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The Principal's Role in Teacher Professional Learning

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

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

By

Alireza Ghaleei

Bachelor of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration

Faculty of Education

2006

Certification

I, Alireza Ghaleei, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, 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 qualification at any other academic institution.

(Signature)

Alireza Ghaleei

20 August 2006

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ABSTRACT

Little attention has been paid to understanding the principal's role in teachers' professional learning. This study was conducted to investigate ways in which principals implement state-wide policy on teachers' professional learning at the school level in New South Wales (NSW) public schools. The major question in this study was: What is the principal's role in teacher professional learning and its relationship with the *Professional Learning Policy*? Three sub questions framed the study were: Firstly, how do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning? Secondly, what kinds of capabilities do principals need for the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school level? Thirdly, what constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

The focus of the research was principals, teachers, and all members of the school Professional Learning Teams in three public primary schools, in the Wollongong area of NSW. Case study methodology was applied in investigating the principal's leadership and management approaches, policy requirements, and characteristics of teachers' professional learning. The research utilised a mixed quantitative and qualitative descriptive research design, employing the questionnaire as its primary data-gathering instrument, semi-structured interviews, and document review.

An analysis of these data identified areas where the principals implemented *Professional Learning Policy* in the schools. The findings indicated that both the principals and teachers had welcomed the implementation of the state-wide *Professional Learning Policy* and even in the initial phases of implementing the policy gave considerable thought to planning and other management practices. The findings also indicate that collaboration between the principal and staff was essential for implementation of the policy.

Clearly, the principal as leader of the school Professional Learning Team has the central role in leading and managing teachers' professional learning and the important functions of this role are planning; encouraging teachers to participate;

implementation of programs; and evaluation of programs. This study indicates that there are interactive relationships among these roles and that the principal's attention to one role without concern for the others can result in unsuccessful and ineffective professional learning programs.

The results of this study provide information on leadership and management practices in teachers' professional learning that can lead to better outcomes for teachers and ultimately the students they teach. Additionally, the author makes recommendations on policy implementation; principal's capabilities; constraints; and further research on teachers' professional learning.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Increasingly, the principal's role is expanding to include responsibility for leadership and management of teachers' professional learning in the school. Extensive literature commonly addresses teachers' professional learning needs, methods, perspectives, and theories, however, what the principal is expected to actually do to support and facilitate teachers' professional learning is addressed in only a few studies.

In 2004, the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training (DET) established a new policy framework to promote the continuing professional learning of all staff in public schools. This study investigates ways in which principals have implemented this policy.

This chapter provides an overview of how the study was conducted. The chapter includes the background of the study, its purpose, research questions, an explanation of the significance of the study, methodology, limitations of the research, definitions, and a theoretical and conceptual framework. The chapter ends with an overview of the structure of this thesis and notes on style.

1.2 Background of the study

Authors on management repeatedly argue that human resources are one of the most critical factors in organisational growth and success (Rothwell & Rich, 2004). Finding ways to uphold and improve staff is an important priority in today's complex world, not only at the organisational level, but also in national and international contexts. This is a concern for every organisation. This study focuses on schools, where there has been considerable attention to developing human resources through teachers' professional learning.

Darling-Hammond (2000a) argues that school improvement involves improving the quality of teaching and there is evidence that improving the quality of teachers through professional learning programs can affect students' learning (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Porter, Garet, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2000). Teachers' professional learning is now recognised as an important component of policies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Consequently, there is a greater need for research that identifies approaches for effective teachers' professional learning (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005).

While there are directions at state and federal levels in Australia, there has been little reform in teacher professional learning activities over the last two decades (Jasman, 2002). In Australia, major changes have occurred in policy directions on professional learning which are aimed at decentralising the professional learning process, introducing greater accountability to the school, and increasing decision-making at the local level (Thompson & Haslam, 2005; White, Sam, & Mon, 2005).

Changing economic, political, and social conditions are bringing about important changes in the principal's role (Crow et al., 2002; Speck, 1999; Speck & Knipe, 2001). "Shifting demographic profiles in schools; demands for improved student performance; increased threats to children's safety and well-being; and requests for more involvement of parents, teachers, and students in school governance are summed up as challenges for the principal" (Seyfarth, 1999, p.18). Seyfarth believes the role of the principal has changed because of changes in knowledge and concepts of educational leadership. Among the conditions contributing to the changing nature of leadership in schools are decentralization and the increased emphasis on accountability for teachers' professional learning and students' outcomes (Thompson & Haslam, 2005; White et al., 2005).

This trend toward decentralisation is apparent in NSW where the DET holds individual schools responsible for improvements in teachers' professional learning. According to *Leading and Managing the School* (NSW DET, 2000), principals of NSW government schools are accountable for staff welfare and for leading and management of their professional learning. This accountability is also elaborated

upon in the recent *Professional Learning Policy for Schools* (NSW DET, 2004a). This document was formulated in consultation with peak groups including the NSW Primary Principals Association, the NSW Secondary Principals Council, Professional Teachers Council, NSW Teachers Federation, and the Interim Committee of the NSW Institute of Teachers (NSW DET, 2004e).

In this policy the principal is required to establish a Professional Learning Team including him/herself as leader. This team should carry out management and leadership functions in teachers' professional learning which include the planning, implementing, and evaluating of programs. This policy is also supported by three associated documents:

- *Using and reporting on teacher professional learning funds* (NSW DET, 2004b): Guidelines for schools, designed to assist schools to manage and account for the financial grants for teacher professional learning.
- *Supporting the induction of new teachers* (NSW DET, 2004c): Guidelines for schools, applying to all probationary teachers entering permanent full-time or permanent part-time employment and newly-engaged casual and temporary teachers.
- *Using external professional learning providers* (NSW DET, 2004d): Guidelines for schools, designed to advise schools on the audit and reporting requirements if they decide to employ an external provider to deliver particular professional learning programs (NSW DET, 2004e).

As a consequence and in support of the new policy, the NSW state government has raised the professional learning grant from around \$25.00 per full-time teacher to a base amount of \$600 to \$1000 per full-time teacher depending on the location of the school; more isolated schools receive the higher amount (NSW DET, 2004e; Wayne Ash, personal communication, October 18, 2004).

Both the policy and the professional learning grant have two major implications for school leaders: firstly, the need to have a systematic, school professional learning plan; and secondly, the need to guard against the possibility of ineffective or

‘suspect’ professional learning providers. NSW DET expects that principals will implement the policy, consistent with the official direction of the Department, and consistent with what is known about research-based effective professional learning. This policy has been implemented by the Illawarra and South Coast Region of NSW since February 2004.

It is argued that the principal’s influence, directly or indirectly, is central to the quality and support of professional learning programs (Bredeson, 2003; Elmore, 2002; Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 2003) and the quality of teaching (Darling Hammond, 2000b; Haycock, 2001; Newman, King, & Youngs, 2000).

Consequently, it is essential to understand the role of the principal in teachers’ professional learning. Principals are not only required to create and direct a school professional learning community, but also to share the values of collaboration and communication (DuFour & Berkey, 1995; King, 2004; Speck, 1999) and perform as knowledgeable change agents working to prepare a collaborative environment where teachers work in harmony (Fullan, 2001a; Huber, 2004). In this regard, Lindstrom and Speck (2004) provide suggestions on what such professional learning might look like and offer guidelines for principals. However, apart from advocating a collaborative school environment, they offer little concrete advice on specific principal behaviours.

According to the literature, the principal’s roles in teachers’ professional learning are summarised as: leading (Lambert, 2002); planning; implementing (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004); providing; facilitating (Ehrich, 1998); communicating; organising; and evaluating (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Moore, 2000).

This study further examines the role of the principal in teachers’ professional learning and specifically in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a). Fullan (1997) notes that there are two main reasons why it is important to focus on policy implementation: first, “we do not know what has changed unless we attempt to conceptualise and measure it directly; ... (second, we need) to understand some of the reasons why so many educational innovations and reforms fail” (p. 222).

According to the review of literature in Chapter Two, there is little empirical research on the principal's role in teacher professional learning. This study attempts to bridge the research gap. As such, this study investigated important aspects of the role of the principal in the implementation of policy and the development of teachers' professional learning.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate ways in which principals implement the *Professional Learning Policy* at schools, to describe the leadership and management of school-based professional learning, and to discuss the policy and practices within schools that could be implemented to ensure that the outcomes of teachers' professional learning are maximised. To achieve this, information was gathered from three Australian public primary schools in NSW, which had implemented the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) policy. However, it was not intended that the study would make direct comparisons between the schools on the implementation of the policy. The study also examined key respondents' perceptions on necessary principal's capabilities, and constraints which principals face in implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. The study aimed at answering the following research questions.

1.4 Research questions

What is the principal's role in teacher professional learning and its relationship with the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Sub questions:

1. How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teachers' professional learning?
2. What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?
3. What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

1.5 Significance of the study

Although this study is a case study and generalizations from it would have to be made very carefully, the results are likely to provide useful information especially to educational policy makers, educational administrators at the state and regional level, school principals and teachers. It is hoped that the study will contribute to understanding the strategies that principals can use in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. For teachers, it provides insights into effective ideas for identifying and satisfying their professional learning needs and support for the belief that teachers need to be in control of, accountable for, and responsible for their own professional learning. For principals, this study may provide strategies for assisting teachers who may experience difficulties in their professional practice and learning. The study should also assist principals in setting and balancing priorities with respect to professional learning activities.

Some studies have reviewed the organisational structures and principal's practice within a school-based context that may either have enabled or constrained teachers as they attempted to master the complexities of classroom practice (Bredeson, 2003; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004; Newmann et al., 2000). However, this study goes further. It highlights the critical role of the principal in improving and developing professional learning of teachers at the school level.

1.6 Methodology

This study involves case studies of three government primary schools in the Wollongong region. The case study schools were nominated by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) on the basis of the schools' adoption of the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a). The schools were then approached after DET approved the research proposal.

The mixed-method of employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches was deemed appropriate for seeking possible answers to the research questions raised in the study. Although in this study the collected data were more qualitative, the

researcher used mixed methods to extend responses in order to obtain complementary findings. Hammersley (2004) believes that focusing on the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is basically incorrect; that quantitative and qualitative methods are, in fact, complementary, that their combined use enables a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied. It has been suggested that applying triangulation through a mixed-method approach makes sure that the weaknesses of one method may be overcome by the strengths of others (Mertens, 2005).

The overall design of this study employed multiple, descriptive, case studies, using two methods to interpret the data, within-case and cross-case analyses. Data were analysed in three stages. Firstly, the software SPSS was utilized to analyse the questionnaire responses. Secondly, this analysis of data was used to formulate the questions to be posed in follow-up interviews. The responses given to the interview questions were analysed using the software NVivo to categorise the data in terms of the initial research questions. Finally, data emerging from the schools' annual reports and school documents, the responses to the questionnaire and to the interview were compared, matched and conclusions drawn.

The following methods of data collection were used:

1. Review of current research, policy reports, working papers, and standards documents on teachers' professional learning.
2. Questionnaires with the principals and teachers to obtain information regarding the extent of implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*, its constraints in practice, the principal's key roles, capabilities, and perspectives on its strengths and weakness.
3. Semi-structured interviews with the principals and members of school Professional Learning Teams to explore critical issues, from their perspectives, in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*.

The participants in each school were the principal, all members of the school Professional Learning Team, and all teachers.

1.7 Limitations of the study

As mentioned before, participants in the study were limited to the principals and teachers in three primary public schools. One of the limitations of this study is that the data were collected from participants who volunteered to be involved in the study. Hence many of these participants may have a more positive attitude than non-volunteers towards their professional learning programs and the implementation of *Professional Learning Policy*.

Another limitation relates to researcher's objectivity. Hammersley (1992) argues that while it is important for researchers to be aware of their views, "... we can never entirely escape our assumptions about the world" (p. 169). Consequently, argues Hammersley, not only should the researcher avoid close relationship with respondents which could lead them to neglect reality, but they should also not accept every response without questioning their view of reality. This study sought to minimize this possibility through cross-checking and triangulation of data from a variety of sources.

This study's reliance on self-reported information presents another possible limitation. No assurance can be given that the principals and teachers gave adequate time and thought when completing the questionnaire and answering the interviews. The accuracy of data depends on the quality of the information provided by the participants who responded to the data collection instruments, and the quality of the research tools.

Finally, the selected schools are in the Wollongong region in the state of NSW. This was a case study. It was context-specific, so the findings of the study may not be reflective of other schools in the state of NSW and it would be problematic to generalize the findings of this study more widely. In addition, the interview sample was limited and it might be argued that the sample was not representative of each school staff as a whole. However, the interview data served to both supplement and triangulate the more reliable data generated from the questionnaires, and credibility and reliability were maximized.

The details provided in reporting this study make it possible to replicate and allow readers to consider the results in relation to their own situations (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

1.8 Definition of key terms

Several terms were used during the study and are defined operationally as follows:

Accountability: A responsibility to account for outcomes, expenditure, and explain actions undertaken.

Career development: “the complex process of managing life, learning, and work over the lifespan” (Miles Morgan Australia, 2003, p. 14).

Celebratory function: A function held in conjunction with professional learning activities to facilitate and encourage participation in such activities; e.g., lunch or dinner.

Collaboration: Work or projects undertaken by staff members in small groups who come together voluntarily and undertake projects of mutual benefit.

Collaborative climate: An environment where staff work and learn with each other and their working relationship is natural, voluntary, and variable (Hargreaves, 1994).

Collegiality: A set of norms and values that define the school as a community of like-minded staff who are bonded together in a common commitment. “Because of shared work goals and a common work identity, they feel obligated to work together for common goals” (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 23).

Distributed leadership: “implies a redistribution of power and re-alignment of authority within the organisation. It means creating the conditions in which people work together and learn together, where they construct and refine meaning leading to a shared purpose or set of goals. It implies inter-dependency rather than dependency” (Harris & Muijs 2006, p. 2).

Executive: Principal and key experienced staff at a school, occupying formal positions of authority.

Evaluation: A systematic process in which related data are collected and classified for assessing the particular results of learning programs, as a basis for decision making, improving programs, and providing a means of effectiveness of training and learning programs (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Zepeda, 2003).

Instructional leadership: The role of the principal in influencing teachers to improve students' learning results through effective teaching strategies.

Planning: A procedure by which priorities are set for the future, designed for particular conditions, and outcomes are defined, both short-term and long-term in the school.

Principal: The person occupying the formal position of, or acting as, senior manager and administrator of the school.

Professional learning: “Refers to all training and development opportunities, formal and informal, individual and shared, that provide opportunities for professional discourse, interaction, practice, reflection and analysis. Professional learning can occur face-to-face, online or through other modes of delivery” (NSW DET, 2004a, p. 4). It is also known as in-service education and training (INSET), training and development, and professional development.

Professional learning community: “... a group of people with a shared interest in the knowledge, application, and improvement of professional education standards” (Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005, p. 78).

Professional learning Team: Members of Executive staff who have formal responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating of the professional learning activities at school level, as designated in the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a).

Program: A distinct set of instructional activities with specific outcomes in the form of seminars, courses, and workshops that may last from one day to several months.

Public school: A school established by NSW state government, which is largely funded and administered by the government through the state Department of

Education and Training (DET).

Peer coaching: “A structured process in which pairs of teachers observe each other in the classroom and provide feedback to one another in order to improve or refine instruction and student learning” (Tallerico, 2005, p. 131)

Role: A group of functions targeted to meet specific expectations of a job or task, associated with a position.

School Annual Report: An official, public document outlining a school’s achievements, performance, and challenges during a twelve-month period.

School Plan: A schedule of school priorities goals and programs for an educational year or for a defined timeframe.

Teamwork: Work or projects undertaken by groups of individuals brought together not necessarily on a voluntary basis.

1.9 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis brings together a number of issues related to the purpose of the research and the research questions. This study involves theories of distributed leadership and professional learning community.

A distributed leadership framework approaches the study of leadership with the notion that leadership is distributed across different people and artefacts, within a special context (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), however, it does not mean that leadership tasks are only delegated to multiple people (Sherer, 2004).

Distributed leadership theory is a democratic and collective form of leadership that suggests the decentralization of the power and authority of the school principal (Alger, 2005). Muijs and Harris (2003) argue for the helpfulness of distributed leadership in clarifying the meaning of teacher leadership and how it performs within the school environment. Harris and Chapman (2002) assert that the roots of distributed leadership have been located in a traditional organisational theory framework and their analysis recommends a view of leadership as a series of tasks.

On the other hand, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) believe that the implementation of leadership tasks is often distributed among multiple leaders. Sherer (2004) has conceptualised leadership practice as a complex system which is comprised of the people, the context, and tools, but also the activity. Kets de Vries (1999) studies distributed leadership within a non-Western social community and defines distributed leadership in terms of effective team-working, which links with social activity theory.

Gronn (2000) suggests a theory of action as a theoretical framework for distributed leadership. Spillane et al. (2001) point to distributed cognition and activity theory as theoretical underpinnings for distributed leadership and extend a distributed theory of leadership around four ideas. These ideas are the tasks and functions of the leadership, the enactment of the task, social distribution of task enactment, and situational distribution of task enactment. This theory of leadership focuses on how leadership practice is distributed among both positional and informal leaders since leadership practice in school is considered as the unit of analysis, rather than an individual leader. In fact, this perspective on leadership is grounded in activity rather than in position or role (Gronn, 2002; Spillane et al., 2001) and leadership is more of a collective experience and the idea of activity bridges the gap between agency and structure (Gronn, 2000).

Harris (2003) points out that distributed leadership in schools may contribute to creating professional learning communities within and between schools and Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) note that the main reason for distributed leadership is to transform schools into professional learning communities.

Lave (1996) defines a community of practice as relations across people, and activity over time and in relation to other communities of practice. Research suggests that one critical feature of successful professional learning models is the capability to create community (Cobb, McClain, Lamberg, & Dean, 2003; Franke & Kazemi, 2001) and professional learning in such community builds an atmosphere of participation, social negotiation, and collective learning (Clark & Borko, 2004). Morrissey (2000, cited in Alger, 2005) claims that if the school performs as a professional learning community, school leaders can initiate improvement,

accomplish goals, and continue a process of continuous learning more efficiently and effectively.

Eaker, DuFour, and Burnette (2002) comment:

The professional learning community framework can be grounded into three major themes that are evidenced in the policies, programs, and practices of the school or district. The themes are: (1) solid foundation consisting of collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values, and goals; (2) collaborative teams that work interdependently to achieve common goal; and (3) a focus on results as evidenced by a commitment to continuous improvement. (p. 3)

According to Eaker et al. (2002), in order to move a traditional school to a professional learning community, cultural and structural changes are required and collaborative culture is one of the features of schools which function as professional learning communities and for Troen and Boles (1992) such culture has emphasis on learning and teacher professional learning. Eaker et al. (2002) assert that the driving engine of such culture is the team. All members of the staff are assigned to one or more teams that are called upon to work interdependently to attain one or more common goals. Williams (2006) argues that leadership of a professional learning community needs the principal to accept and encourage teacher competence by providing teachers opportunities to lead. Ogawa and Bossert (2000) note that the focus of structures and policies in a professional learning community changes from determining roles and well-defined role relationships to maintaining 'social legitimacy' and obtaining the necessary resources to provide quality learning opportunities for students, teachers, and administrators.

1.10 Conceptual framework

There are a number of factors that impinge on the principal's role in teachers' professional learning as shown in the following figure. The arrows indicate the influence of one factor on another and vice versa. For example, the *Professional Learning Policy* impacts on the principal's role and vice versa. The principal, through ongoing evaluation of professional learning programs (Earley & Bubb,

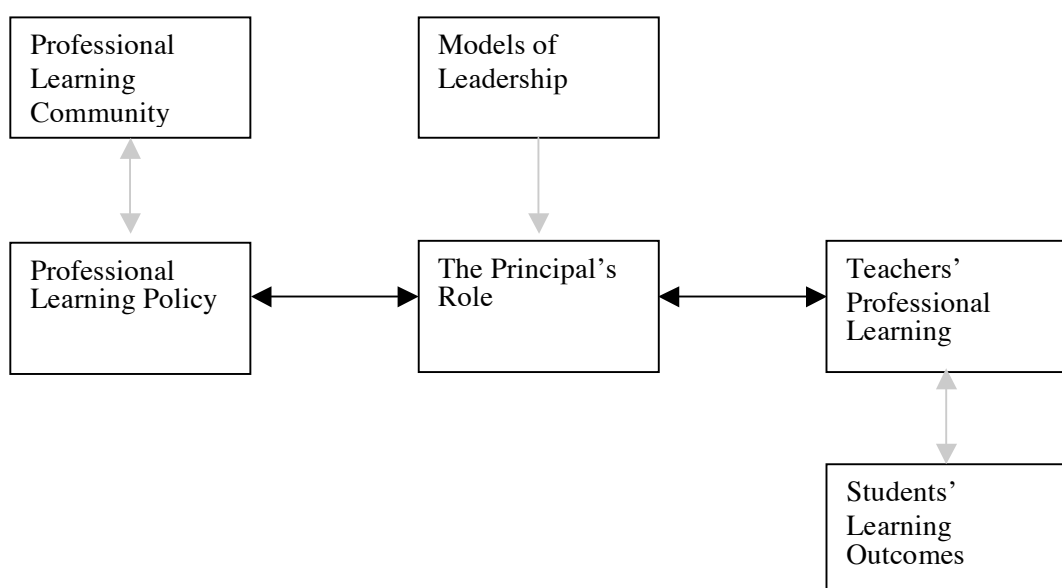
2004), reports and provides feedback to the NSW DET which can be used for improving and developing future state polices (Seifert & Vornberg, 2002).

Effective implementation of teachers' professional learning programs has important effects on improving students' learning outcomes (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Crow et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Hattie, 2003; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Porter et al., 2000) and the outcomes of students' learning are, in turn, also useful in evaluating these programs and planning future programs. Some researchers (Guskey, 2003; Mizell, 2003) generally agree that evidence of students' outcomes can be a useful tool to guide and design professional learning activities and teacher collaboration.

This study focuses on the links between policy, the principal's role, and teachers' professional learning. The conceptual framework assists in the identification and explanation of behaviours and patterns. The concepts involved derive from a review of the literature outlining existing research relevant to the study.

These concepts are elaborated in the literature review chapter.

Figure 1.1 The conceptual framework



1.11 Overview of the chapters

This investigation of the principal's role in teacher professional learning is presented in six chapters that address major themes as follows:

The first chapter provides an introduction to the study and maps the intentions of the research to provide information for the education community to understand the principal's role in leadership and management of teachers' professional learning and its relationship with state policy. The chapter includes: background of the study; purpose; research questions; significance of the study; brief overview of the methodology; limitations; definition of key terms; theoretical framework; and conceptual framework.

The second chapter reviews the literature and research which is relevant and necessary to answering the research question and explains the conceptual framework used in this study. The chapter focuses on literature relating to the major themes, including the nature and importance of teacher professional learning; professional learning trends; principles of effective professional learning; professional learning approaches; learning organisation; professional learning communities; professional learning policy; professional learning constraints; the role of the principal in teacher professional learning; and the principal's required capabilities in supporting teachers' professional learning.

The third chapter explains and justifies the mixed-method approach used in the study and outlines the features of the case study design. Specific areas of this chapter include an explanation of the research design; descriptions of the study participants; the procedures used for collecting data survey; face-to-face semi-structured interviews; and document analysis. The approval process, distribution and return of the questionnaire, data analysis process, reporting the results, ethical considerations, and conclusions based on the data are also described in this chapter.

The fourth chapter presents the results and analysis. This chapter includes descriptive statistics to analyse the survey data and presents an interpretation of the data gathered from interviews in each of the three schools.

The fifth chapter offers a summary of the findings that are detailed in Chapter Four as well as a discussion of these findings as they relate to the literature discussed in Chapter Two.

The sixth chapter provides a summary of the study. The chapter draws conclusions and their relevance to the role of principal in teachers' professional learning. This chapter makes recommendations that will inform principals, teachers, and policy makers, and suggestions on directions for further research in teacher professional learning.

1.12 Notes on style

1. The term 'he/she' is used to avoid gender bias and retain anonymity.
2. When using the terms 'principal' and 'teacher' generally, the terms will be in lower case, however, when referring to the studied schools these terms will be capitalised.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature on teachers' professional learning and the principal's role in it, and specifically the view that the principal is centrally important in the success or failure of professional learning of teachers. The literature related to the research in this study falls into two major categories: the area of teacher professional learning; and that of the role of the principal in that professional learning. These ideas are directly connected to the conceptual framework (see page 14) and research questions outlined in Chapter One.

Related essential literature in this chapter includes: the nature and importance of teacher professional learning; professional learning trends; principles of effective professional learning; professional learning approaches; learning organisation; professional learning communities; professional learning policy; professional learning constraints; the role of the principal in teacher professional learning and models of leaderships, for example, distributive leadership; and the principal's required capabilities in supporting teachers' professional learning.

2.2 Nature and importance of teacher professional learning

Teachers' professional learning is regarded as vital in improving teaching quality and teachers' motivation, which directly and indirectly impact on students' learning (Barth, 2001; Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b; Elmore, 2002; Guskey, 2002; Randi & Zeichner, 2004; Sarason, 1996). Villegas-Reimers (2003) indicates that professional learning for years has involved workshops, seminars, or short-term courses that offer new information on a specific area of teachers' professional knowledge. More recently, the professional learning of teachers has been considered a long-term and ongoing process (Brown, Anfara, Hartman, Mahar, & Mills, 2002; Ingvarson, 2002a; Morrissey & Cowan, 2004; Ramsey, 2000;

Vinson, 2002). This is seen as a major reform by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001), who believe that a new paradigm is essential for developing teachers' professional learning.

Several terms refer to teachers' professional learning programs and career development including 'professional development', 'staff development', 'training', 'in-service' and recently, 'professional learning'. While some researchers see differences among these terms, they are often used to mean the same thing. As Fullan (1992) says, "The terms 'staff development', 'professional development', in-service' and 'on-going assistance' are used interchangeably" (p. 97). For the purposes of this study the term 'professional learning' is used as the key term.

Teacher professional learning, in a broad sense, refers to the development of a teacher in his or her professional role (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999; Guskey, 2000; Orlich, 1989; Randi & Zeichner, 2004). More specifically, teacher professional learning is defined as those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students (Durrant & Holden, 2006; Guskey, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Glatthorn's (1995) definition is not very different as he defines teacher professional learning as, "the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically" (p. 41). These definitions imply that teachers' learning is continuous. Professional growth and professional learning are interconnected; one cannot occur without the other and both impact on students' learning outcomes (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Crow et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Porter et al., 2000).

Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1999) claim that teacher professional learning is intended to provide teachers with professional knowledge, skills and expertise by providing comprehensive learning programs. These may deal with a specific professional area where improvements are necessary or relate to a group of students with specific characteristics. Hoban (2002) points to another aspect of teacher professional learning, suggesting that professional learning provides a framework to support teachers' improvement through their reflections on their teaching

performance and on how it affects students' learning. Professional learning intends to give teachers an understanding of the content they teach, how students learn that content and how to teach that content in more effective ways (Cohen & Hill, 2000; King & Newmann, 2001).

Teacher professional learning may be either formal or informal (Flowers & Mertens, 2003). Formal professional learning involves activities such as participating in organised workshops, seminars, courses, and coaching/mentoring; informal activities including individual teachers' reading, online learning, action research in the classroom; individuals or groups attending conferences; action learning; and individual reflective practices (Ganser, 2000).

The concept of teacher professionalisation is increasingly addressed in recent Australian teacher professional learning literature (Jasman, 2002). Professionalisation can be defined as the drive towards creating teachers as professionals. A professional is a person who has the ability to, "continue learning throughout [his/her] career, deepening knowledge, skill judgment, staying abreast of important learning in the field and experimenting with innovations that promise improvements in practice" (Sachs, 1997, p. 266). Teacher professionalism in Australia reflects the idea that, "in a society where the continuous creation, acquisition and communication of knowledge are central, teacher education needs to be understood as a lifelong learning process" (Ramsey, 2000, p. 26). It can be seen that professional learning is a way, formally or informally, to help teachers add to or strengthen the specialized knowledge and skills they draw upon in the conduct of their profession (Forde, McMahon, McPhee, & Patrick, 2006). In short, it is an important way of supporting and increasing teachers' expertise.

Educational systems, researchers, and principals have long recognised the importance of teacher professional learning for improving teaching quality in schools (Sparks, 2002), and renewing and increasing teachers' knowledge (Borko, 2004; Elmore, 2002; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Teachers' professional learning is important in education systems for a number of reasons such as accommodating to global change, influencing students' outcomes, and improving teachers' performance. Barry and King (2001) point out that schools face the challenge of keeping pace with ever-

increasing changes in the world. Accessing, creating and utilising new forms of knowledge and flexibility to meet changing conditions are vital to school improvement worldwide (Spillane & Louis, 2002).

Villegas-Reimers (2003) states that education systems around the world are reforming at national or local levels. She says, "... the relationship between educational reform and teachers' professional development is a two-way process and educational reforms that do not include teachers and their professional development have not been successful" (p. 24). Guskey and Huberman (1995) indicate that, "The vast majority of teachers and school administrators we have encountered are dedicated professionals who work hard under demanding conditions" (p. 1). In addition, they indicate that professional learning opportunities for teachers are required, not only because they promote the identification of their work as professionals, but also because they provide new opportunities for development, study, and learning. Professional learning is necessary for staff at all levels so that they can learn new roles and succeed in them (Cuttance, 2001; Lingard, Ladwing, Luke, Mills, Hayes, Gore, & Warry, 2001; Rowe, 2003). In short, teacher professional learning is an important factor in ensuring effective educational changes at all levels.

Researchers (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Crow et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Hattie, 2003; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Porter et al., 2000) show that teacher professional learning is critically important to enhancing outcomes of student learning. If teachers improve their teaching as a result of professional learning, their students' learning can also be improved (Durrant & Holden, 2006; Falk, 2001; Tatto, 1999). According to Lee (2002) and Mizell (2003), the aim of professional learning is to help teachers obtain new knowledge and improve their teaching through direct experiences with methods that help students learn in new ways.

A similar position is held by Sanborn (2002) who reports that many schools have begun to pay more attention to students' learning outcomes and many principals are now using these data as they plan teachers' professional learning to improve classroom practice. Also, he points to a rising view among principals that casual acts of professional learning do not contribute directly to continued school improvement.

Researchers such as Guskey (2003), Mizell (2003), and Parsad, Lewis, and Farris (2001) generally agree that evidence of students' outcomes can be a useful tool to guide and design professional learning activities and teacher collaboration.

