continued professional learning, BTs would struggle to meet the demands of the workplace and the varied needs of their students (Ferguson-Patrick, 2011; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007).

Current guidelines for the induction of BTs into primary and intermediate schools are built upon the processes and practices associated with mentoring. The guidelines were developed through the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) research programme
Learning to Teach (2007-2008), and are informed by international expertise and discussion with professional groups, and a two-year national pilot programme. The aim of the programme is to assist in the provision of nationally consistent, high quality and comprehensive support for BTs (NZTC, 2011). The experiences of BTs and their effective induction into the workplace has been the focus of much research concerning support for teachers' professional learning (Aitken, Ferguson, McGrath, Piggot-Irvine & Ritchie, 2008; Cameron, 2007). Importantly however, much less focus has been given to the support that these teachers receive once the BT programmes have finished (that is, from their third year of teaching), as this is when these teachers make their next significant transition from BT to FRT.

The professional learning needs of these newly registered teachers are likely to differ from those of BTs. Feiman-Nemser (2001) states that the post-induction period is a critical time for teachers to develop their repertoire in all areas of teaching, as they have developed their contextualised knowledge of students and are therefore in a good position to build and refine both their curriculum and pedagogical knowledge. The support needs of these teachers are also likely to differ from those of BTs, as these teachers should feel more comfortable having someone observe their teaching, be open to working on more critical problems, invite deeper inquiry and technique and seek opportunities to participate more fully in the school community (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

In the same way that schools determine the allocation of resources and the nature of the support programmes for BTs, continued support for these teachers' professional learning beyond their full registration becomes largely dependent upon the processes and practices determined by the school. It is not known in what ways and to what extent these teachers continue to be supported with their professional learning or how this could be improved. This thesis seeks to answer three research questions concerning the support experiences of primary school teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching and add to the knowledge base in this area.
RATIONALE

Support for professional learning

Within school systems it is teaching that has the greatest influence on student outcomes. In order to exercise this influence effectively, teachers need opportunities to refine their skills and deepen their understandings through professional learning. A particularly urgent issue facing New Zealand education is the need to promote teacher learning opportunities in ways that impact on student outcomes (Timperley et al., 2007).

Conventional approaches to professional learning have relied on schools providing teachers with episodic opportunities for Professional Development (PD) in order for them to develop new ideas, skills and competencies that are associated with either nation-wide reforms, school-wide reforms or improvement within the classroom. Feiman-Nemser (2001) states that conventional, superficial and episodic forms of PD offer teachers a set of disconnected and de-contextualised experiences, where teachers are not supported to apply new knowledge to practice, or to generate new knowledge in practice. Fullan (2007) states that the idea of external experts alone providing PD to bring changes to the classroom is deeply flawed and suggests that PD needs to be part of a wider and more complex system of professional learning in order for student learning to be addressed effectively. Teachers need opportunities to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the settings in which they work (Elmore, 2004, cited in Fullan, 2007).

The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2007) provides a model from which a wider and more complex system of professional learning can be created. The Teaching as inquiry model, presented in Figure 1.1, involves teachers inquiring into the impact of their teaching on students' learning within their own setting. Teachers in New Zealand primary schools are required to follow this model and to reflect on their curriculum and pedagogical knowledge in order to best meet the needs of their students. Each school determines the professional learning practices and processes to be used in conjunction with this model, as well as the support that teachers are likely to experience as they follow the inquiry process. The supportive processes and practices surrounding the Teaching as inquiry cycle are particularly relevant to those teachers in
their third to fifth year of teaching as, according to Cameron et al. (2007), these teachers require models of growing and learning from more experienced teachers. Furthermore, they need support for sustaining practices of curriculum development, critical inquiry and reflection, and support in enhancing their relationships with adults. Therefore, the Teaching as inquiry model is an important part of a wider and deeper system required for these teachers’ professional learning.

Figure 1.1 Teaching as inquiry (MOE, 2007)

This thesis examines primary school teachers’ perceptions and experiences of support during their early career for their professional learning, and also investigates whether or not this professional learning is different from that provided to other teachers. Primary school teachers in their third, fourth or fifth year of teaching are the focus of this research as these teachers have most recently completed their provisional registration period. Therefore, they no longer receive government-funded support as they did during their time as a Beginning Teacher. This thesis also seeks to identify the potential benefits and problems involved with the professional learning practices and processes that have been experienced, and makes recommendations regarding how professional learning support for third to fifth year teachers could be improved.
RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge base concerning the professional learning support that is needed and provided for teachers in the third to fifth years of their careers. The aim is to investigate how these teachers continue to be supported in sustaining their professional learning, to identify the practices that support teachers in this regard, and to critique teachers’ and facilitators’ professional learning experiences against current theory involving sustained professional learning.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How are teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching currently supported in sustaining their professional learning?
- What are the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?
- What needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?

Three schools were selected for this study. None of these schools had a connection to the researcher and were chosen using purposive sampling. The three schools were all primary schools in a large city in New Zealand. The schools were of a similar size, educating between 500-800 students, and were all co-education state schools.

THESIS ORGANISATION

Chapter Two examines and critiques the major themes from the literature relevant to support for early career teachers’ professional learning. The literature comes from a wide range of sources, both from New Zealand and beyond, and includes work that relates to organisational culture, effective practice and sustained professional learning.

In Chapter Three the research methodology is outlined and justified, with an examination of the research methods employed, the samples chosen for each method and the data analysis techniques used. The issues of validity and reliability are also addressed along with ethical issues relevant to the research.
Chapter Four outlines the findings from the first stage of the data collection and analysis process, that is, the focus group discussions from each of the three case study schools. Chapter Five outlines the findings from the second stage of the data collection and analysis process - the semi-structured interviews. Chapter Six concerns the cross-case findings, where comparisons of the focus group discussion data and semi-structured interview data from each of the case study schools are made. Data from the documentary analysis, which provided a secondary source of data, are also presented and analysed within this chapter. Chapter Seven concerns the fourth and final stage of the data collection and analysis process - the discussion of findings with references being made to relevant literature. In the final chapter, Chapter Eight, conclusions relating to the research questions are made, recommendations for senior leaders are presented, the limitations of this study are revealed, and areas for further research are suggested.

The following chapter reviews the literature relating to the support and professional learning of early career primary school teachers. The literature has provided the background for the research and informed the development of the research questions.
Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by providing definitions of both support and professional learning in the context of this study and then reviews the literature concerning the learning needs of provisionally registered primary school teachers, or those teachers who are in their first to second years of teaching. Teacher retention provides a key theme for this section of the literature review. The chapter then focuses on the literature concerning third to fifth year teachers’ support for professional learning through the themes of effective practice, relationships and organisational culture, which are the major areas of study relating to this research. The theme of sustainability is then addressed before the chapter is concluded.

Defining support and professional learning

It is important to define support and professional learning to provide a clear distinction between the two core concerns of the study. Timperley et al. (2007) state that teachers are supported by leaders, while Cameron et al. (2012) state that teachers are also supported by colleagues with similar roles and levels of teaching experience. Support takes a variety of forms that include showing concern, listening to people’s aspirations and goals and communicating warmth and openness (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Support from others enables professional learning to take place.

Professional learning concerns the practices and processes through which teachers learn and improve their teaching so that student learning can be positively impacted upon. Professional learning requires teachers to engage with new knowledge concerning theoretical understandings of pedagogy and assessment as well as the implications of these for practice (Timperley et al., 2007). Opportunities for professional learning need to be multiple and aligned, and enable teachers to learn and apply new understandings and skills. Professional learning can also take place informally and
incidentally or occur in meetings after school (Timperley et al., 2007). Professional learning systems are most effective when teachers learn from experts, mentors and their peers about how to become true instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

**The learning needs of provisionally registered teachers**

Although this study concerns third to fifth year teachers’ experiences of support for professional learning, this section of the literature review concerns the learning needs of Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRTs), also known as Beginning Teachers (BTs), who are in their first to second year of teaching. The literature concerning first to second year teachers is reviewed in order to provide a deeper understanding of what third to fifth year teachers’ support and learning and needs might be.

A significant amount of research has taken place regarding the transition of student teachers from their place of study to their place of work. A majority of these studies concern the challenges encountered by BTs in this transition. Inadequate knowledge of the school context, a lack of self-efficacy and gaps between how student teachers have been prepared to teach and the ways of teaching in the workplace, are some of the challenges contributing to BTs’ disillusionment with teaching and their exit from the profession (Ferguson-Patrick, 2011). Ferguson-Patrick states that while attrition is an issue across a wide demographic of teachers, retaining early career teachers has been particularly problematic. This includes BTs in their first to second year of teaching as well as teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching who have most recently become fully registered teachers.

The contexts of individual schools have the greatest impact on how well BTs are supported in their first two years of teaching, and set the pattern for future learning (Cameron et al., 2007). BT induction programmes were introduced to the New Zealand education system over 27 years ago, with schools having the responsibility for planning and providing ‘advice and guidance’ programmes, allocating in-school mentors and recommending teachers for full registration to the New Zealand Teachers Council (Cameron et al., 2007). These programmes included BTs being entitled to a reduced workload equivalent to 0.2 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in their first provisional year and
0.1 FTE for the teacher's second year, this time being used for the BT's professional development and being made available at the discretion of the school. Cameron et al. (2007) found that although primary school teachers' induction experiences varied from school to school, most teachers claimed to experience systematic and supportive induction programmes that gave them opportunities to work with and learn from other teachers. Schools need to provide high quality and comprehensive support for PRTs in their first few years of practice and to enable them to become fully registered teachers (NZTC, 2011). The NZTC Registered Teacher Criteria provide the legal minimum benchmark for a teacher's performance, describing what provisionally registered teachers need to work towards in order to gain full registration and what fully registered teachers need to demonstrate at appropriate levels of expertise in order to maintain a practising certificate (NZTC, 2011).

Since 1997, performance management systems for principals and teachers have been mandatory in all state and integrated schools (Ministry of Education, 2012). These systems provide the professional learning practices and processes that enable the registered teacher criteria to be satisfied and staff skills, knowledge, training and talent to be developed and utilised in ways that maximise the learning outcomes for students (MOE, 2012).

A positive consequence of school learning cultures meeting the needs of teachers, as well as the needs of the organisation through appropriate professional learning experiences, is teacher retention. This is particularly significant for teachers in the early stages of their professional careers. In each year from 2003 to 2008 New Zealand primary schools, on average, lost over 10% of their workforce. Over 19% of these were teachers aged between 25 and 29 (Engler, 2008). Although these are the ages in which some teachers spend time overseas or start families, it is also possible that these are the ages in which a significant percentage of teachers begin their careers as fully registered teachers. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) state that teacher retention improves when BTs are assigned a mentor working at the same level and/or subject area, receive common planning time with teachers in the same subject area, receive regular scheduled collaboration with other teachers and have opportunities to
participate in peer networks. The rate of retention improves further where mentors have received formal training along with scheduled one to one mentoring time.

Effective induction and mentoring programmes and opportunities for on-going professional learning are key contributors to teachers making a good start in the profession, maintaining their enthusiasm for teaching and remaining at their places of work (Cameron, 2012). When the organisation fails to provide experiences that create spaces for teachers to learn and grow within collaborative cultures of learning, teachers look for alternative workplaces or leave teaching altogether (Cameron, 2012). The Education Review Office (2009) also found that encouraging teachers’ personal growth is a characteristic of well-managed professional learning and development. Another factor that may influence retention is the particular generation or demographic that teachers belong to. Teachers in their third to fifth year of practice, born between 1977 and 1995, belong to generation Y. According to Coley (2009) and Richardson (2011) this generation of teachers are likely to be tech savvy, value personal connection, respond well to experimental staff development and multi-task with ease. Many of these teachers want to know that organisations are committed to helping them transition into their profession and supporting them in their growth. They are looking to be mentored or coached and respect expertise and willingness to guide over hierarchical position. Although the way in which support for professional learning is experienced is an important consideration for school leaders wishing to retain generation Y teachers, Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock and Lasagna (2010) state that in order to retain more teachers of all generations, the most powerful thing that school leaders and policy makers can do is to support teachers’ ability to be effective with their students. Teachers who can see that they are making a difference in their students’ learning will stay in the profession longer. Supporting effectiveness means ensuring that teachers are surrounded by effective colleagues, given time to collaborate with these colleagues, offered constructive feedback on their teaching, and provided other rich opportunities to learn to teach more effectively (Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock & Lasagna, 2010).

Professional development and teacher induction can play a critical role in enhancing teacher retention and ensuring that BTs do more than survive the early crucial years of teaching (Ferguson-Patrick, 2011). Cameron et al. (2007) state that following the fifth
year of their careers teachers have fewer concerns regarding issues that had troubled them or caused difficulty in the past. These teachers have overcome their difficulties with time management, with difficult administrators, and with the overwhelming nature of schools. They are more stable and steady, have matured into the profession and found the right teaching environment. It is then third to fifth year teachers that are most at risk of leaving the teaching profession, as they no longer received the supportive entitlements associated with provisionally registration and are still likely to be dealing with problems and difficulties associated with the workplace. These teachers are also likely to belong to a generation that demands up-to-date 21st century educational environments. Feiman-Nemser (2001) states that this post-induction phase is critical for teachers’ repertoire development in all areas of teaching curriculum, instruction and assessment. Following their BT classroom experiences teachers can concentrate on refining the interactive, inquiry-orientated instructional strategies they favour.

**SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

*Effective practice*

*Teacher reflection and inquiry into student learning*

For effective practice to take place a deep understanding about the kinds of professional learning that best suits the needs of the students, through the needs of the teachers, is required (Timperley et al., 2007). As they move into their third to fifth years of practice teachers need more sophisticated and sustained practices for curriculum development, critical inquiry and reflective practice (Cameron et al., 2007). In the context of this literature review reflective practice includes: teachers thinking about their learning needs in relation to their teaching practice, teachers reflecting on the impact of their teaching practice on student learning and facilitators reflecting on their own practice as the leaders of learning. Teachers’ learning needs are the core concern of all teachers’ professional learning experiences and are presented as an essential component of the *Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes* (Timperley et al., 2007), while teachers reflecting on their learning needs (*teaching inquiry*) and investigating the success of their teaching (*learning inquiry*) are two essential components of the legislated NZ curriculum *Teaching as Inquiry* model (MOE, 2007). To be successful in their professional learning, third to fifth
year teachers need to successfully engage with such reflective cycles of inquiry and have a clear understanding of how these cycles operate within their own school contexts.

The inquiry cycle (Timperley et al., 2007) begins with teachers identifying student needs. Assessment information is often used to make links between student needs and the needs of the teacher, it is therefore important for third to fifth year teachers to be able to interpret and manage student assessment data in order for their own learning needs to be fully understood. The inquiry cycle involves teachers using four essential questions in reflecting on their own needs, these being: How have we contributed to existing student outcomes? What do we already know that we can use to promote valued student outcomes? What do we need to learn to do to promote valued student outcomes? What sources of knowledge or evidence can we utilise? (Timperley et al., 2007). From identifying their own learning needs, through the needs of the students, suitable professional learning can be experienced.

The final process in the cycle involves a reflection on the effectiveness of these tasks and experiences on student learning, before the cycle continues and the needs of the students are identified once more. The model is a reminder that teacher reflection needs to be embedded as a continuous and on-going system. Teachers’ professional learning needs to assume an inquiry stance within communities of inquiry that generate local knowledge, envision and theorise their practice, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others (Awaya et al., 2003). As a consequence of their reflections and the on-going need for improvement, teachers need opportunities to collaborate with others, share their findings and develop ideas about how their practice could be improved. Awaya et al. (2001) and Field (1994) state that collaborative inquiry into practice generates knowledge using particular details of the moment to guide action and solve problems.

Reflection is important in enabling teachers to address the gaps between learning and teaching theory and practice (Field, 1994). By being reflective, newly qualified, less experienced teachers, such as those in their third to fifth year of teaching, can measure the coherence and accuracy of their university teaching against their classroom
practice. In this way the university knowledge ‘for’ practice is measured against the classroom’s knowledge ‘of’ practice (Awaya et al., 2001). One of the skills required of learning facilitators is the ability to articulate thoughts through the reflection process. This is important for assessing and improving skills, evaluating strategies, questioning values relating to practice, theorising about the content of practice, developing explanations about pupils and analysing and questioning aspects of school life.

In order for teachers to be effective reflective practitioners, those facilitating their learning need also to be effective reflective practitioners and expert problem solvers, capable of helping novice teachers develop their reflective and problem solving abilities, encouraging an inquiring stance and ensuring that the teachers can become autonomous and independent problem solvers (Barnett, 1995; Ferguson-Patrick, 2011). Particular to the needs of third to fifth year teachers are facilitators who model growth and learning for them (Cameron et al., 2007). These facilitators may be mentors, coaches, curriculum leaders, middle leaders, senior leaders or experts in particular areas of learning. For facilitators who guide and lead the learning of others, reflection concerns thinking about how the professional learning process has influenced or is influencing other teachers. Cardno (2012) states that there are two ways in which reflection for facilitators is practiced, the first is reflecting-on-action, which occurs after the event, and the second is reflecting-in-action, which is reflection that occurs during the event. Although a more demanding form of reflection, by reflecting-in-action facilitators are able to check that their theory in use corresponds to their theory of action and more easily recognise and deal with defensiveness during their professional conversations. Reflecting-in-action enables dialogue with teacher-learners to become more productive and that facilitators have a key role in modelling such reflective processes for solving dilemmas and contributing towards the school’s learning culture (Cardno, 2012). Field (1994) states that as part of system wide, transformative approaches towards developing communities of inquiry, professional learning facilitators may need to attend training programmes in order to acquire new sets of skills based upon critically examining their own practice and being open to change.
Alignment
Evidence suggests that professional learning has a positive impact upon student outcomes when professional learning experiences are aligned to the specific needs of students (Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Mascall, 2000; Timperley et al., 2007). Historically, formal methods of improving teachers’ professional knowledge, skills and competencies have relied largely upon Professional Development (PD) courses, programmes or workshops from external providers. When focused away from the classroom, these courses, programmes or workshops alone are not powerful enough, specific enough or sustained enough to make significant changes to the culture of a classroom. The success of PD is dependent upon ensuring that context related learning is on-going for both individuals and the school (Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Mascall, 2000). Elmore (2004, cited in Fullan, 2007) states that to improve student outcomes teachers need to be provided with opportunities to learn about their practice, within their teaching context, in a continuous and sustained way. Professional learning needs to be relevant for teachers if they are to stay motivated (Timperley et al., 2007). According to Cameron et al. (2007), the PD activities that third to fifth year teachers regarded as having most impact combined relevant knowledge and skill development, and adequate time and support to develop and reflect on practice. Outside experts providing PD opportunities have some influence on changing practice but this influence has a limited impact on student outcomes and on sustaining practice when the PD provider withdraws (Timperley et al., 2007). Episodic workshops disconnected to practice are ineffective in providing teachers with the time required for any serious reflection of their classroom practice. PD alone is unlikely to meet the teachers’ essential learning needs or contribute to the alignment between teachers’ professional learning and the needs of their students.

The triple P model (Fullan, 2006), promotes alignment between professional learning and student outcomes. The first two P’s concern teachers’ differentiation of students learning through ensuring that the personal needs of each student are being met in the most suitable instructional manor (precision). The third P represents professional learning, as teachers need to be addressing the first two P’s everyday as part of a school’s culture of learning (Fullan, 2006). This provides a useful model for all teachers to use, however, the challenge for senior leaders is in addressing the third P and
developing cultures that promote and support teacher learning all of the time. Professional learning needs to be part of an integrated system aimed at learning about how students learn. This is particularly relevant for teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching as these teachers require the guidance and support embedded within these systems that would not be experienced through stand-alone sessions of PD.

Enhancing capability
Teachers in the third to fifth year of their careers require support to grow their talents, develop their practice and become instructional leaders so that they remain satisfied and motivated in the workplace. If not supported with opportunities to learn and grow, teachers are likely to lose their passion and enthusiasm for teaching and leave their places of work (Cameron, 2012). Learning and growing for these teachers may involve supporting other teachers with their professional learning as well as developing their own classroom practice. Being provided with opportunities to learn and grow is one reason why third to fifth year teachers stay in the profession (Cameron, 2012).

Care is required to ensure that teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching are developed as leaders of learning. Premature promotion to administrative roles is a constraint for third to fifth year teachers who are often still working through problems and issues relating to the school environment (Cameron et al., 2007). Only in their fifth year of teaching do these teachers feel sufficiently comfortable and confident to make decisions about future career paths and about personal and professional investment in their work (Cameron et al., 2012). Timperley et al. (2007) state that facilitators who lack development or leadership experience can feel uncomfortable or lack confidence in their new role. Clearly, support for third to fifth year teachers concerns these teachers’ development as leaders as well as their professional learning that relates to improved classroom practice. Leader development processes that integrate various experiences and embed them in the organisational context are the most likely to be effective at developing leaders’ abilities (Velsor & McCauley, 2004).

The capability of teachers is enhanced when engaging with expert teachers internal or external to the school. Professional learning processes and practices are most effective when teachers learn from experts, mentors and their peers about how to become true
instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Engaging external expertise also contributes to the quality of dialogue within professional learning communities and is one of the seven elements identified in the BES as providing the context for effective professional learning (Timperley et al., 2007). Cameron et al. (2007) state that one professional support need of third to fifth year teachers concerns having models of growing and learning from experienced teachers so that they have a vision of what their own future might be like.

Ownership
Timperley et al. (2007) state that reducing teacher autonomy to the point where teachers are dictated what is taught and how it is taught fails to serve students well, with tightly prescribed PD having little or no impact on student outcomes. It therefore appears essential that teachers have some room to exercise professional discretion within the professional learning process. The MOE (1997) states that policies and procedures relating to teachers’ performance appraisal should be developed in consultation with all staff and teachers, so that staff and teachers feel a sense of agency and have confidence in the appraisal process. In a similar way schools that have established Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) need to achieve a balance between the community having a collective responsibility and teacher autonomy (Timperley et al., 2007). Teachers require some agency in relation to decisions regarding participation in school based professional learning and in taking some responsibility for addressing their particular learning needs (Cameron et al., 2007).

A key function of the facilitator is to open up avenues that allow the teacher to take responsibility for improving their own learning. This involves guiding teachers to take ownership of the decisions that influence their teaching, so that they remain in charge of their own learning. In this way the facilitator guides the teacher away from dependence and towards making decisions driven by their own critical reflection (Awaya et al., 2003; Portner, 1998). The skill of the facilitator is in knowing when to stand back to provide space for the teacher to grow and allow the teacher to reciprocate the willingness to take on the task alone (Awaya et al., 2003). Kaye and Jacobson (1996) state that one key attribute of a learner leader involves guiding the learner to consider different perspectives, while ensuring that they are able to arrive at their own conclusions.
Teachers who are involved in the decision-making process relating to the selection of a learning facilitator become empowered by their organisation to make the match they deem most appropriate.

