2003

Relationship between teacher learning and school culture

Wendy M. Bean

University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses

Recommended Citation

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER LEARNING AND SCHOOL CULTURE

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION (HONS)

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

WENDY BEAN

Faculty of Education
2003
CERTIFICATION

I, Wendy M. Bean, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Masters of Education (Hons), in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Wendy M. Bean

October 2, 2003
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was initially made possible through a SPIRT grant involving a partnership between Catholic Schools Office Broken Bay and the University of Wollongong. This grant provided me with a wonderful opportunity for which I am grateful. I would like to thank everyone from the Catholic Schools Office who provided his or her professional assistance, support and encouragement throughout the study.

Particular thanks must go to the teachers and principals from the research schools who cannot be named because of their request to remain anonymous. However, I wish to acknowledge their generosity in inviting me into their schools and classrooms, their trust and most importantly their input.

In addition I would like to give my thanks to my supervisors Dr Jan Turbill and Associate Professor Brian Cambourne for giving their expert guidance, knowledge and time throughout the study. Both were encouraging and made the project a most enjoyable experience.

Finally thanks to all my family who have always supported me in everything that I have done in many different ways. In particular I would like to thank my mother and father for their belief in me throughout the entire project. Thank you for all your encouragement and support.
ABSTRACT

On school culture and teacher learning…

It is a culture with very high expectations from both parents and staff. Where everyone has the belief everyone will achieve … with this principal the expectations on us are higher now. The accountability is more succinct. It has always been a culture where the staff agrees on the same sort of philosophy. When we talk about how children learn to read etc there is never much disagreement. When there is some disagreement it leads to discussion. I have worked harder here than anywhere but it is all for good. Everything is improving, my teaching and the students’ learning.

Teacher School A

Professional development and teacher learning have been areas of great interest for many years. Similarly, school culture has been the subject of many studies.

This research aimed to bring together the information available on school culture and teacher learning and to examine the relationships between these two areas. Specifically it aimed to develop a grounded theory which explained the role that school culture plays in teacher learning.

The study was set within the qualitative research paradigm and involved focused observation, recording, analysis and checking for reliability through the use of credible measures. The research revealed the complex relationships between professional development, teacher learning and school culture.

The findings of this study indicated that the choice of professional development activity, the actual processes and structures within that chosen activity, teacher attributes, that is, attitudes to learning, and the school culture all have a significant impact on the teacher learning that takes place. Further, the grounded theory showed how the school culture could be observed through the lenses of the school community, values and beliefs, processes in place and conditions.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter 1  Introduction
- Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................... 1
- Background to the Study ............................................................................................... 1
- The Broken Bay Diocese ............................................................................................... 4
- Professional Development in the Broken Bay Diocese .................................................. 5
- Personal Background in Professional Development ...................................................... 8
- Rationale of the Study ................................................................................................... 11
- School Culture ............................................................................................................. 13
- The Relationship Between Teacher Learning and School Culture ............................... 17
- Locus of Study ............................................................................................................... 19
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 19

## Chapter 2  Literature Review
- Introduction ................................................................................................................... 22
- Organisation of the Literature Review .......................................................................... 22
- Professional Development ............................................................................................ 23
  - Professional Development: A Definition .................................................................... 23
  - Effective Professional Development ......................................................................... 24
  - Approaches to Professional Development .................................................................. 26
  - Evaluating Effective Professional Development ..................................................... 33
- Teacher Learning and Teacher Change ......................................................................... 37
  - Characteristics of Teacher Learning ......................................................................... 39
  - Teacher Change ......................................................................................................... 43
- The School Leader ........................................................................................................ 45
- School Culture ............................................................................................................... 46
  - Categories of School Culture .................................................................................... 47
  - Organizational Culture ................................................................................................ 49
  - Professional Culture .................................................................................................... 50
- Community and Collegiality in Schools ...................................................................... 51
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 55