Evidence also shows that professional learning has an impact on teachers' performance and behaviour in the classroom (DET Victoria, 2006; Good & Weaver, 2003; Tallerico, 2005). In Australia, a number of studies have concluded that teachers' professional learning has an impact on improving of teachers' goals, teaching, and learning which in turn has affected the teachers' behaviour and performance in the classroom (Cuttance, 2001; Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Lingard et al., 2001; Rowe, 2003).

Epanchin and Colucci (2002) found that teachers gain from professional learning activities that focus on skill learning, values and collegiality and on implementing new ideas. Moreover, Borko (2004) asserts that high quality professional learning enables teachers to expand and improve their knowledge and change their instructional practices. It, "also increases teacher reflection and reflectively informed behaviour including preparation and planning, risk taking, diversity in the classroom, and collaboration between and among teachers" (Blasé & Blasé, 2004, p. 52).

2.3 Professional learning trends

This section examines trends in teachers' professional learning at international, Australian, and state of NSW levels.

2.3.1 International trends

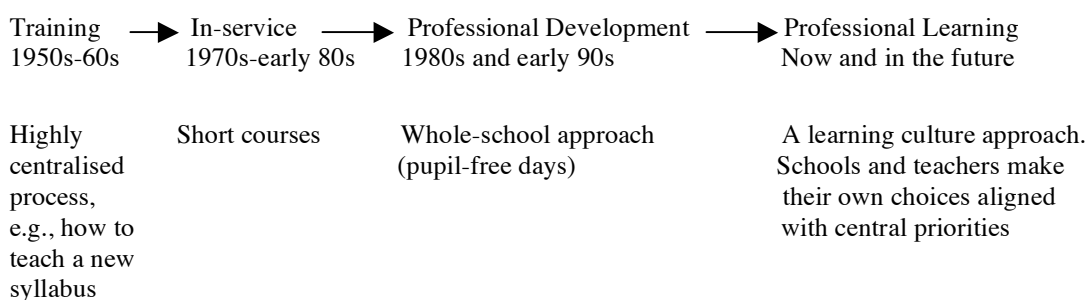
Some researchers (Hawley & Valli, 1999; McRae, Ainsworth, Groves, Rowland, & Zbar, 2001; Thompson & Haslam, 2005) note that there has been considerable progress in the area of teacher professional learning around the world in the last two decades and four distinct phases reflecting different models of teacher professional learning have been identified:

- In the 1950s and 1960s, training was highly centralized and focused on the use of experts who circulated among the schools.

- In the 1970s and early 1980s, in-service education was highly centralized, but with higher levels of awareness of individual needs, characterized by short courses and greater use of the train-the-trainer model.
- In the 1980s and early 1990s professional learning programs included whole-school student-free days providing teachers with opportunities to undertake professional learning within school hours, with more school-based professional learning.
- Now and in the future, a learning culture exists where schools and teachers make their own professional learning choices aligned with central priorities.

Figure 2.1 shows a diagrammatic representation of these trends.

Figure 2.1 Teacher professional learning worldwide trends



Recent trends in most countries have been toward school-based professional learning (Richard, 2003; White et al., 2005).

2.3.2 Trends in Australia

In Australia, in spite of the fact that individual states and territories have separate responsibilities for education, the ways that the various governments promote the nature and extent of professional learning opportunities are similar. Rowland's study (1999) indicates that the growth in acceptance of professional learning was an important means of developing quality teaching in Australia in the late 1980s and early 1990s and that there was weak relationship between professional learning programs and the priorities of schools and teachers in this period (Davies, 1990).

McCulla (1994) indicates that school-based professional learning had generally been implemented throughout Australia. He asserts:

There was decentralisation to the school level of responsibility, authority and accountability to make some important decisions, but within a framework of centrally determined goals, policies, priorities, and standards which define the vision and core value of the system of education. (p. 12)

Nowadays, Australian governments, at the federal and state levels, like so many Western governments, value teachers' professional learning more than ever before and place it high on the list of priorities (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004).

Yates (2005) asserts that teachers' career development and improvements in the quality of teaching are a national priority in Australia. However, in other countries, teacher professional learning continues to be very largely a matter of choice by schools and teachers (Skilbeck & Connell, 2003).

Evidence indicates that Australian teachers' participation in professional learning activities is ranked fourth internationally, close behind the United Kingdom, Sweden and the United States of America (McKenzie & Santiago, 2004). However, an Australian study in 1999 indicated that teacher participation in professional learning programs was irregular, with several gaps, and varied from school to school and even within the same school district (McRae et al., 2001).

National professional learning priorities in Australia include career development, and improving teacher and school leadership capacity, ICT (Information and Communications Technology), literacy and numeracy, quality teaching, early childhood education and care, performance and reporting, and resourcing (MCEETYA, 2005).

The results of the "PD 2000 Australia" study (McRae et al., 2001), which focused on national and international historical trends in teacher professional learning, indicate that many Australian schools have high-quality professional learning programs that reflect local decision-making and are strongly connected to school priorities and

individual teacher needs, but also clearly reflect the influence of government initiatives.

2.3.3 Trends in New South Wales (NSW)

NSW DET provides an example of what is quite common in the other Australian states and territories. Scott (1990) recommends that in NSW, “the majority of funds for human resource development should be allocated directly to schools” to enable principals and schools to, “purchase staff development services which they consider best suited to staff needs” (p. 110).

Funding commitments under the NSW Education Reform Act of 1990 tie the large school-based professional learning funds to system and organisational policies and priorities (McCulla, 1994). Governments in other Australian states and territories have followed a similar line, most by regulation rather than by legislation (Varghese, 2000).

The NSW DET, as an Australian state education system, is the largest employer of teachers in the southern hemisphere (Huber & Cuttance, 2004; Ramsey, 2000; Vinson, 2002). McCulla (1994) reports, “NSW schools believed that having direct access to training and development funds had been one of the best changes resulting from decentralisation” (p.12). Rowland’s study (1999), which focused on management of school-based professional learning in three Australian states and the role of decentralisation, concluded that schools have been given the responsibility for school-based professional learning programs.

Retallick (1999b) argues that the context of teacher professional learning in NSW schools has been reformed in significant ways in recent years, involving changes in policy and funding. In 2004, the NSW DET introduced a new policy framework for the area in response to needs identified by teachers and research on professional learning in which the central state office, regions, schools, and individual teachers share responsibility for promoting, planning, implementing, and evaluating of professional learning programs which use a team approach (NSW DET, 2004a).

As a consequence of the *Professional Learning Policy*, the NSW state government

has also raised the professional learning grant. NSW DET allocated a tied teachers' professional learning grant of about \$ 144 million for 4 years to schools (NSW DET, 2004e). The use of teachers' professional learning funds is the subject of random school audits each year. Indeed, this new policy situates the locus of decision-making at the school-level with support from regional and state-wide programs, as well as from external providers (McCulla & Gereige-Hinson, 2005). A clearer, more direct focus by the schools on their own professional learning programs is one of the results of the direct allocation of funds and giving schools discretionary power over these funds is intended to result in more teacher involvement in professional learning programs (McCulla & Gereige-Hinson, 2005).

The NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) which replaced the NSW *Training and Development Policy Statement 1996* responds to the views expressed in the Ramsey report (2000), the Vinson inquiry (2002), and discussion papers generated by the *Interim Committee for a NSW Institute of Teachers 2003* (NSW DET, 2004e). It recognises that the participation of teams and individuals in workplace learning within the wider professional context are keys to developing quality professional practice (Louck-Horsely et al., 2003). The policy outlines the requirements and procedures for professional learning in NSW public schools. Guidelines and support materials are provided to assist in its implementation (NSW DET, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d).

According to the NSW DET (2004e), the new policy has been determined in consultation with five stakeholder groups: the Primary Principals Association; Secondary Principals Council; Professional Teachers Council; NSW Teachers Federation; and The Interim Committee for a NSW Institute of Teachers. Three guideline documents are available to assist schools in the implementation of the policy which relate to using and reporting on teacher professional learning funds, using external professional learning providers, and supporting the induction of new teachers.

According to the NSW DET policy (2004a), schools are seen as the driving force for improvement and change as each addresses the priorities it has determined based on students' learning needs. Regions and state office directorates provide the necessary

support structures in areas of identified need within the policy framework. Each school's plan for professional learning is expected to involve individual teaching and non-teaching staff needs, school, and state priorities. The NSW DET's professional learning priorities include, "ICT (Information and Communications Technology), beginning teachers, literacy and numeracy, quality teaching, syllabus implementation, career development, and welfare and equity" (NSW DET, 2005a, p. 5).

The policy emphasises opportunities for professional interaction, analysis and reflection on practice; and the many methods of professional learning contributing to improving students' outcomes. The main sections of the policy relate to ongoing professional learning, an endorsed school plan, needs and priorities, school Professional Learning Teams, quality professional learning, resources and opportunities, evaluation, and accountability. Funding, while determined on a per capita basis, is provided to schools and not to individual teachers. Each school is required to establish a Professional Learning Team which has responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating, and allocating funds to best meet staff needs in support of student learning (NSW DET, 2004a).

2.4 Principles of effective professional learning

Research shows that such professional learning activities as one-off seminars, conferences, or workshops do not usually enhance the learning of teachers or their students significantly (Hawley & Valli 1999; Little 1999; McRae et al., 2001), although they may be of value when teachers need to learn specific knowledge and skills (Flowers & Mertens, 2003).

Today, more productive approaches to professional learning programs are becoming better known and more widely used (Guskey, 2000). For example, Garet et al. (2001) gathered 1000 teacher' opinions on effective professional learning across the USA. This research focused on mathematics and science teachers' self-reported views on the principles of effective professional learning programs and concluded that it was important to focus on principles of duration, teacher involvement, related content, active learning and coherence.

Blasé and Blasé (1998), in research conducted throughout the United States, collected data from more than 800 teachers from all grade levels. They reported that teachers highly value professional learning that is related, meaningful, and connected to their daily work with their students; in other words, learning that is ‘job-embedded’. Sigford (2006) believes that effective professional learning is not, “an isolated event or series of events; sit and get; just to make adults feel good; and an event, rather than a process” (p. 109).

Hoban (2002) notes that opportunities for teacher professional learning are optimised when the maximum numbers of effective conditions for such learning are in place and related to each other, and that schools establish principles for teacher professional learning as well as ensuring that these principles complement each other. Eight principles of essential professional learning are embodied both in research studies (Carnell, 2001; Fullan, 2001a; Guskey, 2000; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Pate & Thompson, 2003) and in the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy for schools* (2004a). These are:

1. School goals and student performance: Professional learning should be driven by analyses of the differences between school goals or professional standards and current student performance (Fullan, 2001a; Ingvarson, 2002b). Such analyses will define what teachers need to learn, make professional learning student-centred, and increase educational systems’ belief in allocating more funds for professional learning, so that teachers can bridge the knowing-doing gap and use new practice and useful teaching methods in classrooms (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Sparks, 2005).
2. Teacher involvement: Professional learning should involve teachers in the identification of, “what they need to learn and, when possible, in the development of the learning opportunity and the process to be used” (Hawley & Valli, 1999, p. 140). This involvement increases teachers’ motivation, involvement, and commitment to professional learning (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001; Ingvarson, 2002b; Morrissey & Cowan, 2004; Tearle & Dillon, 2003), confirms their strengths and weakness, empowers them to take instructional risks and be familiar with new roles and responsibilities;

increases the probability that what is learned will be important and relevant to specific problems, improves instruction; and makes the school learning environment more collaborative (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Hoban, 2002; Pate & Thompson, 2003; Randi & Zeichner, 2004).

3. School-based professional learning: The NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy for Schools* (2004a) states, “Staff are entitled to seek school-based and systemic support to identify learning needs and develop personal professional learning programs” (p. 5). Similarly, Gronn (2003) asserts that professional learning should be primarily school-based and integral to school functions, though not denying teachers access to out-of-school learning experiences through professional associations or networks, graduate study, or teacher centres (Carver, 2003; Dudzinski, Roszmann-Millican, & Shank, 2000; Ganser, 2000; Gronn, 2003; McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001; NSDC, 2001; Sparks, 2005).
4. Collaborative learning: Professional learning should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual teacher needs but for the most part are prepared around collaborative learning (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Paez, 2003; Pate & Thompson, 2003; Speck & Knipe, 2001). As Guskey (2000) and Carver (2003) argue, teachers working and learning together to address common issues and concerns facilitates the identification of both the causes of and potential solutions to problems (Harrison, 2004; Stone & Cuper, 2006; Tallerico, 2005).
5. Ongoing and long-term process: Professional learning should be ongoing and long-term, and should support further learning, including support from sources out-of-school that can provide necessary support (NSW DET, 2004a), particularly in a rapidly changing world, and is seen as vital in career development (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Guskey, 2000; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Owen, 2003; Supovitz & Zief, 2000; Woolfolk, 1993).
6. Relevant knowledge: Little (1999) believes that content of professional learning activities should include information based on evaluation of students’ outcomes and of processes involved in implementing the lessons

learned through professional learning. Teachers' knowledge and experience should be valued sources of relevant information (Tallerico, 2005) and knowing the extent to which professional learning has influenced student achievement contributes to the design of and incentives for further learning (Crow et al., 2002; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Porter et al., 2000).

7. Theoretical understanding: Professional learning should provide opportunities to develop and employ a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned (Hoban, 2002) and bridge the gap between theory and practice to support teaching for improving students' learning (Levine, 2002).
8. Follow-up: Teachers must practise what they learn (Robb, 2000). Guskey (2000) asserts that too often teachers are asked to learn new things they cannot act on because there is no obligation to continuous experimentation and improvement (King & Newmann, 2000). Teachers need time and opportunities to investigate why some practices might be better than others and to personally develop these practices (Heller, 2004; Ofsted, 2002).

2.5 Professional learning approaches

The professional learning literature suggests a variety of approaches used in professional learning of teachers and these have become much more complex, long-term, and embedded in the workplace (Ingvarson et al., 2005). These methods are employed in pre-service programs, which occur before teachers begin teaching in schools, and in-service or professional learning programs, which teachers undertake while teaching in schools. Each type of professional learning program can use one or more methods. Loucks-Horsley and Matsumoto (1999) and Norton (2001) identify methods such as engaging in the types of learning that teachers are expected to practise with their students. These include participating in workshops, educational institutes, courses, seminars, online learning, study groups, conferences, school visits, collaborating with colleagues, and other methods. In contrast, Paez (2003) argues that a good design in schools is to provide opportunities for staff to observe teaching methods of another teacher in the classroom. It is seen as necessary that the professional learning approaches must be proportionate and appropriate to teachers'

needs, interests, and conditions (Kubitskey, Fishman, & Marx, 2003; Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005).

Epanchin and Colucci (2002) state that teachers can learn from a range of professional learning approaches and benefit from the knowledge of other teachers' experiences and their familiarity with different issues in teaching. They state that the effectiveness of professional learning approaches depends on the extent to which staff create more powerful contexts for and approaches to teacher learning. The kinds of professional learning approaches chosen should provide for teachers' professional needs, interests, and reflective time (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999) and create a collaborative learning climate within their workplace (Little, 1999; Speck & Knipe, 2001; Turbill, 2002).

A popular form of professional learning approach in Australia is through conferences or seminars, which bring together professional groups of teachers for learning new approaches or skills in teaching (Ling & Mackenzie, 2001). There are a number of other models that have been developed and implemented in different countries to promote and support teachers' professional learning from the beginning of their career until they retire. It is important to point out that most professional learning initiatives use a combination of methods (Koehnecke, 2001; Wise, 2000).

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) list a number of professional learning approaches and argue that their merits can be considered in relation to the context of the school, particular issues raised by analysis of student outcomes, and a professional learning budget. Table 2.1 summarizes the professional learning approaches according to whether their focus and knowledge sources are essentially within-school or outside-school. York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, and Montie (2001) discuss the difference between the two. 'Inside knowledge' refers to knowledge that is generated by the research community and shared with practitioners. 'Outside knowledge' is generated by outside expertise regarding new instructional strategies, curriculum, and assessment which provides an infusion of new knowledge to a school. A principal and professional learning team need to balance 'inside' job-embedded with 'outside' professional learning programs that provide a mixture of expertise and information.

Table 2.1 Teachers' professional learning approaches

Given the limitations of this study, only some of these methods are explained in detail below: study groups, action learning, coaching, and mentoring. These are chosen to reflect current trends towards collaborative school-based approaches.

2.5.1 Study groups

Joyce and Showers (1982) argue that out-of-school experts are no more effective in giving feedback to teachers than teachers themselves. Sparks and Brandt (1998) state, “a study group of teachers is a small number of individuals joining together to increase their capacities through new learning for the benefit of students” (p. 4; see also Silins & Mulford, 2002). They argue that study groups provide an opportunity for staff to become lifelong learners and action researchers. In this method, teachers can concentrate on an area that they choose and of relevance to themselves (Ingvarson, 2002b; Louck-Horsely et al., 2003). Hoban (2002) asserts that a sense of community in such groups is necessary so that teachers trust each other and share experiences such that areas of investigation and discussion may expand over time (Fleming & Thompson, 2004; Speck & Knipe, 2001). As a result of this progressive discourse, teachers theorize and discussions are generative so that new ideas are always developing (Clouder, 2000; Jone, 2002).

For Zepeda (1999) study groups operate to encourage peer communication by providing more opportunities for the sharing of experiences, discussion, collaborative planning, and team building. According to Murphy and Lick (1998), most study groups should also be homogeneous (e.g., all math or all science) in membership. For study groups to survive, groups need, “a common belief system that supports the need for lifelong learning, management support such as release time and access to research, and a quality facilitator to keep meetings on track” (Zepeda, 2003, p. 84). They build over time as teachers work together and offer each other feedback. They have norms for staff learning from each other and continuous attempts to improve.

2.5.2 Action learning

Action learning is one approach to school-based professional learning and focuses on local problems and local staff (Dinham, Aubusson, & Brady, 2006). It is becoming a widely accepted methodology for the development of teachers and principals in schools (Hoban & Herrington, 2004; Hoban, Herrington, Kervin, Ewing, Anderson, & Smith, 2005). The literature on adult learning, self-directed learning, experiential learning and critical thinking can be related to action learning (Howell, 1994).

Limerick, Passfield, and Cunnington (1994) consider action learning to be a suitable method for professional learning of teachers.

The idea behind action learning is that there is no learning without action and no purposeful action without learning. Indeed, action learning can assist teachers in gaining the essential professional capability for making better judgments and taking effective action in an altering and unsure environment (Yuen & Cheng, 2000). Based on action learning, learners are responsible for their own development in terms of content, time, method of learning, time of finishing, and method of evaluation. The assumptions are that learners know what type of knowledge they will need and that they know where they will be able to find it (McLaughlin & Thorpe, 1993).

Although there is no single definition of action learning, there is an accepted understanding of the nature of action learning (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). Bourner, Beaty, Lawson, and O'Hara (1996) assert that action learning is a process of reflection and action. Its aim is an improvement in effectiveness of action where learning contributes considerably. Action learning is a form of learning through practice. Its principle is that learners can only learn about work at work, like learning how to ride bicycle by riding a bicycle (Marsick & O'Neil, 1999; Smith & Peters, 1997) and is a process through which people unite impulsively or by plan to learn from each other and share their experience (Dick, 1997, cited in Dinham et al., 2006). It provides an appropriate way for the capacity-building in schools to improve practice. LaBoskey (2004, cited in Dinham et al., 2006) believes, "Action learning is improvement-oriented, interactive, uses multiple methods and is characterised by validity, viewed as constructing, testing, sharing and retesting exemplars of teaching" (p. 2).

Marquardt (2000) describes action learning as a most effective and powerful tool used by schools for developing the essential competencies in staff to perform their roles. Zuber-Skerritt (2002) identifies characteristics of action learning as, "Learning by doing, experiential learning, reflecting on practice, being open, sharing ideas, collaborating, synergy, learning to learn, life-long learning, and learning in the workplace" (p. 118).

Action learning has several benefits such as learning to learn, self-management of learning, self-awareness, and learning with and through others (O'Hara, Webber, & Reeve, 1996). Motivation of learners to learn for themselves determines the success of action learning programs (O'Hara, Beaty, Lawson, & Bournier, 1997) and the degree to which the values in an action learning culture are followed and practised by participants in programs (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002).

In spite of the fact that recent research confirms the significance of teachers' active involvement in their own learning, the nature of this involvement is important as well as its level (Ingvarson et al., 2005). McLaughlin and Thorpe (1993, p. 19) conclude that, "the greater benefits of action learning depend to some extent on the careful consideration of its application". During 2004 to 2005, Dinham et al., (2006) evaluated the 50 QTAL (Quality Teaching Action Learning) projects in 82 NSW public schools and found that these projects undertaken by school teams were successful in promoting and utilising action learning and enhanced teacher professional learning in the schools. The research also elaborated that, "the voluntary nature of involvement and the fact that projects [QTAL] grew from needs already identified within the schools appeared important conditions for project effectiveness" (p. 12).

2.5.3 Coaching

Coaching and mentoring are methods that provide one-on-one or small group learning opportunities for teachers to learn from their peers about new instructional methods and thus to improve their own teaching practice (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998, 2003; Terehoff, 2002). Davis (2004) distinguishes coaching from counseling, training, mentoring although its skills could be used in any of these practices. Neufeld and Roper (2003) point out that coaching, like teaching, is not a routine activity. Coaches assist in developing principals' and teachers' knowledge and skills and also help to develop schools' professional cultures as learning organisations. Skiffington and Zeus (2003, cited in Davis, 2004) define coaching as:

A structured process-driven relationship between a trained professional coach and an individual or team which includes: assessment, examining values and motivation, setting measurable goals, defining focused action plans and using

validated behavioural change tools and techniques to assist them to develop competencies and remove blocks to achieve valuable and sustainable changes in their professional and personal life. (p. 6)

Russo (2004) elaborates that school-based coaching as a professional learning strategy usually includes experts in a specific subject area or set of teaching practices. They work closely with small groups of teachers in order to enhance classroom practice and, finally, student achievement. Coaches may work full-time at an individual school or district or with different schools during the year. They are usually previous classroom teachers, and some are part-time teachers while they coach.

Starcevich (2004) points out, “A coach is trying to direct a person to some end result, the person may choose how to get there, but the coach is strategically assessing and monitoring the progress and giving advice for effectiveness and efficiency” (p. 1). Some believe that the concept of coaching is beyond just a focus on classroom observation and includes other activities, such as co-planning instruction, material development, and thinking together about the influence of teachers’ behaviour on students (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

One type of coaching is peer coaching which is largely used for beginning teachers with fewer than 3 years of experience (Klug & Salzman, 1991). According to some research (Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2000; Garet et al., 2001; Showers & Joyce, 1996), peer coaching tends to be job-embedded and is intended to ensure the transfer of newly learned skills from a professional learning opportunity into practice (Kelleher, 2003). Peer coaching has typically functioned as a process of shared planning, observation, and feedback, rather than serving as a formal evaluation or review, in order to increase the level of implementation of instructional techniques and curriculum (Odell, 1990; Perkins, 1998). A positive aspect of peer coaching is its potential to encourage a culture of collaboration and professionalism among teachers (Wong & Nicotera, 2003). The results of the study by Davis (2004) indicate that some problems may result from a peer coaching program such as insufficient training, limited resources, and lack of evaluation (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Holloway, 2001; Perkins, 1998).

Becker (1996) classifies coaching into different types with various functions including technical and team coaching, collegial and cognitive coaching, and challenge coaching. Technical and team coaching concentrate on implementing new curriculum and instructional techniques into teachers' practices. The purpose of collegial and cognitive coaching is to improve present teacher practices by improving techniques, increasing collegiality, raising professional conversation, and helping teachers to reflect on their teaching. The third type of coaching, challenge coaching, focuses on identifying and dealing with a particular problem and can be used in a larger context than the classroom such as a school or grade level (Ackland, 1991).

Richard (2003) argues that although the practice of coaching is promising, it often disappointingly focuses only on school improvement tactics. He also notes that school leaders who expect coaching alone to solve many problems, from low test scores to poor student-teacher relationships, are setting themselves up for disappointment (Russo, 2004).

Researchers (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Neufeld & Roper, 2003) highlight that coaches, in order to be successful, need to utilise high quality professional learning programs and for this reason most districts have recognized that they should develop their own coaches through ongoing and relevant professional learning.

2.5.4 Mentoring

During the last two decades there has been extensive attention in the literature on mentoring, which has been implemented in a number of teacher education and induction programs (Carter & Francis, 2001). Kerry and Mayes (1995) note that mentoring developed from the early 1970s and in the 1990s mentoring was established in all phases of teacher education. Indeed, as professional learning becomes school-based and schools prepare formal induction programs, the role of teacher mentor becomes increasingly important in teacher education.

The empirical study of Carter and Francis (2001) confirms the significance of mentoring programs, particularly formal mentoring relationships, in effective school-based induction practice and that there is an important relationship between a

positive school climate and the best mentoring relationships (Klug & Salzman, 1991).

Mentoring is a form of coaching that tends to be short-term; for example, for a beginning teacher or for someone new to a school or a system (Zepeda, 2003). The mentoring model of professional learning typically involves pairing an experienced and highly successful teacher with a less experienced colleague (Guskey, 2000).

Mentoring is when a role model, or mentor, offers support to another person. A mentor has knowledge and experience in an area and shares it with the person being mentored. For example, an experienced teacher might mentor a student teacher or beginning teacher. (McBrien & Brandt, 1997, p. 64)

Studies reveal that mentors fulfil numerous roles: “provider of support and encouragement; confidant; conduit for information concerning school climate, culture, and policies; teacher; counselor; intervener; and sponsor” (Ganser, 1996, p. 36). Loucks-Horsley et al. (1998) note that mentoring in public education is largely used in the training of beginning teachers, where mentors are experienced teachers working with beginners. In the process of mentoring teachers who have experience and particular expertise in a program, teaching practice, or content area work with others with less experience and expertise. Hudson (2006) concludes that the purpose of an effective mentoring is expanding pre-service teachers’ real-life learning experiences and providing opportunities for developing effective teaching practices within the school.

Researchers report that mentoring has considerable benefits for the mentor, the mentee, and the school (Power & Hine, 2003) such as reducing teacher isolation, promotion of an educative workplace and creation or understanding of consensual norms in a school (Carter & Francis, 2001), and development of teaching practices (Crowther & Cannon, 1998). If a mentoring program is provided for beginning teachers with necessary and critical support, it could be a significant tool in helping teachers to improve their profession (Potter, 2000). Carter and Francis (2001) conclude, “Mentoring held legitimacy as a professional learning strategy and at the same time appeared to offer a cost ‘solution’ in training and development for teachers” (p. 250).

Rowley (1999) refers to six fundamental features of good mentoring: commitment to the mentoring role; acceptance of beginning teachers; proficiency at providing instructional support; interpersonal effectiveness; skill at modeling continuous learning; and capacity to communicate hope and hopefulness.

Mentoring is as an effective part of school-based beginning teacher training programs (Carter & Francis, 2000), elaborated on in the document *Supporting the Induction of New Teachers* (NSW DET, 2004c). This document argues that, “effective induction increases the quality of teaching practice in schools, reduces the number of early-career teachers leaving the service and builds commitment to professional learning, teaching and public education” (p. 3).

To sum up, schools implement teachers’ professional learning by mixing and matching different methods (Zepeda, 2003). Schools need to know about the methods of professional learning in order to recognize when and how to use them as well as how to mix them. Guskey (2000) argues that, “combining models in thoughtful ways can provide a highly effective means to professional growth and improvement at both the individual and organisational levels” (p. 29). The value of these models is that they can be modified to fit the needs of teachers.

2.6 Learning organisation

According to Bhindi (1997), a learning organisation has been variously described as a learning community, a community of commitment, and a learning company and in spite of important variation in the use of the concepts by different writers (Garavan 1997), there is a tendency by some scholars to use the terms interchangeably. Capper, Hill, Bullard, and Hawes (1994) describe a learning organisation as one that has capability for creating, obtaining, and transferring knowledge, and adapting its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights, and Elkjaer (2001) states that such an organisation relies largely on the skills and knowledge of its people. According to Senge (1990) learning organisations are:

... organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are

continually learning to see the whole together. (p. 3)

Watkins and Marsick (1993, cited in Willcoxson, 2002) determine seven dimensions of a learning organisation as: creating continuous learning opportunities; promoting inquiry and dialogue; encouraging collaboration and team learning; establishing systems to capture and share learning; empowering people toward a collective vision; connecting the organisation to its environment; and leaders modeling and supporting learning. Bhindi (1997) claims that, "the most apparent benefits of the learning organisation are its base as a platform for staff capacity building, transformation of educational leadership as stewards, and reformation of management structures and processes for quality outcomes" (p. 18).

Developing a learning organisation begins with individual learning (Appelbaum & Gallagher, 2000; Elkjaer, 2001) and staff need to be open to learning, everyone to be a learner, and to continuously explore new ideas and seek to enhance their practice in order to effect increased student achievement. They work collaboratively to implement their collective goals; teamwork is essential (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). "Building a learning organisation requires organisational members to have access to resources such as time to collaborate, ongoing leadership support, information, and ready access to colleagues" (Senge, 1994 cited in Roberts & Pruitt, 2003, p. 3). A lack of ongoing professional learning and meaningful opportunities to engage staff in learning activities can limit the capacity of schools to become learning organisations (Lashway, 1997; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

The leadership of the principal is central in building a school learning organisation and such leadership must shift from centralized decision-making to shared leadership (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Leadership, management structure and processes need to enact a learning culture for professional learning in schools (Bhindi, 1995).

2.7 Professional learning community

A professional learning community is a group in which teachers learn from each other (Hord, 2004; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Louis, Kruse, and Marks (1996) believe that an effective teachers' professional learning community has five basic characteristics:

teachers' common values; is centered on student needs; thoughtful dialogue; showing and observing of practice; and collaboration.

Darling-Hammond (1998) and Lieberman (1999) believe that a school professional learning community is created by and promotes collaboration, teachers working every day in discussion and collaboration with their peers to improve their teaching quality and students' learning. School communities must include a model of professional learning that is embedded within the daily work of teachers collaborating, studying, investigating, and learning together that will drive further school improvement (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005).

Building cooperative capacity in a professional learning community requires more than staff engaging in different workshops or courses (Bredeson, 2003). As Fullan (2005) writes, "capacity building ... is the daily habit of working together, and you can't learn this from a workshop or course. You need to learn it by doing it and getting better at it on purpose" (p. 69). DuFour et al. (2005) conclude that a professional learning community cannot be created in schools unless staff include collaboration in their daily work and ensure that it develops their learning. Obviously, this has implications for school leaders.