**Relationships**

As support concerns social interaction and the relationships between the members of staff within a school, it is important to review the literature concerning the influence of relationships on teachers’ professional learning. Wenger (2002) views learning as a social process, rather than an individual process, that occurs through the many communities of practice that individuals belong to. It is through the foundation of social relationships that dialogue takes place involving a process of reflection and inquiry, where deeply held assumptions concerning practice can surface (Sun & Scott, 2003).

In order to provide constructive educational environments, schools need to be trusting environments (Tschannen-Moran, 2004) where trusting relationships exist as the cultural norm. Smith (2007) states that the provision of a safe and trusting environment is required in order for that environment to be highly developmental and highly reflective. Schools that manage their professional learning and PD well have strong learning cultures with trust being implicit in their development (Education Review Office (ERO), 2009). Strong learning cultures require people to be interdependent and therefore vulnerable to the actions of others. Trust enables interdependent relationships to be successful by managing teachers’ vulnerability. These types of relationships are important for third to fifth year teachers for two reasons: firstly, these teachers are able to rely on support from others in dealing with their on-going problems related to the school environment and secondly, interdependent relationships promote mutual trust where those more experienced are trusting of those who are less experienced. As Tschannen-Moran (2004) states with interdependent relationships the interests of one party cannot be achieved without the reliance on another, and as Cameron (2007) states it is not until their fifth year that teachers tend to have fewer concerns and problems relating to their work environment. Mutual trust and respect are very important if a professional learning community is to offer support to its participants (Timperley et al., 2007).
The importance of trust becomes clear when considering the five facets of trust, these being: benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). School leaders and facilitators are able to promote trust by modelling these facets through their support of third to fifth year teachers’ learning. Open and honest relationships are essential when teachers are being given feedback about their practice. Without openness and honesty teachers would not be provided with the valuable knowledge and advice needed to improve their practice. Respect is demonstrated when facilitators ask permission to give open and honest feedback beforehand. Having established trust teachers are more able to take risks, experiment with alternative teaching pedagogies and are also more likely to disclose weaknesses relating to their teaching practice (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2009). Sizer (1984, cited in Argyris, 1993) states that lack of trust and undermining of teachers contributes towards teachers’ withdrawal and use of defensive routines. For teachers to be open to learning, defensive relationships need to be replaced by relationships that allow collegial trust to develop.

A low trust atmosphere is created when solutions to problems are imposed on people and when they are confronted with changes that they have had little input into (Cardno, 2012). Therefore, creating trusting environments requires teachers to be given some say in creating solutions to the problems that concern them, with senior leaders and facilitators involved in bolstering teachers’ self-direction and interdependence. Awareness that teachers in their third to fifth year of practice are open to working on more critical problems and are seeking more opportunities to participate more fully in the school community (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) and responding to these teachers’ needs is therefore likely to assist in creation of trusting environments for these teachers. Effective school principals are committed to creating and encouraging trusting relationships that are built on mutual dialogue and respect (MOE, 1997). Building safe and trusting environments, that effectively opens individual teacher’s practice to the whole school domain, is difficult and challenging to achieve because it requires a deep cultural change (Fullan, 2006).
Organisational culture

Organisational culture creates the context for the effective practices and relationships associated with the professional learning experience. School cultures influence and are influenced by the actions and behaviours of all their members and are therefore important to review in exploring support for third to fifth year teachers’ professional learning. Cameron, Berger, Lovett and Baker (2007) found that early career teachers learnt best in collaborative, accepting and open minded school cultures, while Cameron et al. (2007) found that teachers in schools with conditions and cultures that encouraged their learning generally reported greater satisfaction with teaching at the end of their third and fourth years of teaching and were unlikely to have changed schools.

By nurturing school culture and creating conditions that are conducive to organisational learning senior leaders can influence student learning (Cardno, 2012) and have a positive influence on retaining teachers in the workplace. Senior leaders are responsible for building and maintaining the organisational culture. This task demands considerable thought, skill, integrity and consistency by them to ensure that all members of the school community are connected (Dimmock & Walker, 2002). In order to build and maintain school culture it must first be understood. If leaders are not conscious of their school culture they will be managed by it (Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) states that culture exists at three levels: the level of artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and assumed beliefs and values. The key issue for senior leaders is to understand the deeper levels of culture, concerning the assumed beliefs and values, to assess the functionality of these and to challenge them if required. If leaders do not manage the culture then the culture will manage them (Schein, 2010). By understanding the deeper levels of school culture senior leaders are more likely to understand how defensive routines impact upon teachers’ learning. Defensive routines are barriers to individual, group and organisational learning and need to be understood in order for the by-pass or cover-up of problems and issues to be avoided (Argyris, 1993).

For schools to improve professional learning for all teachers, school cultures need to be created where teachers are learners all of the time. Communities of learning that value reflective dialogue, a collaborative focus on student learning, a shared openness to practice and collaboration provide teachers with valuable learning opportunities (Fullan,
Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing student learning (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Fullan (2006), states that there are two major sets of conditions to PLCs. The first is a structural condition that involves teachers having time to talk and meet, the second concerns the schools culture involving social and human resources such as supportive leadership, trust, respect and openness to improvement. These conditions make sense when considering the findings from the BES (Timperley et al., 2007), which identifies two key qualities of PLCs that promote teacher and student learning, these being firstly, the provision of support for processing new understandings and the implications of these for teaching, and secondly that teachers are involved with analysing the impact of their teaching on student learning.

Supporting teachers with the processing of new understandings and their implications for teaching involves dialogue that allows for teachers’ existing beliefs to be challenged and allows for the norms of the organisation to be tested (Timperley et al., 2007). This type of support is a quality of PLCs particularly relevant for third to fifth year teachers as Cameron (2007) states that these teachers are likely to have continuing concerns and problems within their teaching environments. Important to the success of PLCs is the teacher’s belief that they benefit from the collaborative support that PLCs provide and make improvements to the achievement of their students (Timperley et al., 2007).

**Sustainability**

One theme that has been apparent through the literature concerns sustainability and the need for schools’ to adopt sustainable approaches to professional learning in order to maintain shifts in student achievement. Sustainability is a process of organisational learning through on-going inquiry and knowledge building, resulting in improved and valued outcomes for students (Lai et al., 2007). Timperley et al. (2007) define sustainability as on-going learning that leads to continued improvement and improved, worthwhile outcomes for diverse students. This involves fostering the depth of teacher knowledge and an understanding of the principles concerning professional learning within the context of the school. A broad range of school-based conditions are associated with sustaining shifts in student achievement through sustainable
approaches to teachers’ professional learning, these are: leadership for improvement, inquiry skills, depth of content and pedagogical knowledge, communities of practice and learning processes for teachers that penetrate teachers’ beliefs about learning (O’Connell, 2011). Such conditions combined with the ability for an organisation to learn are then the key concerns of sustainable schools. Lai et al. (2007) states that sustainability needs to be built in to the design of the professional learning experience rather than being considered as an after-thought.

In order for professional learning to achieve widespread and sustainable improvement it needs to operate at a systems level and be treated as part of an overall strategy for improvement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Fullan & Knight, 2011). These systems involve the individual, the organisation and the wider educational environment in which educational organisations interact with one another. Within the wider educational environment a school’s lateral capacity for learning can be built through intra-school collaboration, where teachers learn from other teachers from different schools (Fullan, 2006).

Teachers need to see the reason for their participation in professional learning to improve the likelihood of their learning being sustained (ERO, 2009). Moral-purpose provides one reason for participation in professional learning, this needing to transcend the individual to become an organisation and system quality (Fullan, 2005). Fullan (2005) states that as a system quality the moral purpose of the individual is then fostered through the organisations commitment to altering the social environment for the better, closing the gap of student learning and treating people with demanding respect. Systems committed to sustainability continue or maintain activities with interventions designed to promote improvement of the system, its processes and its practices (Lai et al., 2007).

**CONCLUSION**

The literature suggests that supporting the professional learning of teachers involves adopting effective practices and developing effective relationships within whole school cultures of learning. It is likely that third to fifth year teachers are continuing to work
through problems and issues relating to the school environment and have not yet reached a plateau where they are more stable and steady in the workplace (Cameron et al., 2007). It is therefore important that these teachers continue to have opportunities to be supported in their professional learning. Third to fifth year teachers are likely to experience support within professional learning communities where reflections on practice are shared with more experienced teachers or experts, and in learning organisations that have the ability to solve deeper organisational problems, dilemmas and defensive behaviours, through the questioning of basic norms, theories and assumptions. Sustaining the professional learning of third to fifth year teachers through the transformation of schools in to communities of learning can be a complex and challenging process. Fullan (2006) states that the transformation process is challenging because it requires deep and necessary cultural change. However, considering the energy and resources invested in the professional learning of provisionally registered teachers, the need to meet the demands of a new teaching generation and to retain teachers in the workplace, the complexities and challenges associated with supporting and sustaining third to fifth year teachers’ professional learning are worthy of investigation. How teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching are supported in their professional learning, the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of these teachers and what needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of these teachers needs therefore to be addressed.

Chapter Three justifies the choice of methodology and outlines the research design and the data gathering methods that were adopted.
Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to investigate how teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching continue to be supported in sustaining their professional learning and how these teachers and professional learning facilitators perceive the impact of professional support on teachers’ practice and consequently on student learning. This research also aims to review teachers and facilitators’ professional learning experiences against current theory involving sustained professional learning.

This chapter begins with an overview of the methodology used for the purpose of this research and explains the choice of an interpretive case study approach that utilises qualitative research methods. Descriptions and justifications of the sample groups and the three qualitative methods of data-collection are then made. This is followed by an explanation of the methods used for data analysis. Aspects of validity and reliability pertinent to the collection and analysis of data are then exposed and justified. This is followed by a discussion of the ethical issues relating to this research, which includes an explanation of the ways in which these issues have been addressed.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

An interpretive case-study approach that utilises qualitative research methodology was chosen because research sought to understand the subjective world of human experience. The interpretive approach enables the meaning of educational processes and experiences to be understood from the multiple realities constructed socially by the individuals involved in the study (Merriam, 1998). Essentially, by adopting an interpretive approach the researcher is provided with an understanding of ‘support for professional learning’ from within those included in the study sample. A key
characteristic of the interpretive approach is that theories are emergent, built on the experiences and understandings that follow research instead of experiences and understandings that preceded it (Cohen et al., 2007). Emergent theory best fits the research frame as the study is not seeking to prove or disprove a pre-existing theory or pre-constructed theory as in more normative models of research, but instead it seeks to make interpretations and explanations based upon an individual’s perceptions and experiences. Additional reasons for adopting an interpretive approach over a normative approach include its orientation towards preserving the integrity of the situations in which research takes place. Minimal researcher influence is one example of this (Cohen et al., 2007).

A qualitative method has been used for this study because it is congruent with the interpretive approach in allowing for understanding to be gleaned from the participants’ perspective and enables the researcher to be the primary instrument for data collection. The qualitative model has enabled the study to take place from within the school context where an inductive research strategy has been employed (Merriam, 1998). An appropriate research methodology to capture the experiences of teachers who facilitate and receive professional learning needs to accommodate the potential complexity of these experiences and for the potential difficulties, dilemmas and conflicts associated with them. A research methodology that accommodates the capture of these experiences allows for rich qualitative data relating to the research aims and questions to be collected.

**Research design**

A case study design was used for three case studies. A case study design allows for the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, pertinent to the aims of the research, to be answered in relation to present time events involving teachers’ professional learning (Yin, 1991). This contemporary focus was an essential component of the study design as it allowed for present time theories to emerge from analysis and for relevant comparisons with contemporary professional learning literature to be made. As some ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are ambivalent and need clarification, the research design needed to incorporate a type of methodology that allowed opportunities for clarification to take place.
One of the strengths of the case study is its ability to deal with a variety of evidence from a multiple methods approach (Yin, 1991). Such an approach is beneficial in reducing potential bias and improving the reliability of results through the methodological triangulation of findings between methods. The case study design also allows for the trustworthiness of interpretations to be tested, as the researcher was able to seek clarification of interpretations within each primary research method. An appropriate research design would involve a holistic case study approach that incorporates a holistic analysis of findings, where the case is studied and analysed as a whole rather than as multiple units. This is because the relevant theory underlying each case was holistic in nature (Yin, 1991). One problem with the holistic approach involves the potential for the nature of the study to shift to new orientations, where evidence addresses different questions to those posed initially. A second problem with the holistic approach arises where the holistic focus fails to examine specific areas identified as relevant to the study (Yin, 1991). The potential influence of these problems can be reduced by the researcher’s awareness of them and by the researcher’s preparation and planning in anticipating the full potential breadth and depth of the investigation.

By focusing on individual actors and groups of actors and seeking to understand their perceptions of events, the qualitative case study design invited rich and vivid descriptions of events, allowed for specific events to be highlighted and for significant features to be explored. Merriam (1998) states that the qualitative case study is particularistic, descriptive and heuristic in nature, providing research knowledge that is more concrete and more contextual than other research knowledge. In providing a unique example of real people in real situations ideas can be more easily understood (Cohen et al., 2007; Coleman & Briggs, 2002).

A multiple case study design is favoured over a single case study design as the critical, unique and revelatory rationales associated with single case studies (Yin, 1991) are not appropriate for the aims of the research. This research aims to develop general themes and concepts established from a wider educational context. As Yin (1991) asserts, using a multiple case study approach a comparative analysis can take place whereby cross case results can be stated more assertively than if a single case study had been used. Yin (1991) further states that the multiple case study design is considered to
provide more compelling and robust evidence than the single case study design. This is particularly significant to establishing the strength of the emerging themes that have contributed to building concepts. One potential problem of the multiple case study approach is the need for literal replication of the single cases. Again, the potential influence of this problem can be reduced by the researcher's careful preparation and planning.

Therefore, I selected three large primary schools as case study schools to represent typical examples of large organisations involved in one to one or small group professional learning practices.

SAMPLE SELECTION

School sampling
The schools selected were all state, co-education primary schools (years one to six) in a large NZ city with student rolls of over 500. State, co-education primary schools were chosen because these types of school are typical samples (Merriam, 1998) within New Zealand urban settings. This large NZ city was selected because of the large number of schools located there and because the researcher could access these schools easily.

The Education Counts website (www.educationcounts.govt.nz/find-a-school) was used to select all Auckland, co-educational, state-funded primary schools with a student roll of over 500. The names of these schools were printed on paper, folded and placed into a hat. Twelve school names were randomly selected from the hat. Twelve primary schools were randomly selected, as this number was large enough to allow for a spread of schools across the Auckland area. Primary schools with rolls over 500 students were selected as larger schools were predicted to provide the largest possible sample of teachers and school leaders for the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Three Auckland primary schools were randomly selected, using the same hat method, from the twelve schools that met the sample criteria and indicated a willingness to participate. Three primary schools were randomly selected, as this number is large enough to constitute a multiple case study design. The researcher did not know the principals of these schools and the schools themselves. Principals or
members of the schools Senior Leadership Team (SLT) were initially contacted by telephone and email to establish their participation in the study.

**Semi-structured interview and focus group sampling**

The sample size for the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions was determined by the size of the project and the limitations on time and labour. In consideration of the time required to transcribe the interview and discussion group data and to then analyse this data, a decision was made to limit the number of interviews and focus group discussions. Two semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion took place within each of the case study schools. Two professional learning facilitators or leaders of learning were chosen as interview participants within each school to avoid overdependence on one. By interviewing two learning facilitators the interpersonal influence of the informant over the investigator was reduced, consequently the quality and reliability of the interview data was improved (Yin, 1991). The two professional learning facilitators were chosen at random from the pool of facilitators who had been informed of the study and who had agreed to take part in it. For the purpose of the research, teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching were required to participate in the focus group discussions. As the focus group must be small enough for everyone to have an opportunity to contribute and large enough to provide for a diversity of perceptions, groups consisted of between five to eight participants (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching who had been informed of the study and who had agreed to take part in it were selected as participants. In schools where more than eight participants had agreed to take part, eight participants were chosen at random from the pool established within the school.

Sampling for the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews was conducted using both a *typical* and *convenience* sampling method. The *typical* sampling method ensured that the participants chosen reflected the average person within the bounds of teacher in their third to fifth year of teaching or professional learning facilitator and the *convenient* sampling method ensured that the participants chosen demonstrated a willingness to participate (Merriam, 1998).
RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods were chosen in order to best solve the research problem. The methods chosen for this project were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. A multi-method approach to data collection can lead to an increased understanding of the case in its totality. This combined with the holistic description and analysis characteristic of a case study ensured that both breadth and depth of data collection took place (Merriam, 1998). By adopting a multi-method approach as part of a multiple case study two types of methodological triangulation took place. Firstly, methodological triangulation was evident where different methods were used within each organisation and secondly methodological triangulation took place where the same methods were used between case studies. Combined levels of triangulation took place where data was analysed at individual, group and organisation levels. By using methodological and combined level triangulation the richness and complexity of human behaviour can be more fully explained (Cohen et al., 2007).

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions

As qualitative methodology best suited the requirements of the project more open ended and less structured methods of data gathering were needed. Both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions allowed for the gathering of rich qualitative data as both provided the flexibility required for the researcher to make in-depth explorations of participants’ experiences and perceptions around professional learning. This occurred within an interview schedule or questioning route framework that enabled the researcher to focus on interview and discussion questions related to the research literature (Coleman & Briggs, 2002; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Questions in both the semi-structured interview and the focus group discussion schedules were phrased and sequenced so they were logical and easy to understand by all participants (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The semi-structured interviews followed a relatively flexible interview schedule that contained a mix of structured questions to initiate the interview, followed by predominantly more open, unstructured questions with prompts and probes that allowed the researcher to explore the emerging views of the respondent (Cohen et al., 2007; Coleman & Briggs, 2002; Merriam, 1998). Focus group discussions also allowed respondents to express themselves in depth and at length, within an
environment where participants are influencing and are influenced by others. The discussions allowed members to interact with each other in order to yield a collective rather than an individual point of view, they allowed members to correct each other on points of detail and they allow orientation towards a particular field of focus (Cohen et al., 2007; Coleman & Briggs, 2002).

**Semi-structured interview and focus group discussion method**

Two semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion took place at each of the case study schools. Professional learning facilitators at each of the schools were interviewed individually. The semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions were conducted according to the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix A) and the discussion schedule (Appendix B). Questions contained within the interview and discussion schedules were grouped according to the issues identified within the literature as relevant to the project and the research questions (see Figure 3.1). This grouping simplified the analysis phase of the research as this involved the identification of common themes from the answers given.

![Figure 3.1 Interview and Focus Group schedule formation](image)

The flexible nature of the interviews and focus group discussions allowed for unanticipated, relevant data to be collected. Consideration was given to the use of familiar language and the avoidance of jargon in the wording of questions in order for questions to be best understood (Merriam, 1998). Interviews took place following a meeting where all available professional learning facilitators or leaders of learning within the organisation were invited to participate. Semi-structured interviews were the ideal
research method as they enable the depth and width of the facilitator’s perceptions and experiences to be explored.

All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at on-site locations, after the school day, at times that were most appropriate for the participants to purposefully communicate. The on-site locations ensured privacy and so supported confidentiality and an openness of communication (Coleman & Briggs, 2002). All interviews and focus group discussions were recorded using audio equipment and then transcribed. Summaries of the interview transcriptions were sent to the interview participants for checking in order for participant validation to take place (Cohen et al., 2007). Notes were also taken in order to gather non-verbal information corresponding to the verbal information gathered (Cohen et al., 2007) and to assist with the process of establishing themes during analysis. Both the group discussions and the interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes.

**Document analysis**

Document analysis was selected as a secondary source of data for the qualitative multiple case study as this data can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated and communicates the position of the organisation in relation to the research problem (Merriam, 1998). A framework of questions that related to the research problem, were used to guide this analysis (Appendix C). The Performance Management documentation from each case study school was accessed for this analysis. This included schools’ Performance Appraisal, Professional Development and Leadership Development policies. Document analysis allows for triangulation to take place as a strategy to enhance internal validity and allows for a holistic understanding of situations where inconsistent or contradictory data are produced (Merriam, 1998). One example from this research concerned the performance appraisal documentation from school B, which stated that teachers involved themselves in a process of self-reflection during the appraisal process. This was consistent with the interview and focus group data from this school.
DATA ANALYSIS

Semi-structured interview and focus group discussion analysis

The emergent research design allowed data collection and analysis to take place dynamically and recursively across each of the case study schools (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative method of data analysis was adopted for the semi-structured interview and the focus group discussion data. This involved formulating themes from the data and seeking the verification of these themes through the constant comparison of data. The analysis of the transcribed data began by coding data on two levels. The first level involved coding based upon data type or category, while the second level of coding identified specific common themes emerging from these categories (Merriam, 1998). One example of coding on the first level involved differentiating between the third to fifth year teachers who had joined the school at some point during their provisional registration and those teachers who had joined the school following their full registration. This demographic information is presented in Chapter Four of this thesis. The constant comparative method of data analysis was appropriate for this research because through this method initial descriptions lead to explanations and then to inference or theory generation both within and across cases (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998). By moving beyond the descriptive analysis readers are less likely to make misinterpretations by having to draw on their own conclusions to make sense of the descriptions presented (Merriam, 1998).

Common theme identification was adopted as the main strategy for the analysis of data within the constant comparative method. Through the process of common theme identification a number of theoretical propositions were made. During this process the researcher made constant reference to the original purpose of the project in order to reduce to possibility of drifting off topic (Yin, 1991). Findings from the three individual case studies are presented within Chapter Four, while findings from the cross-case analysis are presented in Chapter Five.
Semi-structured interview analysis

The interview schedule was structured into three sections relating to an aspect of professional learning relevant to the research questions. The three sections are listed below (see Appendix A).

- Professional learning role;
- Professional learning process; and
- Professional learning relationships

Once the interviews had been conducted, transcribing was completed within two days. All transcripts were sent to the participants for their review with minor amendments being made to four transcripts. For example, interviewee CC2 had given details concerning a specific educational programme that they were involved with. The interviewee perceived these details as a threat to their anonymity and so appropriate minor amendments were made. Summaries from each of the interview transcripts were coded and grouped according to the general sub-themes that reflected the research aims. The coding allowed for easy grouping and regrouping of summaries between sub-themes.

For example, question nine asked: How do you ensure that the professional learning process relates to improved student outcomes? Participant BB2 said: “Sometimes you’ll get emails from teachers giving you feedback about how well students have progressed and so you know that the teacher has been working on their focus point.” This was summarised as: ‘Feedback from teachers’. Participant CC1 said: “When it comes to Whanau leaders, usually there’s a reason why you choose a Whanau leader and that tends to be because of their classroom practice.” This was coded as: ‘Leaders with effective practice’. Participant CC1 also said: “We’ve deliberately mixed it up so in those groups of two and three there’s going to be a teacher who has opportunities to lead what they know in their knowledge with the other teachers.” This was summarised as: ‘Drawing on experts in the school to lead’.