## Chapter 3  Methodology
- Introduction .................................................................................................................. 58
- Methodological Orientation of Study ............................................................................. 58
- Locus of Study ............................................................................................................... 63
- The Research Process In Action .................................................................................... 63
  - Phase 1. Preparing the Ground .................................................................................. 64
  - Phase 2. Preparing the Sites ...................................................................................... 66
# Table of Figures

| Figure 1 | A Schematic Representation of the Theory Framing the ‘Teacher Learning’ Project | 2 |
| Figure 2 | Factors Affecting Outcomes from Professional Development | 13 |
| Figure 3 | Factors Affecting the Existing School Culture | 14 |
| Figure 4 | Five Categories of School Culture (Barton, 2000:287) | 16 |
| Figure 5 | Design Elements of a General Model of School Improvement, Hill & Crevola (1998:7) | 28 |
| Figure 6 | Models of Professional Development (Barton, 1992:25) | 31 |
| Figure 7 | Interactive and Integrative Model of Professional Learning (Turbill, 1994) | 33 |
| Figure 8 | A Comprehensive Framework for Classroom and School Improvement | 52 |
| Figure 9 | Influencing Factors on School Culture | 55 |
| Figure 10 | Schematic Representation of the Data Collection Process | 64 |
| Figure 11 | Representation of Data Collection and Analysis | 76 |
| Figure 12 | Schematic Representation of the Grounded Theory Representing the Recursive Relationship Between Teacher Learning and School Culture | 117 |
| Figure 13 | School Culture Quadrant | 131 |
| Figure 14 | School Culture Quadrant and Effects | 147 |
### Tables

**Table 1**  Broken Bay Diocesan primary school enrolments ................................................................. 4

**Table 2**  Comparison of models for evaluating professional development ........................................ 36

**Table 3**  Comparison of factors influencing learning ........................................................................... 42

**Table 4**  Broad categories of school culture ....................................................................................... 48

**Table 5**  Summary of general demographic parameters in 2001 ...................................................... 81

**Table 6**  Distribution of stages taught by survey respondents at each site. ....................................... 82

**Table 7**  Distribution of respondents by gender across the schools .................................................... 82

**Table 8**  Summary of observations recorded in field notes ............................................................... 83

**Table 9**  Teacher perceptions of selves as literacy teachers and learners .......................................... 84

**Table 10**  Preferred learning styles nominated by respondents ......................................................... 85

**Table 11**  Frequency and popularity of past professional development ............................................ 86

**Table 12**  Breakdown as number of respondents from each school attending the major literacy courses ................................................................. 87

**Table 13**  Summary of teacher descriptors of course highlights ......................................................... 87

**Table 14**  Factors nominated by respondents that make professional development ‘good’ or ‘useful’ .................................................................................. 88

**Table 15**  Relevance of professional development offered by Catholic Schools Office ..................... 91

**Table 16**  Teacher comment on changing the teaching of literacy ..................................................... 92

**Table 17**  Comparison of teacher comments and Catholic Schools Officer comments ..................... 96

**Table 18**  Factors perceived by teachers to support their learning .................................................... 98

**Table 19**  Teacher descriptors of principal support ............................................................................ 99
Table 20  Factors that hindered implementation of teacher learning .............................................. 100
Table 21  Actions teachers might have taken to implement learning................................................. 101
Table 22  Respondents’ perceptions of the school as a context for their learning .............................. 102
Table 23  Descriptors used by teachers to describe the relationships in the school......................... 104
Table 24  Descriptors used by teachers to describe the culture in the school.................................. 104
Table 25  Descriptors used by principals to describe the relationships in the school...................... 105
Table 26  Descriptors used by principals to describe the culture in the school ............................... 105
Table 27  Summary of comments on culture from office personnel.................................................. 108
Table 28  Summary of teacher comments on the school, principal and diocesan visions ................. 110
Table 29  Summary of principal comments on their own and the school’s vision ......................... 111
Table 30  Summary of the teachers’ views of the principal’s vision................................................... 111
Table 31  Guiding questions for reflection on the school culture..................................................... 144