Elmore (2002) suggests that schools should develop a professional learning community. She believes that, "teachers learn through social interactions around problems of practice and that the enhancement of teacher learning requires support for collegial interaction where teachers can work on new practices" (p. 17). Professional learning communities become more successful when staff are provided with professional knowledge and skills and are motivated for successful problem solving (Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005).

A professional learning community is one where staff learning occurs continuously, and where teachers are respected and recognized for their experiences, expertise, and individual needs (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2004). The professional learning community gives teachers time to collaborate and practise their new learning and be coached in the process (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Crow et al., 2002).

2.8 Professional learning policy

Blandford (2000) and Hoban (2002) argue that policy in education should provide the necessary direction and support for teachers' professional learning or such programs may not be successful. Moreover, policy in professional learning, like any other policies, needs to be assessed to determine its effectiveness in practice.

The literature indicates that there are a number of very significant ways in which policy can influence professional learning of teachers. According to Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), these include: encouragement, involvement, funding, and reform of resource allocation processes. Teachers' professional learning can be systematically planned, facilitated, funded, implemented, and evaluated through the implementation of the policy (NSW DET, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c).

Several educational groups influence policy-making in professional learning. Winder (1991) explains that policies developed at the national, state or regional level may be the result of communication among many people or organisations. Sometimes policies reflect the views of a small group, a government or even past governments; the results of elections; perhaps political ideology through a Minister of Education; major interest groups; the bureaucracy; the results of media influence; or evidence of needs. Consequently, developing policy in professional learning by involving several educational groups is seen as important because policies need to reflect the thoughts and wishes of diverse groups of stakeholders (Thompson, 2004).

Rist (1994) suggests that the policy process has three phases: policy formulation, policy implementation and policy accountability. The first phase, policy formulation, entails the selection of the most appropriate policy strategy to achieve the desired objective. The implementation phase is when, "the policy initiatives and goals established during policy formulation are transformed into programs, procedures and regulations" (p. 550). The third phase of the policy process is when the policy is satisfactorily developed to one that can address questions of responsibility, influences, and results (Rist, 1994). It is apparent that it is a long way from making policy to implementing it.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1999) argue that, “policy coherence requires that policymakers at all levels examine both the various elements of the system, such as standards, school environments, learning opportunities, and the demands associated with policies that compete for the same time, attention, and resources” (p. 397). Fenna (2004) indicates that it is common for organisations to have a policy on a range of issues. Successful policy depends on the instruments chosen, the quality of design, and the nature of the problem, and policies will be successful or unsuccessful, carry on or be reformulated in the running (Bovens, Hart, & Peters, 2002).

Policy on professional learning should correspond with the needs and conditions of the teachers who are expected to benefit from it. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1999), argue that policy in professional learning should improve teaching quality and should address a number of key issues at one time:

... attracting, recruiting, and retaining people in teaching who have the ability and disposition to teach well; helping teachers develop strong professional norms, knowledge, and skills; and creating incentives and organisational conditions that support teachers’ and students’ learning in schools. (p. 382)

An effective policy in professional learning should be based on the professional learning needs of teachers, school-determined priorities, and government goals (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999). Little (1999) emphasises that the professional learning opportunities valued by experienced teachers may be different from those that new teachers find helpful. Teachers working in different school settings often have different needs for particular knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, the challenges confronting schools and teachers are not evenly distributed through the public education system. Little also believes that policy makers should accept differential responses to anticipate either different adaptations or needs for resources.

Fenna (2004) argues that the implementation of policy should be conceptualised as a compound and active process by a variety of participants, with a wide range of perspectives. It is probably true to say that there are a number of conceptual possibilities for carrying out the policy. Firstly, it is possible to outline the general

stages of the running process between performance and the impact of the policy. Secondly, it is possible to identify the principal set of variables and the value each must take for successful implementation. Thirdly, it is possible to look at the relative importance of the policy variables within and across its areas (Fenna, 2004).

Schools can influence policy makers at the state or federal levels if they are willing to become involved. Seifert and Vornberg (2002) say that this influence can be optimised through face-to-face discussions with state or federal policy makers. Schools need to be more insistent in providing leadership and if they are unsuccessful in providing this leadership they will be more likely to be surprised by policy changes than they would be if they were participants in the policy making (Seifert & Vornberg, 2002).

To summarise, policy on teachers' professional learning yields the best results when it is focuses on long-term and ongoing processes; is school-based and collaborative; brings all staff groups together for a common purpose; adapts to the needs of state, schools, and individual teachers; and provides effective guidelines for design, implementation, and evaluation of programs (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). Importantly, the policy needs to be continuously assessed to evaluate its effectiveness in practice. Developing guidelines for the design, implementation and evaluation of outcomes is the first important step in the development of professional learning programs in schools. Examples of these guidelines can be found in the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a).

2.9 Professional learning constraints

An important implication for the principal is that he/she must know and understand the constraints on implementation of effective professional learning activities. Some of these are identified in research (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Fermanich, 2002). These are, briefly:

1. Inadequate budget: A fundamental and widely experienced constraint on teachers' professional learning is inadequate funding (Drago-Severson, 2004; Labaree, 2000). In the USA, for example, only small proportions of education budgets are allocated to teacher professional learning (Applewhite, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Sykes,

1999; Fermanich, 2002) and such allocations are often the first to be reduced in a budget cut (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Inadequate funding often leads to the cheapest, least varied and possibly least effective forms of professional learning methods (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

2. Insufficient time: Inadequate time is also widely reported to be a major constraint on teachers' professional learning (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Bredeson, 2003; Brown, Rutherford, & Boyle, 2000; Hoban, 2002; Labaree, 2000; Ludwig & Taymans, 2005; Southworth, 1999). This applies both to actual learning activities and to the necessary preparation for and consolidation of professional learning (Ofsted, 2002), and to out-of-school learning activities, where teachers' time may be taken up by other responsibilities, including, particularly in developing countries, additional work (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Sebring & Bryk, 2000; Tallerico, 2005; Tearle & Dillon, 2003).

3. Irrelevant professional learning content: The priorities that drive the content of professional learning are a combination of state, region and school-level goals for improvement of school (Guskey, 2000). However, teachers often consider the content of professional learning irrelevant to their professional needs (Lynn, 2002) and students' learning (Kelleher, 2003). Little (1999) asserts, "Typically what emerges is a menu of discrete professional learning activities, usually focused on specific content issues [a new way to teach math, for example] or pressing issues in the daily conduct of schooling" (p. 251). These activities are often prepared and delivered centrally, so that staff participate in professional learning that is designed and carried out in isolation from their work setting.

Diaz-Maggioli (2004) observes that when teachers do not participate in planning and delivering of professional learning programs, their learning needs can go unmet, and only a small proportion of teachers seem able to transfer the content covered in a workshop to the classroom.

4. Inappropriate professional learning approaches: Sparks and Hirsh (1997) argue that most teacher professional learning programs are taught in traditional ways, without enabling teachers to participate and learn through collaboration and group discussions (Lieberman, 1999). Some studies have shown that, over time, teachers

participate in fewer professional learning programs, reducing opportunities to observe, practice, reflect and engage in professional discussions about what helps their students to learn (Foster & Peele, 1999; Schambach & Blanton, 2001).

5. Inadequate needs assessment: Ramsey (2000) reports that in Australia one of the major criticisms of existing professional learning programs is the lack of teachers' participation in identifying appropriate professional learning content, design or implementing of programs. Consequently, teachers often consider that content and delivery of professional learning programs are inappropriate to their needs. Tearle and Dillon (2003) similarly contend that teachers' dissatisfaction with professional learning programs is related to lack of assessment of their needs or when its results have not been considered in these programs. Ramsey (2000) argues that in Australia much of the current evidence critical of teacher professional learning arrangements refers to their unplanned nature, to their poor intellectual quality and their lack of a conceptual framework (Lee, 2002).

2.10 The principal's role in teachers' professional learning

One of the main responsibilities of the principal is the improvement of professional learning for teachers (Murphy, 2002). Recently, literature on professional learning has given substantial attention to the issue of the principal's role in teachers' professional learning (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000; Midthassel, 2004). Researchers (Bjork, 2000; Retallick, 1999a) argue that schools with effective principals will be effective in developing teachers' professional learning. Many studies confirm that the leadership of the principal is vital in determining the quality (Newmann et al., 2000; Sigford, 2006) and support of professional learning programs (Bush, 1999; Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001; Ehrich, 1998; Fernandez, 2000).

Dinham (2004) reports, "In the words of several principals, they 'never' turn down a legitimate and reasonable request for teacher development assistance" (p. 20). Blasé and Blasé (2004) report that, "successful principals frequently provided formal professional learning opportunities to address emergent educational needs, and doing so had a powerful effect on the teacher" (p. 53).

The role of the principal is clearly central to the implementation and success of a school-based professional learning program (Scott, 2003). This is highlighted in the NSW DET policy (2004a) and, in the negative, by Richard's conclusions (2004) on problems in some American schools:

Some principals are simply unprepared to reorganise their schools in ways that support shared instructional leadership. When a school has a strong, focused, experienced, creative principal willing to empower others, help a staff grow and change appropriately, and to demand better results for the school, a school-based staff developer's chances for success appear much greater. (p. 3)

Clearly, while all members of the school must be prepared and willing to play new roles, the roles of the principal as initiator, supporter, and facilitator are critical (Bredeson, & Johansson, 2000; Moore, 2000). To the extent that the principal, particularly, fails in these roles, even well-designed professional learning programs cannot succeed (Sparks, 2002).

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) classify the roles of the principal in teachers' professional learning as:

- Builder: Preparing the capacity of the professional learning community;
- Designer: Planning professional learning;
- Implementer: Taking action; and
- Reflective Leader: Evaluating results. (p. 20)

Table 2.1 summarizes some of the roles of the principal in implementing professional learning programs.

Table 2.2 The principal's roles in teachers' professional learning

Successful professional learning also needs a culture of support by teachers, other educators and the public, and also requires the support of national and international associations, and leaders in the field of education (Burget, 2000).

The principal is not only required to create and direct a school professional learning community, but also must share the values of collaboration and communication (DuFour & Berkey, 1995; King, 2004; Speck, 1999) and perform as a knowledgeable change agent working to prepare a collaborative environment where teachers work in harmony (Fullan, 2001a; Huber, 2004).

The principal's roles in teachers' professional learning may be summarised as: leading; planning; encouraging; implementing; and evaluating teachers' professional learning programs. These roles will be reviewed in the following sections.

2.10.1 Leading

Berube, Gaston, and Stepan, (2004) argue that perhaps the biggest change in the role of the principal includes that of being the instructional leader of a school. They argue that teacher perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader can have a major influence on the development of professional learning of teachers. The important characteristics of the principal's leadership style in effective professional learning programs have been seen as advocacy, support, and the ability to affect others (Huber, 2004). Goldberg (2001) found that there are many ways to achieve success in leading professional learning and believes that, "it's just too complex, too varied, and too subject to change for any singular answer" (p. 761). Tirozzi (2001) believes that, "without leadership, the chances for systemic improvement in teaching and learning are nil" (p. 439).

The principal leads the structures and conditions within the learning community and provides support through continuing the dialogue, being involved in the process, coaching, and problem solving within an environment of collegiality (Blasé & Blase, 2004; Calabrese, 2002; Lambert, 2005; Speck, 1999). DuFour and Eaker (1998) refer to the principal's key role in building conditions that help the school become a professional learning community, assisting in creating a collaborative learning environment where teachers learn collectively (Turbill, 2002) and which motivates teachers and reduces run-off in the school (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), the principal as leader must:

- Lead through shared vision and values rather than through rules and procedures.
- Involve faculty members in the school's decision-making process and empower individuals to act.
- Provide staff with the information, training, and parameters they need to make a good decision. (pp. 184-187)

As Lambert (2002) puts it, “the days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other educators” (p. 37). The focus of instructional leadership style is valuing teachers’ work, and promoting and supporting teachers to accept leadership roles (Bell & Harrison, 1998; Southworth, 2002).

Similar models of leadership have been differently described as ‘distributed leadership’ (Gronn, 2000; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003), ‘parallel leadership’ (Spillane, 2006), and ‘shared leadership’ (Fleming & Thompson, 2004; Lambert, 2005) and these are seen as most likely to contribute to school improvement and to create internal capacity for development (Harris, 2002b; Harris & Muijs, 2005). Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) found, “strong evidence that school-based interventions, involving teacher leadership and parallel leadership, can produce enhanced education outcomes” (p. xix; see also Moller, 2004). For example, in NSW the school Professional Learning Teams (NSW DET, 2004a), through shared leadership and ownership with the principal, are seen as setting the direction to carry out the professional learning work (Crow et al., 2002; King, 2004). Because sharing leadership within the school Professional Learning Team and among all stakeholders is essential, the principal is not the only person responsible for teachers’ professional learning (Blandford, 2000; Crow et al., 2002; Drago-Severson, 2004).

Elmore (2000) lists five principles for distributed leadership for professional learning and change in the school:

1. The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role.
2. Instructional improvement requires continuous learning.

3. Learning requires modeling.
4. The roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution.
5. The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity.
(pp. 20-21; see also King, 2004)

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) recommend that everyone in the school should be involved in the leadership and the work of professional learning and the principal should assume that shared leadership roles will create the professional learning frames that make a difference in student outcomes. Barth (2001) encourages principals to change the notion of the principal as the authority and 'knower' to being a learner beside the teachers and students. His term for this type of principal is the 'Lead Learner'. Indeed, learning together builds a community that is committed to sharing and discovering what works well.

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) further argue that shared leadership provides the foundation for ongoing, broad and inclusive teachers' professional learning. The principal with shared leadership assists teachers to have feelings of ownership in goals, plans, and actions. To put this in other words, shared leadership is a critical condition for professional learning action (Crow et al., 2002; Lambert, 2005). Youngs (1999) indicates that even a well-made professional learning program cannot be successful when principals do not apply shared leadership and do not provide appropriate conditions for teacher involvement in these programs.

However, it is important to keep in mind that not all collaborative activities will essentially create distributed leadership; it also depends on the level and quality of involvement in addition to the degree of skilfulness within the group (Harris & Lambert, 2003), and on the extent to which group members' activities effect organisational change and development (Harris & Muijs, 2005).

2.10.2 Planning

Fullan (1993) argues that a principal should be ready to plan for, understand, and support ongoing needs as the learning community grapples with new learning and change, and that careful planning and sustainability are two features of effective

professional learning activities, features which permit teachers to obtain follow-up and support (Ganser, 2000; Peterson, 2002). The literature on the principal's role in planning professional learning focuses on three broad issues: identification and assessment of teachers' needs; determining of content; and allocation of resources.

Blandford (2000) and Zepeda (1999) indicate that required steps for effective professional learning are planning, identifying and evaluating teachers' learning needs, and selecting appropriate strategies, and that there is no single formula for planning and implementing effective professional learning. Joyce and Showers (2002) introduce a feature of good quality professional learning planning as the recognition and evaluation of the learning needs of different teachers. Teacher assistants, beginner teachers, experienced teachers, subject heads and the principal will have different professional learning needs at different stages in their careers (Earley & Bubb, 2004).

Principals need to be familiar with different models of professional learning, identified through research and practice (Bateman & Bateman, 2001) in order to find out how these models can be adapted or combined to serve particular needs in schools (Zepeda, 1999).

Considering needs and interests of participating teachers in planning is one important feature of effective professional learning programs (Epanchin & Colucci, 2002). Principals can involve teachers in planning of professional learning programs (Desimone, Porter, Birman, Garet, & Yoon, 2002; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004), and help teachers in determining and achieving their needs for professional learning (Bransford, 2000; Campbell, 2002; Ehrich, 1998). Teachers should have a significant role in determining the content and planning of professional learning programs because they know more than anyone about their areas of weakness. Their participation in the process of determining the content of professional learning will result in preparing more appropriate programs (King & Newmann, 2001; Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005).

However, this participation should be accompanied by an accountability system. Heller (2004) argues that, "if the staff knows that there will be no follow-up or accountability, then once again, time, money, and effort are wasted in the process"

(p. 55). It appears that school-based professional learning programs result in better programs in relation to the teachers' needs (Benejam & Espinet, 1992). Zepeda (2003) asserts that principals help their teachers become fully performing professionals by identifying their professional learning needs and providing learning opportunities that meet those needs. He says, "A first step is to assess teachers' needs by examining career stages and the generalized principles that characterize adult learning within a particular stage" (p. 63; see also Terehoff, 2002).

Mizell (2003) notes that student achievement data and learning gap needs are two significant foundations for targeting professional learning plans (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). Schmoker (2002) notes that professional learning should be planned according to its direct effect on student learning and this is achieved by having teachers work in teams that focus on evaluated standards and achievement data to target learning gaps. Zepeda (2003) notes that, "methods of identifying professional learning needs include informal discussion [e.g., during planning periods, over lunch], formal discussion [e.g., faculty meetings, department, team, or grade-level meetings], faculty surveys, and classroom observations" (p. 70).

One of the greatest challenges for the principal in planning is the allocation of limited resources to meet seemingly unlimited needs. At the beginning of every school year, principals are faced with the same problem: how to adequately fund every need within a limited budget. This task is further complicated by competing programs championed by stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and central office administrators. McCall (1997) states that, "the budget is key because it encompasses the financial crystallization of an organisation's intentions" (p. 69).

School resources are fundamental and influence teachers' and administrators' abilities to implement professional learning programs (Desimone et al., 2002; Guskey, 2000). In addition, lack of resources or spreading resources so thinly that they have little impact may hinder the implementation of a well-designed professional learning plan. As Lindstrom and Speck (2004) argue, "Without the proper resources, teachers can become disillusioned with the innovations because material, books, supplies, equipment, software, technology, or facilities are not

available to help them implement what they have learned and are ready to apply” (p. 89). The following table adapted from Kelly (2003) indicates the importance of planning in professional learning and provides very detailed and specific actions for principals to take.

Table 2.3 Planning in teachers’ professional learning

Loughridge and Tarantino (2005) outline some basic foundational steps that the principal should put into place that will support their efforts to put the pieces together:

1. Ensure that the Professional Learning Team is knowledgeable of adult learning theory and the change process as a basis for creating the school's Professional Learning Plan.
 2. The School Plan goals provide the framework for planning professional learning at the school.
 3. With the planning team, identify the specific skills and knowledge that staff will need to put into practice to meet the school goals.
 4. After informing staff about the school goals, allow staff to identify specific skills and knowledge needed to make the transition.
 5. The principal and Professional Learning Team then design a Professional Learning Plan that includes external and internal opportunities for staff to engage in meaningful, appropriate, and job-embedded professional learning.
- (p. 66)

2.10.3 Encouragement

Principals have an important role in encouraging teachers to be involved in professional learning programs (Bhindi, 2006; Morrissey & Cowan, 2004). Researchers (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002; Sahid, 2003) have found that effective principals invite teachers to be part of the change process and encourage them to participate in different professional learning programs such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and team learning. Sergiovanni (2001) states, "No other school position has greater potential for maintaining and improving quality schools than the principal. The principal sets the tone of the school, supports a climate for learning, and reflects the level of professionalism prevalent in the schoolhouse" (p. 9).

Wood and Killian (1998) express the view, based on their study, that when principals value professional learning and actively participate, teachers will also value professional learning, but lack of such participation leads teachers to de-value such programs. For this reason, some principals build a teacher learning community and

employ their leadership role to demonstrate and encourage continuous learning for themselves as well as their teachers (Hord, 2004).

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) argue that when teachers are treated as professionals and appreciated they are encouraged in continuous professional learning, and that treating teachers professionally and recognizing their efforts may vary from providing materials, a dinner or refreshments at an activity they are sponsoring, release time to work with others on a unit of curriculum, to formal recognition at a school board meeting. They further explain that providing extra material related to a course they have attended or equipment such as computers or software in professional learning activities are motivations and visible rewards for teachers' participation in professional learning (Kelley & Finnigan, 2004).

2.10.4 Implementation

Villegas-Reimers (2003) claims that although it is important to develop lists of planned structures and conditions for professional learning, their effective implementation is more difficult than identifying them. Bredeson and Johansson (2000) state, "The hard work comes in putting the design principles into practice with real people in the dynamic and complex environments of schools" (p. 388). Additionally, Dick (1991) believes that working with teachers who are experienced adults and who work in complex and pressured environments can be very challenging. Therefore, effective professional learning in practice is difficult and dependent on the quality of the facilitation and the principal's effectiveness (Rhodes & Beneicke, 2003).

The conditions under which professional learning is carried out are important factors in its successful implementation (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001). According to Lindstrom and Speck (2004), "As a principal works toward implementing plans, the conditions that need to be in place are: collaborative environment, shared leadership, time, incentives, and resources for support" (p. 74; see also Kelley & Finnigan, 2004; Speck & Knipe, 2001).

The principal's awareness of teachers' previous experiences is an important contributor to successful implementation of new professional learning programs.

Seifert and Vornberg (2002) like Cardno (1995) point out that the principal's ability to be aware of previous mistakes and to take relevant preventative action will result in avoiding these mistakes.

Educationists believe that successful implementation of professional learning and development needs a safe and supportive environment provided by the principal together with adequate time, appropriate support and resources to allow teachers to master new content and pedagogy and incorporate these into practice (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Fleming, 2004). Professional learning also needs opportunities for teachers to see how other teachers understand and apply new knowledge (Blasé & Blasé, 2004).

Principals need knowledge of effective professional learning methods (DET Victoria, 2006) and a number of methods have been developed and implemented in different countries to promote and support teachers' professional learning from the beginning of their career until they retire. It is important to point out that most professional learning initiatives use a combination of methods (Koehnecke, 2001; Wise, 2000).

2.10.5 Evaluation

Another role for the principal is the evaluation of professional learning, the importance of which is echoed in both policy documents (NSW DET, 2004a), and numerous articles and publications (e.g., Bredeson, 2003; Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001; Guskey, 2002; Mizell, 2003; Tallerico, 2005). For example, Zepeda (2003) states that, "Since teachers' professional learning needs change over time, it is important to assess professional learning to ensure its responsiveness to changes" (p. 78).

According to Guskey (2000), reasons for the growing interest in evaluation of professional learning are:

- A better understanding of the dynamic nature of professional learning;
- Recognition of professional learning as an intentional process;
- The need for better information to guide reform efforts;
- Increased pressure for accountability. (p. 8)

Bredeson (2003) believes that the process of evaluation starts by designing evaluation into the early part of the professional learning planning process and continuing after the particular professional learning activity is completed. Sparks and Hirsh (1997) and Tallerico (2005) assert that impact on teaching practice and impact on student learning are two criteria for evaluating the outcomes of professional learning programs. Guskey (2002) proposes the Professional Learning Evaluation Model with five levels: “participants’ reaction; participants’ learning; organisational support and change; participants’ use of new skills; and student learning outcomes” (pp. 46-49).

Kubitskey et al. (2003) introduce three steps for evaluation of professional learning: interviewing teachers after involvement in professional learning programs; observing classroom teaching during the professional learning programs; and evaluating student achievement (Pate & Thompson, 2003; Preskill & Torres, 1999).

Educationists classify evaluation of professional learning as either informal or formal, and Zepeda (1999) classifies both informal and formal evaluations into several levels: the evaluation of the professional learning; the evaluation of how teachers are implementing professional learning; and the evaluation of the impact of professional learning on student performance. In a later study, Zepeda (2003) explains that professional learning is informally evaluated whilst teachers are implementing new practices. Additionally, the principal can employ informal classroom observations and discussion in the hallway as methods to evaluate how the content of professional learning is being implemented (Blandford, 2000). If there is a peer coaching or mentoring program at the site, peer coaches and mentors can assist the principal to evaluate what is happening in the classroom as a result of professional learning (Zepeda, 2003).

In fact, professional learning requires an ongoing evaluation process to make sure that goals are being attained, needs are being met, and resources are being used wisely (Speck, 1999; Speck & Knipe, 2001; Zepeda, 1999). Without systematic evaluation of efforts, it is almost impossible to determine whether resulting changes are sustainable. Lindstrom and Speck (2004) suggest that to accurately evaluate progress the principal needs to gather data and feedback from multiple sources.

Guskey (1998) argues that historically there have been different views on evaluation of professional learning programs. While many have considered evaluation a costly, time-consuming process that distracts consideration from important planning, implementation, and follow-up activities, others believe that they simply lack the skill and expertise to become involved in accurate evaluations and, “either ignore evaluation issues or leave them to evaluation experts who are called in at the end and asked to determine whether what was done made any difference. The results of such processes are seldom very useful” (p. 36).

Evaluation provides information about the implementation process and its effects, especially on student achievement, and is an important tool to inform parents and the community on progress that is being made at the school. Importantly, assessment of professional learning programs as much as teacher assessment is worthwhile and part of the role of the principal.

2.11 The principal’s capabilities in supporting teachers’ professional learning

According to Australian research by Burke (2003), the particular capabilities which principals require to carry out the above roles effectively are, “educational leadership, solid technical foundations combined with sincerity, ethics, strategic thinking and strong interpersonal capabilities, to identify needs, plan thoroughly, evaluate effectively, [and be a] good decision maker and problem solver” (p. 5; see also Scott, 2003). Other important capabilities of the principal include: commitment to genuine collaboration (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Johnston & Caldwell, 2001); commitment to full support for teachers’ professional learning (Bell & Harrison, 1998; Bredson & Johansson, 2000; King & Newmann, 2001; Senge, 2000); and communication skills such as good listening and discussing (Blasé & Blasé, 2000, 2004; Crow et al., 2002; Jones, 2005; NSW DET, 2005b; Schumaker & Sommers, 2001; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999). On the latter, Senge (1999) believes that, “the essence of leadership - what we do with 98 percent of our time – is communication” (p. 59).

Bell and Harrison (1998) also highlight the importance of communication skills and believe that principals, “must see themselves in a negotiating role with their education authorities, with government and community bodies, with parents, and with the experiences and views of their own students” (p. 155). Blasé and Blasé (2000) report that, “effective principals valued dialogue that encouraged teachers to critically reflect on their learning and professional practice” (p. 131).

Principals require both effective leadership and good management skills (Daresh, 2001; Huber, 2004; Jones, 2005). As DuBrin and Daglish (2003) assert, “Effective leaders also manage and effective managers also lead” (p.10). Researchers (Carver, 2003; Fullan, 2001b; Hargreaves, 2003) argue that principals use their managerial skills to produce agendas with plans and budgets and they use their leadership skills to build vision and strategies to implement these plans; they implement changes with managerial control, and by using inspirational and innovative leadership. Tirozzi (2001) believes that, “the principal’s role must shift from a focus on management and administration to a focus on leadership and vision on facilitating the teaching and learning process” (p. 439). Leadership is related to change, inspiration, motivation and influence while management tries to maintain the current system operating through planning, organising, directing, controlling, budgeting and problem solving (DuBrin & Daglish, 2003). Sigford (2006) argues that both leadership and management skills are significant and interdependent since the leader creates a vision to guide the school and the key function of the manager is to put that vision into action.

It is necessary that principals are well-informed about organisational structures that can support teachers’ professional learning, such as interactive teaming and co-teaching (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Rea et al., 2002; Thomas, Correa, & Morsink, 2001). Principals also should value and employ their staff leadership skills and knowledge (Helgesen, 1996) and Peterson and Deal (1998) note that the term ‘instructional leadership’ emerged to include a large set of principal roles and responsibilities that address many of the school’s and teachers’ needs.

Others (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Blasé & Blase, 2004; Turnbull & Cilley, 1999) have recommended that principals as instructional leaders should understand and

facilitate the application of effective research-based practices, thereby offering more appropriate professional support to their teachers (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). If principals do not have a clear understanding of professional support needs (e.g., manageable case load responsibilities; professional learning opportunities to hone teaming, instructional, and progress monitoring skills), they may inadvertently thwart teacher efforts to provide quality support services for students (Fullan, 2001a; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000).

Effective principals encourage teacher leadership (Crow et al., 2002; Moller, 2004), team learning, flexibility, and collegial self-governance (Rea et al., 2002), and create a respectful, collaborative, collegial school culture (Brown et al., 2002; Drago-Severson, 2004; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; NSW DET, 2005b). As such, they put emphasis on innovation, deep collaboration professional learning (Harris & Muijs, 2005), and powerful academic outcomes for all learners (Klingner, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001).

Handy (1996) indicates that the principal needs the following capabilities:

1. 'A belief in oneself', the self-confidence to take risk, combined with the humility to accept that one makes mistakes and can learn from others;
2. 'A passion for the job', combined with a desire to keep in touch with the rest of the world;
3. 'A love of people', combined with a capacity to accept the loneliness of being a leader; and
4. Preparedness 'to live vicariously', accepting the intrinsic rewards gleaned from the achievements of others. (p. 8)

A Canadian study by Fernandez (2000) identifies characteristics that are common to all supportive principals as, "visibility, modelling, support, high expectations, and decisiveness and courage" (p. 241). Furthermore, in a study involving school leaders, Clement and Vandenberghe (2001) revealed that of all supportive actions of the principal in relation to professional learning, providing working conditions that offer learning opportunities and time for learning was most effective in encouraging professional learning.

Anfara and Brown (2003), like Elmore (2002), argue that principals need understanding and the necessary skills and abilities to assist direction of professional learning activities within their school. This will help them to best develop the vision of quality education for all students. "Principals must bear in mind the learners' views, challenge their beliefs, engage them in assessments that take into account the complexities of the broader context [e.g., leading beyond the classroom], and construct meaning and knowledge through reflection and dialogue" (Lambert, 2003, pp. 2-3). Cardno (1995) argues that the principal, "can learn skills to model effective complex problem-solving practices and facilitate a climate of organisational learning in which productive, rather than defensive, communication enables the quality of educational provision to be examined and improved" (p. 36).

However, many principals have been found to lack sufficient experience and the knowledge to prepare them for encouraging and empowering others, working collaboratively, listening and communicating effectively, or changing the school into a learning community (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Ramsey, 1999), and existing professional learning for leaders tends to be either too academic and abstract or too focused on managerial tasks (Brown et al., 2002; Scott, 2003). Elmore (2002) recommends that principals, by studying and observing what effective practice in schools looks like, should try to alter structures and resource-allocation patterns and then try to figure out how to support it. DuFour (2001) suggests that principals, in developing these skills and capabilities, need to read voraciously, secure a mentor, participate in a principal network, and create a guiding partnership within the school to help create, evaluate, and refine improvement strategies (Armour, 2005; Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002; Petzko, 2003). Significantly, they should search constantly for experiences that provide an opportunity for their own professional learning (Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002).