Summary (a) Feedback from teachers;
Summary (b) Leaders with effective practice; and
Summary (c) Drawing on experts in the school to lead
Became sub-theme:

Professional learning related to student outcomes by sharing expertise and growing leaders.

Focus group discussion analysis

Each focus group discussion used a questioning schedule that was divided into five sections, each having a specific focus relating to the research questions. Additional probe and prompt questions were used where appropriate. The sections are listed below (see Appendix B).

- Teacher transition from provisional registration to full registration;
- Teacher ownership of professional learning;
- The professional learning process;
- Professional learning relationships; and
- Barriers to professional learning

Once the focus group discussions had been conducted, transcribing was completed within two days. Phrases from each of the group discussion transcripts were coded and grouped according to general sub-themes that reflected the research aims. The coding allowed for easy grouping and regrouping of phrases between sub-themes.

For example, question three asked: How much say do you have in deciding what you learn professionally? The following phrases were grouped into the sub-theme of Teachers have some ownership over decisions relating to professional learning

- Phrase (a) With whole school PD we can decide on a number of professional learning workshops to attend;
- Phrase (b) Experts around the school may offer to run workshops; and
- Phrase (c) We can decide not to attend informal professional learning workshops

Document analysis

Content analysis was the systematic procedure used to describe the contents of each of the case study schools’ Performance Management policy documentation. These data made clear the contextual language and discourse of the documents in relation to the
organisation and allowed for an analysis of the assumptions and underlying values implicit in the document. The data also enabled the assessment of documentation in relation to the role expectations presented within the literature.

Merriam (1998) states that the limitations of document analysis stem from the basic difference between this source of data and the data collected from the interviews and discussion groups, these documents not having been developed for purposes of research. However, in using a constant comparative analysis methodology it was possible to describe the alignment of the policy documentation to the perceptions and experiences of learning facilitators and teachers in the third to fifth year of teaching. It was also possible to use document analysis findings to assist in the building of themes, explanations and theoretical constructs. Data from each school’s Performance Management Policy has also helped to ground each case study in the context of the overall problem concerning support for teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching (Merriam, 1998).

The Validity and Reliability of Results

Yin (1991) states that construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability are four aspects of quality that need to be considered within case study design to maximise the integrity of results. In order for this research to be considered useful in contributing to the literature concerning the support of third to fifth year teachers in their professional learning, the validity and reliability of the research must first be addressed. Although all four aspects of quality have been considered within the case study design internal validity and external validity are particularly relevant to this research.

Limitations

Although the research is primarily limited by its small scale, external validity is strengthened using a multiple case study design as generalisations from the results are made from multiple cases (Yin, 1991). A greater number of case study schools would further strengthen external validity, although this was not possible due to the limited research time available and the fact that the researcher was acting alone. Further
increasing external validity would be difficult to achieve considering the time and human resource limitation particularly in view of the required purposive selection of both interview and focus group participants (Yin, 1991).

Research methods validity and reliability

Construct validity was addressed by using multiple sources of evidence with explicit links being made between the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn. Construct validity was also addressed by allowing participants to review an initial draft version of the report provided within the findings section of the thesis (Yin, 1991). A potential bias existed from principals or members of a school's SLT as these people where involved in the initial communication of the study to potential participants. The potential existed for principals or members the SLT to exclude participants from the study or coerce participants in to the study where a conflict of interest was perceived or where hierarchical authority was imposed. This may have an adverse effect upon both the participants and the quality of data collected. Having communicated the confidential nature of the study it was hoped that this bias would be minimised.

Merriam (1998) states that internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research, where interpretations of the participants' reality are accessed directly through interviewing and discussion. Two processes of 'member checking' were used for achieving internal validity. The first of these involved the researcher paraphrasing or summarising what they thought was meant during the interviews and then asking whether the paraphrase or summary was accurate (Robinson & Lai, 2006), the second involved interview participants being given the opportunity to check transcripts for accuracy, ensuring that any misperceptions or misinterpretations were dealt with (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998). The process of transcript checking was appropriate for the semi-structured interviews but not appropriate for the focus group discussions as the sample size and the open nature of the focused discussions made transcript checking impractical. Internal validity was further strengthened by using a multiple methods approach to data collection, allowing for the triangulation of interview and focus group discussion data. This improved the accuracy of data through confirmation of the emerging findings (Merriam, 1998). While the interview and focus
group discussions were the primary sources of qualitative data, the internal validity and reliability of findings were further strengthened by the data provided from the document analysis.

Coleman and Briggs (2002) state that the main potential threat to validity in interviewing is bias. During both the interviews and focus group discussions the researcher was aware of several potential causes of bias surrounding the interviewing process, in particular the interviewer did not seek answers that supported preconceived notions or allow opinions, attitudes or expectations to influence the quality of data gathered. The wording of schedule questions was checked a number of times in order to reduce this bias potential (Cohen et al., 2007) and to ensure that all schedule questions clearly related to the original research questions and literature in order that they fairly represent the wider issue under investigation. The discursive nature of the focus groups with the need for participants to focus on their sharing of perceptions and experiences allowed the researcher to make minimal input, further reducing researcher bias. Participant bias was reduced by participants or members of their SLT selecting an appropriate time and place for the interviews and focuses group discussions to take place. However, the subjectivity of the respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute a degree of bias (Cohen et al., 2007).

Reliability was addressed primarily through adopting a multiple case study design using multiple methods of data collection. Methodological and combined level triangulation contributed to the reliability of data as well as the richness and complexity of explanations (Cohen et al., 2007). The interview and discussion schedule design was consistent throughout each case study as was the researcher’s consideration towards the stability of the discussion and interview environment. This consideration included selecting an appropriate time and location for interviews and discussions to take place. One way in which reliability of data analysis was addressed and the consistency of findings tested was by the researcher coding the same interview and discussion transcription data on separate occasions (Cohen et al., 2007; Coleman & Briggs, 2002).
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The principles of informed consent

The principles of informed individual and organisational consent were applied for all participants and schools within the study. Within the process of consent the possible benefits of the research were communicated to participants (Cohen et al., 2007). Participation in the project was completely voluntary and participants were informed in writing of the purpose of the study, their role in it, and the use that would be made of their information and data (Appendix D). All participants were asked to sign consent forms which gave permission to use their data for the purposes of the project and demonstrated their willingness to participate in it (Appendix E). Focus group discussion and interview participants were made aware of the possibility of withdrawing their involvement at any time leading up to or during the discussion or interview. Interview participants had the option of withdrawing their data up to ten working days after checking their interview transcript. Focus group discussion data formed part of the study once the discussion had been completed. No inducements were made to the participants other than the chance to be involved in a research project that relates to an important part of their work. No participant in the study took part in the research against their will or under duress or pressure of any sort. Participants had the right to refuse to answer any questions if they so wished.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Confidentiality was guaranteed by the collection and storage of data in a secure, locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher during the course of the research. Anonymity was guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms in place of study school and participant names. Although some demographic information was collected from the study, this was insufficient for participants or their schools to be identified in the thesis itself. In addition to this the only people with access to the data were the researcher and the research supervisor. Electronic data was stored on a password protected computer. After five years this data will be deleted.
Minimising risk

Any potentially damaging issues resulting from this project are likely to have been emotional from the processes of group discussion and interview questioning. It is possible that damage to job status or future career opportunities could have resulted from confidentiality issues not having been properly addressed. The possibility exists for pressure from school principals to want access to, or influence over, data used in the study. Principals were given access to the overall findings of the study but were under no circumstance given access to raw data collected from their staff or others. All possible care was taken to ensure that access to raw data was limited to the researcher only. It was made clear to participants that although the focus group was an open forum with issues relating to confidentiality, the questions would focus on organisational structures, activities and roles and not on the individual roles of incumbents. The researcher remained open with participants at every step of the research process. All participants were given contact details which could be used at any time to ask questions regarding the research. Schools and participants were protected in the publication of this thesis by the use of pseudonyms. In order to avoid a conflict of interest, it was undertaken not to conduct any research in the school where I am normally employed. No close acquaintances or friends were participants in either the interviews or focus group discussions.

As some participants in the research were Maori, it was appropriate to contact a local kaumatua with experience in education in order to establish an appropriate kaupapa for the research. The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi have been a consideration for the researcher at all times throughout the study.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach used to conduct this study into the professional learning experiences of third to fifth year primary school teachers. The reasons for choosing a qualitative approach have been discussed and justified with reference to the literature. The three methods used for data collection have also been justified in relation to the study and aspects of validity and reliability pertinent to the
collection and analysis of data have been examined. The ethical issues relating to this study have been discussed and the ways in which these have been addressed explained.

Chapter Four will provide findings from the analysis of the focus group discussion data from each of the three case-study schools.
Chapter Four

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS:
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

INTRODUCTION
In this chapter the first stage of data analysis is reported, where the focus group discussion data from each of the three case study schools are presented and analysed (represented in bold in Figure 4.1 below). This chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of the focus group participants from each school. The process used to analyse the data is then outlined. The focus group questions provide the headings for the presentation and analysis of data, and tables are used to highlight the frequency and representation of specific sub-themes that emerge from the data. Themes then emerge from the analysis of these sub-themes.

Figure 4.1 Stage one: Focus group analysis and discussion
STAGE 1: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the focus group discussions was to collect the responses of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching from each of the three case study schools. These teachers provided a particular perspective of the support that they had received for their professional learning, as they had most recently transitioned from provisional teacher registration to full teacher registration. Refer to Appendix B for the discussion schedule used with these teachers.

The focus group participants

The case study schools are coded A, B and C in accordance with the order in which the initial focus group discussions were conducted (the first school visited being A). Participants for the focus group discussions in schools A and C were nominated by the principal as meeting the third to fifth year teacher criteria and asked to participate by the principal or members of the school’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Third to fifth year participants from school B nominated themselves after receiving a request for participation from the researcher forwarded electronically by the school’s principal.

All participants had gained their full teacher registration during their employment at the case study school, although four teachers had started their teaching careers in a different school. Participants were numbered 1 to 4 in accordance with the order in which they introduced themselves during the initial stages of the discussion. Participants’ years of teaching at their current school and years of teaching in total are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Focus group discussion participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Years at school</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS
The findings are reported in tables according to the focus group questions, each showing the total responses from the twelve participants.

Teacher transition from provisional registration to full registration
Question one asked: How have your professional learning experiences changed from when you were provisionally registered?
A number of changes in professional learning had been experienced in moving from being provisionally registered, to being fully registered. These were: a change of site at which professional learning was based, a change of focus for professional learning and a change in the provision of leadership opportunities. Four responses indicated no change, as professional learning was a continuous and sustained process. These data are shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Question 1: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A change of site at which professional learning was based</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A change of focus for professional learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A change in the provision of leadership opportunities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change as professional learning is continuous and sustained</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven responses showed that since becoming fully registered, professional learning experiences had become more school-based or more focused on school targets, rather than being based off-site with a focus on personal learning targets. As one participant stated:

A3: The provisional registration teachers’ course involved regular learning about specific curriculum areas, every few months. Now, learning is generally dictated by the school; it’s not external, it’s now internal.

This teacher had commented that networking with teachers from other schools was a valuable part of the professional learning process and that by extending such
networking opportunities beyond provisional registration they would be supported in their professional learning.

Four responses revealed that since becoming fully registered, teachers had opportunities to take on leadership roles. For example:

A3: I’ve done further PD since becoming fully registered that’s been associated with a management unit. I’ve been to ICT conferences because I hold an ICT position in the school.

B2: Once we became fully registered teachers we took on leadership responsibilities, I think that’s one way the school has tried to develop us more.

Teachers had more opportunities to grow and develop as leaders once they had become fully registered, although the processes for leadership growth and development varied between schools. For example: having become fully registered, any teacher in school A was able to apply for a middle leadership position. In school B, all teachers were recognised as potential leaders and were encouraged to join curriculum and coaching teams in order for them to develop their leadership skills by learning from others within the team.

Four responses indicated that teachers’ professional learning experiences had involved a continuous and sustained process of learning and development from beginning teacher through to fully registered teacher. Support for professional learning was provided for all teachers across the school regardless of their years of teaching, and teachers’ status in terms of their years of experience as a teacher did not appear to be an important factor. Teachers were supported through systems and processes embedded within an established culture that valued professional growth and development. For example:

B3: From beginning our provisional registration we were exposed to PD and being provided with different opportunities to up-skill. Throughout the five years we’ve been here it’s been about scaffolding and branching out in maths, reading and writing.
Question two asked: What type of support have you continued to experience on becoming fully registered?

Two types of support continued to be experienced by third to fifth year teachers on becoming fully registered: support from middle leaders and senior leaders, and support from colleagues through sharing ideas and resources. These are shown in Table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3 Question 2: Focus group data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support from middle leaders and senior leaders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from colleagues, sharing ideas and resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six responses showed that middle leaders and senior leaders continued to provide support for teachers’ professional learning. As one participant stated:

*C2: I’ve got a very supportive associate principal who always has an open door and so does our principal too, if you’ve got an issue the door is always open and they’re always there to listen.*

Middle leaders and senior leaders having an open door policy, or being available to support teachers on a needs basis, were ways in which teachers continued to experience support with their professional learning. Middle leaders, including syndicate and curriculum leaders, were the first teachers to go to when support was needed. Relationships with these middle leaders influenced the quality of the support received. For example, two teachers commented that they had not received the support required where the relationship with their middle leaders was perceived as being poor. Another aspect concerning the quality of support received involved middle leaders allowing teachers to have the appropriate degree of ownership over the support process in order to allow personal teaching styles to develop.

In addition to middle leaders and senior leaders, two participants continued to be supported by their tutor teachers (as defined on page 1). This would suggest that the working relationships established during periods of formal support had value for
teachers’ professional learning beyond the formal support period of two years. As one participant stated:

A3: I guess my tutor teacher continued to support me beyond the bounds of me being provisionally registered.

Five responses revealed that colleagues continued to provide support for professional learning through the collaborative process of ideas and resource sharing. One participant continued to experience support from colleagues while socialising out of school hours by being kept up-to-date with what was going on around the school. This indicates the need for not only professional relationships, but for more informal collegial relationships as well. For example:

A3: I found a lot of support in going to the pub on a Friday night. It’s been invaluable in just keeping you up to date with what you need to be doing besides just unwind and being a normal person.

B1: The collaboration between the staff members, always feeding off each other and sharing knowledge, that’s continued for me.

C1: I think as a staff we are quite collaborative, there’s a lot of resource sharing and there’s a lot of ideas sharing.

Teacher ownership of professional learning

Question three asked: How much say do you have in deciding what you learn professionally?

Question four asked: How much say do you have in deciding how you learn professionally and whom you learn from?

As these questions are closely related responses have been categorised and grouped into Table 4.4 overleaf. Third to fifth year teachers perceived themselves as having either some ownership or no ownership over decisions relating to professional learning.
Table 4.4 Question 3 and 4: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No ownership over decisions relating to professional learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some ownership over decisions relating to professional learning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant responses relating to decisions made about what was learnt for professional learning, how it was learnt and from whom it was learnt, indicated that four participants from school A felt they had no ownership over decisions concerning professional learning. Participants across each of the schools explained that the first stage of the professional learning process involved the SLT aligning professional learning with school targets. Six responses from schools B and C showed some ownership over decisions made in the following stage of the professional learning process that involved the development of learning groups and coaching partnerships. These participants were able to decide on their professional learning goals, the professional learning facilitators they worked with and on which workshops to attend during whole staff Professional Development (PD). Participants were also able to choose whether or not they attended informal workshops. Therefore, whilst professional learning was always aligned with the strategic direction of the school, the extent to which teachers could shape this to fit their individual needs varied. As one participant stated:

\[
\text{C3: We do get a say, there'll be opportunities where the principal will send out an email asking for ideas for things to focus on for the next term's professional learning communities.}
\]

The professional learning process

Question five asked: Do you have a person or people who lead your professional learning?

Third to fifth year teachers indicated that individuals led professional learning – these data are shown in Table 4.5 overleaf. The individuals who led professional learning were curriculum and syndicate leaders, and all teachers.
Table 4.5 Question 5: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and syndicate leaders lead professional learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All teachers have opportunities to lead professional learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One participant indicated that experts within the school were mainly used to facilitate learning and that there had been a reduction in the number of external experts used to facilitate learning. This suggests that experts were grown and developed within the school and that experts external to the school may have been involved in the development process. This participant stated:

*C3: We actually get very few people coming in from the outside now, because most of our professional learning is coming from expertise within the school, when I first came here we had a lot of people from the outside, but that's less and less now.*

Four responses revealed that all teachers had opportunities to lead professional learning and apply for formal leadership positions, with or without leadership development. Gaining a leadership position was dependent upon teacher strengths and curriculum responsibilities. As one participant stated:

*C3: It depends on your strength and what your curriculum responsibilities are, so we’ve all pretty much had a go at leading some professional learning.*

**Question six asked:** When you meet with this person or these people, what is the main focus of conversation?

When meeting with the leader or leaders of professional learning the conversation was focused on two areas, these were: pedagogy and improving content knowledge and reflection on classroom practice and next steps for professional learning, as shown in Table 4.6 overleaf.
Table 4.6 Question 6: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversation is focused on pedagogy and improving content knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation involves reflection on classroom practice and next steps for professional learning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six responses indicated that reflecting on classroom practice and establishing next steps for professional learning was the main focus of conversation when meeting with the leader or leaders of learning. Reflection on classroom practice often led to conversation about assessment data and student work, particularly where teachers had target children. As one participant stated:

A2: There’s a list of reflective questions where you talk about your target children, what you’ve done and where you want to go next.

For all four participants from school B the main focus of conversation involved a reflection of classroom practice and next steps for professional learning. This conversation followed a set model. As one participant stated:

B2: It actually follows a model, the first question asks what is already happening, then what would you like to be happening and then what steps are you going to take to get there.

Three responses showed that conversation was focused on teaching pedagogy and improving teachers’ content knowledge. Two participants stated that particular areas of need had been identified prior to the meeting and suggested that this improved the efficiency of the professional learning process. For example:

C2: Before you meet with them, you’ve probably given feedback about what you want, and the needs would have been identified.

C1: You’ve given your feedback before it starts, so you’re not spending your whole time deciding, it’s already been done, so most of the time is spent on doing what we want to do.
Question seven asked: What would you identify as being the key features of the learning process?

Four features were identified in the data as being key features of the professional learning process. These were: having some say within the professional learning process, having time to process and implement professional learning, receiving feedback relating to classroom practice and observing expert-teachers model lessons as shown in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 Question 7: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having some say within the professional learning process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having time to process and implement professional learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving feedback relating to classroom practice</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing expert teachers model lessons</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight responses described observing expert teachers model lessons as being a key feature of the professional learning process. Experts included teachers working at the school as well as external facilitators who visited the school at various times during the year. One participant indicated that observing experts was part of a reciprocal process for professional learning, as the expert had also observed them teaching. As this participant stated:

*C4: What has been great is that it has been reciprocal and I’ve been able to observe experts who have had years of experience or facilitators who have come from outside.*

Six responses revealed that receiving feedback relating to classroom practice was a key feature and that feedback was linked to observation and discussion relating to classroom practice. One participant suggested that the potential influence of feedback was dependent upon teachers’ openness to receive it. For example:

*C4: I think feedback is a huge thing and being open to receive it is the biggest thing, not seeing feedback as a criticism but seeing it as how you can move forward.*
Three responses indicated that having a say within the professional learning process was a key feature of the professional learning process. One participant emphasised the importance of ownership for teacher ‘buy-in’ and quality professional learning. It was suggested that ownership improved the alignment between professional learning, teachers’ needs and therefore student learning. As this participant stated:

*C2: I think that the principal understands that the best learning comes from the learning that you own, it comes from us rather than her, she’s not saying that you must learn this, we’ve already identified what we want to learn, so already have ownership of what we’re doing so you have more buy in.*

Three responses indicated that time to process and implement professional learning was a key feature of the professional learning process. As one participant stated:

*C1: I think time is always the key thing, time to try things out and put them into practice and then you can say ‘yes, this really worked well for me’ or ‘I’m really struggling with this’.*

Question eight asked: How do you know that you are making progress with your learning?
Third to fifth year teachers knew they were making progress with their learning when they felt confident with the teaching and learning process, reflected on practice, observed student learning or received praise and feedback. These sub-themes are shown in Table 4.8 below.

**Table 4.8 Question 8: Focus group data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling confident indicates progress with professional learning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on practice indicates progress with professional learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing students indicates progress with professional learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving praise and feedback indicates progress with professional learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Six responses from participants across each of the three schools indicated that they knew that they were making progress with their professional learning because they felt more confident about their teaching. One participant stated that their gain in confidence was partly due to an improved understanding of the teaching programme. For example:

*C3: For me it’s been my own confidence in how I teach and deliver a lesson and from having a greater understanding of the programme.*

One participant stated that professional learning had identified a strength that they were not aware of and that this gave them confidence in their teaching practice. Four responses showed that observing student learning was a way in which they knew that they were making progress with their learning. For example:

*C1: It’s been good to get feedback and it’s been good to see the progress, students were getting one question right and now they’re getting five or six questions right.*

Three responses revealed that receiving praise and feedback was a way in which third to fifth year teachers knew that they were making progress with their learning. In all three cases praise and feedback followed an observation of the teacher’s practice.

Four responses indicated that by reflecting on their practice, teachers knew that they were making progress with their learning. Two participants indicated that through reflecting on their practice they had realised that they had become more efficient and effective with their planning and assessment. For example:

*A3: The programme I put together now is a much more cohesive and targeted programme than it was in my first year for sure. I now have a much clearer picture of how things fit together.*

It was suggested that teacher confidence was influenced by the three other sub-themes i.e. that teacher confidence was influenced when teachers reflected on their practice, observed student progress and received praise and feedback.
Question nine asked: To what extent is your professional learning linked to improving student outcomes? How do you ensure that the professional learning process links to improved student outcomes?

In response to the first part of question nine, all participants from schools B and C indicated that there was a definite link between their professional learning and improving student outcomes. Three participants from school A stated that professional learning needed to be more targeted towards student outcomes.