Carver (2003) raises the point that if principals are to focus on the effective practice of teacher support, development, and evaluation, school districts should also offer meaningful professional learning opportunities for principals. Fink (2005) suggests several areas of such learning for principals including understanding learning, making connections, future thinking, background knowledge, critical thinking, political acumen, emotional understanding, career trajectories, and succession

planning. Hessel and Holloway (2002) assert that “through self-assessment, goal-setting, and self-directed professional inquiry, administrators can discover where their greatest needs lie and can plan accordingly” (p. 3). Shaw (2002), like Sparks (2002), suggests that principals, in order to be successful in teacher professional learning, need to make time for their own professional learning, and consider themselves as designers, developers of the capacity of others, developers of theory and practice of participation and of models of learning for others. The following table (Table 2.4) summarizes some of the principal’s required capabilities in supporting teachers’ professional learning.

Table 2.4 The principal’s capabilities in supporting teachers’ professional

2.12 Summary

The review of literature identifies the relationships among the factors of the conceptual framework (see page 14) and indicates that the role of the principal is critical in relation to the leading and managing of teachers' professional learning programs.

Professional learning is a critical factor in change in schools and improved student learning. From the review of literature on the principal's role in teacher professional learning, several general observations may be made: First, professional learning is not an event, nor is it a set of activities in schools; it is a professional responsibility and an integral part of teachers' and principals' professional work. Second, though principals play a significant role in teacher professional learning, teachers themselves are also responsible for their own professional growth (Earley & Bubb, 2004). Major roles of school principals in the area of teacher professional learning involve leading, planning, encouraging, implementing, and evaluating.

There is limited empirical research on the principal's role in teacher professional learning, particularly on the connection between theory and practice. This study attempts to fill this gap to some extent by investigating important roles that a principal could have in the implementation of policy on teachers' professional learning.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate ways in which principals implement state-wide policy on teachers' professional learning at the school level. To provide this perspective, information was gathered from three Australian public primary schools in New South Wales (NSW). This chapter outlines how the study was designed and carried out and the techniques employed to collect relevant data. It describes the development and final form of both the questionnaire and the interview and provides a rationale for both. A mixed method of employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches was chosen as the most appropriate approach given the specific parameters of the research proposed. This research method has been used successfully in previous studies and was found to be most appropriate given the resources available and the scope of the study (see Bramald, Hardman & Leat, 1995; Cabello & Eckmier, 1995; Graber, 1996; McMillan, 2000; Scott, 2003). This chapter also describes the participants, the data collection methods used to answer the research questions, and concludes by outlining several techniques that were employed to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research instruments and results.

3.2 Research questions

The major question that guided this study was: What is the principal's role in teacher professional learning and its relationship with the *Professional Learning Policy*? The multiple case studies involved three public primary schools in the NSW Wollongong region. They were used to investigate the process of implementation of *Professional Learning Policy* and to address the three major sub-questions outlined in Chapter One, namely:

1. How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning?
2. What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?
3. What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

3.3 Research design

A multiple case-studies approach was considered the most suitable for this study. In case study research, the researcher investigates in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are limited by time and activity, and researchers gather detailed data utilising a variety of data collection processes over a period of time (Stake, 2003). According to Burns (1997), multiple case studies are a type of reproduction of several studies. Three NSW public schools were the focus of this study, each school being considered as a single case. The case study schools were nominated by the NSW DET on the basis of the schools' adoption of the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a).

In accordance with the policy, and taking account of its own context, each school formulated its own School Plan for professional learning. Hence, each school's experience was different, with different views on the appropriateness, influence on and results of the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. To obtain optimal insights into these issues, the researcher gathered information by questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and review of relevant school documents in each school, identifying the different approaches, views and insights involved in each case.

According to Merriam (1998), "The inclusion of multiple cases is, in fact, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalisability of your finding" (p. 40). As a result of using the multiple case study method for this study the researcher could triangulate data on several cases on the same subject with greater confidence in

the validity of the study. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and analyse data.

3.3.1 Case study

As noted above, this research utilises a multiple case study method to gather deeper, more rich information from the selected schools. Major sources of data were questionnaires and interviews in each of the three case study schools to gain information from them on their professional learning activities, their selection of priorities in the School Plan, their anticipated outcomes, and their actual professional learning practices. The researcher chose to write individual case studies so that the uniqueness and diversity of the different contexts could be described and highlighted as each case was developed.

In the literature, several definitions are provided for the term ‘case study’ (Bassey, 2002; McMillan, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 2005; Stake, 2003; Yin 1989). McMillan (2000) refers to a case study as an “in-depth analysis of one or more events, settings, programs, social groups, communities, individuals, or other bounded systems” (p. 271). Stake (2003) argues that a case study is different from other research methods in that it is specific, unique and is carried out in a bounded system.

According to Yin (1989) a case study methodology employed as an empirical inquiry technique has the following features:

1. It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.
2. The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.
3. Multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 23)

These three important features are evident in the empirical case studies here. Yin (1989) expands on the use of theory to guide the research strategy, and speaks of generalization in terms of the ability of the case to enhance theory. However, Stake (2003) also indicates the use of case studies where the interest is not in theory building as such but in the intrinsic and the particular significance of a case or an object of study.

Stake (2003) identifies three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In the first, the researcher has a specific focus and is seeking better information on particular issues. An instrumental case study, on the other hand, is carried out to provide, “insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” and “a zone of combined purpose”, and these factors make it different from an intrinsic case study. “A collective case study involves a number of cases in order to investigate an issue, population, or general condition” (Stake, 2003, p. 137).

This study best corresponds to an intrinsic case study in focusing on particular issues in the principal’s role in teachers’ professional learning. Through the respondents’ views the researcher seeks to achieve more complete knowledge and understanding of the issues. Despite certain limitations, the case study can also go some way toward broader generalization (Stake, 2003). A case study such as this can yield findings that may be generalised to similar situations or comparable issues as well as specific information on the particular issues involved.

3.3.2 Quantitative and qualitative methods

Research methodology includes aspects such as design, data gathering, data analysis, and ethical concerns (Janesick, 2003). Methods can be categorized as being quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). Cohen and Manion (1994) state that quantitative methods, “involve eliciting answers to predetermined questions, recording measurements, describing phenomena and performing experiments” (p. 42). In contrast, Tisher and Wideen (1990) argue that qualitative methodology “stresses descriptive data collection involving observation, interviewing, transcript analysis and direct participation” (p. 262).

Some writers claim that the two methodologies cannot be combined (Smith & Heshusius, 1986), but there are many others who have preferred using both methods in one study (Gay et al., 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mertens, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). McMillan (2000) developed the following reasons for a mixed or integrated approach:

...Using both methods allows the researcher to incorporate the strengths of each approach. It can provide a more comprehensive picture of the

phenomena being studied, emphasizing both outcomes and process. This is desirable when the most credible information needed can only be obtained by using both methods. (p. 288)

According to a number of authors (Creswell, 2003; Gay et al., 2006; Mertens, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), a combined approach is more suitable in some research studies in which aspects of both quantitative and qualitative approaches are appropriate. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) favour the use of mixed methodology, emphasizing that, “At some points during the research process, it is likely that both types of inferences and methods will be used simultaneously. When this occurs, then we have the mixed-model studies with multiple applications”(p. 25). They conclude that combining quantitative and qualitative methods in one study, “is not only feasible but also quite beneficial in many diverse research settings”(p. 167). Tashakkori and Teddlie also point to, “the preeminence of the research question over considerations of either method or paradigm... The best method is the one that answers the research question(s) most efficiently and with foremost inference quality” (p. 167).

Patton (1990) points out that the methodological appropriateness, that is, choosing one method over another, depends on the nature of the research. He also argues that, as an alternative to concentrating on a specific paradigm, methodological flexibility needs in the real world to be related to the intent of the research, questions to be researched and resources available. He adds that this has to be approached with a research background of situational responsiveness.

Increased application of qualitative research methods such as ethnology and case studies often complements and supports the use of traditional quantitative techniques (Shank, 2006). The discussion concerning the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative methods in educational research has been confused by a failure to differentiate between the considerations of epistemology and the kind of data generated (William, 1998). The position taken by Lincoln and Guba (2000) is that there is a clear difference between a research paradigm based in an epistemology on the one hand, and research methods or methods for gathering data, on the other, when they stated:

Positivists and post-positivists alike argue that paradigms are, in some ways, commensurable... We have argued that at the paradigmatic, or philosophical, level commensurability between positivists and post-positivist worldviews is not possible, but that within each paradigm, mixed methodologies (methods) may make perfectly good sense. (p. 169)

The mixed-method of employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches is suitable for seeking possible answers to the research questions raised in this research, however, the weighting given to one or the other could vary. Integrated approaches have been used by a number of researchers with an interest in different aspects and outcomes of teachers' professional learning.

Graber (1996), for example, conducted document analysis and carried out interviews with six beginning teachers and ten faculty members to indicate the effects of teacher education programs. Bramald et al. (1995) identified the impacts of courses on thinking about teaching and learning by employing questionnaires and interviews. Clarke (1995) also employed multiple methods such as questionnaires, journals and interviews to indicate pre-primary teachers' views of their pre-service programs. Cabello and Eckmier (1995) utilized questionnaires and interviews to determine student teachers' views within a model multi-cultural program. McMillan (2000) researched a considerable sample of about 850 teachers in surveying by questionnaire the extent to which different factors were employed in classroom assessment and grading and these teachers were also interviewed, applying a qualitative method to determine reasons why certain practices were employed. In an Australian study, Scott (2003) identified principles of learning by using interviews and questionnaire surveys. From these studies one can conclude that methodology should be used which best achieves the purposes of the research. This could be qualitative, or quantitative or, as here, a combination of both.

3.4 Triangulation

In an effort to strengthen confirmability, the researcher here employed triangulation in the overall research design. As an alternative to using triangulation as a means of providing convincing data, Richardson (2000) and Janesick (2003), favour the idea

of ‘crystallization’ as being a better lens for presentation of qualitative study. Richardson (2000) states that, “in postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we do not triangulate; we *crystallize*. We recognise there are more than ‘three sides’ from which to approach the world” (p. 934). Despite Richardson’s argument for alternative techniques of validating results in qualitative study, this researcher felt that the research data here were better suited to triangulation, as the research design did not focus on qualitative approaches alone (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Cohen and Manion (1994) and Gay et al. (2006) confirm the view that the more research methods contrast with each other the more likely it is, through triangulation, to overcome the weakness of a single method. The reason for applying triangulation here is that it provides a solution to the problem of relying too much on any single data source or method, and thereby threatening the trustworthiness of the findings. Huberman and Miles (2001) indicate, “Triangulation is less a tactic than a mode of inquiry. By self-consciously setting out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the researcher will build the triangulation process into ongoing data collection” (p. 565).

There are different types of triangulation (Janesick, 2003), those employed here being data triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation of principal and teacher data from three public primary schools came in the form of the *Principal’s Role in Teacher Professional Learning* questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and reviews of relevant school documents. Methodological triangulation included both quantitative and qualitative data collecting methods using both structured instruments, and document reviews. In the positivist tradition, transferability was made possible through established sampling methods to ensure that respondents were representative of a wider population to which generalisations could be made; although in this study, no attempt is made to make such generalisation. The results here pertained only to the cohort of the three public primary schools described in this study.

3.5 Research participants

As indicated above, this study took place in three public primary schools in the Wollongong region of NSW. Participants in phase one were all teachers and the principal in each school who responded to the questionnaire. In phase two all members of each school Professional Learning Team and the principal were also interviewed.

3.6 Methods of data collection

The approach of questionnaire followed by interviews aligns with that suggested by McMillan (2000) where “the most common type of mixed-method study, quantitative data are collected first, and, depending on the results, qualitative data are gathered in a second phase of the research to elucidate, elaborate on, or explain the quantitative findings” (p. 289).

The following Table (Table 3.1) shows the research questions, relevant sources of data collection, participant samples, and instruments of data collection from each participant group:

Table 3.1 Summary of data collection

| Questions in sequence | Source for data collection | Number of participants | Instruments of data collection (Questionnaire (Q) Interviews (I)) |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. What is the principal's role in teacher professional learning and its relationship with the <i>Professional Learning Policy</i> ? | Principals, Teachers, and school Professional Learning Team | 3 Principals, All teachers, and All school Professional Learning Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal Q & I (all)• Teachers Q (all)• PL Team I (all)• Review of school documents |
| 1.1 How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning? | Principals, Teachers, and school Professional Learning Team | 3 Principals, All teachers, and All school Professional Learning Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal Q & I (all)• Teachers Q (all)• PL Team I (all)• Review of school documents |
| 1.2 What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the <i>Professional Learning Policy</i> ? | Principals, Teachers, and school Professional Learning Team | 3 Principals, All teachers, and All school Professional Learning Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal Q & I (all)• Teachers Q (all)• PL Team I (all) |
| 1.3 What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the <i>Professional Learning Policy</i> ? | Principals, Teachers, and school Professional Learning Team | 3 Principals, All teachers, and All school Professional Learning Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal Q & I (all)• Teachers Q (all)• PL Team I (all)• Review of school documents |

As indicated in Table 3.1, data for this research were collected from three sources:

1. Questionnaires with the principals and teachers to obtain information regarding the extent of implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*, its constraints in practice, the principal's key roles and capabilities, and perspectives on the policy's strengths and weaknesses.
2. Interviews with the principals and all members of school Professional Learning Teams to further explore their perspectives on critical issues, the roles and capabilities of the principal in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*, and the practical constraints involved.

3. Documentary analysis: Review of relevant school documents, policy reports, working papers, and other documents on teachers' professional learning.

The two-stage data gathering strategy was approved by the NSW DET Planning and Innovation (Appendix A) and Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong (Appendix B).

3.6.1 Survey

A questionnaire survey instrument (Appendix F) was designed and employed to gather information from all respondents. This has several advantages over other forms of data collection; for example, it can be simply and quickly analysed once completed (McQueen & Knussen, 2006; Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). The questionnaire titled "*The Principal's Role in Teacher Professional Learning*" was structured according to key concepts identified from the professional learning literature (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004; Rowland, 1999) and related to NSW state government documents (NSW DET, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d).

The questionnaire has several parts:

Part One concerns the respondents' personal characteristics and backgrounds: sex, length of service, qualifications, position; and attitudes to and experience in professional learning activities. In this part respondents were required to either attach a number value or tick a short written response. Data collected in this part of the survey were nominal.

Part Two of the survey seeks information on responsibilities for managing school-based professional learning activities, focusing on the principal's role as indicated in the literature. Questions in this part were directed toward gathering data on individual teacher learning needs; professional learning priorities; documentation of professional learning needs in the School Plan; allocation of funds; permission for teachers to take part in professional learning activities; informing staff of available programs; managing of school staff development days; and evaluation of professional learning activities.

Part Three of the questionnaire seeks information on guidelines that the schools had put in place for permitting staff to take part in professional learning activities identified in the School Plan or by teachers.

In Part Four, questions focus on the perceptions of principals and teachers on the evaluation of the professional learning activities in the school: the frequency of evaluations; the extent and types of staff reporting required; and the importance of the evaluative processes. Responses to the frequency of professional learning evaluations and forms of teacher reporting were scored using ordinal data.

Part Five explores the methods of professional learning that the school employed and respondents' views of the degrees to which various approaches were effective. It also explores the views of respondents on the place of professional learning in their professional life; issues related to the levels of accountability of the principal for the professional learning of teachers; varieties of support provided by the principal for staff and the importance of these for teacher involvement in professional learning programs.

Part Six questions are designed to obtain the perceptions of respondents on the effectiveness of managerial activities for teachers' professional learning: the nature and effectiveness of the allocation of professional learning funds; the informing of staff; the gathering and reporting of participation data; and the overall effectiveness of the professional learning program.

All questions in Part Seven are open-ended (McQueen & Knussen, 2006), requiring respondents to write in their responses, from which descriptive tables were generated. Questions are designed to gain the views of principals and teachers on accountability for expenditure of funds, the role and necessary capabilities of the principal in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a), and practical constraints in implementing the policy.

3.6.2 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews, based upon the outcomes of the questionnaire, were conducted with principals and all members of each school Professional Learning

Team. These took place at pre-arranged times in private. These interviews allowed greater flexibility and depth of enquiry (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). General principles were followed in conducting the interviews, including asking questions in the same order to all the respondents and recording the interviews with the consent of the participants (Tuckman, 1999). Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed to make sure of accurate gathering and checking of information, increasing the validity and credibility of the interview as a method of research (Brenner, 1998).

A semi-structured interview schedule was used, based on the study's research questions and guided by its conceptual framework (see page 14). The aim of this phase was not only to capture useful qualitative data but also to ensure that the survey data-gathering instrument was appropriately expressed, complete and in the voice of the target audience. In parallel studies completed in other professions this was proved to be a very important step in ensuring that the items used in the survey were valid, complete, engaging and immediately recognisable to the full sample of respondents.

When conducting the semi-structured interviews it was necessary to keep in mind what Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) say that, "...there is sufficient flexibility to allow the interviewee an opportunity to shape the flow of information" (p. 45). Similarly, Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest, " researchers must take into account the effect of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings" (p. 359).

The interviews were structured in two parts. First, the nature of the study and their role in it were explained to participants who then signed the research Participant Consent Form (Appendix E) approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong and NSW DET Planning and Innovation. Second, they were interviewed individually for approximately one hour. Initially, participants were asked to respond to the interview questions (Appendix G) in an open-ended way, and then they were specifically asked to suggest anything that should be added, dropped, changed or highlighted in order to ensure that the interview questions would be clear, relevant and engaging.

3.6.3 Documentary analysis

Merriam (1998) employs the term ‘document’ for print and non-print materials. Burns (1996) lists a range of items, as “letters, agendas, minutes, administrative reports, files, books, diaries, budgets, news clippings, photographs, lists of employees/pupils, etc.” (p. 372), as documents which make available relevant and valuable information for a case study. The selection of documents in this case study was generally guided by the research questions together with the conceptual framework (see page 14) developed. Creswell (2003) asserts several advantages of analysing documents which:

- enable a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants;
 - can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher as an unobtrusive source of information;
 - represent data that are thoughtful, in that participants have been attentive to their compilation;
 - as written evidence, save the researcher the time and expense of transcribing.
- (p. 187)

Several researchers (Creswell, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) believe documentary evidence offers stronger perceptions on the issues under study by cross-validating, corroborating and augmenting evidence gathered from other sources, and contributing to data triangulation. In the present study, documentary analysis was carried out to obtain relevant information on current NSW DET and school policies, School Plans, School Annual Reports, evaluation sheets, and financial accounts for professional learning programs.

3.7 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was tested by administering it to a group of 15 postgraduate students of the University of Wollongong who were principals and teachers. They agreed to provide feedback to the researcher about the questionnaire on the

understanding that their responses would not be part of the actual research and would not be recorded.

The participants were asked to consider the questionnaire for readability, relativity, clarity of questions, and suitability. According to responses, some questions were reworded and reformatted. To help improve the questionnaire and to overcome problems in the use of too many closed questions, more open-ended questions were added with the help of the principals and teachers in the pilot study (McQueen & Knussen, 2006).

Two postgraduate students, one a principal and the other an executive teacher, were individually interviewed to test the interview questions. The findings of the pilot interviews were satisfactory. The respondents found the vocabulary suitable; that they understood each question; and that the length of time to complete the interview questions was within the period predicted.

3.8 Distribution and return of the questionnaire

A package containing questionnaires for principals and teachers along with covering letters for each respondent, letters from Planning and Innovation of the NSW Department of Education and Training and Human Ethics Review Committee (HERC) of the University of Wollongong, and reply-paid envelopes was delivered to each of the three schools by mail. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, with teachers being asked to detail their experiences of school-level implementation of *Professional Learning Policy*, that is, effectively being asked to comment on the role of their principal, respondents were guaranteed confidentiality. Whilst there was a need to code the questionnaires for follow-up and statistical purposes, only one number was allocated per school, thereby reducing the likelihood of individual teachers being identified by the researcher or records being kept at the school level as to who had completed each questionnaire.

3.9 Data analysis process

Data was analysed in three parts; firstly, the analysis of questionnaire responses with software SPSS to categorize the frequency of responses (Blanksby & Barber, 2006).

Research questions required the use of descriptive statistics based on strength of response to where nominal and ordinal data were appropriate.

Secondly, three categories were used to formulate the interview questions, beginning with the categorisation of qualitative data by transcribing all recorded interviews and then using the NVivo software programme to categorise the data in terms of the initial research questions. This program allowed the researcher to move back and forward through the data, selecting pieces of the data and placing these into a variety of categories and sub-categories which the researcher felt were relevant. These were either pre-existing categories, or those newly formed and labelled by the researcher. An example of this analysis is shown in Appendix I.

One example of how this analysis occurred was when the researcher initially identified within the literature a number of issues that caused teachers to question their professional learning programs and the principal's role in them. These issues were categorised to include individual attitudes to change, the principal's role, and implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school level. Subsequent to extensive analysis of the data, two broad categories replaced these initial categories: issues in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*, in which eight sub-categories were identified; and issues that constrained the implementation of the policy, in which four sub-categories were identified.

Issues or categories additional to those initially identified in the literature were also identified in the qualitative data-gathering processes and these were reported under new or revised headings. Two examples of these issues were eventually categorised as Principal's Role and Capabilities, and Teachers' Professional Learning Constraints. As the researcher analysed the data through the building of conceptual categories, it was found that these two issues were of concern to teachers, but had either not been included in the original conceptual framework (see page 14) or needed to be modified. To gain greater understanding of these emerging issues during the analysis, the researcher found it necessary to go back to the literature and then back to the field through follow-up, semi-structured interviews.

Finally, data emerging from school key documents, the responses to the questionnaires, and to the interviews were triangulated, compared, matched and conclusions drawn.

3.10 Reporting the results

The findings are reported in the following chapter. From the data collected, issues have been categorised and are reported under related headings. The issues selected for reporting were either drawn from the literature and explored in the questionnaire, or were identified during the interview processes and review of relevant documents as being important or significant. In some instances these issues are reported under the same heading using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Responses to items contained in the questionnaire are indicated by their frequencies. The method of reporting the results of the qualitative data-gathering methods is intended to convey a realistic understanding of participants' perceptions of the issues. This involves the use of direct extracts from the data; that is, quotations from participants' responses or descriptions of actual incidents during the course of the study.

3.11 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted within guidelines established by the Human Ethics Review Committee (HERC) of the University of Wollongong (Appendix B). It observed all ethical considerations regarding privacy, anonymity, sensitivity, confidentiality, betrayal and deception and proper measures were taken to ensure observance.

1. Approvals were obtained from The NSW Department of Education and Training (Appendix A) and principals of the three public primary schools.
2. Principals and teachers were informed of the purpose, confidentiality and processes of the research and their consent was obtained.
3. The recorded data completely excludes any information associated with personal identification.

4. The recorded interviews and questionnaires were kept secure in the University of Wollongong by the primary supervisor.
5. Data analysis and reporting did not involve or provide any personal information of the participants.

Before beginning the data-gathering process each participant received a copy of a statement about the process. This statement also included an outline of ethical issues relating to confidentiality, freedom to withdraw for the study and access to findings (Appendix D, Appendix F).

3.12 Summary

This chapter has reported and justified the choice of research methods adopted in this study. The procedures adopted for the data analysis have also been outlined. The research was based on a case study approach, and the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods in gathering and analysing data to enable a more complete understanding of the issues involved. The quantitative method included the *Principal's Role in Teacher Professional Learning* questionnaires and sampled principals' and teachers' responses in three public schools on personal characteristics, managerial responsibilities, professional learning needs, funds allocation, professional learning approaches, and professional learning evaluation. The qualitative method included semi-structured interviews related to participants' experiences and the role and capabilities of the principal in the implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a), and its practical constraints.

This research was based in an interpretive paradigm with the principal's role in professional learning of teachers being the major focus. The chapter concludes with an overview of ethical considerations and procedures maintained in the study.

The following chapter, Chapter Four, presents the results from application of the methods outlined above.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal's role in teacher professional learning and determine its relationship with the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a). The major question that guided this study was: What is the principal's role in teacher professional learning and its relationship with the *Professional Learning Policy*? Three sub questions also framed the study:

4. How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning?
5. What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?
6. What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Information was gathered from three public primary schools in the NSW Illawarra/South Coast region. It was not, however, one of the purposes of the study to make direct comparisons between the schools with regard to the principals' roles in the implementation of the state-wide policy within their schools.

In this section, data obtained from the policy statements, School Plans, and other relevant documents sourced from within and outside the sample schools, as well as data obtained from interviews and questionnaire surveys, were analysed.

The results for each of the three research questions are presented in three case studies under School A, School B, and School C. Because each school was a separate case study, the analysis for each school is presented individually. The findings in each case are grouped under the three research questions.

4.2 School A

4.2.1 School context

School A is a public primary school that was established about 53 years ago. In 2005 the school had a student population of around 144 (K-6), together with an additional 19 preschool students. The school community, through the School Council and Parents and Citizens Association, were involved in the progress and development of the school. The school's documents suggest that the multicultural nature of the school is a feature. The socio-economic background of the school's students is diverse; some students' families are non-professional and have part-time employment or are unemployed and have low incomes. A significant number of overseas children have parents who are either students or lecturers at university. These children are often enrolled for a short term (School Annual Report & School Plan, 2005).

The school's goal is to provide a caring environment that ensures a broad educational program that meets the needs of both long-term and short-term enrolments. Experienced and caring teachers aim to provide an attractive learning environment which is safe, tolerant and supportive, and a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the school community. A very active and supportive parent community, through the School Council and the Parents and Citizens Association, provides funding for a variety of educational programs and initiatives (School Annual Report, 2005).

In 2005, there were seven teaching positions at the school. The School Plan contains a section on professional learning programs. The school has a Professional Learning Team consisting of the Principal and two volunteer Executive staff members with the Principal as the chair.

4.2.2 Respondents' information

Surveys were sent to the Principal and all of the seven teachers in the school, and replies were received from the principal and four Teachers. Appendix H is an example of the data analyzed for school A using SPSS. Interviews were conducted

on a one-to-one basis with individual members of the school Professional Learning Team. Respondents' information on such things as gender, position, length of service, and highest current level of education was obtained. The results show that the Principal had been a teacher for 23 years and in the principal position for more than 14 years. He/she had a Masters Degree.

The data indicate that three Teachers had been teaching for 20 years or more and one had had 17 years experience. There were more female respondent Teachers (3 out of 4) than males. Three Teachers had Masters Degrees and one of them had an Honours Degree.

4.2.3 How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning?

This section reports on the data collected in relation to the Principal's role in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. In survey question 16, respondents were asked: "*What is the role of the principal in successfully implementing the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*" While the question was open-ended, in general the Principal responded to this question with reference to how he/she thought about his/her role in professional learning. The roles nominated by the Principal included: "Professional learning need identification, liaise with staff and outside bodies, ensure staff learning needs are met and relate to the School Plan, monitor and evaluate process".

The Principal described his/her role as planner, manager, instructor, problem solver, identifier of teachers' learning needs, evaluator, and facilitator of professional learning. The Principal said:

Number one, I have to plan as a leader. I have to see the big picture. What will I do? What's the reason? What am I doing to keep everybody busy? The other one is I've got to be the manager. I've got to manage the programs. Make sure it [the program] works, that the time is right, not over-crowded with too much work. Are the learning needs of all staff in the school met? I have to be an instructor, solving the problems that come up, and have to be a facilitator of community activities outside the school. If I have to send

teachers outside [for training], I've got to bring [relief] teachers from the outside. That's part of my role.

The Principal had a positive view on the policy and believed that its main points were using the funds for bringing outside expertise, identifying the state priorities, and recognizing ongoing professional learning for all staff. The Principal said:

This is a very good policy. In the past, we had something like this. And what's happening, now we get a lot of directions from the policy. At the moment in our South Coast region the leadership methods are probably modeled for the rest of NSW, because it is doing two things: It's using the expertise of current leaders. And the other thing is being able to use the funding and bringing outside help... I think the most important ones are the six to seven target areas by the Department of Education that have given me a direction because they're the priorities that are so important to us. I think the main thing with regard to the *Professional Learning Policy* is recognizing that teachers at all stages and leaders at all stages are still professional learners. I think that's very important. That's the main aspect of the policy. Everything changes rapidly and you need to be aware and emphasize professional learning is an ongoing process. Your learning doesn't finish when you finish school. It's always an ongoing process.

Three Teachers had similar perceptions to the Principal. The roles of the Principal nominated by the Teachers were: "Involvement in development of the School Plan, identifying teachers' professional learning needs, monitoring budget expenditure, discussion of staff needs with Executives, especially senior Executives, implementation of programs, and ongoing support." In the interviews with members of the school Professional Learning Team, it was evident that they believed that the Principal has active roles in planning, implementing, monitoring, facilitating, and evaluating of the professional learning of teachers. As one of the Executive Teachers noted:

It's [the Principal's] role to develop the Professional Learning Plan. But also, he/she does need information not only from Executive but also other important information from other staff. The Principal is doing this kind of

thing in what specific areas people [staff] are interested in. Do they have specific concerns about the eight learning areas [professional learning priorities]? Also, taking on board not only looking after key learning areas but I am also in the process of putting folders together as I'm in charge of budgeting for each key learning area and I also give staff leadership development. He/she evaluates programs and looks at what individually happens to our school this year. His/her role is to implement the *Professional Learning Policy*. But also, to come up with procedures that involve negotiation with the staff. His/her role will be to discuss it with the staff in the staff meetings and explain how the policy will work.

This Executive Teacher had a positive attitude regarding the policy and believed that it provides useful guidelines for the implementation of professional learning programs. He/she noted:

It's wonderful. It's all about improvement. As I said we have lots more that would be happening this year. We did have a meeting. We did touch on this and then from this came to our Professional Learning Plan. This year more collaboration would take place with staff and it would be more based on individual teachers' needs...

The other Executive Teacher said:

I'm involved in it personally, the Principal is involved in it and the other Executive staff member is involved too, very successfully, I might add. ... As I said, the policy is being developed with guidelines from the department. As I said, I'm happy that there is a program specifically for professional learning and I'm happy there is funding to enable people to do it because schools don't have a lot of money.

The various roles of the principal in the implementation of the policy identified by respondents are presented under the following headings: responsibility for managerial functions; planning for professional learning; selection of professional learning content; allocation of funds for professional learning; implementation of professional learning programs; and evaluation of professional learning activities.

4.2.3.1 Responsibility for managerial functions in teacher professional learning

Survey question 10 asked: “*Who was mostly responsible in your school for the following functions related to professional learning?*” Responses indicated that the Principal and the school Professional Learning Team provided the main focus of professional learning efforts within the school. The Principal and three Teachers believed that the Principal had a significant responsibility in the school in the identification of the school’s professional learning priorities and allocation of budget between categories of professional learning expenditure. They also believed the Principal had responsibility for informing staff about professional learning opportunities, identifying of teachers’ learning needs, collecting of participants’ reports, and evaluating. They stated that the school Professional Learning Team had responsibilities for managing of the school staff development days and reviewing the school Professional Learning Plan. In addition, the Principal believed this Team had the responsibility for documenting professional learning priorities in the School Plan. He/she agreed that the Team was also involved in giving permission for staff to participate in professional learning programs.