The teachers described a number of ways in which they and their school ensured the professional learning process linked to student outcomes. These were: by targeting particular students, by including parents in the professional learning process and through teacher accountability. Three sub-themes emerged from the data for the second part of question nine and these are shown in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Question 9: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning linked to student outcomes by targeting students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning linked to student outcomes through including parents in the learning process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning linked to student outcomes through teacher accountability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three responses indicated that professional learning linked to student outcomes when teachers had targeted particular students. Target students were identified, as those students who had a particular learning or behavioural need. For example:

*C2: We identified target children who were not performing and our professional development always comes back to those target children and how they’re progressing and what is happening with them.*

One participant commented that stronger links were needed between professional learning and those students who were excelling, while two participants from school A stated that professional learning involving pedagogy would strengthen links to student outcomes and wished to observe more experienced teachers in order to achieve this.
Three responses revealed teacher accountability as a way in which links between professional learning and student outcomes were ensured. Informal observations by members of the SLT and set tasks relating to the professional learning were ways in which third to fifth year teachers experienced measures for accountability. Teachers within curriculum teams were accountable to the board of trustees. For example:

*C4: There’s a lot of accountability to the board with our PD. Our maths team have had to report back to the board to show our progress of student outcomes.*

Three responses showed that the inclusion of parents in the professional learning process was a way in which links between the professional learning process and student outcomes were ensured. It was suggested that parents who have an idea of what goes on in the classroom are able to align learning at home with learning at school. As one participant stated:

*C2: We actually provide learning opportunities for parents. Each of the teams organised a reading evening where parents come in and find out how we teach reading, so they can have an idea of what goes on in the classroom.*

Question ten asked: What professional learning practices and processes are the best practices and processes within the school?

A number of practices and processes were indicated as the best practices and processes for professional learning. These were: practical, interactive workshops relating to classroom practice, taking on leadership responsibility and observing expert teachers. Three sub-themes emerged from the data and these are shown in Table 4.10 below.

**Table 4.10 Question 10: Focus group data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical, interactive workshops relating to classroom practice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>A  ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking on leadership responsibility is a best practice for professional learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing expert teachers is a best practice for professional learning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>A  ✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seven responses indicated attending practical, interactive workshops relating to classroom practice as a best practice for professional learning (professional learning that occurred in the style and format of a lecture was identified as the least favoured practice). As one participant stated:

* A1: I really like hands on, where you’re making and moving resources or you come out with a head full of ideas rather than sitting, listening to someone dictate for hours and hours.

Seven responses revealed observing experts as a best professional learning practice. As one participant stated:

* C4: I find that powerful, seeing what effective practice is. You know the theory and what it’s like in a textbook, but actually seeing someone do it. I’m a kinaesthetic learner so I need to see it in order to comprehend what it fully means.

As well as seeing effective practice, one participant felt reaffirmed in their practice when observing experts who came up against the same problems that they had with particular students or when they observed solutions to problems that they felt were unsolvable.

Three responses showed that taking on a leadership role that included modelling lessons for other teachers was a best practice within their school. Although one participant recognised the value of this role, they were concerned at that stress and strain it caused. For example:

* A1: I think that being in a leadership role with student teachers actually forces you to be on top of your game. In a way it has inspired me to do my best.

* A3: I think that taking on a leadership role is a massive strain on a new teacher although it has helped me immensely. At the same time I’m not sure if that stress was worth it.
Professional learning relationships

Question eleven asked: How would you describe the relationship between you and the person or people leading your professional learning?

The relationships between third to fifth year teachers and the person or people leading their professional learning was described in a variety of ways. Relationships were described as: reciprocal and collegial, challenging, open and honest, and equal and respectful. Four sub-themes emerged from the data and these are shown Table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11 Question 11: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is reciprocal and collegial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is challenging</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is open and honest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is equal and respectful</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three responses showed that the relationship participants had with their professional learning leaders had become challenging where firstly, there were personality differences, making the leader less approachable, or secondly, where the leader was known to be excessively busy and perceived not to have sufficient time to give the support and advice needed. One participant stated that senior and middle leaders who had a number of additional management units and therefore a number of additional responsibilities were quite time poor and because of this they were less approachable. For example:

A4: I feel like I can’t ask any more questions because they’ve got so much to do already, I don’t want to give them anything else to do. That can be quite hard.

The importance of relationships was emphasised by one participant who stated that regardless of a leader’s workload, they would always go to the leader they had a good relationship with rather than the person they had a poor relationship with.

Three responses indicated that relationships were open and honest. In school C the principal and associate principals had an open door policy. As one participant stated:
C4: Honest, to be able to put your hand up and say ‘I have no idea what I’m meant to be doing. I need some help’. Something that the principals say is that if you don’t voice it they will never know, so you have to be able to say ‘Can I please have some help’.

Question twelve asked: In what ways are you challenged by the personal and professional values of the person or people leading your professional learning?

Third to fifth year teachers in schools B and C stated that differences in personal and professional values were respected and given equal value within the wider culture of the school, and that open and collaborative discussion enabled differences to be better understood. Four responses contributed to the one sub-theme that emerged from the data, this being: All personal and professional values are respected and are given equal value.

Two participants referred to the collaborative nature and openness of the professional learning process when commenting on the ways they were challenged by the personal and professional values of those leading their professional learning. For example:

C2: Because professional learning is collaborative we tend not to have values imposed upon us. Every view is valued.

B1: Because we all listen and discuss things there was that openness where people could say ‘I don’t like that whole thing’ and you could talk about it and no one was told that they were wrong.

One trend suggested by this sub-theme was that third to fifth year teachers were not challenged by differences in values between them and the person or people leading their learning, as differences in personal and professional values were respected and given equal value within the wider culture of the school. It was suggested that open, collaborative practices and processes contributed towards school cultures where value differences were respected and given equal value.
Question thirteen asked: In what ways have you influenced the learning of the person or people leading your professional learning?

Third to fifth year teachers felt that they had influenced the learning of the person or people leading their professional learning in three ways, these were: through questioning, through sharing thoughts, ideas and perspectives, and through professional learning leaders having observed their teaching practice. Three sub-themes emerged from the data and these are shown in Table 4.12 below.

### Table 4.12 Question 13: Focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) through questioning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) through sharing thoughts, ideas and perspectives</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) through their observations of teaching practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four responses indicated that participants influenced the learning of those who led professional learning through questioning. Three participants stated that they influenced those who led their professional learning by asking questions, while one participant stated that they influenced those who led professional learning by answering questions asked of them.

Teachers sharing their own perspectives with leaders following an observation or sharing their own thoughts, ideas and perspectives with leaders within their teams or at meetings was one way in which teachers influenced those leading professional learning. As one participant stated:

*B1: With off-site PD we’re all expected to come back and share with our teams and with the people we work with.*

Three responses showed that participants felt that they influenced those who led their professional learning while being observed by them. These observations included the informal four-minute walk through and formal observations of teaching practice. For example:
C3: I think they can take little gems from you, like when they’re observing you and they might notice something for their own practice or something that might be transferred to another person.

The three sub-themes or ways in which teachers had influenced the learning of their professional learning leader or leaders highlight the importance of quality relationships between the third to fifth year teachers and the professional learning leader or leaders. It was suggested that open and equal relationships, where teachers felt comfortable asking questions, sharing ideas, thoughts and perspectives, and being observed had an influence on the potential for leaders to learn.

**Barriers to professional learning**

*Question fourteen asked: What barriers (organisational or otherwise) influence the quality of the professional learning process?*

Third to fifth year teachers identified a number of barriers to the professional learning process. These were: not having enough time to process and implement professional learning, and professional learning being a non-practical process. Two sub-themes emerged from the data and these are shown in Table 4.13 below.

**Table 4.13 Question 14: Focus group data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not having time to process and implement professional learning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning being a non-practical process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine responses revealed that not having enough time to process and implement professional learning was a barrier that influenced the professional learning process. Third to fifth year teachers’ commitments and responsibilities had an influence on the time needed to process and implement professional learning. For example:

*C2: Too much too quickly and not having enough time to process it, that’s been my major barrier.*
C4: A lot of commitments as well, not just within curriculum and schools, all the other things like having sports commitments, just having a lot on in a term and having time, I think that's the crux, the time, never enough time.

More time was needed in order for new learning to be processed, tried out and implemented within the classroom before further professional learning was conducted. Consideration needed to be given to teacher commitments and responsibilities when giving teachers enough time to process and implement their professional learning.

Refining the sub-themes
In all, thirty-six specific sub-themes were identified from the focus group data. These sub-themes were then grouped into nine themes. Sub-themes were grouped according to how each sub-theme related to the subject of professional learning. This was achieved first, by identifying the key words within the sub-theme and second, by understanding the sub-theme in relation to the question being asked. These sub-themes were then grouped together to form a theme. For example, the common link for the sub-themes listed below was alignment as these sub-themes involved alignment between professional learning and student outcomes:

- Professional learning linked to student outcomes by targeting students;
- Professional learning linked to student outcomes by including parents in the learning process; and
- Professional learning linked to student outcomes through teacher accountability

The thirty-six focus group sub-themes are presented by question in Table 4.14 on page 61. The table is divided into three sections that reflect the focus group question number, the sub-theme and theme. An overview of the method used for the refinement and analysis of focus group data is shown in Figure 4.2, where the focus group responses were grouped into sub-themes, which were then grouped into themes that related to the research aims.
The re-organisation of the sub-themes by theme is outlined in Table 4.15 on page 62. The table is divided into three sections that reflect the research aims:

i) to identify the ways in which third to fifth year teachers are currently supported in sustaining their professional learning;

ii) to identify the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching; and

iii) to identify what needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching.

Following this table, these research aims inform the headings for the summary of findings. Sub-themes have been combined where two or more similar sub-themes existed from responses to different questions. For example:

**Ownership:**

- Some ownership in decisions relating to professional learning; and
- Having some say within the professional learning process

Becomes sub-theme: Some ownership within the professional learning process

Thirty-six sub-themes are presented in Table 4.15.
<p>| Q1 | A change of site at which professional learning was based | Barriers          |
|    | A change of focus for professional learning             | Barriers          |
|    | A change in the provision of leadership opportunities   | Enhancing capability |
|    | No change as professional learning is continuous and sustained | Enhancing capability |
| Q2 | Support from middle leaders and senior leaders         | Professional learning facilitators |
|    | Support from colleagues, sharing ideas and resources   | Professional learning facilitators |
| Q3+Q4| No ownership in decisions relating to professional learning | Barriers |
|     | Some ownership in decisions relating to professional learning | Ownership |
| Q5 | Curriculum and syndicate leaders lead professional learning | Professional learning facilitators |
|    | All teachers have opportunities to lead professional learning | Professional learning facilitators |
| Q6 | Conversation focused on pedagogy and improving content knowledge | Enhancing capability |
|    | Conversation involves reflection on classroom practice and next steps for professional learning | Reflective practices |
| Q7 | Having some say within the professional learning process | Ownership |
|    | Having time to process and implement professional learning | Enhancing capability |
|    | Receiving feedback relating to classroom practice       | Enhancing capability |
|    | Observing expert teachers model lessons                 | Enhancing capability |
| Q8 | Feeling confident indicates progress with professional learning | Teacher Experience |
|    | Reflecting on practice indicates progress with professional learning | Reflective practices |
|    | Observing students indicates progress with professional learning | Inquiry |
|    | Receiving praise and feedback indicates progress with professional learning | Enhancing capability |
| Q9 | Professional learning linked to student outcomes by targeting students | Alignment |
|    | Professional learning linked to student outcomes by including parents in the learning process | Alignment |
|    | Professional learning linked to student outcomes through teacher accountability | Alignment |
| Q10| Practical, interactive workshops relating to classroom practice are best | Enhancing capability |
|    | Taking on leadership responsibility is a best practice for professional learning | Enhancing capability |
|    | Observing expert teachers is a best practice for professional learning | Enhancing capability |
| Q11| The relationship is reciprocal and collegial            | Relationships     |
|    | The relationship is challenging                         | Relationships     |
|    | The relationship is open and honest                     | Relationships     |
|    | The relationship is equal and respectful                | Relationships     |
| Q12| All personal and professional values are respected and given equal value | Culture |
| Q13| Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) through questioning | Enhancing capability |
|    | Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) by sharing thoughts, ideas and perspectives | Enhancing capability |
|    | Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) by their observations of teaching practice | Enhancing capability |
| Q14| Not having time to process and implement professional learning | Barriers |
|    | Professional learning being a non-practical process     | Barriers          |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Specific sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Professional learning facilitators** | Support from middle leaders and senior leaders  
                                    Support from colleagues, sharing ideas and resources  
                                    Curriculum and syndicate leaders lead professional learning  
                                    All teachers have opportunities to lead professional learning                                                                 |
| **Culture**                 | All personal and professional values are respected and given equal value                                                                                   |
| **Relationships**           | The relationship is reciprocal and collegial  
                                    The relationship is challenging  
                                    The relationship is open and honest  
                                    The relationship is equal and respectful                                                                 |
| **Reflective practices**    | Conversation involves reflection on classroom practice and next steps for professional learning  
                                    Reflecting on practice indicates progress with professional learning  
                                    Feeling confident indicates progress with professional learning                                                                 |
| **Alignment**               | Professional learning linked to student outcomes by targeting students  
                                    Professional learning linked to student outcomes by including parents in the learning process  
                                    Professional learning linked to student outcomes through teacher accountability                                                                 |
| **Ownership**               | Some ownership within the professional learning process  
                                    Having some say within the professional learning process                                                                 |
| **Enhancing capability**    | A change in the provision of leadership opportunities  
                                    No change as professional learning is continuous and sustained  
                                    Conversation focused on pedagogy and improving content knowledge  
                                    Receiving feedback relating to classroom practice  
                                    Receiving praise and feedback indicates progress with professional learning  
                                    Practical, interactive workshops relating to classroom practice are best  
                                    Taking on leadership responsibility is a best practice for professional learning  
                                    Observing expert teachers model lessons is a best practice for professional learning  
                                    Observing expert teachers is a best practice for professional learning  
                                    Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) through questioning  
                                    Having time to process and implement professional learning  
                                    Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) by sharing thoughts, ideas and perspectives  
                                    Have influenced the professional learning leader(s) by their observations of teaching practice                                                                 |
| **Inquiry**                 | Observing students indicates progress with professional learning                                                                                           |
| **Barriers**                | A change of site at which professional learning was based  
                                    A change of focus for professional learning  
                                    No ownership in decisions relating to professional learning  
                                    Not having time to process and implement professional learning  
                                    Professional learning being a non-practical process                                                                 |
Support

In order to identify the ways in which third to fifth year teachers have been supported with their professional learning it was necessary to identify the people involved in the support process and the relationships that third to fifth year teachers had with them. Support for teachers’ professional learning included the themes of professional learning facilitators, relationships and culture. The relationships that teachers had with their professional learning facilitators were central to the teachers’ views and experiences of support. Teachers stated that they continued to receive support from middle and senior leaders, and from their colleagues through sharing ideas and resources.

The type of relationships teachers had with their facilitators was indicative of the way in which teachers had been supported. Relationships were described as reciprocal and collegial, challenging, open and honest, and equal and respectful. It was suggested that participants experienced the greatest support where relationships were open and honest, while they were least supported in relationships they perceived as challenging.

School culture provided support for third to fifth year teachers in work environments where their personal and professional values were respected and where a sense of equality was practiced and experienced.

Best practices

Best practices for supporting teachers with their professional learning included the themes of reflective practices, alignment, ownership, enhancing capability and inquiry, as these themes all contributed towards teachers’ effective professional learning views and experiences. Teachers commented that conversation involving reflection on classroom practice and next steps for professional learning was a best practice for professional learning and that by reflecting on classroom practice they were able to recognise progress with professional learning.

The second theme of alignment focused on the sub-themes that involved aligning professional learning, teacher outcomes and student outcomes. Professional learning was aligned to student outcomes where teachers were held accountable for the
implementation of their professional learning. In the case of school C this meant reporting back to the board of trustees. The sub-themes for alignment also included: targeting particular students, and the inclusion of parents in the professional learning process.

The third theme for best practices involves ownership. It was evident that third to fifth year teachers valued having some say or some ownership within the professional learning process as these were indicated as best practices for professional learning.

The fourth theme of enhancing capability concerned the best practices within the professional learning process. These practices concerned teachers being provided with: feedback about their classroom practice, opportunities to lead professional learning, opportunities to observe experts, a continuous and sustained process for professional learning, conversation focused on pedagogy and improved content knowledge, having time to process and implement professional learning, practical interactive workshops relating to classroom practice, and praise and feedback that recognised their progress. The capacity of the leader was enhanced when teachers asked and responded to questions, shared their thoughts ideas and perspectives with the leader and when the leader observed their practice.

The fifth theme for best practices involved inquiry. The single sub-theme of observing students indicates progress with professional learning links directly to teacher inquiry into student learning as I have outlined on page 11. This inquiry process also includes: the analysis of student assessment data and student work.

**Improving professional learning**

Five sub-themes were identified as barriers to the professional learning process. The theme of improving professional learning concerned the removal of these barriers and the introduction of enablers. One trend suggested that lack of time for processing and implementing professional learning was a barrier and that more time was needed in order for the quality of professional learning to be improved. A number of other barriers were indicated by third to fifth year teachers: a change of site at which professional
learning took place, a change of focus for professional learning, having no ownership over decisions made and professional learning being a non-practical process.

**CONCLUSION**

A number of specific sub-themes were identified from the data that articulate third to fifth year teachers’ experiences and perceptions of support for their professional learning. These sub-themes were organised into nine themes, with each theme relating to one of the three research aims. An overview of how these teachers’ experiences and perceptions relate to the research aims was also presented.

A full examination of these themes will be carried out in Chapter Six. Chapter Five will consider the data from the semi-structured interviews with learning facilitators.
Chapter Five

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS: INTERVIEWS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the second stage of data analysis is reported, where data from six semi-structured interviews with teachers who were involved in facilitating the learning of other teachers are presented and analysed (represented in bold in Figure 5.1 below). This chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of the interviewees from each school. The process used to analyse the data is then outlined. The data and analyses are organised according to the interview questions and tables are used to identify the frequency of specific sub-themes that emerge from the data. The themes that emerge from the analysis of these sub-themes are also presented.

Figure 5.1 Stage two: Semi-structured interview analysis and discussion
STAGE 2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to collect data from teachers who were involved in facilitating the learning of the third to fifth year teachers from the case study schools. These teachers provided their particular perspectives of the support that they had provided for professional learning.

The interviewees

The coding of schools - AA, BB and CC - corresponds to the order in which the schools were initially visited for the focus group discussions (the first school visited being AA). As two interviews took place at each of the three schools, interviewees are coded here as Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2 (the interviewees from school AA are therefore AA1 and AA2). The first question from the interview schedule asked interviewees to state their role as leaders of professional learning within their organisations. Overall, interviewees had multiple roles and responsibilities that related to professional learning. These are shown in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Interviewees’ roles and responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA1</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher. Team leader. Assessment lead teacher. Literacy lead teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA2</td>
<td>Maths lead teacher. Junior school team leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB1</td>
<td>Literacy team member. Senior teacher and part of the coaching team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB2</td>
<td>Maths lead teacher. Team leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC1</td>
<td>Associate principal for junior school. Responsible for Beginning Teachers (BTs), student teachers and associate teachers. A member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) overseeing all learning and Professional Development (PD).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC2</td>
<td>School principal. Role involves building a learning culture and a trust environment, ensuring that all systems and structures are in place for learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings are reported in tables according to the interview questions, each showing the total responses from the six interviewees.

Role

Question one asked: What professional development or professional learning have you undertaken for this role?

All interviewees had undertaken PD or professional learning which related to their role as leaders or facilitators of learning, including professional learning with an external expert, off-site workshops, conferences and symposiums and post-graduate study. Interviewees’ previous roles and leadership experience were also helpful for this role. These are shown in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 Question 1: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In school professional learning with an external expert facilitator</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✔️ ✔️ ✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off-site workshops, conferences and symposiums</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✔️ ✔️ ✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post graduate diploma or Masters in education</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✔️ ✔️ ✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous role and leadership experience</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✔️ ✔️ ✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No clear trend is suggested by these sub-themes. However, all but one of the learning leaders had experienced professional learning in school with an external expert facilitator and all had had a variety of professional learning related to the role. It was suggested that external expert facilitators were important for the growth and development of leaders within schools.

Question two asked: Did you choose to be a learning facilitator?

All six interviewees had chosen to be learning facilitators, with three interviewees commenting that the transition into their role had involved either communication with the principal, their development as leaders within the school or their natural career progression. Six responses contribute to the one emergent sub-theme of: Learning facilitators chose to take on the role.
Both interviewees from school B stated that the principal had developed leadership potential throughout the school. As one interviewee stated:

*BB2: The principal is really good at recognising leadership potential in others, so if teachers are not quite ready they will be given opportunities to be brought in to the team with other leaders so that they can grow themselves as leaders.*

In school B there was an expectation that all teachers would become involved in facilitating the learning of others, as the growth and development of leaders was part of the school’s culture.

**Question three asked: Why did you take on this role? What was your motivation?**

Five responses from interviewees contributed to the emergent sub-theme of: Enjoying working with people. These five responses revealed that working with people was a motivation for taking on the learning facilitator role. The experience of working with people included such benefits as collegiality, sharing knowledge and ideas, supporting people and watching people succeed and grow. This is reflected in the following statements:

*AA1: I like talking about ideas with people, I like the sharing of knowledge, the collegiality, but trying to get it at a deeper level.*

*CC1: Watching teachers succeed and seeing the growth in them has actually enthused me to keep going in the role that I’m doing.*

One clear trend is suggested by this sub-theme - that facilitators were motivated to take on their role because they enjoyed working with people.

**Question four asked: How much say do you have in deciding whose learning you facilitate?**

Interviewees had ownership over decisions in consultation with other leaders or shared ownership over decisions with the teachers themselves, as shown in Table 5.3 below.

**Table 5.3 Question 4: Interview data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership in consultation with other leaders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership shared with teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

69
Four interviewees revealed that their role involved facilitating whole staff learning and so at this level they had no ownership over whose learning they facilitated. However, these four facilitators then indicated that differentiated learning took place at the next level of professional learning, where teachers communicated their individual learning needs to them. This suggested that learning facilitators operated on two levels: at the first level, and in relation to whole school targets, facilitators dealt with all staff; at the second level, and in relation to individual learning needs, facilitators dealt with individuals or groups. As one interviewee stated:

**BB2:** *It’s a bit of both, probably – we have quite a lot of whole staff meetings; two a term per subject that’s directed to everybody, but often teachers have emailed weaknesses or queries that they have so we plug those gaps to everybody because if one asks, you assume that others are wondering too.*

Three interviewees showed that they had ownership in the decisions made regarding whose learning they facilitated in consultation with the SLT, team leaders and external facilitators. An example of this is:

**BB1:** *We have quite a bit as a team in conjunction with our external facilitator and in conjunction with the SLT. I think we would be over ruled if what we found as a team was not where they wanted to go.*

Question five asked: *How much involvement do you have in the performance appraisal of those whose learning you facilitate?* This involvement was varied - learning facilitators had either some involvement in guiding teachers through a cycle of performance inquiry (similar to performance appraisal), had full involvement in the performance appraisal of teachers or had no involvement in the performance appraisal of teachers. These three responses are shown in Table 5.4 below.