During the follow-up interview, the Principal reflected on this managerial responsibility. He/she believed he/she had major responsibility for providing professional learning opportunities for teachers, identifying the school’s priorities, and assessing staff learning needs. He/she said:

Identifying the priority areas in the School Plan where professional learning needs to be targeted is important. Particular teachers need some assistance in some areas. I need to be able to identify the talented people in the school to give them opportunities to develop their talent. I have to be aware of the various levels of development of every one of the staff...

This finding is consistent with the *Leading and Managing the School* document (NSW DET, 2000) according to which the principal is responsible for: “Implementing specific programs for the professional learning of staff, supervising and evaluating the implementation of teaching and learning programs, and inducting staff in the requirements of policies and mandatory training procedures” (p. 4).

Three of the Teachers surveyed perceived documenting of professional learning priorities in the School Plan as the Principal's responsibility. Only half of the Teachers believed that permission for teachers to take part in specific professional learning programs was the responsibility of Executive staff in the school.

One of the Executive Teachers, who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team, believed that determining of teachers' learning needs, implementation of professional learning programs, encouraging staff to learn collaboratively, and shared leadership are the Principal's responsibilities. He/she noted:

All staff need to have input into the Professional Learning Plan and have a role to play. I think the needs of all staff in the School Plan are met. He/she [the Principal] has the needs of the staff, needs of the school and all those things to be considered. But you know, at the end of the staff development day he/she would be responsible to ensure that the Professional Learning Plan has been implemented successfully. ... He/she also encourages staff to participate in [professional learning] programs and collaborative learning. Sometimes he/she joins us in professional learning programs and this increases our motivation for more participation in these programs.

The other Executive Teacher believed that leading, and encouraging staff to learn together and resource allocation were the Principal's major roles in teachers' professional learning. He/she said:

...This policy [*Professional Learning Policy*] must go hand in hand with our School Plan and will be implemented by the Principal. The Principal comes up with how the budget will be spent, with the time-line on how the policy would be implemented and how the resources will be used in the various areas of the school or professional learning. ... He/she also creates conditions in which we could learn from each other and this raises our motivation to engage in collaborative work.

The Principal provided staff with information about, and encouraged them to attend, professional learning programs. He/she did not pressure, but encouraged, staff to

attend, and permitted teachers to choose whether or not to attend. For example, one Executive Teacher said:

He/she informs me of new professional learning programs and offers to send me if I choose.

The other Executive Teacher said:

He/she informs me of instructional programs that I might be interested in, and then helps to make arrangements for me to attend in the way of financial support.

The perceptions of the Principal differed from those of Teachers in one area. Specifically, the Principal felt that the school Professional Learning Team had responsibility for documenting professional learning priorities in the School Plan, whereas most teachers saw this as the responsibility of the Principal. Clearly, however, the Principal and the majority of Teachers agreed that the Principal and the school Professional Learning Team held the major responsibility for the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school level although the extent to which this occurred is unclear.

4.2.3.2 Planning for professional learning

In survey question five, respondents were asked: “*Does your school have a professional learning plan?*” and all respondents confirmed the existence of a plan for professional learning of teachers within the broad School Plan. The Principal in the interview explained that the school’s Professional Learning Plan focused on quality teaching, the gifted and talented program, student services, Aboriginal education, and leadership development. He/she stated:

It [planning] is more important than ever, since last year and this year the Department of Education and Training has provided special funding targeted for professional learning, and we have to spend it on professional learning activities. Also, it [DET] gives us five or six key learning areas that we need to target. We try to create a balance among the state [professional learning] priorities, student needs, and teachers’ career development in the School

Plan. So, we planned in those key areas. For instance, quality teaching is one, gifted and talented students is another one, Aboriginal education is another one, and teacher professional learning, and the other one is also leadership development. We have to decide which course is more important. ... We also decide which teacher has more priority than the other teachers to go to which course. Then, we implement the methods and practices based on components of the endorsed Professional Learning Plan.

The school Professional Learning Plan focused on individual teachers' learning needs, school, and state priorities. One Executive Teacher said:

Teachers look at the results of basic tests, how the children performed in mathematics and literacy, writing, and computer ... a newly introduced standardized assessment. We look at all those results, and we target areas that we need to improve in. Also, we take on board district or state government initiatives. Also, we are trying to align what we are doing in the school. On one level, you've got only local needs and they are only relevant to our school and then at another level, the government level is saying these are the priorities in 2005 and each school needs to address those priorities. So, you need to take on all those things and then you need to reduce it down to manageable size because otherwise, it's too big. You can't do everything that you want.

The importance of the Professional Learning Plan and the key role of the Principal were also highlighted:

Our Principal places importance on planning in professional learning and always encourages us to share in writing it [plan]. It's his/her role to develop the plan. But also, he/she does need information not only from Executives but also other important information from other staff. The Principal is doing this kind of thing such as what specific areas people are in, are they interested in, do they have specific concerns about the eight learning areas? And also taking on board not only looking after the key learning areas.

A review of documents such as the School Plan, School Annual Report, and the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) was undertaken. These documents were provided by the Principal along with copies of the School Plan and Annual Report with his/her completed questionnaire. The results indicate that the latter were consistent with directions of the state policy that, “ Schools ensure the professional learning component of the School Plan takes account of the needs of staff and the school community and the priorities of the school and the Department” (p. 4).

The categories documented in the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) were utilised as a framework to analyse the School Plan. These included: ongoing professional learning; planning guidelines; needs and priorities; the creation of the school Professional Learning Team and its responsibilities; quality professional learning; supporting the induction of new teachers; provision of a range of resources and opportunities; using external professional learning providers; accountability; and evaluation of the professional learning program (NSW DET, 2004e).

The School Plan contained a section on professional learning which the Principal identified as a separate priority in the plan. Importantly, consideration was given to a range of priorities at the state, school, and individual teacher levels when deciding upon the different purposes of the professional learning program. Whilst the documents analysed made reference to professional learning priorities to be addressed, they lacked detail on expected outcomes and targets, indicators, responsibility and evaluation mechanisms.

Available school documents and the NSW DET guideline document (2004b) provided some direction for the school on the use of and accounting for professional learning funds. In the School Plan, the budget was distributed among the professional learning programs on the basis of the school priorities. The Principal informed teachers on the permission process that was utilised within the school to enable staff to gain financial support to be involved in professional learning programs. In fact, the school listed those items for which teachers would be able to gain support for their participation in professional learning programs.

As indicated above, both the Principal and Teachers indicated that the School Plan focused on individual teachers’ learning needs, the priorities of the school, and those

of the state. The NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) document provides guidelines for principals with regard to planning, budgeting, and using external professional learning providers.

4.2.3.3 The selection of professional learning content

The Principal, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Team, selected the content of professional learning programs by considering state, school, and individual teacher priorities. As mentioned previously, the analysis of the School Plan revealed that professional learning programs within the school focused on quality teaching, programming, leadership development, assessment and reporting, student services, school community, the gifted and talented program, and Aboriginal education. Content areas included information technology, school management and leadership, numeracy, literacy and inclusive curriculum. Whilst also seen as important within the school, teachers' professional learning programs usually only involved a small number of staff.

To identify how the school Professional Learning Team made decisions on professional learning priorities, respondents were asked to indicate the levels of influence that national, state, regional, local and individual teacher priorities had on the overall pattern of the Professional Learning Plan in the school. The Principal and three Teachers believed that state, regional, school, and individual teacher priorities were most important and national priorities least important in the determination of the content of the professional learning program. In the interview with the Principal, he/she strongly agreed on the influence of the state, regional and the school priorities on the selection of the professional learning content. He/she said:

We have five specific areas that were identified by state and region. The areas of the plan are quality teaching, programming, leadership development, assessment and reporting, and student services. I can also choose one developing area which I think our school needs to develop. If the funding that the government gives is insufficient I can make that up with my school funds and I try to do that. We prepare the Professional Learning Plan. We get the funds and the priorities and we know the needs and we make the plan. We've a deaf child in the school and teachers learn how they communicate with this

child and also we have children with special learning needs and teachers learn how they teach these children. Some of our teachers teach very talented students and we identify very bright students. We have some Aboriginal students in the school and we're doing Aboriginal education as well.

In responding to question 14, which asked: *Do professional learning programs at this school match your professional needs?* three Teachers agreed and one Teacher strongly agreed that individual staff needs and professional learning programs at the school matched closely. Comments from Teachers on the content of the school professional learning programs were consistent with the Principal's comments. One of the Executive Teachers as a member of the school Professional Learning Team emphasised the importance of discussion with staff regarding their professional learning needs and getting feedback from them. He/she said:

The Principal and myself as the Assistant Principal and the relieving Assistant Principal, based on staff needs and communication with staff and getting feedback from the staff, we basically put the plan together. If you look at our School Plan, you would see that we're always in the process of identifying needs and targets and devising the action plans for developing the staff and identifying what area is a priority in professional learning. ... We believe that these [professional learning] programs must increase teachers' knowledge and their quality of teaching ...

The other Executive Teacher commented on determining the school needs by using a formal survey or in discussions with teaching staff. He/she noted:

In the professional learning programs, we've been targeting areas this year based on state and regional priorities, and what the school needs are and aligning them with the Management Plan of the school. Part of the Professional Learning Plan is writing and other areas too. For determining the school needs we have made a practice of discussing what the content of the professional learning programs should be with members of the school Professional Learning Team, and have selected teachers within the school as well as with the whole staff either through full school staff meeting or by the use of a formal survey of teaching staff. The school also used information

[priorities] which was provided by the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Overall, the results indicate that the school utilised a variety of sources in identifying and prioritising the professional learning needs of both the school and individual teachers.

4.2.3.4 The selection of participants for professional learning activities

Survey question 20 sought to identify the criteria that the school applied in permitting teachers to participate in particular external professional learning programs. The Principal and three Teachers confirmed that, in the school, such permission was usually dependent on the activity being in line with the School Plan.

Both the Principal and three Teachers indicated that it was usually the responsibility of the Principal and other members of the school Professional Learning Team to identify or choose and encourage the teachers to be involved in professional learning programs.

In survey question 20, the respondents were also asked about their perceptions of how teachers generally viewed the process of permitting staff to participate in professional learning activities. The Principal and three Teachers perceived that permitting teachers to participate was, to a degree, effective in that ensuring teachers' professional learning needs matched those of the school. The Principal and three Teachers agreed that a very effective procedure for ensuring this match was to approve their participation if activities were aligned with their needs and the School Plan. There was also agreement among the Principal and three Teachers that aligning teachers' professional learning needs with the School Plan would result in the school's needs being moderately well met. Teachers being chosen by the school Professional Learning Team for professional learning was regarded by the Principal as very effective in ensuring that the needs of the school would be met. Teachers' opinions were divided on this issue.

There were some areas where the perception of the Principal was different to the perceptions of the Teachers. For example, the Principal indicated that permission for

staff to be involved in professional learning activities within the school was seldom dependent upon the activity being in line with the teacher's learning needs. However, three Teachers believed that permission for staff to be involved in professional learning activities was usually dependent on the activity being in line with the teacher's learning needs.

4.2.3.5 Allocation of funds for teacher professional learning

The school receives annual funding for implementing professional learning programs from the NSW DET as a tied grant (NSW DET, 2004e), and the school Professional Learning Team and Principal have the managerial responsibility for allocating resources. In survey question 30, participants were specifically asked: "*How was the total funding for professional learning distributed within the school in 2004*"? The responses to this question from the Principal and three Teachers confirmed that professional learning funds are allocated on the basis of an activity being in line with the School Plan and that no funds are distributed directly to individual teachers. In their responses to question 26, in which they were asked about their views on the distribution of the professional learning budget across the school, three Teachers believed that the distribution of the professional learning budget across the school was acceptable.

The Principal and three Teachers indicated that the school usually provided funds for provision of a celebratory function and of clerical and/or technical support for teachers. They also agreed that the school seldom provided teachers with reimbursement of costs and never provided scholarships or fees for studies undertaken. The Principal added that the school usually provided release time for teachers but seldom provided funds for provision of learning materials or equipment.

During the follow-up interviews the Principal explained that allocation of funds for teacher professional learning was based on the numbers of teachers in the school and the kinds of programs available. He/she said:

We send our plan to the Department of Education and Training. Then they see our plan and say okay this program is needed by many schools and they will bring somebody in to give them that program rather than go to separate

schools. It's more convenient to go to the other people [or other schools] and also from the financial aspect too [we should share costs]. If I bring an expert to my school it will cost several thousand dollars and when you've got fifteen or sixteen schools together you are sharing the cost. You get better value. Once upon a time, we got the global budget and we had to decide by ourselves how much money we spend. Now, we get professional learning funds based on the numbers of teachers in our school and that is what you can use it for. It gives you a great start. Probably the funding situation is a lot better than before and at least I know how much money I can spend. This school gets \$5,200 a year. That is our professional learning fund. This fund is for seven full-time and two part-time staff.

The Principal was also asked, "*How is the school accountable for the expenditure of funds for professional learning?*" He/she reflected that the professional learning budget being a tied grant was audited by the Department of School Education. He/she added:

There is a guideline on how to spend the money and at the end of the year there is a form that we have to fill in about how you spent the money. We're assessed every 12 months. They check if we're spending the money in the right places. If you don't spend the money by the end of year, they ask the question, why? You have to spend the money.

Teachers' opinions were divided on the school's provision of release time and learning materials or equipment. One Executive Teacher, who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team, stated in the interview that the School Plan identified the allocation of funds for particular teachers' professional learning programs. He/she said:

In the Professional Learning Plan we actually identify how much money we are going to spend. I think we have something near \$9,000 and we actually in each area spend \$1,300. It is actually documented with each plan how much money we allocate to that. I guess the department monitors it.

In the interview, the other Executive Teacher was asked: "*How is the school*

accountable for expenditure of funds for professional learning?” He/she reflected that the professional learning budget was provided and audited by the Department of Education and Training. He/she added:

The Principal is in charge of the funds for professional learning. Also, in conjunction with the Executive members of the staff, our expenditures are reviewed by the District Office. So, our accountability not only comes from the school community but also from the District Office. So, if they say at the end of the term that no money has been spent on professional learning of teachers, the District Office would say why? Why haven't you spent the professional learning money?

The Principal and the Teachers were asked to give their views of how teachers overall perceived the importance of various forms of support. The Principal and three Teachers believed that it was very important for teachers' involvement in professional learning programs that, when needed, teachers be provided with release time, learning materials or equipment, and clerical and/or technical support. They also agreed that reimbursement of costs at the school's expense was useful and that a celebratory function was not important in teachers' decisions to be involved in professional learning. The Principal confirmed that scholarships or fees for studies undertaken were not important in teachers' decisions to be involved in professional learning, although no consensus on this issue was evident among Teachers.

4.2.3.6 Implementation of professional learning programs

This section of the study sought to identify the professional learning methods which the Principal utilised within the school. To determine the amount of time which teachers were involved in professional learning activities, survey question seven asked respondents to indicate how many hours they participated in formal professional learning activities per year. The responses indicated that the Principal spent, on average, 50 hours per year while Teachers spent about 24 hours per year involved in professional learning activities.

Methods that teachers engaged in when participating in professional learning programs were also investigated. They were differentiated on the basis of whether

teachers were involved in group activities, structured activities with a colleague, or individual involvement in professional learning activities. The Principal was asked to take a whole-school perspective on the extent of use of different methods within his/her school. Teachers were asked to respond from an individual perspective as to the extent they were engaged in each of the methods listed, either in within-school activities or in professional learning activities outside the school.

The Principal and three Teachers indicated that the school always used collaborative learning and coaching/mentoring as methods for professional learning. They agreed that the school also usually used workshops, courses, and peer observation, and never used online learning and action learning as professional learning approaches. The Principal also indicated that the school usually used seminars and invited speakers as methods in professional learning. In the interview he/she confirmed that the school used different methods in teachers' professional learning such as workshops, courses, invited speakers, and professional reading. As he/she said:

...For example, at the moment one of our teachers has the responsibility for Aboriginal education and he/she is doing some workshops. I and two members of the school Professional Learning Team participated in the leadership development workshops. In the other areas for instance, we have teaching children writing and a specialist person comes ten days each year to help teachers teach writing and increasing their teaching skills. We have authority to bring teachers from other places than the Department of Education and Training for running professional learning programs in the school. One of the important things is professional reading. There are always interesting articles and documents to be read, ... and I think we're getting to groups and workshops and getting the ideas and supporting the points. I think professional leadership and learning and Executive development is giving them some methods to take back to the school and say look try this and then getting back together and working on it.

In the interview, when the Principal was asked: "*Do you use external professional learning providers?*" he/she indicated that the school used university lecturers as external professional learning providers in school hours. He/she stated:

Yes we use the university a lot because we've connected with that. In the past we had visiting speakers from the university. District Office provides trained experts in the writing, math, computers; and leadership in the principals' networks. Sometimes we bring professionals to teach teachers how to manage stress, how to balance time because all teachers will tell you they never have enough time to do everything. They [teachers] have family commitments or engage with other issues in their life, so they prefer to participate in professional learning programs during the working hours. Teaching teachers and principals how to handle stress is important.

Half of the Teachers indicated that the school usually used invited speakers, peer observation, and seminar methods; an equal number felt that these were seldom used in the school. During the follow-up interviews the school Professional Learning Team was asked: "*What are the types of professional learning programs in your school*"? One Executive Teacher responded:

We had a technology program established early in the second term last year. That's continuing. It has continued up-dating staff training and professional learning in computer and literacy skills. I'm thinking the mechanism needs to be in place, give teachers relief to work with the computers and teaching can be changed. Also during the process of deciding on the skills, what technology skills should be taught in each class, and also to be working in the area of math based on the new math syllabuses to devise whole-school approaches and sequences. Writing has been enormous; that's teaching teachers how to assist writing. We get lots of programs on those. We're very busy.

During the interview an Executive Teacher who had attended a program where the professional learning presenter "did a good job" said:

They [professional learning educators] are all so positive. Like I told my Principal it's like a revival. It gets you all pumped up and thinking this works and this is great.

This study also investigated the views of the Principal and Teachers on the effectiveness of the professional learning approaches. The Principal was asked to take the school perspective as to the level of effectiveness for teachers of the different methods and teachers were asked to respond from an individual perspective as to whether the methods they experienced contributed to effective learning.

The Principal and three Teachers believed that workshops, courses, and collaborative professional learning were very effective methods in professional learning programs. They also agreed that coaching/mentoring was moderately effective and that action learning was not effective. The Principal also believed that seminars and peer observation were very effective and that an invited speaker, when used, was moderately effective, but that online learning was not effective in methods of professional learning. Three Teachers agreed that seminars were moderately effective but on methods such as invited speakers, online learning, and peer observation their opinions were divided.

Overall, the results indicated that teachers engaged a variety of professional learning approaches. Whilst the Principal perceived a large proportion of teachers to be very satisfied with their involvement in seminars formed on the basis of common professional needs, three Teachers highlighted that, when used, this method contributed to only a moderately effective learning experience.

4.2.3.7 Evaluation of teacher professional learning

Information on which to base an evaluation of professional learning may be drawn from a number of sources such as “participants’ reactions, participants’ learning, organisation support and change, participants’ use of new knowledge and skills, student learning outcomes” (Guskey, 2002, pp. 46-49). Initial analysis of the School Plan document for School A, as well as responses to the returned questionnaire, indicated that evaluation of professional learning was based on the immediate reporting of participants’ learning outcomes rather than on the longer-term examination of students’ learning outcomes. This section is, therefore, concerned with the management practices that the Principal utilised in gaining information from participants on the outcomes of professional learning activities.

The Principal and three Teachers confirmed that the school's Professional Learning Plan was reviewed at least once a year. Analysis of responses indicated that the Principal regularly conducted a review of the Professional Learning Plan. The Principal required teachers to report on the outcomes of programs they had been involved in, usually by way of an oral presentation, but suggested that if the Teachers' reports were in a written form they would be more useful in contributing to the improvement of future Professional Learning programs.

The Principal and Teachers were asked how useful the information received from teachers was in informing the Principal for future professional learning programs. The Principal and three Teachers indicated that having teachers report on formal or informal activities involving individual teachers, groups, or the staff as a whole were very useful in providing information for the Principal on which to base future professional learning programs.

During the follow-up interviews the Principal commented on the evaluation of teachers' professional learning programs by looking at indicators of the results of the programs. He/she explained:

At the end of year we have outcomes. First, we look at the budget and decide whether we spent our budget wisely, whether we got value for money. My main criteria for evaluation are two: Did it make a better leader or better teacher or better administrator? Did it have a positive effect on children? Usually, there are a number of indicators. At the end of year, we sit and say did we achieve this, this and this? If not, why? All teachers get input. At the end of the year we identify some of the areas and then we give them a survey. We might use that information for the next year. Basically, we look at the indicators and their success and how we can do things better and what we think we should do next. With the teacher we look at the teacher performance and the progress. At the end of the year, I personally have to make the evaluation of them for professional purposes.

During the interview one of the members of the school Professional Learning Team clarified that the school evaluated professional learning activities by observing teachers' programs and measuring students' outcomes. He/she said:

Usually, it's [evaluation] done through observation of teaching programs. Usually it's a very good indication whether their [teachers'] changing practices have been reflected in the teacher documentation. It's reflected in the improvement in student outcomes ... sometimes it [professional learning program] is not run well and sometimes it's about learning but when you come down into the class it doesn't exactly help you in the class situation. It's not practical enough.

The NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) document gives limited direction for the evaluation of professional learning programs at the school level. The policy document is noticeably lacking in major references as to how and when evaluation of a school's professional learning program would be carried out.

Research Question One related to the range of managerial practices that were utilised by the Principal for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. When the resulting data were analysed, a clear picture emerged of the roles of the Principal in the implementation of the policy at the school. Management structures consisted of the Principal and the school Professional Learning Team. Research Question Two, the focus of the next section, related to the range of capabilities that the Principal needed for the implementation of the policy at the school level.

4.2.4 What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

In survey question 17 the participants were asked: "*What capabilities are necessary for the principal to successfully implement the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*" While the question was open-ended, in general the Principal of School A responded, "Knowledge of processes and schools is assumed training. In 2005, there has been some move towards formal training about budgeting". The Principal in the interview expressed the view that the essential training was in team leadership, budgeting and finance. He/she noted:

There are a lot of things for learning, the managerial parts; the other part is once a person becomes a principal or leader they have to develop support networks. If you've got a problem, somebody can share it with you and this

is an important part. Now, training people to be leaders is very important, the training before they're leaders is so important too. Leadership itself is a particular skill. In my instance, training in team leadership, budgeting and finance is very important. I think the training depends on the principal. I think, the principal has to have certain skills and a certain personality. If you have not got certain skills then you can't be a successful leader. You have to have it. With other areas I guess the important training relates to the particular leader. For me it's finance and for another principal it may be assessing teacher performance.

The Principal during the interview further clarified the essential capabilities he/she required in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*. He/she stated:

I think for implementing this policy, the Principal should have interpersonal communication, the ability to think rationally, and knowledge about professional learning theories. I need to build collaborative relationships among the staff. For example, we have a group of principals that meet each other on a regular basis. We discuss the issues with each other and we meet twice a term and we also have a Primary Principals Association. We get together and we bring some experts and we also have a small support group that meet regularly around the schools to give you support in that area. The Department has a website on leadership you can go to, to get information. And best of all is to ring up a friend who's a principal when you've got a problem and he/she can help you. I do that quite a lot. People ring me too. It's a good thing.

Three Teachers had similar views to the Principal on necessary capabilities in a principal for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. For instance, in response to the survey question, some noted:

- Knowledge of adult learning and giving feedback.
- In-service into familiarisation of the policy.
- Depends on level of expertise for the task; some just read, think rationally, good listening, discuss with colleagues, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate,

others may need in-service ... should not be compulsory ... should not assume everyone needs it.

The Executive Teachers who were members of the school Professional Learning Team confirmed in the interviews that negotiation, monitoring, communication, giving feedback, and motivation are essential capabilities required in a principal in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*. For example, one of them said:

I think the training necessary would be to attend the district level meetings. So, the District Officer takes the principal through the policy and also does regular monitoring. I know that is happening at the moment. At the conference at the end of last year, the policy was discussed. Then the principals had to explain how they are going to implement it. So, there is some kind of accountability. That comes from the district level not from school level. The District Officer takes our Principal as well as the other principals through this. And then they [District Officers] were coming on a regular basis last year. He/she [District Officer] was here last week, monitoring how the policy and a number of other issues are. A principal should have negotiation skills, monitoring skills, a high level of communication skills, ability to ask for help when it's needed and also the skills of making people feel valued, and motivation as part of this policy.

The other Executive Teacher listed communicating, remaining calm, financial support, and the ability to listen proactively as essential skills for the Principal. He/she said:

I would hope that a successful principal that was functioning effectively in the school has all of the necessary skills such as good communication, remaining calm, and to listen proactively. If you look at our School Plan you would see he/she [the Principal] is always in the process of identifying needs and targets and devising the action plans and developing the staff through identifying in what area the professional learning is needed. He/she's always planning, evaluating, and supporting financially professional learning programs. He/she listens to me and guides me as a peer. So, I would not imagine the principal would need any other skills than to be a good principal.

All respondents agreed on the capabilities needed by the principal for implementation of the policy at the school level: the ability to think rationally; to listen proactively; good communication; management skills; and problem-solving ability.

4.2.5 What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Survey question 18, asked respondents: “*What are the practical constraints on implementing the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*” The Principal responded by nominating: “money, time, available funds, and willingness to participate”. In the interview, he/she noted that money, teacher relief, and time were major constraints on implementation of the Policy. He/she reflected:

Not enough money ... the problem is the budget. Try to make sure you do what you want to do within the constraint of budget because every time you send the classroom teacher to do something, you have to find a relief teacher and it's expensive and that's one of the difficulties. I think money, time, available funds, willingness to participate are important. My personal view is if you're going to provide teachers with expert learning, you have to provide the time. For professional learning during the day, you have to take them off from the class and send them to courses and to do that you've got to bring in casual teachers. Getting good reliable people to come in and take over from the teacher is a real issue. Time management is so important. The important thing is to provide teachers the best opportunities in the best time during the day.

All respondent Teachers had similar views to the Principal on these constraints. For instance, those nominated by Teachers in the survey were time, money, permission on applications for courses, (some needed in a hurry), and commitment to teaching and student performance. In the interview, a member of the school Professional Learning Team confirmed management of time, availability of the Teachers, coordinating, and funding as practical constraints in implementing the policy. He/she stated:

The difficult factor is the time factor, the time to do those wonderful things. It gets difficult when you are a teaching executive on the staff because you are unable to do realistic work on projects. I'm not in my class. The time management factor is very tricky at the moment. I think the practical constraints are the management of time, availability of the staff, coordinating, and funding. There is always only a certain amount of money.

The other Executive Teacher believed time, coordinating, money, and relief teachers were professional learning constraints. He/she explained:

Basically, the management factor of time and coordinating of training and developing activities are constraints. The coordinating of professional learning activities in the school can be a huge constraint. As you can imagine, there are so many things going on in the school like performances, sporting events, library, and finding relief teachers. You know... the time management factor becomes so tricky. Another constraint is money which is never enough. But at least there is something, because the crucial thing for teachers is the time factor. They can go to a course and learn something new. It's the time factor when they get back to the school, they've got a full teaching load. How they organise that, how they implement it in the classroom is just not that easy. My belief is that school-based professional learning is the most effective. In addition to the time factor, to get relief teachers is another factor. One of our Executives phone-called 25 times one day last year until they could get a casual teacher.

Analysis of results from the qualitative and quantitative data indicates that the Principal and the majority of Teachers agreed that the major constraints in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy* were inadequate funds, insufficient time, lack of relief teachers, inability to coordinate programs, and unwillingness of teachers to participate.

4.2.6 Summary

The analysis of the School Plan and collection of data revealed that School A had linked teachers' professional learning to the School Plan, indicating the high regard for professional learning in the school. The Principal and responding Teachers were

generally happy with the implementation of the policy. Professional learning programs within the school focused on quality teaching, programming, leadership development, assessment and reporting, student services, community of school, gifted and talented programs, and Aboriginal education.

There was general agreement between the Principal and Teachers that the principal has a key role in the implementation of the policy. They believed that managerial functions in teachers' professional learning involved: documenting professional learning activities in the School Plan; allocation of resources; identification of teachers' learning needs; choosing content; implementation of programs; ongoing support; collection of participants' reports; and evaluation. The results also indicated that the school Professional Learning Team and the Principal were the major drivers in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school.

The findings indicate general agreement on a number of capabilities which a principal needs for implementing the policy. These included: the ability to think rationally; to listen proactively; good communication; problem-solving ability; motivation and management skills. There was also agreement that the principal faces some major constraints in the implementation of the policy including inadequate money; insufficient time; lack of relief teachers; inability to coordinate programs; and teachers' unwillingness to participate.

The next section presents the findings for School B.

4.3 School B

4.3.1 School context

School B is a government primary school that was established about 68 years ago. In 2005 the school had a student population of 164 (K-6) and was formed into seven classes of which three were composite classes. The school's documents suggest that the school has good facilities and is continuing to develop resources to support teaching and learning programs. The school is located in an area made up of housing commission homes and units, as well as established, long-term residents and new families moving into older homes. It is an area where the socio-economic status of most students' families is relatively low. The school's goal is to provide a warm, supportive environment in which each student can realize his or her full potential. The school's staff also try to build a learning community where each student achieves personal happiness and success, and where self esteem and social skills are fostered (School Plan, 2005). This school has seven teaching positions.

The school has a supportive parent body with a core group of Parents and Citizens Association members working extremely hard to organise events and fundraise throughout the year. The parent body would like to see the school increase in size and are working with the school to promote the school and its achievements throughout the wider community. The School Council enables formal parent and community participation in the planning and administration of the school. The council consists of the Principal, Teacher Representatives, Parent Representatives, and a Community Representative (School Annual Report, 2005).

The School Plan has a section on professional learning activities. The school has a Professional Learning Team consisting of the Principal and two volunteer Executive staff members with the Principal as the chair.

4.3.2 Respondents' information

Surveys were sent to the Principal and all of the seven teachers in the school, and replies were received from the Principal and five Teachers. Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis with all members of the school Professional

Learning Team. Respondents' information on such areas as gender, position, length of service, and highest current level of education was obtained. The results indicate that the Principal had been a teacher for more than 20 years and in the principal position for six years. He/she has a Diploma qualification.

The data indicate that three Teachers had been teaching for more than 20 years and the other two Teachers had had five and nine years experience respectively. There are more female respondent Teachers (4 out of 5) than males. Teachers' education qualifications are Diploma (2 out of 5), Graduate Diploma (1 out of 5), and Honours Degree (2 out of 5).

4.3.3 How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning?

Survey question 16, asked the respondents: "*What is the role of the principal in successfully implementing the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*" While the question was open-ended, in general the Principal responded to it with reference to how he/she thought about his/her role in professional learning. "The principal provides leadership, within the context of the school's management structures, of the Professional Learning Team. The principal leads the collaborative development of a Professional Learning Plan".

The Principal identified his/her role as guiding, controlling, collaborating, and providing equal professional learning opportunities for all staff. He/she said:

I think my role is giving teachers lots of opportunities to engage in professional learning. Some of that is done at the school level through staff meetings where we get consulted. Sometimes, the school sends teachers to courses and then they come back and present at the staff meetings. All staff benefit from that person going [to the courses]. So, my role is a guiding role if you like, and to make sure that the money is spent properly in the areas outlined in the *Professional Learning Policy*. Whatever professional learning happens during the year, it matches with teachers' goals and needs and the school needs. Briefly, I am in charge of making sure that the money is spent correctly and there is planning for professional learning in our school. My role is to make

sure that the plan has been developed collaboratively with staff and make sure that everybody has an equal opportunity to engage in professional learning.

He/she also explained budgeting and identifying priorities in the School Plan:

The *Professional Learning Policy* came out last year and I implemented it in the school through staff meetings and so on. This year there is evidence of professional learning in the School Plan. All of the money has been budgeted and we are spending all of that and introducing goal setting and so on. Teachers are a lot more aware of their own professional learning needs. What we are looking at, at the moment, the policy is broken into a number of criteria looking at beginning teachers. We don't have any beginning teachers, so, we are not doing anything in that and I allocated money to equality and welfare, syllabus implementation, career development, literacy and numeracy and ICT. So, in those areas money has been allocated and we look at what we could do within the school and where we need external assistance, whether we want to do it in the staff meeting after school or relieve teachers during the day to work together as a collegial group. And the other thing that happened is this school is a part of network of eight schools, doing professional learning between schools too.

Three Teachers indicated that the Principal has a role in mentoring, facilitating, and planning. The roles of the Principal nominated by one Executive Teacher who was interviewed were:

... Disseminating information so that everyone knows, facilitating formulation of the Professional Learning Team, facilitating procedures for committees, budgeting, collecting data and to inform about the Professional Learning Plan. The Principal needs to bring this document to the attention of staff members and oversee its implementation... I think he/she [the Principal] must push and encourage us to participate in the different courses and learn from each other. But unfortunately, he/she does not consult with us about the issues and just suggests to staff they go to professional learning programs. Would you go or are you likely to go? If we feel our Principal encourages and

supports us, we'll have more motivation for involvement in professional learning activities.

According to their interviews, members of the school Professional Learning Team believed the Principal is active in needs assessment, planning, organisation, mentoring, and leadership roles in the professional learning of teachers. As one Executive Teacher noted:

The Principal is a leader. All professional learning courses go through him/her in the first place. He/she decides whether or not it is worthwhile. He/she is very well organised. He/she decides alone about the value of courses, students' and teachers' learning needs. I think he/she must make staff aware of it [collaborative learning] and motivate them to work and learn together and decide what is going on. ... Staff haven't received enough motivation or encouragement to learn collaboratively by him/her. ... I feel, he/she takes more decisions him/herself without consulting with us. We're just involved in superficial decisions and he/she doesn't want our recommendations. He/she has the final say in all decisions in the Team [Professional Learning Team]. I think it's not good.

The other Executive Teacher who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team also explained with regard to the *NSW DET Professional Learning Policy* (2004a):

Up to this year it hasn't been working. That's the bottom line. In professional learning last year there was no accountability feedback for the staff that go to the professional learning programs, but this year we are accountable. If we go on a course, we will come back and in-service the staff about it. The Principal has developed our policy according to the Department's *Professional Learning Policy*.

The Principal and Teachers agreed on the roles of the principal but disagreed on how or whether it was carried out successfully, as apparently most Teachers believed that collaboration was not encouraged by the Principal. Respondents emphasised the range of the principal's roles in the implementation of the policy. These are

presented under the following main headings: responsibility for managerial functions; planning for professional learning; the selection of professional learning content; allocation of funds for professional learning; implementation of professional learning programs; and the evaluation of professional learning activities.

4.3.3.1 Responsibility for managerial functions in teacher professional learning

Survey question 10 asked: “*Who was mostly responsible in your school for the following functions related to professional learning?*” The Principal provided the main focus for professional learning efforts within the school. The Principal and four Teachers believed that the Principal had the main responsibility in the selection of the school’s professional learning priorities and allocation of budget between categories of professional learning expenditures. They also believed the Principal had responsibilities for permitting teachers’ involvement in professional learning programs, informing teachers about professional learning opportunities, identifying teachers’ learning needs, and documenting of professional learning priorities in the School Plan. The Principal also confirmed he/she had a responsibility in managing of the school staff development days. He/she agreed that the school Professional Learning Team had responsibilities for the collection of participants’ data for evaluating and reviewing the school Professional Learning Plan.

During the follow-up interview the Principal reflected on this managerial responsibility and believed he/she had a major responsibility for planning, organising, mentoring, and need assessment in teacher professional learning. He/she said:

The School Plan is done by all staff. I made sure that all teachers are aware of the *Professional Learning Policy* and from that I have developed our own school policy. I have also organised the Professional Learning Team which involved me as the principal and two executives. Then, we developed professional learning and any teachers who wish to do professional learning can apply for any in-service or courses, and that is based on their professional learning goals for the year. In the beginning of this year, I asked all teachers to fill in the professional learning goals sheet and the areas that they needed more expertise in. We also put together the Professional Learning Plan in the

School Plan and if anything comes through the school about professional learning, teachers are asked in the staff meetings if they'd like to attend.

This finding is consistent with the *Leading and Managing the School* (NSW DET, 2000), in which the Principal is responsible for: "Promoting a collegial and co-operative culture to support team effectiveness and to encourage individual development" (p. 4).

All of the Teachers surveyed confirmed that the Principal had a significant responsibility in the collection of participants' data for evaluation of professional learning programs. There was no consensus of teacher views on who was specifically responsible for managing school staff development days and for reviewing the school Professional Learning Plan.

One Executive Teacher who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team believed that team leadership, needs assessment, and reporting were the Principal's roles in teacher professional learning. He/she noted:

The Principal is the main manager in professional learning programs. He/she disseminates information to the rest of the teachers and approves or disapproves the applications for professional learning. He/she sees the applications for particular meetings. He/she has discussions about the applications with other Executive. Also, there is not enough funding available for professional learning. We then look at whether or not a course is going to work after a while and whether that person can come back and report to the other staff whether it assists other teachers or the individual teacher.

In one area the views of the Principal differed from those of Teachers. Specifically, the Principal felt that the school Professional Learning Team had responsibility for planning and evaluating whereas most Teachers felt that the Principal independently collected participants' data for evaluating of the programs. Overall, however, in the view of the Principal and four Teachers the Principal had the major responsibility for the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school level although whether this actually occurred remains unclear.

4.3.3.2 Planning for professional learning

In survey question five, respondents were asked: “*Does your school have a Professional Learning Plan?*” The Principal and all of the Teachers confirmed the existence of such a plan within the endorsed School Plan. The Principal explained that the school’s professional learning is an ongoing process and focuses on the needs of the teachers, students, and the school. He/she stated:

I do it during Term Four at the staff meeting. Staff look at their own professional learning needs for the year. So, when we look at the School Plan, we look at the data which we received from the BST (Basic Skills Test) and various other places. We see how children are progressing. We look at all of that information and we get a lot of data and we see which direction the school needs to go for the following year. It may be an ongoing thing over a number of years and it may be a new program from which the School Plan is developed. We are also looking at the school’s needs, students’ needs, and what the region wants to implement as well as the Department of Education and Training. So, we put all of them together in our School Plan.

One Executive Teacher who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team stated that professional learning planning at the school focused on school needs, region, and state priorities. He/she said:

Basically, the main plan for professional learning is in the needs areas of staff, the school, region, and state. In the beginning of each year, staff identify the areas of weakness or areas that they’d like to develop and plan from that point. In addition to that, there are broad school goals, state and regional priorities that we do work on in the School Plan as well.

The School Plan contained the section on professional learning and the school identified professional learning as a separate priority. Whilst the documents analysed made reference to professional learning priority areas to be addressed, they lacked detail with regard to the purposes of programs and evaluation mechanisms.

Available school documents and the NSW DET teacher professional learning guideline document (2004b) provided some direction for the school on use and accounting for professional learning funds. In the School Plan, the budget was distributed among the professional learning programs on the basis of the school priorities. The Principal informed teachers on the permission process that was utilised within the school to enable them to gain financial support for participation in professional learning programs. In fact, the school listed those items of financial support which teachers would be able to claim for their participation in professional learning programs (see below 4.3.3.5).

As noted earlier, both the Principal and Teachers agreed that the school Professional Learning Plan focused on individual teachers' learning needs, and priorities of the school and state. However, the school Professional Learning Plan appeared to contradict this indicating that the school gave more weight to state priorities.

4.3.3.3 The selection of professional learning content

Despite the emphasis given to state priorities in the school Professional Learning Plan, the Principal stated that, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Team, he/she selected the content of professional learning programs by considering state, school, and individual teachers' priorities. According to the School Plan, professional learning programs within the school focused on S&T (Science and Technology), ICT (Information and Communications Technology), leadership skills, planning, reading recovery teachers, and quality teaching. Content areas included school management and leadership, numeracy, literacy and inclusive curriculum.

To identify how the school Professional Learning Team made decisions on the professional learning priorities, respondents were asked to indicate the levels of influence that national, state, regional, local and individual teachers' priorities had on the overall pattern of the Professional Learning Plan in the school. Again in contrast to the school Professional Learning Plan, The Principal and four Teachers believed that the school's priorities, state's priorities and regional priorities were most important in the determination of the content of the professional learning program. They confirmed that national priorities were not very important in the selection of

professional learning content. The Principal also believed that the individual teachers' needs were important in the selection of professional learning contents.

In the interview with the Principal a question was asked regarding his/her perception of the selection of professional learning content. The comment below indicates that there is strong agreement on the influence of the identified teachers' needs on the professional learning programs. He/she said:

Individual teachers fill out a goal-setting form and then the school Professional Learning Team and I look through all of those. We identify major areas where teachers will benefit from either getting consulting into the school or sending teachers to courses and then they are the major part of professional learning for the year. It is enhancing their [teachers'] motivation too. We also consider teacher performance for identifying needs of teachers. For example, one of the things we are focusing on this year is problem-solving in maths, which we found that the children are very good at it. So, we feel that's because of training the teachers into incorporating problem-solving into maths. Basically, teachers put down what their goals and needs are. They are also involved in the School Plan. So, they know what the projects are for the year and based on all of that information that's how we come up with the professional learning needs for the year.

As mentioned above, the review of school key documents also confirmed that expected outcomes and learning targets in the School Plan 2005 focused on successful teacher goal setting for the year with achievement of goals assisted by Executive staff and through the School Plan. It was also expected that teachers have improved leadership skills, and improved teaching with computers, teaching explicit reading, grammar and punctuation across all stages.

Three Teachers agreed that individual teachers' needs were most important in the determination of the content of the professional learning program. Further insights were gained from teachers' responses to survey question 14. Teachers were asked whether the professional learning programs at the school matched their professional needs. In responding to this question, all of the Teachers indicated that they agreed

with the matching of individual teachers' needs and professional learning programs at the school.

One of the Executive Teachers as a member of the school Professional Learning Team indicated that in the first stage teachers identify their professional learning needs and then these needs are collated by the Team to identify the whole school's professional learning priorities. He/she said:

The teachers identify the areas of needs and we as Executives get together to identify, prioritise and work out the whole-school needs and then prioritise individual needs as well. Teachers who go to the courses train the staff when they come back. This raises teachers' knowledge and improves their quality of teaching.

The perceptions of the Principal differed somewhat from the perceptions of Teachers on the level of importance of individual teachers' needs in determining professional learning content. The Principal only rated the individual teachers' needs as important while Teachers believed that they are most important in the selection of professional learning contents. Overall, the results indicate that the Principal utilises a variety of sources of advice and processes in identifying the professional learning needs of both the school and individual teachers.

4.3.3.4 The selection of participants for professional learning activities

Survey question 20 sought to identify the criteria that the school applied in permitting teachers to participate in particular external professional learning programs. The Principal and four Teachers confirmed that permission for teachers to be involved in such programs is usually dependent on the activity being in line with the School Plan. The Principal and all Teachers indicated a similar criterion for professional learning activities within the school.

The Principal and all Teachers also indicated that the Professional Learning Team is usually responsible for selecting and encouraging teachers to be involved in professional learning programs.

The Principal indicated that the school is likely to be flexible in permitting teachers to participate in professional learning programs but that the most important criterion is that the teacher's learning activity is in line with the school's plan for professional learning. In survey question 20, the Principal and Teachers were also asked about their perceptions of how teachers generally viewed the permission criteria. The Principal and four Teachers perceived that selection and permission processes were, to a degree, effective in ensuring that teachers' professional learning needs matched those of the school. The Principal and three Teachers agreed that a moderately effective procedure for ensuring that professional learning activities would address the needs of the school was to approve participation if activities were aligned with their learning needs or the School Plan. There was also agreement by both the Principal and three Teachers that aligning teachers' professional learning needs with the School Plan would result in the school's needs being met very effectively. However, two Teachers differed in their views on this aspect.

The perception of the Principal differed from the perceptions of Teachers on the effectiveness of the teacher being selected for professional learning by the school Professional Learning Team. This process was regarded by the Principal as very effective, however, by four Teachers as only moderately effective in ensuring that the needs of the school would be met. There was, however, general agreement that teachers being given funds directly was not effective in ensuring that teachers' professional learning needs matched those of the school.

4.3.3.5 Allocation of funds for teacher professional learning

The school receives annual funding for implementing professional learning programs from the NSW DET as a tied grant (NSW DET, 2004e), and the school Professional Learning Team and Principal have a managerial responsibility in allocating resources. In survey question 30, participants were specifically asked: "*How was the total funding for professional learning distributed within the school in 2004*"?

As in School A, professional learning funding was not directly available to individual teachers within the school. The responses to this question from the Principal and three Teachers confirmed that professional learning funds are allocated on the basis of the learning activity being in line with the School Plan.

Teachers were asked about their views on the distribution of the professional learning budget across the school, and only one of the five expressed dissatisfaction with the current distribution policy and procedure.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which the school provided financial support for teachers' professional learning. The Principal and three Teachers indicated that the school usually provided funds for reimbursement of costs but seldom for provision of learning materials or equipment. They also agreed that the school never provided scholarships or fees for studies undertaken for teachers. The Principal also indicated that the school seldom provided release time for teachers, and never funded attendance at celebratory functions. In contrast, three Teachers believed that the school usually provided release time from teaching duties for professional learning. On the provision of a celebratory function at the school's expense, there was no consensus of Teacher views.

During the follow-up interviews the Principal confirmed that NSW DET allocation of funds to the school for teacher professional learning is based on the numbers of teachers and students, and the distance of the school from the regional office. He/she said:

Each school receives teacher professional learning funds based on the number of teachers and students in the school, how far you are away from the regional office and those sorts of things. A lot of programs come with funding or you get relief teachers, so that doesn't cost the school anything. I am also allocated additional money out of global funds for professional learning as well. I am actually allocating an additional \$2000 on top of professional learning funds. There is never enough.

The Principal was also asked, "*How is the school accountable for the expenditure of funds for professional learning?*" and replied that the professional learning budget is a tied grant and the accounting for expenditures reported annually to the NSW Department of Education and Training. He/she added:

The Department of Education and Training have guidelines about using and reporting on teacher professional learning. These guidelines were designed to

assist the principals to account for their teacher professional learning funds. TPL [Teacher Professional Learning] funds are allocated annually as a tied grant. We account for the use of all TPL funds through the annual financial reporting. There is a form that we have to fill in about how the school spent the money.

One Executive Teacher who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team insisted that the allocation of funds for teacher professional learning has to be equitable. He/she said:

It has to be an equitable allocation. Unfortunately, allocated money is not equitable in the school because there is not a lot of money available. Some courses may have great value for one person and it may be a three-day course which takes away a quarter of our budget. ... we try to be as equitable as possible with allocation, but the value is less. When somebody goes for a course, we have to pay for casual teacher relief to take the class, over \$350 for a day. We try to allocate according to the needs of staff and the needs of the school. As I said earlier, if we get something as cheap as possible and benefit most staff, then we go for that one rather than benefiting just one person.

The Principal and Teachers were asked to give their views of how teachers overall perceived the importance of various forms of support. The Principal and four Teachers believed that it was very important for teachers to be involved in professional learning activities and that when needed they be provided with release time, reimbursement of costs, and clerical and/or technical support. The Principal perceived the provision of learning materials or equipment as being useful but scholarships or fees for studies undertaken and provision for a celebratory function at the school's expense as not important in teachers' decisions to be involved in professional learning.

Three Teachers indicated that providing funds for a celebratory function at the school was important for teachers' continuing involvement in professional learning activities. With regard to scholarships or payment of fees for studies undertaken and provision of learning materials or equipment Teachers expressed diverging views.

One area where the Principal's views differed from those of Teachers was on the provision of release time; the Principal felt that the school seldom provided release time for professional learning while most Teachers believed that the school usually did provide such release time.

4.3.3.6 Implementation of professional learning programs

This section of the study sought to identify the particular approaches to professional learning which the Principal implemented within the school. To determine the amount of time teachers were involved in professional learning activities, survey question seven asked respondents to indicate how many hours they participated in formal professional learning activities per year. The results indicated that the Principal spent, on average, 40 hours per year while Teachers spent 20 hours per year involved in these activities.

Professional learning approaches were differentiated according to whether teachers were involved in group activities, structured activities with a colleague or individual involvement in professional learning activities. The Principal was asked to take a whole-school perspective on the extent of use of different methods within his/her school. Teachers were asked to respond from an individual viewpoint on the extent to which they were engaged in each of the methods listed, either in within-school activities or in professional learning activities outside the school.

The Principal and four Teachers indicated that the school usually used workshops, courses, and collaborative professional learning methods. They also agreed that the school seldom used seminars and peer observation methods. The Principal believed that the school usually used invited speakers and seldom used action learning and coaching/mentoring, and that the school never used online learning as a method for professional learning. In the interview he/she offered the following example:

Most of the courses come from the regional office. We are also involved in the quality teaching program which is an across-the-state initiative. Sometimes, other projects that have funding attached are offered which fit in with the School Plan. You apply, hopefully, to get involved in the program as well. We also invite counselors from the region to come in and do in-service

at the staff meeting. They are on Wednesday afternoons and that is all professional learning. Sometimes, it might be somebody who's done a course before and comes back and presents to the rest of the staff or we have teachers at the school that have particular expertise in areas and they will do some in-service. At the moment one of my staff is in-servicing for using the website and Internet pages.

In the interview, the Principal was asked: "*Do you use external professional learning providers?*" and indicated that the school only sometimes used university lecturers as external professional learning providers because it was so expensive. He/she noted:

The external providers are usually set up by the Department consultancies. Unfortunately there is not a lot of money available for professional learning. So, we have to make the best use the professional learning budget. Unfortunately a lot of professional learning external providers charge so much and it's impossible for us to use them. The Departmental consultancy is running the staff meeting after school. Actually, paying someone to come and help us is just part of the learning programs. Also, we do have internal programs too. For example, I run a lot of IT [Information Technology] in-services here.

The Teachers' opinions were divided on the use of invited speakers, online learning, and action learning. During the follow-up interviews members of the school Professional Learning Team were asked: "*What are the types of professional learning programs in your school?*"? One member responded that the school used mentoring and collaborative professional learning approaches. He/she said:

It is obviously mentoring opportunities. Quite often, what I like to see happening here, for example, is IT [Information Technology]. I like to see funding allocated to provide teachers for the children in my class; so, I can go to other classrooms and work with them in computing and the staff; sometimes that is another opportunity. We also have group sessions all run during afternoon in-service activities.

Teachers wanted to be supported and respected as professionals in their professional learning programs. However, this was not always the case. One Executive Teacher said:

... The last workshop itself was awful. It was too long. The invited speaker didn't seem to have a lot of energy and it was hard to stay motivated and listen. We are used to being up talking and moving around. When you have to sit down, it is really hard to stay focused. ... He/she [speaker] treated us too much like children and we didn't like it.

This study also investigated the perceptions of the Principal and Teachers on the effectiveness of different professional learning approaches, the Principal from the school perspective, and Teachers from their individual viewpoints. The Principal and four Teachers believed that workshops, courses, invited speakers, peer observation, and coaching/mentoring were very effective methods in professional learning programs. The Principal also believed that seminars were very effective and that collaborative professional learning and action learning, when used, were moderately effective. All of the Teachers believed that collaborative professional learning was a very effective method but diverged more on the effectiveness of methods such as seminars and action learning.

There are some areas where the Principal's views differed from those of Teachers. For example, the Principal perceived that the school seldom used coaching/mentoring as a specific professional learning method while Teachers believed that it is usually used by them. Whilst the Principal perceived a large proportion of teachers to be only moderately satisfied with their involvement in collaborative professional learning based on common professional needs, Teachers agreed that this method contributed to a very effective learning experience.

4.3.3.7 Evaluation of teacher professional learning

Data for evaluation of professional learning may be drawn from a number of sources such as teachers' learning outcomes, the school's outcomes, or students' outcomes. Analysis of the School Plan document indicated that in this school the reporting required was immediate and based on examining participants' learning outcomes

rather than on the longer term examination of student learning outcomes. This section is, therefore, concerned with the management practices of the principal in gaining information from participants on the outcomes of professional learning activities.

The Principal and three Teachers confirmed that the school's Professional Learning Plan was reviewed at least once a year. Analysis of responses indicates that the Principal regularly conducted a review of the school Professional Learning Plan which required teachers to report on the outcomes of learning programs they had been involved in, usually by way of an oral presentation to staff meetings or directly to the Principal. The Principal suggested that if the teachers' reports were in a written form rather than presented orally, it would contribute more to the improvement of future professional learning programs.

Participants were asked how useful the information received from teachers was in informing the school for future professional learning programs. The Principal and four Teachers believed that teachers' reports on the formal or informal activities where teachers are involved as individual members of staff are very useful in providing information for evaluation. They also agreed that teachers' reports on activities involving groups of teachers and whole-school staff in professional learning programs were also useful in providing such information.

In responding to the question about the collection and reporting of participants' data for the school as a whole, the Principal reflected that these data were adequate for evaluation of professional learning activities. During the follow-up interviews the Principal commented on the evaluation of teacher professional learning programs by looking at improvement in results and feedback from teachers and students. He/she explained:

We evaluate individual teachers based on the courses that they go through. After we've had training in certain things we sit down and we evaluate the success of the day. For example, we had a staff development day at the beginning of the term and all of us went to the quality teaching day. They asked us to evaluate it at the end of day on the form. I think the majority of people said that they were very disappointed at the end of day because it did

not deliver what they promised. Also, part of teacher goal-setting was whether they achieved the goals by the end of the year. Then, we also evaluate through the success of the programs that it was linked to and that goes into the annual report at the end of the year and the Management Plan and the School Plan are evaluated at the end of the year as well. What we would do, for example, in the training of teachers in problem-solving; as part of the evaluation program, I asked teachers to report the outcomes of their involvement. I would like to see the evidence in the teaching programs. I like to see the evidence that comes through the classroom where we see the results of the training program. So, we are looking at improvement in results and feedback from staff and students.

During the interview one member of the school's Professional Learning Team clarified that the school evaluated professional learning activities by supervising and collecting data from participants. He/she said:

I have been evaluating, because the *Professional Learning Policy* is only at the early stages of development and implementation, so it would be evaluated this year. The professional learning programs are evaluated through supervising, collecting data from participants in teaching and learning programs. We have a checklist of criteria in place, of what is expected from teachers and what they need to meet those criteria.

The Principal and four Teachers perceived that having teachers report on the outcomes of their involvement in professional learning activities was useful in providing information for evaluation of professional learning programs. A further analysis of the data suggests that Teachers agreed with the Principal that if the reports were in a written form rather than presented orally, it would probably be more useful in evaluating professional learning programs.

4.3.4 What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Research Question Two relates to the range of capabilities that the principal needs for the implementation of the policy at the school level. In survey question 17

participants were asked: “*What capabilities are necessary for the principal to successfully implement the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*” While the question was open-ended, in general the Principal responded, “understand the *Professional Learning Policy*, leadership capacity, professional learning knowledge, and to work collaboratively with staff”. The Principal in the interview further clarified the essential capabilities which principals need for implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*. He/she believed that principals must be expert on teaching, learning, and other leadership and managerial functions. He/she stated:

A principal needs interpersonal communication, organisation, financial, evaluation, and planning skills... in fact, he/she needs to be an expert on teaching and learning. You’ve got to look at the needs of staff and you’ve got to look at the needs of the school, and you also have to be aware of what the direction is from the state and region and you have to work within all of that, making sure you are working towards providing the best possible education for all of the students, and extending and expanding teacher expertise in the school.

Four Teachers had similar perceptions to the Principal on necessary capabilities for the principal to successfully implement the *Professional Learning Policy*. For instance, one Executive Teacher in response to the question, stated: “The policy is self-explanatory. The success or not of its implementation depends on the willingness or not of the Principal to use best practice in leading and facilitating its implementation”. The other Executive Teacher, who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team, confirmed organising, collaborating, and motivating as essential skills for the principal in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*. He/she believed:

The principal has to be approachable, aware of needs, well informed, and well organised. He/she [the Principal] needs to be aware of what professional learning opportunities exist and what are the priorities also, the department priorities for the area and school priorities. He/she needs to be able to encourage staff to become involved in their own development as well. I need his/her advice in teaching and learning ...

The findings identified a number of capabilities commonly perceived as needed by the Principal for implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) at the school, with both groups of respondents emphasising the needs for leadership and managerial skills and professional learning knowledge.

4.3.5 What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Survey question 18, asked the respondents: “*What are the practical constraints on implementing the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*” The Principal responded by nominating: “Time, money, and needs of staff”. In the interview, he/she noted that cost, teacher relief, unavailability of courses to meet, lack of teacher motivation, distance, and district consultancy were important specific constraints on the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. He/she reflected:

Some teachers often become sour when they participate in professional learning programs. The other constraints would be courses not on offer to cover the needs of staff. Cost is another constraint, and distance. Teachers have to travel to get to these things. The regions have professional learning opportunities, so that is one way. We also get a lot of individual in-service teachers or private company teachers but that is very expensive and we don’t do them very often. ... Another constraint is availability of consultants from district level or area level. Often we have to wait. At times it is difficult to get casual teachers too... and another constraint is that sometimes I need more time for meeting my responsibilities in contributing to teachers’ [professional learning] demands.

All Teachers have similar views to the Principal on these constraints. For instance, constraints nominated by Teachers in the survey were lack of release time, lack of money, and inadequate support. In the interview a member of the school Professional Learning Team confirmed that funding, lack of teachers’ enthusiasm, and teachers’ inability to change are practical constraints on implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*. He/she stated:

There is really only one constraint, that is funding. I suppose the other constraints are the inability to change, some staff do not like to change. They just like to go ahead and just do their own thing. That is probably one of the major constraints in professional learning. You have to get those people and motivate those people to become involved in their own professional learning. That is why asking them what areas they need to improve or why they want professional learning is a good way of going about it. It is better that they decide rather than force them. If you have funding, time is never a constraint.

Another Executive Teacher believed money, time, and lack of relevant in-service courses were professional learning constraints. He/she explained:

The bottom line is we need more money and release time. That increased slightly but unfortunately the Department introduce a lot of schemes and new ideas and then do not support it; for example, the computer in the school program. We have got all of these computers everywhere but there is less support here to train teaching staff on how they can use them. Then people just type stories or play games with them and this is a waste of money and there is no support staff for professional learning in computers. We get technology advice at the moment. It is better than nothing. ... There was a big increase in money allocation for financing in-service courses. Yes, but I don't think there's anything much more offered in the way of in-service courses. I don't see any change in in-service courses compared with other years. The money is not enough. We need good courses for professional learning. To be honest I think there aren't relevant professional learning programs for staff to learn effective teaching methods.

Analysis of results from qualitative and quantitative data indicates that the Principal and four Teachers agreed that major constraints in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy* are inadequate funds, insufficient time, lack of teacher motivation, lack of relevant in-service courses, and teachers' inability to change.

4.3.6 Summary

There was general agreement among the Principal and Teachers in this school that the Principal's role involves leading, controlling, collaborating, mentoring, facilitating, and providing equal professional learning opportunities for all staff. Analysis of results indicates that the principal is a major driver in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school. Professional learning programs within the School Plan focus on S&T (Science and Technology), ICT (Information and Computer Technology), leadership skills, planning, reading recovery teaching, and quality teaching. The results indicate that the Principal utilises a variety of sources of advice and processes in identifying the learning needs of both the school and individual teachers; that workshops, courses, invited speakers, peer observation, and coaching/mentoring methods when utilised are very effective. The school usually provides direct financial support or reimbursement of costs for teachers to enable them to participate in professional learning programs.

The findings identify a number of capabilities that the principal needs for successful implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*, including: leadership and management skills, the ability to work collaboratively, and communication ability. Both the Principal and Teacher respondents reflected that the major constraints on the principal's implementation of the policy are: inadequate funds, insufficient time, lack of relevant in-service courses, and lack of teacher motivation.

4.4 School C

4.4.1 School context

School C is a public primary school that was established about 46 years ago. The school had 294 students enrolled in 2005; 165 of these were boys and 129 girls. The school's documents suggest that the school has provided several generations with a happy, secure and stimulating learning environment. The school aims at providing the best possible educational programs for all its students by utilizing the resources of the school and the involvement of the community. The School Plan states the belief that life-long learning is essential to success in a changing society, that quality learning depends on quality teaching, and that education is the shared responsibility of the school, student, family, government, and community. The school provides a purposeful learning environment which enables all students to experience success. Nineteen different nationalities are represented in the school's student body. The school attempts to create a culture where all students are accepted and valued. In 2005, there were 11 classes, with six year groups and five composite classes at the school (School Plan, 2005).

The parents of students have middle-class aspirations and strongly support their children's educational progress. The parents are represented in the school in a formal manner by three bodies: School Council, Parents and Citizens Association, and School Auxiliary (School Annual Report, 2005).