**Table 5.4 Question 5: Interview data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some involvement in guiding teachers through a cycle of performance inquiry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full involvement in the appraisal of teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No involvement in the appraisal of teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewees from school B were very clear about having separation between appraisal observations on the one hand and also observations specifically targeted for professional learning. Separating appraisal and professional learning also meant that external facilitators and coaches were not involved in the appraisal process. Interviewee BB2 was involved in the performance appraisal of teachers, although this participant stated that they would not appraise teachers in the targeted learning areas that they were involved with. For example:

BB2: *We do have an unwritten rule that any other observation that has been performed on a teacher cannot be used in appraisal. The SLT don't want any barriers put up. They want teachers to feel really comfortable.*

BB1: *We made a deliberate decision that what we did with our external literacy expert would have nothing to do with performance appraisal and my other role coaching has nothing to do with performance appraisal either.*

School C had created their own system for performance appraisal based upon a continuous cycle of teacher inquiry that involved observations, feedback, feed-forward, goal setting and collecting evidence for a *Professional Personal Portfolio*. It was stated that the on-going nature of the cycle and the ownership teachers had within this created a meaningful process through which teachers addressed their learning needs. This is shown in the following example:

CC2: *It’s not like appraisal is being done to them, they drive themselves, their sources of feedback, it’s really growing people. The appraisal document is an on-going working document – evidence is written throughout the year, it’s not onerous.*

**Process**

**Question six asked:** When you meet with your teacher learner(s) what is the main focus of conversation?

When meeting with their teacher learners, conversation was focused on three areas: reflection on progress, developing skills, knowledge and understanding and on support needs, goals and resources – these data are shown in Table 5.5 overleaf.
Table 5.5 Question 6: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversation involves reflection on progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation is focused on developing skills, knowledge and understanding</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation is focused on support needs, goals and resources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four responses revealed that reflecting on progress was the main focus of conversation when meeting with their teacher learner. This included reflecting on student progress, the teacher’s progress, the leader’s progress and the leader’s team progress. Assessment data, tracking, monitoring and observation were all used as part of the reflection process. The principal from school C met with each teacher in the school and used reflective questioning to gain information relating to the teacher’s progress. For example:

*CC2:* Where they’re at, what they’ve been doing, where they’re going and what are some of the things they’ve learnt by the challenges that they’ve faced. Then I’ll ask them about their personal vision, their goal and their maths inquiry and how they’re working within their learning group.

The reflecting on progress category included reflecting on student progress as well as teacher progress, as one participant stated:

*BB2:* The conversation is mostly around where to next with the students, the assessment and the planning. Although most people I’ve talked to this year the conversation has been around resources.

It was suggested that following reflection of progress and support needs, and conversation focused on goals and resources, learning facilitators would become more deeply involved in conversation focused on the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Reflecting on progress, identifying professional learning needs and satisfying professional learning needs through the development of skills, knowledge and understanding are three key stages of a cyclical process that facilitators use with their teacher learners.
Question seven asked: What are the key features of the process used for professional learning?

Interviewees identified a number of key features of the process used for professional learning: modelling lessons for teachers, observing teachers and feedback to teachers and developing teachers’ leadership skills, as shown in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6 Question 7: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modelling lessons for teachers, observing teachers and providing feedback to teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing teachers’ leadership skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three responses showed that modelling lessons for teachers, observing teachers and providing feedback to teachers were key features of the process used for professional learning. In school B teachers had some ownership over the observation process by deciding on the observation focus. As one interviewee stated:

**BB1:** Teachers write down on an observation form what they would like the literacy team to look at. The external expert and a member of the literacy team then observe and give feedback from the observation.

**BB2:** I might do a bit of teaching that they watch and then they might do a bit of teaching that I watch and then usually after school we sit down and go over what it looks like on paper.

Three responses revealed developing teachers’ leadership skills as a key feature of the professional learning process. Leadership skills were shown as a key feature of the professional learning process by interviewee CC1, as they were responsible for the growth and development of middle leaders. Interviewee BB2 also indicated leadership skills as a key feature of the professional learning process as each member of a professional learning team had responsibility for assisting in the growth and development of new team members.
Question eight asked: How do you know that your teacher learner(s) are making progress?

Interviewees knew that their teacher learners were making progress by receiving feedback from them about their learning, by observation and discussion concerning teaching practice, and by tracking and monitoring students and teachers. These data are shown in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7 Question 8: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher progress known from teachers feeding back about their learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher progress known from observation and discussion of practice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher progress known from tracking and monitoring students and teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five responses showed that observation and discussion concerning teaching practice were ways in which learning facilitators knew that teachers were making progress. Interviewee CC1 stated the importance of observing relationships, taking part in professional discussion and receiving teacher feedback in the development of teachers who were already in leadership roles. As this interviewee stated:

*CC1: Usually at the end of each term we meet at a regular basis and we talk about relationship building, the issues that have come up through the term we’ll discuss and how they handled them and would there be a different way if they did it again, so there’s lots of opportunity for feedback for them, observations for me, just to see how things are going, listening to the conversations.*

Three responses indicated that feedback from teachers about their learning was a way in which facilitators knew that their teacher learners were making progress. Establishing a climate of openness and trust was identified as a factor influencing the effectiveness of this feedback process. Another factor would be the degree to which teachers reflected on and inquired into their own practice. For example:
BB1: Knowing that teachers are making progress can be tricky, we talk a lot; we’ve worked really hard to build up a climate of trust, so teachers can say openly what is and isn’t working for them.

AA2: Some very active teachers will get back to me and question further and clarify. I also have a group of teachers that I feel it’s very hard to make progress with; just to shift them from current practice.

Five responses revealed that tracking and monitoring students and teachers was a way in which facilitators knew that their teacher learners were making progress. In the case of students, facilitators followed target students through assessment data and workbooks. In the case of teachers, tracking and monitoring teacher comments within student books and following planning for target students was a way in which progress was known.

Question nine asked: How do you ensure that the professional learning process relates to improved student outcomes?

Interviewees indicated a number of ways in which they ensured the professional learning process related to student outcomes. These were: by sharing expertise and growing leaders, by promoting quality, belief, trust, ownership and accountability, by following teacher and student progress and by aligning professional learning with student data and teacher goals. These are shown in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8 Question 9: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning related to student outcomes by sharing expertise and growing leaders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning related to student outcomes by developing quality professional learning, belief in professional learning, trust, ownership and accountability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning related to student outcomes by following student and teacher progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning related to student outcomes by aligning professional learning with student data and teacher goals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four responses indicated that following teacher and student progress through data tracking, monitoring and observation ensured that the professional learning process related to student outcomes. As one interviewee stated:

CC1: We’re constantly monitoring how people are going and what they’re doing, we’re going into classrooms as part of the SLT and observing and doing observations.

By following teacher progress through data tracking, monitoring and observation, learning facilitators were balancing tensions between ensuring teacher accountability and developing a trust climate were teachers had some ownership over the professional learning process.

Three responses revealed that by developing quality professional learning, belief in professional learning, trust, ownership and accountability learning facilitators ensured that the professional learning process related to improved student outcomes. For example:

AA1: At the end of the day as much as we want outcomes we have to get teachers actually believing in what we’re presenting for any change to happen that will affect every outcome.

BB2: At the end of the day you have to trust that the teacher has actually done what they have said that they were going to do.

CC2: It’s got to be like dominoes, if you’re putting quality learning in front of teachers and they’re taking it on board and they feel like they have ownership of their journey and they’re getting that learning fulfilled they’re actually gaining knowledge and it’s having a positive impact upon their practice then it’s like a domino, student outcomes will improve.

CC2: We’re looking for accountability ‘what’s changed in your practice? Tell me about it, show it to me’.
Three responses showed that sharing expertise and feeding back on actions for improved student outcomes ensured that the professional learning process related to student outcomes. One interviewee from school B stated that this took place through a digital database that could be accessed by all teachers. As this interviewee stated:

**BB1: Teachers note their actions for improved student outcomes in a digital file on the staff drive available for all teachers to look at – it’s very open.**

It is suggested that a number of interconnections existed between these five sub-themes. For example, by ensuring that teachers had some ownership over the professional learning process the alignment between professional learning, student data and teacher goals was more easily achieved. It is also suggested that teachers took more ownership of quality professional learning they believed in and that through true reflection and inquiry in to practice ownership of professional learning was developed.

Question ten asked: What barriers (organisational or otherwise) influence the quality of the professional learning process?

Interviewees identified a number of barriers that influenced the quality of the professional learning process: not having time to process and implement professional learning, the undue stress and tiredness of teachers, lack of personal accountability for progress with professional learning and lack of teacher ability within the professional learning process. Four sub-themes emerged from the data and these are shown in Table 5.9 below.

**Table 5.9 Question 10: Interview data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers not having time to process and implement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The undue stress and tiredness of teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of personal accountability for progress with</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of teacher ability within the professional learning process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All interviewees revealed lack of time for teachers to process and implement professional learning as a barrier influencing the quality of the professional learning
process. Interviewee CC1 stated that time became an important consideration influencing the professional learning process during teachers’ report writing and interviewee BB2 stated that beginning new PD initiatives too soon influenced the quality of the current professional learning process. For example:

AA1: There are always more needs than there is time to fulfil them and particularly if you wanted to be taken more seriously by the staff. I think that if you overload people too much, they actually end up learning way less.

BB2: There’s so much that teachers do in their general day. So sometimes you have a fantastic meeting with someone and they’ve got all these great ideas and then six months down the track they’ll say ‘I’ve not done anything. It got put to the side because some new PD started’.

Interviewee CC2 referred to the use of time as a potential barrier to the professional learning process when linked to the issue of personal accountability. For example:

CC2: It’s constant tension between knowing where you want to go, allowing enough time, but making sure that the time you allow is used wisely because you can’t be sitting on everyone’s shoulder. So it’s about putting in accountability measures where people take personal accountability and they feel responsible for that.

Five responses revealed that undue stress and tiredness of teachers was a barrier to the professional learning process. Interviewees from school B commented that undue stress was created through teachers having perceived their formal observations as threatening. This had become much less of a barrier since the number of leaders observing teachers had been reduced and the observers had become aware of over critiquing through teacher feed-back:

BB1: Last year we had one teacher observing, one member of the literacy team, one member of the SLT and our external expert and that was a little off putting for people. Doing it the way we do now in our second year is more relationship building.
BB2: You don’t want to over critique or over analyse someone’s teaching style because at the end of the day you’re not just observing their maths teaching, you’re observing them as a person as well, their style of teaching.

Three responses showed lack of teacher ability within the professional learning process as a barrier that influenced the quality of the process. Teacher ability concerned teacher knowledge, skill, confidence and mind-set and drew attention to the need for specific systems for the induction of new staff in to the school. As one interviewee stated:

CC1: New teachers coming and going so we have to be quite mindful of where their mind is, about what their mind-set is like because they haven’t gone through the process that we went through as a staff, so that was a barrier.

Question eleven asked: What professional learning practices and processes are the best practices and processes within your organisation?

Interviewees identified a number of practices and processes as being the best practices and processes for professional learning within their organisations: practical professional learning connected to student data and classroom practice, practices and processes involving communication and developing a culture of trust, that included a shared vision, shared values and a shared purpose. These data are shown in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10 Question 11: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical professional learning connected to student data and classroom practice is a best process for professional learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultures that allow for quality communication to take place are the best for professional learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four responses revealed that cultures that allow for quality communication to take place are the best for professional learning. Learning conversations, established cultures of trust and the structure of learning teams were linked to the quality of communication. Listening to staff feedback and staff identifying what they wanted were also indicated as important aspects within the communication category. As one interviewee stated:
BB1: Our school environment and culture allow for good communication to take place and the structure of learning teams disseminating into syndicates contributes to the effectiveness of communication.

Three responses signified practical professional learning connected to student data and classroom practice as a best process for professional learning. As the following two interviewees stated:

AA2: I just think linking learning back to what’s in teachers’ classrooms, using their own data so that it’s relevant is best.

BB2: I think that the best thing is to listen to what your staff want and then apply it to a workshop rather than a lecture.

Professional learning relationships

Question twelve asked: How would you describe the relationship you have with your teacher learner(s)?

The relationship between interviewees and their teacher learners was described in a variety of ways: open and honest, equal, and trusting and caring – as shown in Table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11 Question 12: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is open and honest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is equal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is trusting and caring</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five responses revealed that the relationship that learning facilitators had with their teacher learners was open and honest. For example:

AA2: I think a lot of teachers are all very willing to come up and ask questions and are quite open. If they’ve got any questions or concerns a majority of teachers would be very open with me.

CC1: I’d like to think that the relationship is open. The hardest part about that role with learning and developing and professional learning is relationships and I think
that you can’t actually grow people unless you’re in a relationship where it’s beneficial for you both.

**CC2: If you really want to engage with people in a deep way you’ve got to be open and honest to feedback yourself.**

It was suggested that being open and honest in receiving feedback from teachers enabled deep engagement and growth to take place, and enabled the relationship to transcend the more traditional relationships associated with a hierarchical roles.

Four interviewees signified that the relationship that had with their teacher learners was based upon equality. As one interviewee stated:

**BB2: I hope that teachers see us as not experts but assisters, helpers, colleagues, people that assist rather than people who come down from over the top.**

It was suggested that equal relationships were more effective than unequal or hierarchical relationships in supporting the professional learning of teachers. It was also suggested that equal relationships provided opportunities for open and honest communication to take place.

**Question thirteen asked: How are decisions made about ways to improve student outcomes?**

Decisions concerning ways to improve student outcomes were made in a number of ways within each of the case study schools: collaboratively within meetings, from student and teacher feedback and observing teaching practice, and made using student data. These three sub-themes are shown in Table 5.12 below.

**Table 5.12 Question 13: Interview data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decisions are made collaboratively within meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions are made from student and teacher feedback and observing teaching practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions are made using student data</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four responses signified that decisions about ways to improve student outcomes were made collaboratively during discussion within team, curriculum or syndicate meetings. For example:

AA2: I guess in the leadership meetings there will be a lot of discussion about the way we do things - we would bring a lot to the leadership meetings and have discussions there and refine our systems. The team leaders meet with SLT fortnightly – a lot of the discussion will be around teacher practice.

BB1: Decisions are made in the curriculum teams about where we’re going to go and then that’s fed back in to the syndicate teams and most of the people who are in the syndicate are part of a curriculum team especially the more experienced teachers, so decisions are made there.

Four interviewees revealed that decisions about ways to improve student outcomes were made using student data. For example:

BB2: Our principal gives us quite a lot of guidance about trends that have been reported to the board. So, we look at the trends and from those have a target group of students and communicate that to everyone and focus in on those students.

CC1: At the end of the term I expect the Whanau leaders to collate data from the previous term, analyse that data and then share that data at our very first meeting with the rest of the teachers.

It was suggested that student data provided the evidence base from which the collaborative decision making process effectively functioned. As one participant stated:

CC2: Very collaboratively, data driven, evidence based, we have regular milestones where we gather – we have regular team meetings where we look at data for targeted children.

Three responses indicated that decisions were made from students and teachers feeding back about their needs and from observations of practice. As one interviewee stated:
AA1: Here we embrace and ask for input at all levels, so we would ask students what they think; we ask teachers what they think they need. We then do observations, we being management observe and see what we think people need and so it’s a collective of those things.

It is suggested that there are two consequences in facilitators having branched across all three sub-themes in the decision making process. Firstly, those people with a stake in the decision had some ownership of it and secondly, through collaborative discussion, decisions from interpretive analysis of student data were more reliable.

Question fourteen asked: How much influence does your teacher learner(s) have on your teaching and your students’ outcomes?

All interviewees stated that their teacher learners had influenced their teaching and their students’ outcomes. In answering this question interviewees indicated how and when they were influenced: through observing teacher’s practice and their classroom environments and through sharing planning and student books. These responses are shown in Table 5.13 below.

Table 5.13 Question 14: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching influenced through observing teachers practice and their classroom environments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching influenced through sharing planning and student books</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five responses signified that their teaching was influenced from observing their teacher learner’s practice and their classroom environments. Across the three case study schools observations took place as part of performance appraisal or as part of the process for professional learning independent of performance appraisal. As one interviewee stated:

CC1: I’m very privileged to observe in a lot of different rooms and pick up all sorts of wonderful ideas on what people do well, so that’s had an influence on my teaching.
Two responses revealed that facilitators’ teaching was influenced through teachers sharing their planning and student books with them. As one interviewee stated:

*BB2: I guess there’s always an influence. When you go into another teacher’s classroom there’re always things that you’re going to pick up. I sometimes look at their planning, because they don’t think that it’s good, but it’s great and I get ideas from it and I get them to explain how they are planning and why they don’t think it’s great. Every time I work with a teacher I get something that I could probably try in my room.*

One trend suggested by these sub-themes was that facilitator learning was influenced when they observed their teacher’s practice and their classroom environments. Performance appraisal provided one opportunity for facilitators to observe their teacher learners and as part of this process opportunities were also provided for professional discussion and feedback. The four-minute walk-through, practiced in school C, involved a group of teachers walking through a classroom for a short duration of approximately four minutes while a lesson was in progress. This created opportunities for all teachers to observe other teachers’ practice, with discussion taking place within each ‘walk-through’ group following the observation. It is suggested that, when organised strategically within an open, honest and trusting environments, observations had the potential to benefit all teachers’ professional learning and consequently had a beneficial influence upon student outcomes.

**Question fifteen asked: In what ways, if any, are you challenged by your learner(s) personal and / or professional values?**

Interviewees indicated two ways in which they were challenged by the personal and professional values of their learners: by the learners’ resistance to change; and by their passive participation in professional learning. Interviewees also revealed that they were not challenged by the personal or professional values of their teacher learners because all differences were valued within the established culture of the school. This is shown in Table 5.14 overleaf.
Table 5.14 Question 15: Interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent sub-themes</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenged by learners resistance to change and passive participation in professional learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No challenge, as all differences are valued</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two responses showed that facilitators were challenged by the learners’ resistance to change and by their passive participation in professional learning. As one interviewee stated:

*AA1: I get challenged quite a lot, in fact that’s probably one of the struggles of the job, is that I feel if I’m putting my best foot forward and putting all this time preparing something amazing that they should actually want to hear it or participate in it, but of course you realise over time what’s a priority to me is not necessarily a priority to someone else.***

Interviewee AA2 stated that when frustrated over a teacher’s resistance to change they reflected on their own performance in facilitating the professional learning and reorganised the professional learning process to provide clear and specific steps for the teacher to follow.

In school C teachers had ownership over the school’s core values by having decided on the values and then having ‘unpacked’ them to find shared meanings. Interviewee CC2 commented that this had set the school’s cultural foundations and formed the basis from which potential challenges to values were addressed. The school was open to challenge and welcomed different points of view as it valued being a truly shared organisation. As this interviewee stated:

*CC2: Even though we may have come from totally different backgrounds and totally different lives, if you work here and you’re on this bus then those are the core values you live by. We took a whole year to unpack what those actually meant.***

Interviewee BB1 stated that having an organisational culture that was open to challenge, where there was shared discussion about differences in values, enabled teachers to grow and develop. For example:
BB1: We talk quite a lot as a staff and I think it’s always good when people question why. I think we’re a school where people don’t mind challenging or asking questions, which is good, that’s what you want. I think sometimes for younger teachers who are beginning to be leaders it’s quite hard to go into another room where somebody does something quite different from you and to differentiate between effectiveness of practice and just different practice. That’s why we should all be in each other’s classrooms, to see that different is good.

Interviewees gave two reasons why they were not challenged by the values of teacher learners. Firstly, all those working within the organisation had shared ownership and a shared understanding of the school’s core values and secondly, the established culture within the school welcomed differences in values and had processes that enabled open discussion about these differences.

Refining the sub-themes

In all, thirty-nine specific sub-themes were identified from the interview data. These sub-themes were then grouped into nine themes, according to how each sub-theme related to the subject of professional learning. This was achieved by identifying the subject of the sub-theme in relation to the question being asked. These sub-themes were then grouped together to form a theme. For example, the theme of alignment was developed from the following sub-themes:

- Professional learning related to student outcomes by aligning professional learning with student data and teacher goals;
- Professional learning related to student outcomes by following student and teacher progress;
- Practical professional learning connected to student data and classroom practice is a best process for professional learning;
- Professional learning related to student outcomes by sharing expertise and growing leaders; and
- Professional learning related to student outcomes by developing quality professional learning, belief in professional learning, trust, ownership and accountability
The thirty-nine interview sub-themes are presented by question in Table 5.15 overleaf. The table is divided into three sections that relate to the question number, the sub-theme and the theme. An overview of the process used for the refinement and analysis of interview data is shown in Figure 5.2, where interview data were grouped into sub-themes, which were then grouped into themes that related to a particular research aim.

Figure 5.2 Process used for the refinement and analysis of interview data
Table 5.15 Question sub-themes and their related themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>In school professional learning with an external expert facilitator</th>
<th>Enhancing capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Learning facilitators chose to take on the role</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Enjoy working with people</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Ownership in consultation with other leaders</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Some involvement in guiding teachers through a cycle of performance inquiry</td>
<td>Enhancing capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>Conversation involves reflection on progress</td>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>Modelling lessons for teachers, observing teachers and providing feedback to teachers</td>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>Teacher progress known from teachers feeding back about their learning</td>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>Professional learning related to student outcomes by sharing expertise and growing leaders</td>
<td>Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>Teachers not having time to process and implement professional learning</td>
<td>Barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>Practical professional learning connected to student data and classroom practice is a best process for professional learning</td>
<td>Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>The relationship is open and honest</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>Decisions are made collaboratively within meetings</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>Teaching influenced through observing teachers and their classroom environments</td>
<td>Enhancing capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>Challenged by learners resistance to change and passive participation in professional learning</td>
<td>Barriers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A re-organisation of the sub-themes into themes is outlined in Table 5.16 overleaf.
The table is divided into three sections that reflect the research aims:

i) to identify the ways in which third to fifth year teachers are currently supported in sustaining their professional learning;

ii) to identify the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching; and

iii) to identify what needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching.

Following this table, these research aims are used as headings for the summary of findings.

Table 5.16 Linking specific sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Specific sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Culture        | Cultures that allow for quality communication to take place are the best for professional learning  
                     No challenge, as all differences are valued                                             |
| Relationships  | The relationship is open and honest                                                
                     The relationship is equal                                                        
                     The relationship is trusting and caring                                              |
| Motivation     | Enjoy working with people                                                           |
| Reflective practices | Conversation involves reflection on progress                                      
                     Conversation is focused on support needs, goals and resources                      
                     Modelling lessons for teachers, observing teachers and providing feedback to teachers 
                     Decisions are made from student and teacher feedback and observing teaching practice 
                     Teacher progress known from teachers feeding back about their learning              
                     Teacher progress known from observation and discussion of practice                |
| Alignment      | Professional learning related to student outcomes by following student and teacher progress 
                     Practical professional learning connected to student data and classroom practice is a best process for professional learning |
                     Professional learning related to student outcomes by sharing expertise and growing leaders |
                     Professional learning related to student outcomes by developing quality professional learning, belief in professional learning, trust, ownership and accountability |
                     Professional learning related to student outcomes by aligning professional learning with student data and teacher goals |
| Ownership      | Ownership in consultation with other leaders                                       
                     Ownership shared with teachers                                                      
                     Learning facilitators chose to take on the role                                      
                     Decisions are made collaboratively within meetings                                     |
| Enhancing capability | In school professional learning with an external expert facilitator                    
                     Off-site workshops, conferences and symposiums                                        
                     Post graduate diploma or Masters in education                                         
                     Previous role and leadership experience                                               
                     Some involvement in guiding teachers through a cycle of performance inquiry           
                     Full involvement in the appraisal of teachers                                         
                     No involvement in the appraisal of teachers                                           
                     Conversation is focused on developing skills, knowledge and understanding           
                     Developing teachers’ leadership skills                                                
                     Teaching influenced through observing teachers and their classroom environments    
                     Teaching influenced through sharing planning and student books                        |
| Inquiry        | Decisions are made using student data                                                
                     Teacher progress known from tracking and monitoring students and teachers             |
| Barriers       | Teachers not having time to process and implement professional learning               
                     The undue stress and tiredness of teachers                                           
                     Lack of personal accountability for progress with professional learning              
                     Lack of teacher ability within the professional learning process                      
                     Challenged by learners resistance to change and passive participation in professional learning |
Support

Support for teachers’ professional learning concerned the themes of culture, relationships and motivation. It was suggested that support was experienced in trusting and inclusive cultures and where levels of equality existed between people in relationships that were open and honest. Facilitators described their relationships as being open, honest, trusting and caring. This translated to teachers’ descriptions of their relationships with facilitators as being collegial, comfortable, friendly and respectful. Unlike teachers, facilitators did not reveal their relationships as challenging, although it was suggested that teachers were positively challenged as part of their professional learning. Facilitators indicated that they were motivated intrinsically in leading teachers learning.

Best practices

Best practices for supporting teachers with their professional learning included the themes of reflective practices, alignment, ownership, enhancing capability and inquiry. Facilitators stated that a variety of reflective practices were used to support teachers in their professional learning. These included modelling, observation, feedback and teachers’ continual reflection on their own learning.

The second theme of alignment concerned the practices that strengthened the links between professional learning and student outcomes. These included practical professional learning experiences that connected to classroom practice and student data, and teachers believing in the process of professional learning.

The third theme concerned ownership over professional learning. Facilitators revealed that they had shared ownership with teachers or had complete ownership over professional learning in consultation with other leaders. Facilitators also stated that decisions relating to professional learning were made collaboratively within meetings and that ownership was shared in this way.

Within the fourth theme of enhancing capability leaders indicated that learning from experts external to the school was a best practice for professional learning. Facilitators also revealed that observing teachers’ practice, teachers’ classroom environments and
sharing feedback influenced their own professional learning. For facilitators, **enhancing capability** also involved focusing conversation on teachers’ skills, knowledge and understanding and developing teachers’ leadership abilities.

Within the fifth theme of **inquiry** facilitators revealed that the strategic use of student data and the tracking and monitoring of student progress were best practices used in the professional learning process. As part of this process, facilitators also tracked and monitored teacher progress, the data from which was sometimes used during reflection.

**Improving professional learning**

Improving professional learning included the theme of **barriers**. It was suggested that in order to improve professional learning these barriers needed to be removed and replaced by practices and processes that enabled improvement to take place. These included: the removal of time constraints and the creation of opportunities for teachers to process and implement professional learning, and enabling personal accountability for the translation of professional learning into the classroom.

**CONCLUSION**

A number of specific sub-themes were developed from the data that articulated learning facilitators’ views and experiences of support for professional learning. These sub-themes were organised into nine themes, with each theme relating to one of three research aims. An overview of how the facilitators’ views and experiences related to the research aims was also presented.

A full examination of these themes will be carried out in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. Chapter Six will consider the data from the cross case analysis.
Chapter Six

CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter concerns the third stage of data analysis, - the identification of similarities and differences in the experiences of the third to fifth year teachers as compared to the learning facilitators in relation to the themes developed in Chapters Four and Five (represented in bold in Figure 6.1 below). By comparing and contrasting these experiences, the validity of answers to the three research questions is improved.

The matching of sub-themes within each theme is discussed and supported by tables that indicate commonality in the data. Eight common themes from the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews are analysed. Data from the remaining two themes of professional learning facilitators and motivation will contribute to the discussion in Chapter Seven. The analysis presents each case (A, B and C), with findings from the document analysis also included.

Figure 6.1 Stage three: Cross case data analysis and discussion
STAGE 3: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

This third stage of data analysis will answer the following research questions:

- How are teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching currently supported in sustaining their professional learning?
- What are the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?
- What needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?

Document analysis

Performance management documentation was provided by senior leaders from each of the case study schools. Documentation was analysed using a two-part analysis schedule, which was structured into two sets of questions these being - the principles of professional learning and the practices of professional learning (refer to Appendix C). The purpose of the document analysis was to collect extra data that related to each schools professional learning policy. These data contributed to the validity of the overall ‘best practice’ findings from the focus groups and interviews. The analysis schedule was focused on the second research question concerning best practices for professional learning as gleaning answers to the first and third research questions from the document analysis method would have been too difficult, as these documents had not been developed for purposes of research.

Phrases from each performance management document were coded and grouped according to general sub-themes that reflected ‘best practices’. Four themes that related to the second research question concerning the best practices for professional learning were established from the document analysis: reflective practices, ownership, enhancing capability and inquiry. Document analysis data is presented with each case. A model of the process used for the refinement and analysis of document data is shown in Figure 6.2 (overleaf), where document data were grouped into sub-themes, which were then grouped into themes that related to the ‘best practices’ research question.
Figure 6.2 Process used for the refinement and analysis of document data.

**School A**
The matching of one or more emergent sub-themes within each theme is indicated in Table 6.2 overleaf. For example: for the theme of reflection relating to the second research question both teachers and facilitators stated that *reflecting* on practice enabled progress with professional learning to be measured. Analysis and discussion relating to these similarities and differences between teachers and facilitators experiences is then presented by theme.

**Document analysis**
The professional learning policy documents from school A concerned the school’s process for performance appraisal. The specific sub-themes gleaned from the appraisal documentation and their related themes are shown in Table 6.1 overleaf. The documentary analysis provided a secondary source of data concerning the second research question relating to best practices.
Table 6.1 Linking specific sub-themes from documentary analysis: School A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Specific sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Reflective practice**    | • Teachers reflect on teaching practice through the process of appraisal and self-review  
                                 • Teachers reflect on their practice from student feedback  
                                 • Reflective questioning and discussion in group meetings supports teachers professional learning                                                                                                           |
| **Ownership**              | • Teachers identify their own professional learning goals or needs  
                                 • Appraisal groups have some ownership over the professional learning process within the constraints of the appraisal process  
                                 • Appraisal leader oversees appraisal group learning  
                                 • Whole school Professional Development (PD) decisions made by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in consultation with curriculum leaders and external facilitators  
                                 • Professional learning partnerships decided by the SLT                                                                                                  |
| **Enhancing capability**   | • Professional learning partnerships within appraisal groups  
                                 • Teachers professional learning supported through appraisal observation and feedback  
                                 • Teachers professional learning supported with whole staff PD meetings  
                                 • Classroom release time for provisionally registered teachers  
                                 • Teachers experienced the same professional learning processes and practices as provisionally registered and fully registered teachers                                                                 |
| **Inquiry**                | • Inquiry into student learning through assessment policy; running records and assessment data  
                                 • Inquiry into student learning through student feedback                                                                                                                                                              |

Table 6.2 Alignment of themes from school A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Theme</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>No apparent match</td>
<td>No apparent match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>No apparent match</td>
<td>No apparent match</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best Practices Theme</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>No apparent match</td>
<td>No apparent match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing capability</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support
There was no apparent close match between third to fifth year teachers and learning facilitators concerning the theme of relationships and neither group made reference to school culture having supported or not supported third to fifth year teachers with their professional learning.

Third to fifth year teachers revealed that the relationships they had with their facilitators were comfortable, friendly and challenging. Facilitators described their relationship with third to fifth year teachers as being open and honest, equal, trusting and caring. The different views and experiences of these groups regarding their relationships suggest a difference in perception between third to fifth year teachers and learning facilitators that could be reduced by teachers communicating in more open, honest and trusting ways. Such communication would take place within cultures that reflected these values.

Best practices
Four out of the five themes concerning best practices indicated a match between third to fifth year teachers and learning facilitators’ experiences. There was no apparent match between these two groups relating to the theme of ownership.

Reflection
Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators identified reflective practices as best practices for professional learning. Both groups stated that reflecting on practice enabled progress with professional learning to be assessed. Reflection enabled the teacher’s needs, goals and next steps for professional learning to be identified. Facilitators revealed that modelling lessons, observation, feedback and discussion were used as practices within the reflective process and that reflection was one way in which decisions relating to teachers’ professional learning were made. Reflection took place within appraisal group meetings where a formal set of reflective questions, relating to classroom practice, were used as a process for professional learning and improvement to classroom practice. Student feedback was analysed within appraisal groups meetings:
There’s a list of reflective questions, you talk about your target children, talk about what you’ve done and where you want to go next and then they will ask reflective questions and some people might feed in with things they’ve done in the past. (Participant A1: Focus group discussion).

Alignment
Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators showed that alignment between professional learning and student outcomes was brought about through following student progress. For third to fifth year teachers this involved the analysis of assessment data from target students. Facilitators revealed that professional learning was aligned to student outcomes through developing quality professional learning that was practical and connected to classroom practice. Although, third to fifth year teachers revealed non-practical professional learning process and irrelevant content of professional learning as being barriers that influenced the quality of their professional learning process.

Facilitators revealed that linking professional learning to student outcomes required teachers to believe in their professional learning, to trust the professional learning process, and to have some ownership and a degree personal accountability within the professional learning process:

At the end of the day as much as we want outcomes we have to get teachers actually believing in what we’re presenting for any change to happen that will affect every outcome. (Interviewee AA1: Semi-structured interviews).

Ownership
Although there was no close match within the theme of ownership, a difference revealed that facilitators felt that they shared ownership over decisions made relating to professional learning, while teachers felt they only had some say within the professional learning process. Third to fifth year teachers revealed that they identified their own learning goals and needs, but did not feel that they had ownership within the professional learning process. Facilitators signified that some decisions relating to professional learning were made collaboratively within meetings with teachers, and in these situations perceived shared ownership with teachers.
The SLT, in consultation with curriculum leaders and external facilitators, had *ownership* over decisions relating to whole school PD that concerned whole school targets. Following whole school PD, professional learning partnerships and appraisal groups were decided by the SLT. The document analysis indicated that appraisal groups had some *ownership* over the professional learning process within the constraints of the appraisal process. It was suggested that appraisal leaders had an influence over the degree of *ownership* experienced by the appraisal group members.

**Enhancing capability**

Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators had similar views and experiences relating to the theme of *enhancing capability*. When teachers and facilitators met during whole school PD, the conversation focused on content knowledge:

*When we have our whole staff professional learning it’s more of a seminar type thing, then we sometimes break off in to groups and do it at a team level. It’s usually quite focused on the content that we’ve been doing, such as writing assessment.* (Participant A2: Focus group discussion).

During appraisal group meetings conversation involved feedback and discussion relating to classroom practice and pedagogy. Both groups agreed that observing expert teachers model lessons was a best practice for enhancing teacher capability. Opportunities for observation and feedback were organised within performance appraisal meetings where learning partnerships were also established.

**Inquiry**

Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators viewed the analysis of assessment data and student work as a best practice for professional learning. Teachers revealed that one way they knew that they were making progress with their professional learning was through the observation of their target students. Inquiry into student learning and the analysis of running records, assessment data and student feedback was part of the schools assessment policy. For facilitators the theme of *inquiry* related to the tracking and monitoring of both teachers and students:
I will get teachers as actively involved at looking at their own student data and making decisions about their students, trying to keep it as inquiry based as possible - that is related to students. (Interviewee AA2: Semi-structured interviews).

**Improving professional learning**

**Barriers**

Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators indicated teachers not having time to process and implement professional learning as a *barrier* to professional learning. Although no other matches existed within this theme links between sub-themes can be made. For example, teachers who perceived having no *ownership* of professional learning can be linked to teachers having low levels of personal responsibility for their professional learning. It was suggested that teachers who had *ownership* of their professional learning through participation in decision-making felt more personally responsible for transferring their professional learning into the classroom, as they had greater ‘buy in’ regarding the professional learning process. A second link concerned facilitators who were challenged by the teachers’ resistance to change, while teachers were challenged by the teaching style of the facilitator. It was suggested that by adopting particular teaching styles facilitators encountered less resistance to change.

**Conclusion**

Within school A both third to fifth year teacher and learning facilitator experiences of support for professional learning had no perceived connection to school culture. For some third to fifth year teachers the quality of relationships between them and their learning facilitators were seen as a barrier to professional learning as was the lack of ownership that these teachers had over decision making that related to their professional learning. However, the best practices of inquiry into student learning, aligning professional learning to student outcomes, reflection on practice and observation supported teachers with their professional learning.
School B
The matching of one or more emergent sub-themes within each theme is indicated in Table 6.4 overleaf. For example: for the theme of culture relating to the first research question both teachers and facilitators revealed that differences in personal and professional values were respected and given equal value within the school’s culture. Analysis and discussion relating to the similarities and differences between teachers and facilitators’ views and experiences within themes is then presented by theme.

Document analysis
The professional learning policy documents from school B concerned the school’s process for performance appraisal and the school’s use of coaching partnerships. The specific sub-themes gleaned from the appraisal documentation and their related themes are shown in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Linking specific sub-themes from documentary analysis: school B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Specific sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Reflective practice | • Teachers reflect on teaching practice through the process of appraisal and self-review  
• Teachers reflect through coaching partnerships  
• Teachers supported with feedback from observation  
• Teachers self-reflection and review supports their learning |
| Ownership       | • Teachers identify their own professional learning goals or needs  
• Professional learning process co-constructed within coaching partnerships  
• Decisions regarding PD made within coaching partnerships  
• Whole school Professional Development (PD) decisions made by SLT in consultation with curriculum leaders and external facilitators  
• Professional learning partnerships decided by SLT  
• Professional learning practice decided in collaboration with coach |
| Enhancing capability | • Coaching partnerships  
• Teachers professional learning supported observing others  
• Teachers professional learning supported with whole staff PD meetings  
• Classroom release time for provisionally registered teachers  
• Teachers experienced the same professional learning processes and practices as provisionally registered and fully registered teachers |
| Inquiry         | • Tools used to assess all students in relation to school targets |

100
Table 6.4 Alignment of themes from school B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing capability</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improving professional learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support**

**Culture**
There was a close match between the views and experiences of teachers and facilitators relating to the theme of *culture*. Both teachers and facilitators signified that differences in personal and professional values were respected and given equal value within the school’s culture. It was suggested that the school promoted a sense of equality throughout the professional learning process and encouraged communication where individual teachers felt the need to express a view or concern.

**Relationships**
Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators viewed and experienced their relationships as being equal. It was suggested that this close match was linked to the wider school culture, which valued equality and promoted this value through its processes and practices related to professional learning:
We talk quite a lot as a staff and I think it’s always good when people question why – I think we’re a school where people don’t mind challenging or asking questions, which is good, that’s what you want. (Participant B1: Focus group discussion).

**Best practices**

**Reflection**
Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators viewed and experienced teachers’ reflection on classroom practice, through which teachers’ established their next steps for professional learning, as a best practice for professional learning. Facilitators revealed that teacher progress was known through observation, and that this provided valuable opportunities for reflective discussion and feedback. It was also suggested that teachers’ reflection on classroom practice took place while facilitators modelled lessons.

**Alignment**
There was a close match between the views and experiences of third to fifth year teachers and facilitators within the theme of alignment. Both groups stated that professional learning linked to student outcomes through developing quality professional learning experiences that related to effective pedagogy. One practice that contributed towards alignment was sharing best practice digitally:

*Information is shared on in a digital folder, which anyone can look at. Which is great, because you can go in and look at the goals that teachers have set for themselves and what they’re doing.* (Interviewee BB1: Semi-structured interviews).

In addition teachers and facilitators stated that professional learning linked to student outcomes through teacher accountability. This was achieved through teachers completing follow-up tasks from professional learning sessions and through classroom practice being observed informally:

*Quite often there’ll be some kind of task or an instruction about what you need to do after any kind of PD.* (Participant B3: Focus group discussion).
We’ll have informal observations where some members of the SLT will pop in at any point in time. They want to see and they do see what we’ve learnt in our practice. (Participant B4: Focus group discussion).

Ownership
A close match occurred in the theme of ownership as both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators felt they had a degree of shared ownership over decisions relating to professional learning. Facilitators signified that they had ownership over decisions relating to professional learning in consultation with other leaders or had shared ownership with teachers during collaborative meetings:

With the coaching, we got to choose whom we worked with, they showed us who the coaches were and said ‘who would you like to work with?’ (Participant B4: Focus group discussion).

It was suggested that teachers were more likely to ‘buy-in’ and engage with professional learning experiences in which they had a degree of ownership.

Enhancing capability
Two matches occurred between third to fifth year teachers and facilitators relating to the theme of enhancing capability. The first match revealed that developing leaders was a best practice for professional learning. Teachers indicated that leadership opportunities were provided once they had become fully registered and that taking on a suitably challenging role within a curriculum team was one way in which leadership skills were developed.

The second match related to a two-way process of observation. Teachers stated that observing experts was a best practice for professional learning, while facilitators revealed that their teaching was influenced through observing other teachers. Teachers also identified facilitators’ feedback following an observation, as a best practice within the professional learning process.
Inquiry

Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators indicated inquiry into student learning as a best practice for professional learning. The analysis of student assessment data, tracking and monitoring were viewed and experienced as being fundamental to the inquiry process. Facilitators also identified the tracking and monitoring of teacher progress as a best practice for professional learning. It was suggested that inquiry into student learning had taken place to inform the reflective process and to ensure alignment between professional learning and student outcomes.

Improving professional learning

Barriers

Not having time to process and implement professional learning was shown to be a barrier to professional learning by both teachers and facilitators:

The biggest barrier is time. There’s so much that teachers do in their general day. So sometimes you have a fantastic meeting with someone and they’ve got all these great ideas and then six months down the track they’ll say I’ve not done anything, it got put to the side because some new PD started. (Interviewee BB2: Semi-structured interviews).

Although no other matches existed within this theme, additional links can be made. For example, undue stress and the tiredness of teachers indicated by facilitators as a barrier to professional learning can be linked to teachers not having time to process and implement professional learning.

Conclusion

Within school B a culture of shared values, equality and ownership underpinned third to fifth year teachers’ support for professional learning. In particular, equality was a value experienced within the relationships between third to fifth year teachers and those who facilitated their learning. The best practices of leadership, inquiry into student learning, pedagogical learning aligned to student outcomes, reflection on practice and observation contributed towards the support experienced by third to fifth year teachers with their professional learning.
School C

The matching of one or more emergent sub-themes within each theme is indicated in Table 6.6 overleaf. For example: for the theme of barriers concerning the third research question, an emergent sub-theme for both teachers and facilitators concerned teachers not having time to process and implement professional learning. Analysis and discussion relating to the similarities and differences between teachers and facilitators views and experiences within themes is then presented by theme.

**Document analysis**

The professional learning policy documents from school C concerned a cyclical model of teacher inquiry and were analysed in the presence of the principal who answered the document analysis questions with direct reference to the documentation. The sub-themes gleaned from the appraisal documentation and their related themes are shown in Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5 Linking specific sub-themes from documentary analysis: school C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Specific categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Reflective practice  | • Teachers reflect using a learning conversation log  
                      • Teachers use reflective questioning and discussion in learning groups or pods  
                      • Teachers supported with feedback from observation  
                      • Teachers self-reflection and review supports their learning  |
| Ownership            | • Teachers identify their own professional learning goals or needs  
                      • Professional learning groups have ownership over the professional learning process  
                      • Decisions regarding PD made within learning groups or pods  
                      • Whole school Professional Development (PD) decisions made by SLT in consultation with curriculum leaders and external facilitators  
                      • Professional learning partnerships decided by SLT  
                      • Professional learning practices organised within groups or learning pods  |
| Enhancing capability | • Coaching partnerships  
                      • Learning groups or pods made up of teachers with similar needs  
                      • Teachers professional learning supported observing others  
                      • Teachers professional learning supported with whole staff PD meetings  
                      • Presentation of progress as personal accountability  
                      • Classroom release time for provisionally registered teachers  
                      • Teachers experienced the same professional learning processes and practices as provisionally registered and fully registered teachers  
                      • University partnership programmes  |
| Inquiry              | • Assessment policy with running records and assessment data  |
Table 6.6 Alignment of themes from school C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing capability</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support**

**Culture**

There was a close match between the views and experiences of teachers and facilitators relating to the theme of *culture*. Both teachers and facilitators signified that differences in personal and professional values were respected and given equal value within the school. Facilitators revealed how all staff took part in the development of a shared vision, shared values and a shared purpose. As part of the development process, discussion within whole staff meetings enabled these three aspects of the school's culture to be explored and for a shared understanding to be gained. Once the shared vision, values and purpose had been established they needed to be 'lived' and modelled throughout the school:

*We've identified six core values that we want to live as a school that sit absolutely hand in hand with our shared vision, those are the core values that we*
need to be seen living here day in and day out. (Interviewee CC2: Semi-structured interviews).

Relationships
Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators had matching views and experiences with regard to their relationships. Both groups described their relationships as being open and honest and equal or reciprocal. It was suggested that the school having established shared values that were the core of the school’s culture cultivated these matching views and experiences of relationships.

Best practices
Reflection
Both third to fifth year teachers and facilitators viewed and experienced reflection on classroom practice as a best practice for professional learning. Both groups revealed that teacher progress was known through reflection, and that this involved teacher feedback to facilitators about their learning. Facilitators communicated that all teachers followed an established cycle of inquiry, which involved teachers reflecting on classroom practice as part of their professional learning and appraisal process. It was suggested that the teacher cycle of inquiry was a continuous process that enabled true inquiry into practice and provided for the requirements of the performance appraisal process:

Our inquiry cycle for our performance and growth is huge – the whole development of our learning conversations and our trust culture. (Interviewee CC2: Semi-structured Interviews).

The document analysis revealed that teachers used a learning conversation log as a formal working document that enabled continuous reflection on teaching practice to be recorded. The log also provided documentation that contributed towards teachers’ performance appraisal.

Alignment
Two sub-themes relating to alignment were matched. Firstly, teachers and facilitators ensured that professional learning linked to student outcomes through targeting
Students and analysing student data. And secondly, both teachers and facilitators stated that teacher accountability ensured alignment between professional learning and student outcomes.