In 2005, there were eleven teaching positions at the school, with very experienced teachers most aged 46-56 years. The teachers' professionalism is shown by their determination to achieve the best for their students. The School Plan has a section on professional learning. The school has a Professional Learning Team consisting of the Principal and three volunteer Executive staff members with the Principal as the chair.

4.4.2 Respondents' information

Surveys were sent to the Principal and all of the eleven teachers in the school, and replies were received from the Principal and six teachers. Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis with all members of the school Professional Learning Team.

Respondents' information on such areas as gender, position, length of service, and highest current level of education was obtained. The results indicate that the Principal had been a teacher for 11 years and in the principal position for more than 19 years. He/she has a Masters Degree. All of the respondent Teachers (6 out of 6) had been teaching for more than 20 years. There were more female respondent Teachers (4 out of 6) than males. All of the respondent Teachers have a Diploma.

4.4.3 How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning?

This section reports on the data collected in relation to the Principal's role in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. Survey question 16 asked the respondents: "*What is the role of the principal in successfully implementing the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*" While the question was open-ended, in general the Principal responded to this question with reference to how he/she thought about his/her role in professional learning. The roles nominated by the Principal were "establish and lead the school Professional Learning Team, ensure a professional learning component in the School Plan, ensure all teachers are engaged in professional learning, evaluate the effectiveness of professional learning, and be accountable for funds".

The Principal described his/her role as: planning, looking after professional learning, and identifying professional learning needs. He/she noted:

I look after professional learning in terms of education and to a lesser extent considering their future career. I am one of the members of the school Professional Learning Team. I contribute in many ways, but also I have to identify professional learning needs. I must make sure particular teachers are targeted for student management. That is a particular thing that we do. We do target a teacher for a year. ...So, my role is to try to identify the needs and make sure the teachers get the training before I have to say look, I am pretty worried about your teaching.

He also explained the implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) at the school:

We do it [*Professional Learning Policy*] by trial-and-error. Obviously we are given certain money for some reasons. I gave teachers a copy of the *Professional Learning Policy*. We do have a professional learning component within the endorsed School Plan. We do have a Professional Learning Team. We also included office staff because they need professional learning too. One of the office staff went to a course run on the Annual Financial Report. We are working on a big target to improve literacy, learning support, student support, reading recovery, learning assistance teaching, sports teaching, ... we have reading groups; some of our parents are trained people and we have one parent come from an ambulance group and teaches medical care to our teachers.

Five Teachers had similar perceptions to the Principal. The roles of the principal nominated by the Teachers were: "Informing staff of what courses are available, matching courses with the overall School Plan, and meeting with Executives." According to the interviews with members of the school Professional Learning Team, they believed the Principal has active roles in planning, coordinating, providing, organising, implementing, and evaluating roles in the professional learning of teachers. As one of the Executive Teachers noted:

His role is planning for the School Plan, running staff development days, and running some of the courses, however, there are not many courses. The Principal has an evaluation role too.

The other Executive Teacher said:

Well, I think making staff aware of the courses available or getting speakers and that sort of thing to the school; providing, and organising professional learning programs.

One Executive Teacher who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team asserted that he/she did not have enough information about the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a):

I really could not say much about it. I do not have enough knowledge on this policy [*Professional Learning Policy*]. I've seen it but I've not looked at it. We had a meeting and the Principal introduced us to the policy and he/she told us, if you want you can see it. But we're too busy and don't have time for studying the policy. Probably a little more detail and probably it's better we look at that and actually divide time too. That would be good.

The other member of the school Professional Learning Team reflected that he/she did not see the *Professional Learning Policy*. He/she noted: "Well, I have not seen the policy, never seen it. So, I really cannot comment on that."

The various roles of the principal identified by respondents in the implementation of the policy are presented under the following headings: responsibility for managerial functions; planning for professional learning; selection of professional learning content; allocation of funds for professional learning; implementation of professional learning programs; and evaluation of professional learning activities.

4.4.3.1 Responsibility for managerial functions in teacher professional learning

Survey question 10 asked: "*Who was mostly responsible in your school for the following functions related to professional learning?*" Responses indicated that the Principal and the school Professional Learning Team provided the main focus of professional learning efforts within the school. The Principal and five Teachers believed that the Principal had a significant responsibility in the school in the allocation of budget between categories of professional learning expenditure and determining of teachers' learning needs. They also believed that the Principal had responsibility for informing teachers about professional learning programs and collection of participants' data for evaluating. The Principal stated that the school Professional Learning Team was responsible for determining the school's professional learning priorities, managing of the school staff development days, and granting permission for teachers to take part in specific professional learning programs. In addition, he/she believed that this Team has a responsibility for determining professional learning priorities in the School Plan and reviewing the school Professional Learning Plan.

During the follow-up interview, the Principal reflected on this managerial responsibility. He/she believed that he/she had major responsibility for determining the professional learning priorities and initial budget allocations. He/she said:

The management functions are done entirely by the Executive staff and me. Sometimes, we see professional learning areas that staff may benefit from. For example, we will target people, just particular areas we think might affect them in terms of career or in terms of the School Plan. In terms of the School Plan, we actually set aside money to spend on certain areas such as improving literacy and improving numeracy and we keep our staff up to date. Basically, we run the management functions through the Executive staff.

Five of the Teachers surveyed also perceived that documenting of the school's professional learning priority, permission for teachers to take part in specific professional learning programs, and managing of the school staff development days or activities were the Principal's responsibility. They confirmed that the Principal had a responsibility for identification of professional learning priorities in the School Plan and for reviewing the school Professional Learning Plan.

One of the Executive Teachers, who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team, believed that the initial budget allocation, selection of priority areas, provision of information, and collection of data for evaluating professional learning activities were the principal's responsibility. He/she said:

We need the Principal to oversee it all and channel what is coming to the school and he/she has to have a plan for each year. We can't do everything in a year. ... I think he/she [the Principal] has to plan. In brief, selection of priority areas, provision of information, and collection of data for evaluating might be his/her responsibilities for teacher learning.

The other Executive Teacher referred to the Principal's emphasis on the School Plan and encouragement of teachers to share common work in professional learning. He/she noted:

... To implement professional learning the Principal just gets us together and looks at the overall School Plan and sees whatever everybody has expertise in or general interest in or whatever. ... He/she [the Principal] also provides conditions for staff to learn together and help each other in the work.

The Principal encouraged staff to attend professional learning programs. He/she permitted teachers to choose whether or not to attend. For example one Executive Teacher said:

His/her encouragement to attend learning programs has helped me improve my teaching as a professional. I have this option of saying no if I am not interested. I'm allowed to make my own choice. My feeling about this is positive because my efforts are supported by the Principal.

There were some areas where the perceptions of the Principal were different from the perceptions of Teachers. Specifically, the Principal felt that the school Professional Learning Team had responsibility for the major implementation areas below whereas most Teachers felt that the Principal largely determined the school's professional learning priorities, managed the school staff development days, permitted staff to take part in specific professional learning programs, documented professional learning priorities in the School Plan, and reviewed the school's overall Professional Learning Plan.

4.4.3.2 Planning for professional learning

In survey question five, respondents were asked: "*Does your school have a professional learning plan?*" The Principal and all of the Teachers confirmed the existence of a plan for professional learning of teachers within the broad School Plan. The Principal explained that the school's Professional Learning Plan was very important and that it had been developed with all teachers. He/she stated:

Most of our professional learning planning is based on our School Plan. This is a plan which is developed with all the staff. All planning for professional learning is for the entire staff. Running the programs is the Executive's responsibility. ... And I believe it [professional learning] must be an ongoing

process in a teacher's life.

An Executive Teacher who was a member of the school Professional Learning Team stated in the interview that professional learning planning at the school was done in the whole-school meeting. He/she said:

We have a staff development day. Also when we have somebody else coming to the school then we prepare the timetable. We do not plan in the school Professional Learning Team because we do not have a large staff. When something comes up we say in the whole-school meeting that anybody who is interested can go to the course. ...I think, we don't need to write responsibilities, methods or any details in the plan.

The other Executive Teacher said:

When something comes up then the Principal might say, "You are at that stage, would you like to go to the course or anywhere?" ...But the only thing we plan is when we have a staff development day and we might focus on mathematics for the whole year. Then we might get someone and he/she comes and talks to staff. Probably, it is really a bit ad hoc. There is not a great plan.

The School Plan had a section on professional learning and the school identified professional learning as a separate priority. Whilst the documents analysed made reference to professional learning priority areas to be addressed, however, they lacked information about evaluation of the programs.

The documents received from the school focussed on general statements of intentions and objectives rather than on responsibility for professional learning management functions. The majority of documents included a rationale for professional learning programs within the school which articulated either detailed definitions of professional learning or the principles on which the professional learning program at the school was based. Importantly, the School Plan included statements of purpose (aims, objectives or desired outcomes) for the professional learning program to cater for the range of priorities (state, school, and individual

teachers) that the school had to consider when deciding upon the different purposes of the professional learning program.

Available school documents provided limited direction for the school concerning the allocation of funds for professional learning activities. The school provided information to staff on the process that would be utilised within their school to permit teachers to gain financial support for involvement in professional learning activities. Documents actually listed those items of professional learning expenditure that teachers would be able to claim. In short, both the Principal and all Teachers indicated that the School Plan focused on teachers' needs and priorities of the school, region and state.

4.4.3.3 The selection of professional learning content

The Principal, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Team, selected the content of professional learning programs by considering state, school, and individual teacher priorities. According to the School Plan, professional learning programs within the school focused on quality teaching, a new reporting style, assessment, improving literacy and numeracy, and training of clerical staff in use of software.

To identify how the school Professional Learning Team made decisions on professional learning priorities, respondents were asked to indicate the levels of influence that national, state, regional, school, and individual teachers' priorities had on the overall pattern of the Professional Learning Plan in the school. The Principal and five Teachers believed that school priorities and individual teachers' needs were most important, and national priorities were important in the determination of the content of the professional learning program. The Principal also believed that state priorities and regional priorities were most important in the Professional Learning Plan. In the interview with the Principal a question was asked regarding his/her perception of the selection of professional learning content. The comment below indicates that he/she strongly agreed on the influence of the individual teachers' needs on the professional learning programs. He/she said:

First of all the teachers are asked about their professional learning needs.

They are asked to talk to the supervisors about the areas where they feel they need some support. My teachers also are happy to go to the school meetings and in-service courses. We consider student performance in identifying teachers' needs too.

Half of the Teachers agreed that state priorities were important in the determination of the content of the professional learning program. They also had a variety of views about the level of importance of regional priorities. Further insight regarding the Teachers completing the survey can be gained from their responses to question 14, which asked: *Do professional learning programs at this school match your professional needs?* In responding to this question, four Teachers indicated that they agreed and only two strongly disagreed that individual teachers' needs matched professional learning programs at the school. One Executive Teacher, a member of the school Professional Learning Team, said:

We do have to plan and see student needs in different classes. If a teacher has, for example, a diabetic student, we suggest to him/her to go for medical training. ...We have subject coordinators, key learning areas, something in English, we might ask a couple of those who would like to go.

The other Executive Teacher commented on the school professional learning content:

I guess it's up to each supervisor. Teachers might need and they may suggest they could go to courses, but I think there's not so much money for professional learning for the school.

One area where the perceptions of the Principal were different from the perceptions of the six Teachers was on the level of importance of state priorities in determining professional learning content. The Principal believed that state priorities were most important while Teachers believed that they were only moderately important in the selection of professional learning contents. Overall, the results indicate that the Principal utilised a variety of sources of advice and processes in identifying the professional learning needs of both the school and individual teachers.

4.4.3.4 The selection of participants for professional learning activities

Survey question 20 sought information on the criteria that the school applied in permitting teachers to participate in particular external professional learning programs. The Principal and half of the Teachers indicated that in their school the responsibility was usually on the school Professional Learning Team to identify or choose teachers and encourage them to be involved in professional learning activities.

Further analysis of the responses from the Principal indicated that the school was likely to be flexible in permitting teachers to participate in professional learning programs but that the most important criterion was that the teacher's activity be in line with the school's plan for professional learning. In survey question 20, the Principal and Teachers were also asked about their perceptions of how teachers generally viewed the permission criteria. The Principal and five Teachers perceived that the criteria for permitting teachers to participate as described were, to a degree, effective in ensuring that teachers' professional learning activities matched the school's and teachers' professional learning needs. Selection of teachers by the school Professional Learning Team was regarded by the Principal and four Teachers as a moderately effective procedure for ensuring that the needs of the school would be met. They were also agreed that aligning teachers' professional learning needs with the School Plan would result in the school's needs being moderately well met. Teachers being given funds directly was not seen to be effective in ensuring that teachers' professional learning needs matched those of the school.

4.4.3.5 Allocation of funds for teacher professional learning

The school receives annual funding for implementing professional learning programs from the NSW DET as a tied grant (NSW DET, 2004e), and the school Professional Learning Team and Principal have a managerial responsibility in allocating resources. In survey question 30, participants were specifically asked: "*How was the total funding for professional learning distributed within the school in 2004?*"

Professional learning funds were not directly available to individual teachers within the school, and responses to this question from the Principal and four Teachers

confirmed that professional learning funds were allocated on the basis that the activity was in line with the School Plan. All Teachers believed that this distribution of the professional learning budget across the school was acceptable.

The Principal and Teachers were asked for their views on the extent of support given by the school overall to teachers. The Principal and five Teachers indicated that the school seldom provided funds for learning materials or equipment and never provided teachers' scholarships or fees for studies undertaken. The Principal confirmed that the school usually provided teachers with reimbursement of professional learning costs, adding that the school seldom provided release time, a celebratory function, clerical or technical support for teachers' professional learning.

In the follow-up interview the Principal explained:

Basically, allocation of funds is annually given as a 'tied grant' for professional learning. It can be shifted around because of changes in identified needs. We consider the school needs and priorities. In five areas I have to answer to my boss and also look at the evaluation and educational management and practice...normally programs are at the school level and some are at the state level.

The Principal was also asked, "*How is the school accountable for the expenditure of funds for professional learning?*" and replied that, "Money is allocated by the Department and records of attendance kept and reported to the School Education Director". He/she added:

We charge against certain sections of our financial program. For example, in numeracy we know how much we spend on courses etc. I will prepare a report by the end of the year and submit it to my School Education Director. It is a financial report about how our allocation of professional learning budget has been used.

Five Teachers believed that the Principal usually provides them with release time, but confirmed that the school never supported them by reimbursement of costs, provision of a celebratory function or clerical and/or technical support.

An Executive Teacher claimed that there is no real vision in the allocation of funds for teacher professional learning:

Really, I think we don't realize how much money there is for each of us but not like just allocating the professional learning budget to each person. So, people might be thinking when they are going to the course but not sure whether the money is there or how it is supposed to be used. ...The money is there but I don't know whether it's been spent wisely, you know the school ability, quite frankly... it just seems there is no real vision.

The other Executive Teacher noted:

I don't know much about it really. There is a change now and the professional learning budget per teacher has increased and we have Executive meetings and staff talk about how allocation should be done. Sometimes, we have a course that costs \$400 or whatever. Teachers can go still but they have to come back and report to the school. We actually learn from each other as well.

In the interview one of the Executive Teachers was asked: "*How is the school accountable for expenditure of funds for professional learning?*" he/she replied that the professional learning budget was allocated and audited by the Department of Education and Training. He/she added:

I think the Principal is accountable to the Department. I think he/she has to prepare a financial report on spending on the professional learning budget and submit it to the Department.

Respondents were asked how teachers perceived the importance of various forms of support. The Principal and five Teachers believed that it would be useful for teachers' involvement in professional learning activities that when needed, they be provided with necessary learning materials or equipment. They also agreed that scholarships or fees for studies undertaken were not important in teachers' decisions to be involved in professional learning. The Principal confirmed the reimbursement of costs at the school's expense as being essential. He/she added that release time

and clerical and/or technical support would support/encourage teachers' decisions to be involved in professional learning.

Five Teachers agreed that provision of release time when needed was very important to teachers' involvement in professional learning activities. Reimbursement of costs, provision of a celebratory function at the school's expense and provision of clerical and/or technical support were not seen by Teachers as major factors in such involvement.

Areas where the Principal's views differed from those of Teachers included provision of support for a celebratory function; clerical and/or technical support; provision and importance of release time for staff; and reimbursement of costs and its importance.

4.4.3.6 Implementation of professional learning programs

This section of the study focused on the methods which the Principal utilised within the school for professional learning activities and the time teachers were involved in these activities. The results indicated that the Principal spent, on average, 40 hours per year while teachers spent 10 hours per year involved in these activities.

Methods were differentiated on the basis of whether teachers were involved in group activities, structured activities with a colleague, or individual involvement in professional learning activities. The Principal was asked to take a whole-school perspective on the extent of use of different methods within his/her school, Teachers to respond from an individual viewpoint and to indicate whether activities were within or outside the school.

The Principal and most of the Teachers indicated that the school usually used collaborative professional learning and sometimes used workshops, courses, peer observation, or coaching/mentoring. The Principal indicated that the school seldom used online learning, seminars, or action learning as professional learning approaches. In the interview he/she said that the school also utilised other methods in teachers' professional learning such as short-term courses, workshops and invited speakers, and noted:

If there are identified needs for the school, for the stages, then we would be actively going to seek courses or support or have people coming in. With the quality teaching, for example, I had done a course and collected material through the Executive last year. We could not present in a way which would appeal to the staff ... We've got quite a mature staff and I think the youngest is 46 and the average age is 50. Every week we have a staff meeting, which can be used for professional learning, Key Learning Areas or any other areas. We try to keep this separate from the main staff meetings. From time to time we look at the progress in particular Key Learning Areas. We've had some short-term professional learning for the teachers with some students with special needs. For example, we have a blind child and children with hearing problems and medical needs.

In the interview, the Principal was asked: "*Do you use external professional learning providers?*" and responded that the school sometimes used the Primary Principals' Association and speakers from universities as external professional learning providers:

So far we've used the consultant from the District Office and next month we are going to use one from the Primary Principals' Association (external professional learning provider). We've had external professional learning in the past and combined it with other schools. We are part of fifty community schools. A couple of years ago we decided on a major speaker from Melbourne. He/she was a specialist in dealing with teenagers. To get top-line speakers is very expensive and it costs \$2000 to \$5000 a day and we do not have money...

Five Teachers believed that the school sometimes used invited speakers and never used online learning, seminar, and action learning methods. During the follow-up interviews, Executive Teacher members of the Professional Learning Team reflected that the school used professional learning courses, invited speakers, collaborative professional learning and visual-type methods. As explained by one Executive Teacher:

Really, it depends on what the topic is. I think it's helpful having time to

reflect on it [topic], collaborate with other educators, and being able to discuss it. ... Sometimes, we have TV and visual type things or we have a visitor or speaker or we actually go somewhere depending on what it is and where it is. We had a workshop a year ago in art and we went to another school for the workshop.

The other Executive Teacher said:

I think it varies. Simply it might be somebody reporting back to staff when he/she's been to a course, it might be handouts given in the courses, it might be buying books or something on that course, this sort of thing. For example, we recently had a course about children who are hard to manage. We had a person who came from the District Office and worked on professional learning for the whole day. ...But part of the day we could learn from each other.

The Executive Teachers pointed out that having professional learning presenters who were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their topics was a major factor in the success of programs. For example, one Executive Teacher noted:

...When you sit through a professional learning program, it is always encouraging to know that the presenter is trained and knowledgeable in the subject area being discussed. Also, it is a pleasure to know that the presenter wants to be there and is able to share his or her enthusiasm for education.

The Principal was asked to take the school perspective as to the level of effectiveness for teachers of the different methods within his/her school. Teachers were asked for their individual perspectives on which of the methods they experienced contributed most to effective learning.

The Principal and five Teachers believed that collaborative professional learning was very effective and that workshops, courses, and invited speakers were moderately effective in the methods of professional learning. They also agreed that online learning was not an effective method. The Principal also believed that seminar, action learning, and coaching/mentoring, when utilised, were moderately effective.

He/she believed that peer observation was not an effective method of professional learning. Four Teachers believed that seminars and action learning were not effective methods, and their opinions were evenly divided on the effectiveness of peer observation and coaching/mentoring.

Overall, responses to the questionnaire indicated that teachers in the school engaged in a variety of professional learning activities but there were some areas where the views of the Principal were different from the views of Teachers on the use and effectiveness of different methods such as: online learning, seminars, action learning, and invited speakers.

4.4.3.7 Evaluation of teacher professional learning

Information on which to base evaluation of professional learning may be drawn from a number of sources such as participants' learning outcomes, organisational outcomes or students' achievement outcomes. Analysis of the school planning documents as well as those submitted with the returned questionnaire indicated that in this school the reporting required was immediate and based on examining participants' learning outcomes rather than on the longer-term examination of students' learning outcomes. This section is, therefore, concerned with the management practices in the school for evaluating the outcomes of professional learning activities.

The Principal and four Teachers confirmed that the school's Professional Learning Plan was evaluated at least once a year. The Principal regularly conducted a review of the Professional Learning Plan which required teachers to report on the outcomes of programs they had been involved in, usually by way of an oral presentation. The Principal suggested that Teachers' written reports would be more useful in contributing to the improvement of future professional learning programs.

The Principal and half of the Teachers believed that having teachers' reports on activities involving groups of teachers, for example, Executive teachers and subject specialists was useful in evaluating professional learning. The Principal believed that teachers' reports on their individual participation in formal or informal professional

learning activities was not useful, while whole-school activities provided useful information for evaluating.

The Principal believed that data from whole-school activities were adequate for evaluation of professional learning activities. During the follow-up interviews he/she commented on the evaluation of teacher professional learning programs by general survey and discussion with the Teachers. He/she explained:

By the end of the year, we are going sit down and see how it does work. It could be a general survey of the staff and it could be general discussion with the staff. We do expect when they have been to some session of professional learning that teachers come back and report to the staff. We have, every Tuesday, key learning areas meetings and teachers have an opportunity to report back. We must be evaluating the success of the [professional learning] programs through the amount of increases in student learning outcomes as a result of teacher involvement in these programs.

Four Teachers differed from the Principal on the value of having reports on individual formal or informal professional learning activities and teacher opinions were evenly divided on the value of the whole-school reporting process. During the interview one member of the school Professional Learning Team clarified that the school evaluated professional learning activities by teachers' reports. He/she said:

We don't do formal ones. We look at what people come back with and tell us what was done. I think the biggest problem is that teachers don't have time to share what they learn but the expertise is still there. We know that.

When the data relating to Research Question One were analysed, a clear picture emerged of the roles of the Principal in the implementation of the policy at the school. Management structures consisted of the Principal and the school Professional Learning Team.

Research Question Two, on the range of capabilities that the Principal needed for the implementation of the policy at the school level, is the focus of the next section.

4.4.4 What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

In survey question 17 the participants were asked: “*What capabilities are necessary for the principal to successfully implement the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*” While the question was open-ended, the Principal responded, “revision of policy every 1-2 years; i.e. revision of the learning team’s knowledge about the policy and its implementation”. During the interview he/she also clarified the essential skills he/she required in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*: team leadership, planning, budgeting, motivating and evaluating skills, and communication. He/she stated:

The school Professional Learning Team is very important and you [principal] need an ability to lead it. You need to be able to plan courses targeted in the areas of need of the school. You certainly need staff to put a little bit extra in and money available for the course. We do have some money available. Certainly overall motivation of staff and listening to their ideas are very important. Also, allocation of time by staff and evaluation of the curriculum are other essential factors.

The Principal also added communication, instructional leadership capability, consistency between words and deeds, creating a collaborative environment, creating an environment in which teachers can present their problems and learn from colleagues. He/she said:

I want to communicate frequently, to talk at length about what I do and why I do it, to discuss areas of leadership ... I think being an instructional leader for me is more important than being the manager of activities, teachers, and students. Instructional leadership capability is a vital factor in promoting professional learning, since teachers need to work in a positive climate in which risk-taking is acceptable and present their problems without fear of failure or judgment. We [principals] need to translate our knowledge and beliefs into practice to create the respectful and collaborative climate and emotional support for them [teachers]. ... I am happy to meet a colleague, ... consult with him/her about teachers’ problems.

The Teachers who were members of the school Professional Learning Team confirmed in the interview that leading, thinking systemically, financing, planning, communicating, and motivating are essential capabilities in the Principal in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*. For example, one of them said:

Everyone needs to be aware of what is available and I think as a Principal you have to decide the best way to spend the funds your school has got and then agree, yes I can spend this year in this particular area. It has to be planned. At the moment, really, there is not a plan for it. How is it going to be spent? Who is going to go to a program? He/she [principal] should have an overall idea and picture of what is coming up because teachers don't have enough time to look through things coming in. You know he/she gets information about courses coming in and that sort of thing. It is up to him/her to look at the big picture and then channel it in the direction, okay, this person is really interested in maths or something.

The other Executive Teacher noted:

I think the important thing is managing the funds. I think the principal needs to be able to prioritize and be able to make good decisions and narrow down for the courses that are coming and of course setting common goals, saying what the school aim is about. Leadership skills and ability in interpersonal communications are important too. ... He/she [the Principal] is very appreciative of what staff do. He/she is also very supportive and listens and makes suggestions when we need to be guided.

All respondents agreed on the capacities needed by the principal for implementation of the policy at the school level: leading, thinking systematically, financing, planning, communicating, and motivating.

4.4.5 What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Survey question 18 asked respondents: “*What are the practical constraints on implementing the Professional Learning Policy for Schools?*” The Principal

responded by nominating: “time and unsuitable professional learning activities”. In the interview, he/she noted:

Time is not such a big constraint these days because we have a meeting every week. The difficulty is just lack of suitable courses. My teachers are more practical than theoretical...at the moment there are not many courses and the budget is not enough too.

Four Teachers expressed similar views to the Principal in their survey responses: insufficient time, not enough money, and not enough casual teaching replacement. In the interview a member of the school Professional Learning Team confirmed that not enough and uncoordinated time, not enough money, courses after school hours, lack of motivation, aging teachers, and lack of casual teachers were professional learning constraints:

I think time and sometimes coordinating time. Sometimes, some programs are available but we can't get personnel because they are all busy and there is not enough money. For example, we had a leadership course and we were lucky because we could send one but it is unfair because the whole staff needs to go. Some schools are specially disadvantaged; for example, another school sends the whole staff to the professional learning programs but we don't have enough money and we can't send them and this is unfair. Some people want to go to a lot of things but there isn't a lot of money available and finding relief teachers is so difficult. Teachers are busy and a course after school hours has a big impact on their life. It is difficult to get everyone going to everything that they should go to.

He/she also added:

... The money should be correctly distributed between schools. Some schools send more teachers to professional learning programs because they have more money. For example, I was at one conference last year. So many teachers were from one school and only I was from my school. Paying money for casual teachers is a problem for our school. Lack of an overall picture is an important problem in relation to the professional learning

programs for teachers. We don't know what programs will be available from the Department and consequently we can't choose and the school doesn't have money to send us to all programs we need to go to and are interested in.

The other Executive Teacher said:

Time, I think just getting time to talk about these courses and who is going to go and that sort of thing. I think teacher interest and the aging population of teachers too. Maybe younger teachers might go to more professional learning programs. I think just being aware of what is going on. I guess not getting information perhaps on courses, and I think motivation, you know getting motivated to go on things.

Analysis of results from qualitative and quantitative data indicates that both the Principal and most Teachers agreed that major constraints on implementing the *Professional Learning Policy* were lack of suitable courses, lack of funds, insufficient time, lack of motivation, aging teachers, and lack of casual teachers.

4.4.6 Summary

There was general agreement between the Principal and responding Teachers in this school that the principal's role involves informing staff of what courses are available, matching courses with the overall School Plan, planning, coordinating, providing, organising, implementing, and evaluating. They believed that a vital role of the principal is to provide sufficient data and information, and to provide appropriate professional learning programs and support for teachers. Analysis of results indicates that the school Professional Learning Team and the Principal had the major roles in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* in the school. There was agreement between the Principal and Teachers on the role of the principal but disagreement on how or whether it was carried out successfully.

The Principal and Teachers also agreed that the focus of school-based professional learning programs is, in the main, determined by state and school priorities. The results indicate that the Principal utilised a variety of sources of advice on processes for identifying the needs of both the school and individual teachers. Professional

learning programs within the school focused on quality teaching, a new reporting style, assessing, improving literacy and numeracy, and training of clerical staff in the use of software. The school on most occasions used collaborative activities as the major method for professional learning, which was perceived to be very effective.

The findings identify a number of capabilities perceived as needed by the principal for implementing *Professional Learning Policy*; these included: leading; thinking systematically; financing; planning; communicating; and motivating. Respondents generally agreed that the constraints on implementing *Professional Learning Policy* included lack of suitable courses and inadequate budget, insufficient time, lack of teacher motivation, aging teachers, and lack of casual teachers. Overall, respondents believed professional learning is very important for every teacher, with their involvement being on a regular basis each year.

4.5 Chapter summary

The *Professional Learning Policy* is a new policy which had not been fully implemented during the time of this study. Professional Learning Teams have been established in all the three schools studied. The findings indicate that principals play a key role in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. The Principals and Teachers in the three schools generally agreed on the role of the principal but disagreed on how or whether it was carried out successfully.

Respondents emphasised different aspects of the roles of the principal. For example, the Principal in School A perceived his/her role in teacher professional learning as focusing on planning, managing, problem solving, identification of teachers' needs, evaluation, and being the community facilitator, but the Teachers also considered other roles such as implementing and monitoring programs. The Principals in Schools B and C considered their roles to include guiding, controlling, collaborating, budgeting, identifying priorities in the School Plan, and providing equal professional learning opportunities for all staff. Teachers in these schools believed that the principal's role should also include mentoring, organisation, coordination, and leadership. Both Principals and Teachers placed more importance on planning than on other aspects of the principal's role.

The Principals regarded the school's Professional Learning Team as having the overall responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating of professional learning programs at the school level. Although the Principals in Schools A and B provided teachers with necessary information in relation to *Professional Learning Policy* and the related NSW DET documents, Executive Teachers in School C felt that they did not have adequate information about the new policy.

Respondents across the schools identified different essential capabilities necessary for the principal in the implementation of the policy. The Principal in School A perceived that the need for knowledge of processes, team leadership, and budgeting skills were essential but the Teachers considered that the principal also needs knowledge of adult learning, familiarity with the policy, rational thinking, good listening, consultation and communication, and skills in planning, implementing, negotiation, monitoring, and evaluating. The Principals in Schools B and C believed that the principal needs capabilities in leadership, managerial functions, professional learning knowledge, and the ability to work collaboratively with staff while Teachers saw organising, collaborating, and motivating as essential skills for the principal in implementing policy.