Teachers were held accountable for their progress with professional learning through having to present evidence of how their learning had transferred into the classroom. Teachers were made aware of when presentations would take place and were given a list of questions, which they had to answer within the presentation:

> So many of our teachers who have worked in other schools say that they can’t believe how much time they’ve been given – but you’ve got to use it wisely because you and your buddies are going to be presenting to our group the outcomes of this learning for you, we want to know what have been the highlights for you, what have been the challenges and how have you faced them, what have been some lessons you’ve learned along the way, how’s it changed your practice, how’s it changed your student outcomes, we want you to present that to us, we don’t want a big flashy presentation – we want you to talk to us as a whole class of people through your journey. (Interviewee CC2: Semi-structure interviews).

Ownership
Teachers and facilitators revealed that ownership was a best practice for professional learning. Teachers stated that they had some say in the professional learning process and that they had some ownership over decisions made relating to professional learning. Facilitators were in agreement when stating that firstly, decisions were made collaboratively with teachers within meetings and secondly, that they shared ownership with teachers:

> I think that the principal understands that the best learning come from the learning that you own, it come from us rather than from them, they’re not saying that you must learn this. We’ve already identified what we want to learn, so already have ownership of what we’re doing, so you have more buy-in. (Participant C2: Focus group discussion).
Enhancing capability
Two matches occurred within the theme of enhancing capability. Firstly, both teachers and facilitators indicated that conversation focused on developing pedagogical skills, content knowledge and a deeper understanding of practice was a best practice for professional learning. And secondly, that observation was a practice that improved both teachers and facilitators’ professional learning.

For both teachers and facilitators, professional learning had taken place on-site with expert teachers external to the school. Observing these teachers model lessons or working with them to develop pedagogy, content knowledge and leadership skills enhanced the capability of both teachers and facilitators. It was suggested that over time, expertise would be transferred to others within the school as teachers began to take on leadership roles in their new areas of learning. The four-minute walk-through also provided opportunities for teachers to observe other teachers teach:

*We actually have very few people coming in from outside now, because most of our knowledge is coming from the expertise within the school. When I first came here we had a lot of people come from the outside, but that’s less and less now.*
(Participant C3: Focus group discussion).

Teachers identified their professional learning experiences as being continuous and sustained throughout their provisional registration and full registration periods. It was suggested that this was a best practice for professional learning as it enabled teachers to build upon familiar practices and processes rather than beginning new and unfamiliar programmes as they became fully registered. Teachers stated that they attended beginning teacher courses during their provisional registration period and took part in professional learning that related to their classroom context. For example, teacher C1 attended PD related to autism as they had an autistic child in their class.

Inquiry
Inquiry into student learning through observation, monitoring and the tracking of students was recognised as a best practice by both teachers and facilitators. Facilitators stated that decisions relating to professional learning, for the whole school and for
individual teachers, were made using student data. Teachers’ progress was also tracked and monitored by facilitators:

At the same time we’re tracking teachers and their leaning and their uptake of new knowledge and what they’re doing with it, we’re also tracking and monitoring our students, we’ve got targeted students, but we’re also tracking across the school and the correlation between the teacher learning and the teacher increased confidence and content knowledge has an direct positive correlation on student outcome – and we’ve got the data to show that – it’s like an inquiry. (Interviewee CC2: Semi-structured interviews).

**Improving professional learning**

**Barriers**

One match between teachers and facilitators made within the theme of barriers concerned teachers not having time to process and implement professional learning:

The main one for me has been too much too quickly and not having time enough to process it [professional learning]. That’s been my major barrier. You’re expected to be on a couple of curriculum teams and just because you’re new doesn’t mean that you can’t be one of the leaders of that curriculum team and you have a school responsibility as well, at least one if not two, so the jobs are handed to everybody. And that’s a barrier because you’ve got so much to do and of course you want to do it to your best and that’s not always possible. (Participant C2: Focus group discussion).

Time waits for no one – so it’s that how do you make enough time for people to be able to almost have a play at it – almost have a go and make resources or whatever it is they want to do, but also constant tension between knowing where you want to go, allowing enough time, but making sure that the time you allow is used wisely because you can’t be sitting on everyone’s shoulder. (Interviewee CC2: Semi-structured interviews).

It was suggested by interviewee CC2 that removing this barrier to professional learning and enabling teachers time to process and implement professional learning, required careful consideration of the tension between the wise use of time and amount of time
needed for teachers to ‘play’ with their new learning so that it became embedded within their practice. Time for professional learning was particularly important for teachers within school C as they were held accountable for their learning through a presentation of their progress to school leaders.

**Conclusion**
Within school C the co-construction of shared values promoted third to fifth year teachers’ ownership and commitment to a culture of learning. Within this culture third to fifth year teachers’ experienced supportive relationships with those who facilitated their learning. The best practices of following a co-constructed process for inquiry into student learning, pedagogical learning aligned to student outcomes, reflection on practice and observation contributed towards the support experienced by third to fifth year teachers with their professional learning.

**CONCLUSION**
The views and experiences of third to fifth year teachers and learning facilitators concerning support for professional learning were both similar and different within each theme as each theme contained matching and non-matching sub-themes. Through analysing data by case school, it became clear that each school had a particular cultural context in which professional learning was embedded. This cultural context was reflected through the type of relationships that existed between teachers and facilitators and through the practices and processes embedded within each school’s performance management policy.

Through the process of analysis it became apparent that school leaders had an important role in establishing the cultural context of the school. This was achieved through the communication and modelling of school values and through the development of school policy. It also became apparent that school values and professional learning processes and practices, embedded within school policy, had an influence on the relationships between teachers and facilitators and consequently on the quality of support received for teachers’ professional learning.
Regardless of their cultural differences, common themes and emergent sub-themes existed between schools for both teachers and facilitators. These were two themes relating to best practices for professional learning, one emergent sub-theme relating to best practices for professional learning and one emergent sub-theme relating to improving professional learning.

The two common themes relating to best practices:

- Reflective practices; and
- Inquiry

The one emergent sub-theme relating to best practices:

- observing others teaching

A common emergent sub-theme relating to improving professional learning was:

- not having time to process and implement professional learning

The findings from the cross-case analysis contribute to the discussion of findings which will be presented in Chapter Seven. Also presented in this chapter will be the discussion of findings across Chapters Four, Five and Six.
Chapter Seven

DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the overall findings from the focus group discussions, the semi-structured interviews and cross-case analysis data presented in the previous three chapters (represented in bold in Figure 7.1 below). The documentary analysis data is also drawn upon within this chapter. The chapter is divided into two sections: In Section One the three research questions are addressed and the findings relating to the literature are discussed (links between the main themes discussed in Chapter Two and the themes that emerged from the data are presented in Appendix F). The research questions provide the sub-headings for this section:

- How are teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching currently supported in sustaining their professional learning?
- What are the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?
- What needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?

Figure 7.1 Stage four: Overall analysis and discussion
In Section Two a summary of the overall findings is presented and the key components of support for third to fifth year teachers’ professional learning are proposed and discussed (see Figure 7.2).

SECTION ONE

How are teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching currently supported in sustaining their professional learning?

The availability of support for teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching appears to be no different to the availability of support for all teachers across each of the case study schools. In each of the three case studies, professional support concerned social interaction between people. The literature reinforces this view of support by stating that teachers received support from leaders (Timperley et al., 2007) or from work colleagues with similar roles and experience levels (Cameron et al., 2012). As discussed in the previous chapters, culture and relationships are the major themes of support for professional learning as these themes concern the social aspects of professional learning experiences that influence interactions with people.

School culture
Respecting differences in personal and professional values was found to be one aspect of school culture that influenced third to fifth year teachers’ support for professional learning and contributed towards respectful, open and honest relationships between staff members. Third to fifth year teachers felt supported within cultures where there was a sense of equality between staff members, a valuing of difference and a sense of agency concerning organisational change. Such cultural characteristics are indicative of learning organisations that are able to overcome defensive routines that are barriers to both individual and organisational learning. For example, Argyris (1993) states that in cultures where organisational learning takes place individuals are less likely to by-pass or cover-up problems and issues needing to be addressed because they are seen as a threat to the norms of the organisation. However, there may be gaps between the actions of these staff and their espoused beliefs where the culture proposed is different from the culture in process.
However, it was still not known to what extent the essence of these cultures were reflected through the schools’ cultural artefacts and the teachers’ espoused beliefs, as teachers’ patterns of basic underlying assumptions were not known. Observational research is needed in order to establish the extent to which teachers’ theories in action align to their espoused beliefs. Once the pattern of basic underlying assumptions is understood, senior leaders can assess the functionality of these and challenge them accordingly in order to establish the cultural norms most desired for the school. Schein (2010) states that an understanding of the deeper levels of an organisation’s culture is needed in order for that culture to be changed. In order to improve support for professional learning for third to fifth year teachers, senior leaders would benefit from understanding the shared basic assumptions of staff so that informed cultural changes could be made. Changes are needed to the school’s culture as there were clear differences between the espoused beliefs of third to fifth year teachers and facilitators regarding relationships, and no explicit reference was made to sharing cultural beliefs or values. This finding suggested that a more effective learning organisation could be created.

In School C students, teachers and parents had been involved in the co-construction of a shared vision, shared values and a shared purpose, with senior leaders ensuring that all parties achieved a shared understanding of what these meant. The co-construction process was indicative of an effective professional learning community, as shared norms and values were the critical elements that underpinned the culture to allow for continuous improvement to be made. Fullan (2006) calls for organisations to develop cultures from where teaching is private and isolated to more open, shared cultures, where teaching is de-privatised, in order to build continuous improvement. As Busher (2006) states the shared process allows for vision, values and purpose to be centralised and for commonly accepted views and norms to be challenged for the benefit of every student.

**Relationships**

The types of relationships existing between teachers and facilitators gave some indication of the nature of each school’s culture, the success of learning partnerships and the quality of support given for professional learning. Open and honest relationships
were experienced by teachers and facilitators from schools B and C. Tschannen-Moran (2004) states that openness and honesty are two facets of trust, which is an essential prerequisite for productive learning environments. For teachers and facilitators from these two schools openness involved the sharing of ideas, resources, thoughts and feelings. Being open with thoughts and feelings to the scrutiny of others entails risk and demonstrates vulnerability. At the same time being open has the potential to develop trust between colleagues (Cardno, 2012). In particular, the sharing of personal information demonstrated vulnerability and therefore the existence of trusting relationships between staff members. Openness fosters trust, but also grows from high levels of trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Openness also gave teachers the opportunity to demonstrate benevolence, reliability, and competence to one another.

Honesty is a facet of trust that concerns a person’s character, integrity and authenticity (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). By describing relationships as honest, teachers and facilitators were stating that staff were truthful, that they did as they said they would do and that they could be relied upon. Honest teachers are responsible, avoided manipulation and avoided distorting the truth (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Honest relationships were therefore productive in supporting others with their learning. Third to fifth year teachers from schools B and C had adopted professional learning practices similar to peer coaching which encouraged reciprocal, collegial and equal relationships. In these types of relationships where teacher-facilitator roles were interchanged, concerns over each-others development were shared, decisions were made by consensus rather than by conflict and the facilitators’ authority was derived from wisdom rather than rank (Awaya et al., 2003; Brundrett, 1998).

School B and C teachers and facilitators descriptions of relationships were similar. This indicated that teachers and facilitators had established a strong commitment to the shared beliefs and values of the school as these were reflected through the shared and supportive professional learning relationships that existed between them. Dimmock and Walker (2002) identify the degree of a schools’ commitment to its shared beliefs as a sub-dimension of organisational culture. Having established the desired values for successful learning partnerships it was important for senior leaders to sustain them through managing school cultures that ensured staff commitment to them. The findings
indicated that there were differences between how teachers and facilitators from school A perceived their relationships. These differences indicated a loosely controlled school culture that had a weak commitment to its shared beliefs, values and practices (Dimmock & Walker, 2002). One teacher from school A described the relationship they had with their facilitator as challenging, as the facilitator was perceived as being too busy and having too many leadership responsibilities to adequately meet the teacher’s support needs. Another teacher from school A found the dictatorial style of the facilitator challenging, as the style did not utilise the teachers’ creative capabilities. Senior leaders and facilitators from school A would benefit from examining their own beliefs and assumptions concerning teacher-facilitator relationships, while also attempting to understand the pattern of beliefs and assumptions held by teachers. In this way, the functionality of beliefs and assumptions in the context of the school could be assessed and the appropriate change processes put into place if deemed necessary.

**What are the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in third to fifth year of teaching?**

The cross case analysis revealed that reflection on classroom practice, inquiry into student learning and enhancing capability through observing experts were important, if not essential, best practices for professional learning. The *Teacher inquiry and knowledge building cycle to promote value student outcomes* model from the BES (Timperley et al., 2007) is a key focus in answering this question, as teachers reflecting on their own needs and inquiring into the needs of their students are the model’s key components. This model has been designed as the essential professional learning process for all educational practitioners to adopt regardless of their experience level.

**Reflective practices**

Both teachers and facilitators across each of the three case study schools considered reflecting on practice as a best practice for professional learning. School C had established *reflection* as one of its shared core values, which was modelled by teachers and taught to students as a strategy for improving their achievement and as a way of developing their meta-cognition. Although each school had its own formal process for reflecting on practice, school C had developed its own model based upon the *Teacher
inquiry and knowledge building cycle to promote value student outcomes from the BES (Timperley et al., 2007). This model contained the essential elements of the legislated teaching as inquiry model provided within the NZ curriculum documentation that all teachers are required to adopt (Ministry of Education, 2007). School C’s model was co-constructed and context related, and formed the basis for teachers’ performance management and performance appraisal. It was evident that this model aimed to promote teacher’s capacity to inquire into and strengthen the relationship between their teaching and their students’ learning. Sinnema and Robertson (2007) argue for such an approach to teacher evaluation.

Observation and feedback were common practices used within the reflection process, with teachers reflecting on their own practice following an observation and reflecting on practice while observing others. Barnett (1995) states that the meta-cognitive process of reflection assists teachers to become autonomous, expert thinkers and better problem solvers. Although Ross (1989) provides a five stage process for reflection that involves identifying problems, responding to problems by relating to similar problems, framing the problems, anticipating the possible consequences of the solutions and determining whether these are desired, it was not known to what extent these stages were a part of teachers’ reflective process or whether each school’s reflective process could have been improved by adopting this five-stage process.

Documentation from school C revealed that teachers reflected on critical incidents and the way in which they reacted to unexpected events. These teachers kept reflective performance portfolios based on these events as a basis for reflective dialogue, group discussion, and for providing evidence for teachers’ performance appraisal. Barnett (1995) states that discussion and dialogue based on written reflections is a way in which reflective capacity can be developed. For facilitators and other leaders of learning the reflections on practice after the event need to co-exist with reflection-in-action. By reflecting-in-action leaders are able to check that their theory in use corresponds to their theory of action. Cardno (2012) states that reflecting in action enables dialogue with teacher learners to be more productive. In order for teachers to be effective reflective practitioners, those facilitating their learning need also to be reflective practitioners and expert problem solvers, capable of helping novice teachers develop their reflective and
problem solving abilities, encouraging an inquiring stance and ensuring that the teachers can become autonomous and independent problem solvers (Barnett, 1995; Ferguson-Patrick, 2011).

Inquiry
From the analysis of results it became clear that both teachers and facilitators considered inquiry into student learning a best practice and that this practice occurred at two levels within each of the case study schools. At the first level, curriculum leaders along with senior leaders examined whole school student data in order to establish strategic targets for improving student achievement. At the second level teachers examined student data that informed reflective discussion related to student learning within learning groups. Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos (2009) state that learning groups follow a cycle of continuous improvement that begins with the examination of student data to determine the area of greatest student need. For facilitators, the second level of inquiry related to the tracking and monitoring of both teacher and student progress and learning.

A key concern for senior leaders involves managing the integration of organisational targets and teacher goals from these two levels. Middlewood and Lumby (1998) state that integration occurs as individuals take on meaningful work in various groups within the organisation. The relationship between the individual and the organisation should be symbiotic with working units linked together effectively (Middlewood & Lumby, 1998). In each of the case study schools these meaningful work groups consisted of three or more members following a formal process of inquiry and reflection that related to the components of the Teaching as inquiry model (MOE, 2007) or the Teacher inquiry and knowledge building cycle to promote value student outcomes (Timperley et al., 2007), which allow teachers to identify students’ next steps for learning, review the effectiveness of teaching practice, provide motivation for engagement in professional learning and evidence for performance appraisal documentation.

Teachers from each of the case study schools indicated that reflective group discussion regarding student progress was used to support them with their professional learning. However, it was not known how effective the learning groups were in managing these
discussions or how effective the school wide strategy was for these groups integration or whether improvements could have been made to the ability of the group to learn. It was therefore not known the extent to which third to fifth year teachers were supported with their professional learning through their inquiry into student learning. However, Timperley et al. (2007) states that cycles of teacher inquiry embedded into schools performance management systems have the potential to act as motivators for change and improvement as the relevance and implications of all student data are revealed.

Alignment
The theme of alignment concerned the ways in which professional learning was linked to the learning needs of students. The targeting of students, the analysis of student data and effective pedagogical practices were identified as three ways in which professional learning was linked. These three links can be embedded within the Teaching as inquiry cycle (MOE, 2007) and can therefore become relevant links for improved student outcomes for all primary teachers who adopt the cycle. Within teacher-learner relationships teachers meet the personal needs of their students (personalisation) and use the most suitable instructional method (precision) to meet those needs (Fullan, 2007). Once whole school targets had been established, the content of whole school professional learning became an important concern for third to fifth year teachers. These teachers revealed that quality pedagogical content promoted alignment between professional learning and student outcomes, and that irrelevant content was a barrier to the professional learning process. The quality of content for these teachers related to the findings from the BES, where the content of professional learning concerned the integration of pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of how students learn and the ability to assess student progress (Timperley et al., 2007). Quality whole school professional learning programmes involve teachers having multiple and sequenced opportunities to learn, maintain a student perspective and provide opportunities for understandings to be discussed and negotiated (Timperley et al., 2007).

The provision of accountability measures that promoted teacher responsibility for the transfer of professional learning into the classroom and teachers believing and trusting in the professional learning process were also sub-themes that related to the literature. Cardno (2012) states that accountability should be integrated with teacher development
through an appraisal system. Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC) (NZTC, 2011) describe the criteria for quality teaching that are central to these appraisal systems and are required to be met by teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching. The two key areas of the RTC concern professional relationships and professional values, and using professional knowledge to improve student learning. Both teachers and facilitators revealed that accountability promoted teachers’ personal responsibility for ensuring that their professional learning transferred to student learning. Facilitators also suggested that when teachers were provided with low levels of accountability they took less personal responsibility for ensuring the transfer of professional learning into the classroom and that this was a barrier to the professional learning process. As accountability and professional development are the interdependent and inseparable dual purposes of the performance appraisal process (Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005), an effective performance appraisal system would ensure that teachers experienced accountability, and therefore responsibility for the transfer of their professional learning into the classroom, throughout all experiences of professional learning. The challenge for senior leaders is to create such a system and manage the tension between the dual purposes of accountability and professional development in order to promote teachers transfer of teacher professional learning into the classroom. School B managed this tension by ensuring that facilitators remained independent of formal appraisers. Portner (1998) states that facilitators cannot be evaluators as evaluation is a hierarchical activity and leading learning involves a collegial relationship of shared responsibility. However, managing the tension in this way suggests that appraisal is an event rather than a continuous process linked to all teachers professional learning experiences.

Facilitators revealed that aligning professional learning to student outcomes required teachers to believe in their professional learning and to trust in the professional learning process. Belief and trust were the cultural values providing the foundation upon which the facilitators’ practices and processes functioned. School cultures that valued the opinions and ideas of all staff were identified as cultures in which teachers felt supported with their professional learning. Schein (2010) states that school cultures that value teacher opinions and ideas contribute towards teachers’ belief in the professional learning process and therefore their learning and their students’ learning.
Ownership
Ownership concerned the decision-making processes and practices that related to professional learning. Decision-making occurred at two levels within each of the case study schools. At the first level facilitators, curriculum teams and middle leaders shared decision-making and ownership of professional learning that related to whole school targets and whole staff professional learning. At the second level, which related to teacher-facilitator partnerships, teachers tended to share decision-making and ownership of professional learning with their facilitators.

Teachers tended to have some ownership within the second level of the professional learning process; this included deciding on personal learning goals, the focus for professional learning observations and which targeted learning workshops to attend. The key for the facilitators is to empower teachers by matching the appropriate teaching style with the appropriate situation (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In the teacher-facilitator situation there is a need for consensus through decision-making and for hierarchical relationships to be avoided in order for the partnership to become productive (Awaya et al., 2003).

Evidence from the BES (Timperley, et al., 2007) suggests that reducing teacher autonomy to the point where teachers are dictated what is taught and how it is taught fails to serve students well. Evidence also indicates that tightly prescribed professional development has little or no impact on student outcomes. It therefore appears essential that teachers have some room to exercise professional discretion within the professional learning process. Third to fifth year teachers from schools B and C indicated that they did have some ownership over the professional learning process, while third to fifth year teachers from school A, indicated having no ownership or say over decisions relating to their professional learning and viewed this as a barrier to the professional learning process. According to teachers, facilitators and the performance management documentation from schools B and C, shared decision-making took place within appraisal groups, coaching partnerships and targeted learning groups. Smith (2007) states that meeting environments are required to be structured, developed and shaped by the group in order for them to be meaningful, familiar, comfortable and
predictable. It was not known to what extent these schools meeting environments were structured, developed and shaped by the professional learning group.

Enhancing capability
A common best practice for both facilitators and teachers across each of the case study schools concerned teachers learning through observing other professionals; these included professionals who were experts in particular areas of learning, more experienced professionals or peers with similar expertise and experience. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) state that professional learning processes and practices are most effective when teachers learn from experts, mentors and their peers about how to become true instructional leaders. Engaging external expertise is one of the seven elements identified in the BES as providing the context for professional learning (Timperley et al., 2007).

Teachers and facilitators identified a common process used for enhancing capability was facilitators observing experts, usually external to the school, with facilitators then being observed by teachers. This process was typical of the cascade process used to develop leaders (Timperley et al., 2007). Although the cascade model was a common model used for professional learning, it can provide challenges for third to fifth year teachers who take on the facilitator role but have limited experience in leading the learning of others. Timperley et al. (2007) states that facilitators who lack development or leadership experience can feel uncomfortable or lack confidence in their new role. A more suitable model for developing facilitators would involve a context-based setting that allowed for flexibility in determining levels of leadership responsibility to be managed. Third to fifth year teachers becoming facilitators in this model is different from teachers taking on facilitator roles during peer coaching practices, that were described by teachers from schools B and C, as the transfer of learning cascades down in a hierarchical fashion rather than across in a shared interchange.

Teachers across all three case study schools indicated that opportunities for leadership arose once they had become fully registered following their second year of teaching. However, the process used for developing leaders varied between schools. In school B potential leaders were encouraged to join curriculum and leadership teams to develop
their leadership skills. These were trusting environments in which they observed others leading. In school A teachers simply applied for leadership positions that they were interested in. Velsor and McCauley (2004) state that leader development processes that integrate various experiences and embed them in the organisational context are the most likely to be effective at developing leaders abilities. In the same way that teachers improved their practice by learning through their classroom context, Elmore (2004, cited in Fullan, 2006) states that teachers taking on leadership positions need opportunities to engage in continuous and sustained leadership development from the settings in which leadership functions. It is important for senior leaders to consider leadership development for third to fifth year teachers and therefore the degree of leadership responsibility that these teachers experience.

Facilitators who were intrinsically motivated for their roles revealed the importance of providing leadership development opportunities for third to fifth year teachers. Facilitators enjoyed working with people, had a love of the subject and enjoyed the thinking and learning that the role entailed. These motivations correspond to the reasons teachers gave for staying in the teaching profession from the Teachers of Promise Project (Cameron, Whatman & Lovett, 2012), these being: supporting the professional growth of other teachers, the enjoyment of teaching the subject and the stimulation of continually learning new things. Developing third to fifth year teachers to become the leaders and supporters of others learning is one way in which these teachers’ intrinsic motivations as educators are met and which teachers are retained in the workplace and teaching profession.

When workplaces fail to provide experiences that create spaces for them [promising teachers] to learn and grow, some look for other schools, or leave teaching altogether. Neglecting adult learning also leads some teachers to ‘switch off’, become cynical, or to coast (Cameron et al., 2012, p.4)

Cameron et al. (2007) state that teachers in their 3rd and 4th years of teaching generally feel more secure about their place in schools and are mainly concerned with consolidating and broadening their teaching practice. This includes being supported to enhance their relationships with adults as they begin to contribute in more of a
leadership capacity. Cameron et al. (2012) states that it is important for principals and senior leaders to recognise the growth, potential and learning needs of teachers at this stage of their careers and respond to these needs so that suitable support and development processes can be put into place and the individual and school benefit from new teacher expertise.

The content of professional learning and the focus of conversations during professional learning were considered important influences on the quality of teachers’ professional learning. At the first level of whole school professional learning, teachers from school A indicated that conversation was focused mainly on content knowledge. These teachers felt that a greater focus on pedagogical practice that related to their classroom practice would have enhanced their professional learning and teaching capability further. At the second level of professional learning, concerning teachers’ specific learning needs, teachers and facilitators revealed that conversation focused on classroom practice, knowledge of pedagogy, pedagogical skills and teachers gaining a deeper understanding of their practice. These conversations took place during collegial meetings that often made use of reflective questioning and student assessment data. These findings concur with findings from the BES where the content of professional learning involved the integration of theory and practice, using evidence from the analysis of student assessment data. However, it was not known to what extent the content of conversation challenged prevailing discourses concerning assumptions about students and their learning (Timperley et al., 2007).

**What needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in third to fifth year of teaching?**

**Barriers**

Common across each of the case study schools were teacher and facilitators’ perceptions concerning a lack of time for processing and implementing professional learning. Time is one of the essential structural supports needed for teachers to sustain their professional learning. Sustained professional learning involves time for follow-up learning opportunities about teachers’ practice and within teachers’ own work contexts (Fullan, 2007; Wei et al., 2009). Wei et al. (2009), state that time and opportunities,
essential to sustained professional development, are simply not in place in most contexts.

Significantly better student outcomes were reported for studies where teachers participated [in professional learning] for longer periods of time, indicating that, when complex change is required, participation in a professional learning opportunity is more effective for those teachers who participate in it for longer (Timperley et al., 2007, p.107)

“One-off” professional learning experiences without follow-up opportunities for learning do not allow the learner to engage with their prior knowledge in any depth because there is not enough time to do so. However, simply extending the time and frequency of professional learning opportunities to enable teachers to engage with their prior knowledge does not ensure that sustained professional learning takes place (Timperley, et al., 2007). Timperley, et al. (2007) state that it is the content and form of learning, and the quality of interaction with the facilitators of learning that is important and that this is dependent upon the facilitator’s theories of learning. Teachers benefit from having time and opportunities to practice what they learn, discuss problems and deal with challenges to their existing assumptions.

The undue stress and tiredness of teachers was identified by facilitators as a barrier to the professional learning process as was teachers’ resistance to change, often evident through teachers’ passive participation in professional learning. Having additional professional responsibilities and consequently increased workload following fully registered status contributed to third to fifth year teachers’ stress and tiredness levels. However, Cameron (2007) states that after the five-year teaching period teachers tend to have fewer concerns and problems within their teaching environments. These findings suggest that leaders need to be cautious regarding the additional responsibilities taken on by teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching and that leadership development, rather than responsibility needs to be the focus for teachers during their third to fifth years, with a focus on leadership responsibility occurring from teachers 5th year onwards.
Leaders and facilitators with a genuine understanding of teachers’ resistance to change are able to make informed strategic decisions concerning the removal of resistance as a barrier to professional learning. In order for this to take place an understanding of teachers’ beliefs and underlying pattern of basic assumptions is needed. This allows senior leaders to assess the functionality of beliefs and patterns of assumptions and to challenge them accordingly (Schein, 2010). Leaders who worked towards understanding teachers’ beliefs and assumptions are more able to create cultures in which organisational learning takes place (Dick & Dalmau, 1999).

Teachers and facilitators indicated that a lack of teacher accountability concerning the transfer of professional learning into the classroom was a barrier that influenced the quality of teachers’ learning and student outcomes. In some cases, teachers perceived improved accountability measures as a way of increasing teachers’ personal responsibility for the transfer of their learning into the classroom. Examples of accountability measures likely to influence teachers’ personal responsibility towards their professional learning include: teachers rendering accounts of what they do and achieve related to their performance expectations and teachers being given opportunities to comment on the professional learning undertaken (Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005).

SECTION TWO

The availability of support for teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching appeared to be no different to the availability of support for all teachers across each of the case study schools. Although teachers in their third to fifth years of teaching are still dealing with difficulties relating to the work environment (Cameron et al., 2007), no particular programmes of professional learning were designed specifically for this group of teachers. Third to fifth year teachers had been supported with their professional learning through schools with a strong commitment to shared cultures, that exhibited value and belief characteristics similar to those of learning organisations, and that were open to influence of students, teachers and parents. All teachers, regardless of their years spent teaching, experienced the common professional learning processes and practices embedded within the schools performance management system from their entry into the
school. This encouraged third to fifth year teachers’ inclusion in the wider professional learning community and promoted familiarity with the common professional learning processes and practices. These processes and practices varied between schools, as did the cultures in which they were embedded. The key components of support for third to fifth year teachers’ professional learning have been established from the analysis of data (Figure 7.2). The following sub-headings are the key components:

School culture
The first research question related to support for professional learning and concerned workplace relationships and school culture. School cultures that promoted a sense of equality, that valued difference and were open to influence from others were found to be supportive cultures. Fullan (2006) states that in order to build continuous improvement organisations need to develop open, shared cultures of teaching and learning. School cultures that were characteristic of learning organisations supported third to fifth year teachers with their professional learning, as these cultures were more able to deal with solving difficult problems.

Relationships
In the context of this study relationships essentially concerned the supportive relationship between the teacher and learning facilitator. Open and honest relationships, were experienced by both teachers and facilitators from two of the three case study schools. Tschannen-Moran (2004) states that openness and honesty are two facets of trust, which is an essential prerequisite for productive learning environments. In order for learning environments to be productive adequate support for solving teachers’ critical problems of practice is needed. Cardno (2012) states that by building productive relationships the critical problems of practice can be addressed.

Effective practice
The second research question relating to best practices concerned the practices and processes that lead to the best outcomes for learning. Teachers’ learning needs were determined through inquiry into student learning, reflection on teaching practice and discussion both within and outside of ‘learning groups’. Effective practice integrated teachers’ learning needs with whole school targets through ‘learning groups’ and
curriculum teams. Middlewood and Lumby (1998) state that the needs of the organisation and the needs of the individual are integrated through working groups. The *Teaching as inquiry* model (MOE, 2007) and the *Teacher inquiry and knowledge building cycle to promote values student outcomes* (Timperley et al., 2007), provided the basic models from which school specific models of on-going inquiry were developed. Observation, reflective discussion and feedback were the key practices for the effective transfer of learning from experts or colleagues, through the teacher-learners and into the classroom. Supportive relationships and school cultures need to underpin these practices in order for them to be effective. Third to fifth year teachers needed leadership development as a posed to leadership responsibility without opportunities for development. Performance appraisal bound together all aspects of teachers’ professional learning, regulating the tension between teachers' development and accountability.

**Improvement**
The third research question related to *improvement*. Elmore (2004, citied in Fullan, 2007) states that this concerns learning to do the right things within the context of the school. *Improvement* was a continuous process that provided the overall context in which support for professional learning was based. *Improvement* for improved student outcomes was the moral-purpose for teachers' participation in professional learning. Fullan (2005) states that moral purpose needs to transcend the individual to become an organisation and system quality. As a system quality the moral purpose of the individual is fostered through the organisations commitment to becoming a learning organisation. Lai et al. (2007) state that systems with interventions designed to promote improvement of the system are committed to becoming sustainable systems.

Within the context of improvement support for third to fifth year teachers’ professional learning takes place in the zone where *effective practice, school culture and relationships* overlap and inter-relate. Each of these three components is inter-dependent. For example, a school culture depends upon values and beliefs cultivated through relationships between staff members, and for effective professional learning practices to be supportive quality relationships are required between teachers and learning facilitators. Although these components are inter-dependent, they need to be
addressed independently by senior leaders who are concerned with supporting third to fifth year teachers with their professional learning, as each area commands considerable influence and demands a considerable exploration.

Figure 7.2 Key components of support for third to fifth year teachers’ professional learning
Chapter Eight

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

It was not known to what extent third to fifth year teachers were supported in sustaining their professional learning, what worked well for them in their experiences of professional learning or what needed to be improved concerning their support with professional learning. Key concerns of this research were the quality of third to fifth year teachers’ support and the quality of professional learning experiences that led to successful outcomes for students. A second concern was the influence of professional learning experiences on the satisfaction of third to fifth year teachers as satisfaction impacts upon these teachers’ desire to remain in the workplace and in the teaching profession (Cameron, 2007).

This final chapter employs the findings from the previous four chapters and the literature relating to third to fifth year teachers support for professional learning, to reach in-depth conclusions and recommendations. Three concluding summaries are presented that related to the three research questions that have guided this study. This is followed by the recommendations, the limitations of the research, suggestions for future research and the final concluding statement. The research questions are:

- How are teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching currently supported in sustaining their professional learning?
- What are the best practices for supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?
- What needs to be improved in supporting and sustaining the professional learning of teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching?
Support
In the context of this research, support concerned the help and assistance given to facilitate teachers’ professional learning. Although the practices and processes concerning professional learning may be considered supportive, it was through people that support was valued and experienced. School culture and relationships were the themes that influenced the way in which facilitators supported teachers in their professional learning. Cardno (2012) states that through building productive relationships the critical problems of practice can be addressed.

Third to fifth year teachers had been supported within cultures that valued difference and a sense of equality between staff members. The collaborative practices that embedded these values enabled teachers to voice opinions and have some ownership over school decisions that were of concern to them. Principals had a strong commitment to these cultures, which although described by Dimmock and Walker (2002) as being tightly controlled, were also open as they welcomed influence and input from students and parents as well as teachers. Opportunities for the co-construction of school vision, values and purpose led to shared-ownership of these and contributed towards the students, parents and teachers’ commitment to these cultures (Dimmock & Walker, 2002). Commitment to these cultures was also created through the collaborative practices that enabled teachers to voice opinions and influence decisions. Such cultural characteristics contributed to the conditions necessary for team learning to take place, in the wider context, these schools were learning organisations.

Effective practices
Professional learning practices that linked to teachers’ classroom contexts were considered as best practices for professional learning. These practices required teachers to be reflective about their teaching in order to know what their needs were relating to the needs of the student and building upon what was already happening within the classroom. At this second level of professional learning concerning teacher goals relating to student needs, each school had its own process or cycle of reflection and inquiry. These were similar to the Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007) with the
most similar being a model strongly embedded as the core process through which professional learning took place. This process used professional portfolios or journals as the continuous working documents which were used in professional discussion and provided evidence on which performance appraisal was based.

Third to fifth year teachers valued having opportunities to lead others with their learning although the quality of their leadership training and development experiences varied. As leadership opportunities contribute to teacher satisfaction, motivation and retention (Cameron, 2007), leadership development requires careful consideration by principals and senior leaders. Cameron et al. (2007) states that after five years teachers have dealt with issues and problems relating to the school. This infers that some caution is needed for teachers who are in their third to fifth years who are still dealing with problems while also taking on extra leadership responsibility and workload.

**Improvement**

Ensuring that teachers have adequate time to process and implement professional learning was an important way in which support for professional learning could have been improved. However, senior leaders need to be cautious about simply allocating extra time for teachers to process and implement professional learning. One interviewee suggested that if adequate, additional time was provided for teachers then accountability measures were required to ensure that teachers used the time productively, took responsibility for their learning and for the transfer of their learning into the classroom. Both teachers and facilitators indicated that accountability measures encouraged shared responsibility for professional learning and were necessary for the effective transfer of professional learning from the teacher and into the classroom.

Third to fifth year teachers taking on additional responsibilities within the school influenced the time available for them to process and implement professional learning, and their levels of tiredness and stress. Opportunities for leadership became available for all teachers from their 3rd year of teaching and did not necessarily include a progressive process for leadership development. Improving support for these teachers would involve senior leaders balancing teachers’ skill and responsibility levels and establishing a developmental process for leadership development.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have produced six recommendations, which may be of use to principals, senior leaders or other staff involved with performance management within schools. It is worth pointing out that these recommendations relate not exclusively to support for the sustained professional learning for third to fifth year teachers, but support for the sustained professional learning of all teachers within any given school.

1. That senior leaders, ensure that the schools vision, purpose and values are co-constructed with students and parents as well as staff, so that they become shared, as the findings indicated that this contributed to the building of productive and supportive educational environments;

2. That senior leaders have a commitment to the shared vision, purposes and values through active modelling and developing processes and practices that embed the established values and beliefs so that they are made visible throughout the school and shape the school culture rather than constraining it;

3. That school vision, values and purpose are reviewed annually, with appropriate opportunities made available for discussion and revision with parents, students and teachers;

4. That leadership development (particularly, but not exclusively for teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching) involves learning in the leadership context (for example: leadership development within a curriculum team) and allows for progressive leadership responsibility;

5. That training is provided for professional learning facilitators so that they become truly reflective practitioners who can also enable teachers to become autonomous, independent problem solvers (Barnett, 1995); and

6. That schools co-construct their own, shared models of professional learning based upon the Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes (Timperley et al., 2007). With teachers’ commitment to these models providing the basis for their performance appraisal, shown through reflective journals.
LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

A number of limitations of this research were identified and discussed in Chapter Three: the limited number of case study schools, the limited research time available, the fact that the researcher was acting alone, principals nominating focus group participants and interviewees and the limited sample size.

Upon reflection it may have been appropriate to use additional probing questions for some focus group and interview participants in order to reinforce and support particular themes that became more apparent following the discussion and interview process. In the same way it may have been appropriate to modify questions within the interview schedules between the discussions and interviews.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has highlighted possibilities for future research. These possibilities include:

- Research into the processes and practices used for leadership development within schools;
- Observational research to explore the gaps between teachers espoused beliefs and their theories in practice relating to their professional learning;
- Research into how the professional learning processes and practices for teachers are modelled as the learning processes and practices for students; and
- Research into how principals and senior leaders lead and manage changes to school culture.

CONCLUSION

The six recommendations made in this chapter emphasise the important role that principals and senior leaders play in ensuring that the school environment is one that continuously improves. Culture forms the context for school leadership (Dimmock &
Walker, 2002), and it is this context that requires deep and necessary change in order for schools to become professional learning communities (Fullan, 2006). However, all supportive practices and processes for professional learning function upon the underlying principles and values of school culture and senior leaders must be attuned to these if successful outcomes for students are to be achieved.

The research has identified third to fifth year teachers continued experiences of support for their professional learning, the best practices and processes for their continued support and what is needed to improve support for these teachers. Finally, a diagram has been presented that reflects the organisational context in which support for professional learning took place.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
(Learning facilitators)

Role questions

1. What is your role as a leader of professional learning in this school?
2. What professional development or professional learning have you undertaken for this role?
3. Did you choose to be a learning facilitator?
4. Why did you take on this role? What was your motivation?
5. How much say do you have in deciding whose learning you facilitate?
6. How much involvement do you have in the performance appraisal of those whose learning you facilitate?

Process questions

7. When you meet with your teacher learner(s) what is the main focus of conversation?
8. What are the key features of the process used for professional learning?
9. How do you know that your teacher learner(s) are making progress?
10. How do you ensure that the professional learning process relates to improved student outcomes?
11. What barriers (organisational or otherwise) influence the quality of the professional learning process?
12. What professional learning practices and processes are the best practices and processes within your organisation?

Relationship questions

13. How would you describe the relationship you have with your teacher learner(s)?
14. How are decisions made about ways to improve student outcomes?
15. How much influence does your learner(s) have on your teaching and your students’ outcomes?
16. In what ways, if any, are you challenged by your learner(s) personal and / or professional values?
17. Is there anything else you’d like to add?
APPENDIX B

DISCUSSION SCHEDULE
(Third to fifth year teachers)

Opening
1. Please tell us your name and how long you’ve been teaching at the school.

Introductory
2. What did your most recent professional learning experience involve?

Transition
3. How have your professional learning experiences changed from when you were provisionally registered?
4. What type of support have you continued to experience on becoming fully registered?

Key Questions
5. How much say do you have in deciding what you learn professionally?
6. How much say do you have in deciding how you learn professionally and whom you learn from?
7. Do you have a person or people who lead your professional learning?
8. When you meet with this person or these people, what is the main focus of conversation?
9. What would you identify as being the key features of your learning process?
10. How do you know that you’re making progress with your learning?
11. To what extent is your professional learning linked to improving student outcomes?
12. How do you ensure that the professional learning process relates to improved student outcomes?
13. How would you describe the relationship between you and the person or people leading your professional learning?
14. In what ways are you challenged by the personal and professional values of the person or people leading your professional learning?
15. In what ways have you influenced the learning of the person or people leading your professional learning?
16. What barriers (organisational or otherwise) influence the quality of the professional learning process?
17. What professional learning practices and processes are the best practices and processes within your organisation?

Ending Questions
18. Is there anything else you’d like to add?
APPENDIX C

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Professional Learning within Performance Management Policy

Principles

1. Where and in what ways do school policy documents make reference to teacher ownership of professional learning experiences?

2. How are decisions regarding teachers’ professional development made?

3. Where and in what ways do school policy documents make reference to teacher inquiry into student learning?

4. Where and in what ways do school policy documents make reference to teachers reflecting / critically reflecting on their teaching practice?

5. Where and in what ways do school policy documents make reference to professional learning partnerships, collegial learning groups or teams?

Practice

6. What specific practices are used to support the professional learning of teachers?

7. How are these practices organised in terms of who, where, when and how?

8. What professional learning practices exist for provisionally registered teachers in their first 2 years of practice?
APPENDIX D

INFORMATION SHEET: Focus Group Discussion

Title of Thesis: Sustaining professional learning: Primary school teachers’ experiences of professional support in their third to fifth year of practice.

My name is Duncan Henderson and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education and Leadership degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course, which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to understand how teachers, in their 1st, 2nd or 3rd year of full registration, continue to be supported in sustaining their professional learning.

I request your participation in the following way. I will be conducting a focus group discussion that will involve between 5 to 8 teachers from your organisation in their third to fifth year of teaching. These teachers will be involved in sharing their experiences and perceptions relating to and around support for their professional learning. Although discussion takes place openly between participants, a question schedule has been designed to guide the discussion when needed. The discussion will take place over a period of approximately 45 minutes, in an appropriate room and at an appropriate time after the school day. I would appreciate your contribution as a member of the group. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event which acknowledges your agreement to take part and confirms your understanding that neither your name nor the school’s name will be used in any public reports. Consent is also required to allow any findings to be published in education related journals e.g. New Zealand Journal of Educational Leadership & the New Zealand Journal of Educational Research. This consent will further ensure confidentiality.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution using a digital audio recorder to assist in my analysis of findings. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is

Alison Smith and may be contacted by email or phone.

Email: alisonsmith@clear.net.nz
Phone: 0272714764

Yours sincerely
Duncan Henderson

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 21012-1052
This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 17th July 2012 to 16th July 2013. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
INFORMATION SHEET: Semi-structured Interview

Title of Thesis: Sustaining professional learning: Primary school teachers’ experiences of professional support in their third to fifth year of practice.

My name is Duncan Henderson and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education and Leadership degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course, which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to understand how teachers, in their 1st, 2nd or 3rd year of full registration, continue to be supported in sustaining their professional learning.

I request your participation in the following way. I will be collecting data relating to the above aim, by conducting a semi-structured interview based upon open discussion and a pre-designed question schedule. The interview will take place over a period of approximately 45 minutes, in an appropriate room and at an appropriate time after the school day. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event which acknowledges your agreement to take part and confirms your understanding that neither your name nor the school’s name will be used in any public reports. Consent is also required to allow any findings to be published in education related journals e.g. New Zealand Journal of Educational Leadership & the New Zealand Journal of Educational Research. This consent will further ensure confidentiality.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution using a digital audio recorder in order to assist in my analysis of findings and will provide a summary of findings for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. Data from these findings may be withdrawn up to 10 days from being provided with the summary. You are free to withdraw yourself at any stage leading up to or during the interview. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Alison Smith and may be contacted by email or phone.

Email: alisonsmith@clear.net.nz

Phone: 0272714764

Yours sincerely

Duncan Henderson

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APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

Research event: Focus Group Discussion

Researcher: Duncan Henderson

Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Sustaining professional learning: Primary school teachers’ experiences of professional support in their third to fifth year of practice.

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports. I also give consent for any findings from this study to be published in education related journals.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself at any time up to or during the focus group discussion.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: ______________________________________

Name: ______________________________________

Date: ______________________________________

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 21012-1052

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 17th July 2012 to 16th July 2013. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
CONSENT FORM

Research event: Semi-structured Interview

Researcher: Duncan Henderson

Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Sustaining professional learning: Primary school teachers’ experiences of professional support in their third to fifth year of practice.

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports. I also give consent for any findings from this study to be published in education related journals.

I also understand that I will be provided with a summary of findings for checking before data analysis is started and must contact the researcher within 10 days of receiving these findings if I wish to withdraw any data from the summary.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself, or any information that has been provided for this project up to the stage when analysis of data has been completed.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _____________________________________

Name: _______________________________________

Date: _______________________________________

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 21012-1052

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 17th July 2012 to 16th July 2013. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
### APPENDIX F

**Links with the literature**

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