A common finding in the schools is that the principal faced major constraints in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy* including pressure of time, inadequate budget, insufficient teacher enthusiasm, and lack of relief teachers. In addition, the Teachers in School A complained about slow processing of applications for courses, some needed in a hurry, and lack of commitment to student learning and performance as major constraints on professional learning. In School B, the Principal confirmed that needs of staff, unavailability of courses to meet, distance, and problems in availability of district consultancy were major constraints, while Teachers also identified teacher inability to change as another major constraint. In School C the Principal also highlighted lack of suitable courses, while Teachers saw courses after school hours and aging teachers as major constraints faced by the principal in implementation of the policy.

Generally, in spite of the fact that teacher professional learning has been delegated to the school level and, based on the policy, schools have Professional Learning Teams,

in practice only a few executive teachers are involved in these Teams. In Schools A and C the Teams make decisions on planning, encouraging, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning programs and the other teachers in the schools had an opportunity to identify their learning needs. In School B, however, decisions were generally perceived as being ‘top down’, made and enacted largely by the Principal.

A discussion of these findings will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings reported in Chapter Four on the major themes that emerge in response to each of the research questions. Issues raised are based on the data available from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and related school documents as well as information identified within the professional learning literature, related government reports, and information provided by NSW DET and the school principals.

5.2 How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning?

The results of this study indicate that principals have a key role in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* by establishing priorities and creating opportunities for teachers' professional learning. This is consistent with the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) and the literature (Bredeson, 2003; Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004; Turbill, 2002) that highlights the critical role of the school principal in facilitating change and establishing structures within the school to enhance teachers' professional learning.

A finding across the studied schools is the existence of common views on the principal's role in successfully implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*: identification and assessment of teachers' learning needs; documenting professional learning programs in the School Plan; allocating of resources; encouraging; supporting; implementing; and evaluating. One possible reason for this commonality of view is that the studied schools were similar in structure and the Principals performed similar management functions.

It is clear that respondents considered the principal's role more as managerial than instructional in teachers' professional learning. There were, however, some subtle differences among the schools. For example, respondents in Schools B and C agreed that the major functions are organising, coordinating, and providing professional learning opportunities, while participants in School A believed that problem solving was another important role of the principal in the implementation of the policy and this appears to be emphasised in the School Plan. Reasons for these divergent views could be related to the different contexts, attitudes, needs, and knowledge of respondents in the different schools.

The literature indicates that the principal's role in teachers' professional learning is that of provider, facilitator, communicator, organiser (Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Earley & Bubb, 2004), builder (of the capacity of the professional learning community), designer (planning professional learning), implementer, and evaluator (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004). According to King (2004) and the DET Victoria (2006), principals should encourage teachers toward sharing, trust, risk-taking, experimentation, collaborative inquiry, self-assessment and continuously evaluating the impact of their professional learning in relation to the effect it has on student outcomes. Ehrich's (1998) study suggests that the principal should identify and help teachers identify professional learning needs; organise, shape, oversee and monitor professional learning; create a learning environment; act as curriculum leader; establish structure; encourage and promote professional learning. In other words the way principals exercise their professional learning responsibilities is critical.

Overall then, the principal's role in implementation of the policy includes establishing and leading the school Professional Learning Team; identifying needs; balancing priorities; allocating resources; encouraging staff to learn collaboratively; implementing a variety of professional learning approaches; and evaluating teachers' professional learning programs.

5.2.1 Establishing and leading the school Professional Learning Team

The Principals established and led the school Professional Learning Team in each school. Adey and Jones (1997) argue that, although the principal plays a key role in leading and managing teachers' professional learning, it is not the responsibility of one person alone (Randi & Zeichner, 2004). All the members of the team have parts to play if the whole-school approach to teachers' professional learning is to be successful and sustained. This study shows that the Principals tended to delegate such major responsibilities to the team as formulation of professional learning needs in the School Plan, organisation and implementation of school staff development days, and evaluation of the school's overall professional learning activities. This is also in line with the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a).

This study indicates that the school Professional Learning Team members are volunteers rather than being elected or appointed. Such teams consist of the principal and executive teachers. Parents and students are not represented. Highlighting the significant pedagogical link between the principal and members of the school Professional Learning Team is the fact that in all cases the Principals were also the chairpersons of the teams. This partially reflects Zepeda's, (2003) recommendation that, "the team could include the head teacher, the instructional coordinator, or one or two grade-level leaders in addition to either the principal or the assistant principal" (p. 75). The nature of this structure is probably due to the principal's experience, familiarity with teacher needs, and general management responsibility in the school.

According to the policy, the school Professional Learning Team has responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the professional learning programs at the school level. In practice, most of the Principals and Teachers in the studied schools perceived that these responsibilities were largely part of the Principal's managerial functions although this diverges from the policy which emphasises shared responsibility.

One interpretation for this divergence could be that the policy is new and schools are in the early stages of its implementation. Possibly, the smaller size of some schools could be a factor or teachers' unfamiliarity with the expectations of the policy and

their defined responsibilities. Another reason could be that most teachers are so busy with their work that they rely on the principal for the implementation of the policy within the school; or that they are not motivated to take on further responsibilities in the school. It is also possible that some teachers do not have enough expertise to be involved in decision-making on professional learning programs and consequently prefer not to participate actively. Some studies (Desimone et al., 2002; Lambert, 2005; Morrissey & Cowan, 2004) maintain that school-based professional learning programs require training of staff in different areas to take an active part in the process of decision-making concerning professional learning programs. However, this is a moot point given the overcrowded curriculum and time constraints. It could also be, as perhaps in School B, that the Principal believed he/she should be the major decision-maker in the school.

Although the principal has the major role in directing the team towards the effective implementation of professional learning programs, this study indicates that some leadership and management responsibilities for professional learning are shared between the principal and other members of the team. For example, the Teachers in Schools A and C stated that their Principals provide appropriate conditions for the staff to share in common work, engage in specific conversations about professional learning, and help each other engage in the work of the school. This arrangement reflects the professional learning literature (Lambert, 2005) and government reports (e.g., NSW DET, 2005b) that outline the major responsibilities of the team and the principal in the implementation of the policy. The team structure allows the principal and teachers flexibility to share decision-making in identifying the content of professional learning programs, providing a variety of methods, allocating resources, and evaluating the effects of specific professional learning activities on students' outcomes.

The Principals in this study varied in providing information for members of the Teams regarding the policy and other documents (e.g., NSW DET, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d) related to professional learning. For example, in Schools A and B the Principals provided sufficient relevant information for the Team members with regard to the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a). However, this was not the case with School C despite their having had a meeting with the Principal who

introduced the new policy to them. They were offered opportunities to see the policy, but limited time and/or limited interest prevented them from taking advantage of the opportunity.

Overall, the formation of a school Professional Learning Team and the leadership of it by the principal were found to be the major steps taken by the schools to implement the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a).

5.2.2 Planning

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the NSW DET has developed specific support documents (NSW DET, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2005a) to guide schools in the formulation of their Professional Learning Plans. The NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) identifies the state priorities in teachers' professional learning for schools, and indicates that the school's plan for professional learning should reflect these priorities, school-determined priorities, and the professional learning needs of individual teachers and non-teaching staff.

This study reveals that principals are significant influences on planning teachers' professional learning. For example, the Principal of School A explained that with more and more professional learning responsibility and funding going directly to schools, the importance of planning is greater than ever. The Teachers perceived a good school principal as one who places importance on the Professional Learning Plan and encourages all staff to develop their own professional learning activities. These views on planning reflect Fullan's (1992) claim that, "good implementation requires good planning" (p. 41). He also believes that principals need to plan for teachers' professional learning, given that change occurs over time. He argues that change is not an isolated event but rather an ongoing and career-long process which requires continuous planning (Fullan, 1994).

The principal develops the School Plan, with the expectation that there is a professional learning component within it. A common finding across Schools A and C was that the Principals considered individual teachers' and the school's learning needs and the state's professional learning priorities within the School Plan. In School B, however, only state priorities were included in the School Plan without

significant consideration of other priorities such as specific school and individual teacher professional learning needs, although this was not as clearly the case in the perceptions of respondents in this school. It is reasonable to argue that specific contextual conditions in different schools would contribute to different school-based priorities.

This is consistent with the literature that shows that principals should develop a Professional Learning Plan as part of the overall School Plan, in which they clearly define goals, processes and outcomes to effect curriculum and pedagogical change (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Fullan, 2001b; Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005). According to the NSW DET policy, teacher professional learning in NSW places the locus of decision-making at the school level with support from regional and state-wide programs. Schools are also expected to follow state policy directions and guidelines for principals and teachers, for maximum effectiveness of professional learning programs within schools.

A common finding across the schools was that professional learning was linked to the School Plan. It was identified as a separate priority or focus area within the School Plan along with areas such as curriculum, teaching practice, student welfare, community involvement, communication and administration of resources. In line with this finding, Blandford (2000) recommends that professional learning should be carefully integrated into the School Plan so as to promote school improvement and good classroom practice. Whilst earlier studies (McCulla & Gereige-Hinson, 2004) provide little detail on the content and relative quality of different professional learning plans, this study found that there were some similarities in the content of such plans. Schools in their professional learning plans address the professional learning priorities and state their broad targets, professional outcomes, methods, time, and funds (Louck-Horsely et al., 2003).

In two of the studied schools, the Principals documented the school Professional Learning Plan which contained a rationale and statement of purpose. The plan described the processes that are to be applied in the school to identify professional learning priority areas, organisational structures, roles, and responsibilities, how funds should be allocated, and how the schools intended to evaluate their

professional learning programs. This is also in line with state policy (NSW DET, 2004a). The School Plan submitted by School C for analysis, however, provided little evidence of this. In interviews with this Principal and members of the school Professional Learning Team, they said that writing detailed information in the School Plan was not necessary or important. A further explanation for this may be that they did not have the time or the expertise to carry out such a procedure or that they wanted to provide simpler information in their School Plan.

The planning of professional learning may be summarised as: identifying needs; choosing content; and allocating resources. These functions will be discussed in the following sections.

5.2.2.1 Identifying needs

The Principal, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Team, develops the Professional Learning Plan around the identified skills and knowledge needed to accomplish the goals and objectives outlined in the School Plan. The results of this study show that a common approach across the schools was that the Principals gained information regarding the school's and teachers' professional learning needs from discussion groups consisting of teachers and Executive staff within the school. The Principals regarded this data as being the most useful. This finding is consistent with Guskey (2000) who believes that there are two ways for principals to gather information regarding identifying and assessing teachers' professional learning needs: interviewing teachers about their concerns and existing problems of the school; and data collection techniques like questionnaires, observations, and assessed students' outcomes. State priorities drawn from the NSW DET policy documents, as indicated before, were also utilised to varying degrees by the Principals in the decision-making process and affected the content of professional learning programs.

While the Principals believed it was important in the school Professional Learning Plan to focus on enhancing promotion opportunities, the teachers disagreed on this point, viewing such professional learning for promotion as unimportant. This difference between the Principals and Teachers could be related to the different expectations of teachers and the principals about a teacher's career. The Principal, taking a more holistic view, expected the teachers to also focus on career

development needs but the teachers were more concerned with student learning needs. For example, most of the teachers stated that the professional learning activities were only useful where they could gain new skills and knowledge to improve students' outcomes.

This study indicates that the Principals tried to balance individual teachers' professional learning needs and the school's, the region's, and the state's priorities in formulation of the School Plan. The school Professional Learning Plan is intended to reflect the needs of the local school community and the individual needs of teachers under the broad umbrella of state priorities. For example, the Principal of School A believed that the Professional Learning Plan should include and create a balance among teachers' career development, student learning needs, and state government priorities. Most of the Teachers, on the other hand, commented in interviews that student learning needs were a more important priority than other priorities in formulation of the school Professional Learning Plan. The Teachers' views were similar to those noted by Blasé and Blasé (1998, 2004) who point out that teachers value professional learning activities that are linked and connected to their work with students.

5.2.2.2 Choosing content

The Principal and members of the school Professional Learning Team in the studied schools determined the content of professional learning programs in implementing the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a). In Australia, schools largely determine the content of their own professional learning programs (McRae et al., 2001). The Principals and Teachers in the three schools agreed that the content of professional learning should improve teachers' knowledge of the subject matter that they are teaching, and enhance their abilities in assisting students' learning in that subject matter.

Both the Principals and Teachers in Schools A and C believed that professional learning content should enhance teachers' motivation, knowledge and skills that would lead to improving the quality of their teaching and student outcomes. They identified the major purpose of professional learning as being to help teachers to maintain a deep pedagogical knowledge level in their fields. This supports the

finding of Blasé and Blasé (2004) that, “Good professional learning generally motivates teachers and enhances their self-esteem” (p. 52) and professional knowledge.

5.2.2.3 Resource allocation

In the main, principals control the expenditure of state government funds for professional learning. Sometimes they also utilise funds provided from the overall school budget to supplement funds for professional learning. As mentioned previously, the schools receive specific funding for implementing professional learning programs from the NSW DET, allocated to the school, not to individual teachers. The funding is determined according to the number of full-time teachers. As noted, allocations range from \$600 per teacher for schools in metropolitan areas to \$1000 per teacher for schools in more remote and rural locations (NSW DET, 2004e).

In School A, the Principal and Executive Teachers were not equally aware of the total amount of professional learning funds allocated by DET. This difference in perceptions could indicate that Executive Teachers as members of the school Professional Learning Team did not have real involvement in decision making, as knowledge of funding allocations should be a part of such decision making.

McRae et al. (2001) show that schools determine the scale and nature of expenditure to support professional learning programs. It is apparent from the data here that the Principals’ distribution of professional learning funds among programs was based on the School Plan. The Principals indicated that schools made decisions about the allocation of funds on clearly identified criteria rather than by ad hoc approaches or through favouritism or compulsion. Both Principals and Teachers believed that a teacher’s individual professional learning needs should be utilised as a major criterion for the distribution of funds for professional learning, although Principals, more than Teachers, advocated the use of School Plan priorities as well as of individual teacher professional learning needs as the basis for funding approval. The importance of these priorities is also indicated in the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a).

This study indicates that the Principals generally provided support of release time for teachers and allocated financial grants to cover registration fees, travel and accommodation, but not for scholarships, or payment of fees for tertiary studies, or learning materials or equipment, or the cost of celebratory functions.

5.2.3 Encouragement

The results show that, generally, the Principals in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Teams encouraged staff to participate in professional learning programs and supported them in the in-service training they required. For instance, in School A the Principal participated in some professional learning programs with the teachers, but also encouraged all staff to be involved in these programs. Teachers notice if the principal is not participating in professional learning activities and conclude that he/she does not think they are important. Thus the principal's participation is important in initiating developing, and encouraging teachers' participation in these programs. Some researchers (Blasé & Blasé, 2002, 2004; Glickman et al., 2004; Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005; Wood & Killian, 1998) report a similar finding.

Principals also supported teachers' professional learning by providing qualified and experienced educators to deliver programs. This study highlights the importance of the quality and expertise of professional learning educators in determining the success or failure of programs. Participants want professional learning educators who are well organised, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, well-prepared, and passionate about their topics. This is consistent with the findings of Barnard's study (2004) who found that if there is an expert educator in a professional learning program, it will encourage staff to participate more.

Principals in Schools A and C, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Teams, empowered teachers to engage in collaborative approaches to professional learning. The results here indicate that although the general pattern of empowering teachers to learn from each other, to share and develop expertise, and collaborate with other professional peers was the same across the two schools, there were also slight differences between them.

These findings are consistent with other studies (Blasé & Blasé, 1999, 2004; Harris, 2000). Several studies (Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckingham, 2004; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001) have shown that teachers who learn collaboratively, discuss their problems and issues together, and tend to self-evaluate their practice are more effective than teachers undertaking professional learning programs individually. Where such collaboration is not always encouraged, as apparently to some extent in School B, it might be because of poor communication between the principal and teachers, or because the principal does not have the skills to encourage and empower teachers to learn collaboratively or because the principal is unaware of the value of such learning or because the principal simply believes he/she 'know best'.

5.2.4 Implementation

The Principals, in conjunction to varying degrees with the school Professional Learning Team, implemented a variety of methods in professional learning programs. These ranged from workshops to activities with cooperative or collegial approaches to guided learning.

Studies conducted in Australia have shown that professional learning approaches that involve cooperating pairs or small groups are an effective method of promoting teacher learning (McCallum, 2003; Springer, Stanne, & Donovan, 1999). However, although the implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) has emphasised the use of collaborative learning methods, teachers require guidance by the principal and the school Professional Learning Team in activities such as peer observation and coaching though these were not always evident in these schools.

Principals prioritised professional learning at staff meetings. There may be a number of reasons for this; for example, the principals may see their staff meetings as prime opportunities to include a whole-school professional learning component. However, Teachers are divided on this issue. Some Teachers viewed this as essential, while for others it is less important. Those who view it as essential may be those who see other forms of professional learning as time-consuming and see the regular staff meeting as most appropriate as it does not affect classroom teaching time or add time outside

school hours. Other teachers may see this as expanding the already tight staff meeting agenda, thereby making staff meetings longer.

This study found that Teachers clearly preferred to be involved in professional learning activities where they work in pairs or groups, usually with others in the same subject or discipline area. The majority of Teachers indicated that when they work in groups or cooperative pairs, they generally regard them as being more satisfying than activities where they worked alone. These findings highlight the point that more emphasis needs to be given by schools to use collaborative or collegial methods, and that cooperative professional learning is a key to ensuring that schools become learning communities where teachers work together, learn from each other and share best practice in effective teaching and learning (DET Victoria, 2006; Durrant & Holden, 2006; King & Newmann, 2001).

A common finding across the studied schools was the view that action learning and online learning are not effective as professional learning approaches. The respondents, however, had earlier indicated that collaborative professional learning was very effective and action learning is incorporated within collaborative learning (Dinham et al., 2006; Hoban et al., 2005; Hoban & Herrington, 2004). The reasons for this perception may be that respondents were not familiar with action learning and online learning and these methods had not been introduced to them adequately, that they had never experienced them, or that the school or individual teachers did not have adequate equipment and facilities to support these methods.

This study highlights the fact that Principals sometimes utilise the services of university personnel, and personnel from outside educational organisations to implement teachers' professional learning programs. Outside educational organisations such as professional associations and cooperatives, universities, not-for-profit organisations, and private companies do have a role to play as resources for professional learning (Newmann et al., 2000). According to the *Professional Learning Policy* guidelines documents (NSW DET, 2004b, 2004d), while the DET is to be seen as the 'preferred provider' of professional learning, schools do have the freedom to choose the provider that best suits their professional learning need, provided that the choice can be justified as cost effective.

5.2.5 Evaluation

The evaluation of professional learning is an important and complex topic (McCulla & Gereige-Hinson, 2004; Tallerico, 2005). It consists of methodical collection and analysis of data to investigate the impact of professional learning activities on teacher learning, students' outcomes, school improvement, and development of professional communities (Guskey, 2000, 2002). This aspect of this study was concerned with the management practices that the Principals, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Teams, utilised in gaining information from teachers on the results of professional learning activities in which they had been involved.

Evaluation of teacher professional learning may be drawn from a number of sources such as teacher portfolios, records, diaries, reports, and students' learning outcomes. The results of this study indicate that in the studied schools the evaluation of professional learning activities came mostly from teachers' self reports on the results of their involvement in these activities.

The Principals' major expectation was for teachers to report on the professional learning activities undertaken and identify resulting changes in knowledge, teaching practice, and student outcomes. For example, the Principal of School A pointed out that the school Professional Learning Team goes through the School Plan at the end of each year and evaluates the effectiveness of each professional learning activity in terms of improving the learning of teachers and students. This approach is supported by Guskey (2002) who suggests evaluation should not just explore participants' reactions but also must take into account teacher learning, school support for change, and follow-up activities that the teacher participant uses in the classroom after attending professional learning programs.

The results of this study show that the professional learning program is usually evaluated by the Principal and other members of the school Professional Learning Team on an annual basis. This finding supports McRae et al.'s (2001) assertion that Australian principals should report on professional learning evaluation as part of their annual reporting requirements.

Principals utilise a variety of methods for gathering information about the results of teacher involvement in professional learning, including oral or written reporting and questionnaires. However, by far the most popular reporting mechanism in this study was for teachers to report orally to the principal. Whilst the study did not investigate the degree to which such oral reporting was structured or unstructured, the analysis of data indicates that the Principals believed that written rather than oral reporting would provide more useful information for them in developing future professional learning programs. Perhaps the time required for such reporting is a constraint on its utilisation. This is also in line with findings of Rowland's study (1999).

The NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) document gives limited direction on the evaluation of professional learning programs at the school level and is noticeably lacking in major references as to how and when evaluation of the professional learning program will be carried out. Although it requires schools to use self-evaluation, it does not spell out what is entailed or how it might be done. In fact, since the policy is not specific about the methods of evaluation of professional learning programs, the studied schools have limited their evaluation to the oral reports and feedback provided by teachers on professional learning activities. It could be argued that the policy should provide more explicit guidelines for evaluating professional learning and that schools could adopt more systematic and extensive approaches to evaluating professional learning programs.

In summary, this section discussed the principal's major leadership and management functions in the implementation of the policy: establishing the school Professional Learning Team; identifying needs; balancing priorities; allocating resources; utilising a variety of delivery methods; encouraging staff to learn collaboratively; and evaluating teachers' professional learning. All three Principals used team approaches to professional learning of teachers and leadership responsibilities were distributed across the team members thereby creating professional learning communities. In the following section, the capabilities which principals need for implementation of the policy will be discussed.

5.3 What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

To be effective, the principal needs an “integrated body of knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Korthagen, 2004, p. 80). This study indicates that the principal needs at least five specific capabilities for the successful implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. These include ability to communicate, educational leadership capabilities, management skills, collegiality, and supportive attitudes toward professional learning.

5.3.1 Communication ability

The Principals and Teachers in this study pointed out that interpersonal communication is a significant capability for principals. The Principals valued the opportunity to be givers as well as receivers of ideas and skills. This is not surprising as principals do much of their daily work through verbal, interpersonal communications. In their daily communications with teachers, principals try to create a shared view about how teachers learn and improve students’ outcomes (NSW DET, 2005b; Wasley, Hampel, & Clark, 1997). Principals are central in the provision opportunities for teachers to clarify ideas about the purpose, structure, and impact of teacher professional learning and in providing such information to parents and other stakeholders.

The Principals and Teachers in the three schools here emphasized that discussing and listening are important parts of principals’ capabilities. For example, the Principal in School C when interviewed referred to his/her desire to communicate frequently, to talk at length about what he/she does and why he/she does it, and to discuss areas of leadership. The literature on communication indicates that effective principals spend 70 percent of their time on different forms of communication (Irmsher, 1996). This is possibly because by dialogue and listening, principals can empower teachers through acknowledging their experience, expertise, and professional learning needs. In fact, all of these are essential to a good professional learning community (Burke, 2003; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; NSW DET, 2005b). In discussions, the principal can express and support teacher independence and professional decision-making in ways that

build collective leadership capacity in the school to improve teacher professional learning (Lambert, 2003).

5.3.2 Leadership capabilities

Principals need to demonstrate a range of particular leadership capabilities that allow them to increase the capacity of teachers to successfully implement the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a) at the school level. For example, the Principal of School C believed that leadership is a critical factor in promoting teachers' professional learning and that being an instructional leader has become the principal's primary role. The principal needs to create a positive climate; direct professional learning activities, and encourage teachers to participate; follow through on a variety of initiatives and training opportunities; pay attention to teachers' learning; and develop pivotal resources to achieve professional learning objectives. This also entails helping teachers maintain a positive attitude toward their learning and facilitating changes in teaching practices to improve students' outcomes. This is consistent with several studies that report that the leadership capacity of the principal is crucial for professional learning to occur in schools (Bush, 1999; Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001; Fernandez, 2000; Fullan, 2005; Ladwig & King, 2003; Moore, 2000; Sebring & Bryk, 2000).

As leader of the school Professional Learning Team, the principal needs to develop his/her team leadership capability for creating conditions where team members become motivated and prepared to work collaboratively (Lambert, 2003; Jones, 2005). This study shows that most Principals tried to raise the motivation levels of those members of the Team who were less interested in working collaboratively. Harris (2002a) argues that the principal must motivate teachers to collaborate because this is important in creating a collective professional confidence that allows teachers to interact more productively.

Democratically sharing power, authority, and decision-making with others is an important capability that the principal needs to have in order to implement professional learning programs (Harris, 2002a). However, the results here indicate that in practice there was some dissatisfaction among teachers about the extent to which power and authority are shared within teams, particularly in School B, where

the Teams only made superficial decisions and were not involved in central and major decision-making.

According to the literature, the success of the team depends on the principal's attitude to and willingness in sharing power and decision-making with others (Crow et al., 2002; Sparks, 2005) and his/her ability to utilise the knowledge, talent, perspectives, and experience of teachers within the team for better managing and facilitating professional learning activities (Dinham et al., 2006).

Principals need to be consistent between their words and deeds (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004). This study indicates that the integrity between the principal's words and actions was regarded as highly important by teachers. As the Principal of School C argued, the principal needs to honestly translate their knowledge and beliefs into practice to create support and improve the learning climate for everyone in their school.

Stein and D'Amico (2000) suggest that effective principals should lead in teachers' professional learning, have a deep understanding of content areas and accompanying pedagogy, and the ability to apply these in practice to help teachers identify problems and resolve them accordingly.

The principal's ability to lead and promote teamwork in the school is particularly important in promoting, encouraging, facilitating, and implementing professional learning programs. The Principal in School A, for instance, argued that the principal needs teamwork leadership ability to successfully implement the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school and the Principal of School C agreed. This supports Lambert's (2002) opinion that it is more important for principals to lead school teams than to manage and maintain them.

The Principals here agreed on the need for creating a respectful, collaborative, collegial school climate and recognising the importance of identifying and internalising these aspects of principal responsibility to promote success in teachers' professional learning. Sparks (2005) argues that effective principals create relationships within schools that build a sense of common purpose, respect, and trust (Blasé & Blase, 2004; Drago-Severson, 2004; Fleming & Thompson, 2004). Diaz-

Maggioli (2004), like Fleming (2004), recommends that principals facilitate broad involvement of all staff and create supportive and collaborative environments for the improvement of the school.

Teachers in School B believed that the Principal should create a positive and caring environment in the school. One Executive Teacher in this school stated, "... If we feel our Principal encourages and supports us, we will have more motivation for involvement in professional learning activities". This is supported by Ehrich's finding (1998) that, "in their leadership capacity, principals endeavour to provide a climate which is non-threatening, supportive and collaborative so that professional development can flourish in their schools" (p. 114).

5.3.3 Management skills

This study finds that an important area of the principal's capacity includes various managerial responsibilities such as coordinating professional learning activities, making decisions on resources and school priorities, scheduling time, spaces, and opportunities for teachers to work and learn together, developing and implementing teacher professional learning, and evaluation. Principals who successfully manage these responsibilities help create a supportive school climate for professional learning of teachers. Since school-based professional learning programs are emphasized in NSW public schools, implementation of these programs requires effective school management skills. This is supported by Murphy's view (2002) that the major responsibility of principals should be the improvement of quality teaching, instructional leadership, and management of professional learning activities (Daresh, 2001).

5.3.4 Collegiality

It is apparent from this study that some principals seek other experienced principals in their district to serve as mentors who can share their expertise in some of these managerial aspects. For example, the Principal in School A said that sometimes, when he/she has a problem in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*, he/she makes contact with colleagues in other schools and seeks their guidance. Sometimes,

other principals seek advice from him/her. Similar collegial behaviours were reported by the other two Principals.

One interpretation of this could be that consultation provides new ideas for the principals, or that they use their colleagues' experiences to avoid others' mistakes. Another reason could be that such consultation yields a number of solutions for a problem and reduces the likelihood of hasty decisions. It also provides an opportunity for the principal to examine an issue from different perspectives. This finding is supported by Daresh's (2001) view that principals must establish a network with other experienced colleagues in their district, exchange school visits, and help each other in professional problem solving (Armour, 2005; Doherty, 2002; Evans & Mohr, 1999; Hargreaves, 2003; Kochan et al., 2000; Petzko, 2003).

5.3.5 Supportive attitude toward professional learning

Both Principals and Teachers in this study believed that involvement in professional learning activities is essential for enhancing teacher learning and improving students' outcomes. The priority given by these schools to the provision of release time and payment of expenses to enable teachers to be involved in professional learning activities demonstrates the value they place on professional learning, and a commitment to professional learning necessary for the school's professional learning programs to be effective (Kelley & Finnigan, 2004; Rowland, 1999; Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Principals believe that professional learning is an ongoing process (Lingard et al., 2001; Ramsey, 2000; Rowe, 2003), regarded by principals in this study as crucial to teachers' professional life, and that teachers regularly engage in it. For example, in School A the Principal in the interview highlighted the rapidity of change, including curriculum change, and the need for teachers to see professional learning as a related and ongoing process (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Barry & King, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; NSW DET, 2004a).

Principals provide financial support for teacher learning and growth, through such things as conferences, travel, relief teachers, learning materials, program budgets and salaries for consultants. This confirms the view of Moats, Cunningham, Wurtzel,

Silbert, and Furry, (2002) that without such support, teachers are reluctant to undertake formal professional learning activities.

The principal also needs to develop an environment where risk-taking is acceptable. In School C the Principal believed that teachers need to work in an environment where they can present their problems without fear of failure or judgment, with the principal's professional, psychological, and emotional support. Of course, this support will vary with the different learning needs of different teachers (Carnine & Palfreman, 2002; Glickman et al., 2004).

In all three studied schools the Principals stressed that they needed pedagogical and adult learning knowledge to support teachers' professional learning and Teachers argued that some principals don't have adequate knowledge or skills to apply such knowledge in this area. Knowledge of teaching and learning, theories and practice, changes in school policy, motivation, school change, and uses of technology, for example, are important areas where principals could provide support for teachers' professional learning (Bredeson & Johansson, 2000).

To summarise, this study indicates that a principal needs at least five groups of capabilities to successfully implement the *Professional Learning Policy*: communication skills; educational leadership capabilities; management skills; collegiality; and informed, positive support skills. Educational leadership capabilities here are related to the principals' exercise of distributed leadership approaches by focusing on factors such as team building, creating and encouraging a learning community, creating a positive and supportive climate, and sharing responsibilities with others. In the following section, the constraints that principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* will be discussed.

5.4 What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Analysis of data confirms that most Teachers were open to changes that they believed would benefit students. However, there were some constraints in the implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a). The constraints which were most frequently mentioned by the Principals and Teachers

were insufficient time; inadequate budget; teachers' lack of enthusiasm; and lack of relief teachers.

5.4.1 Insufficient time

The Principals were concerned about professional learning because they were focused on the improvement of their schools and the implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a). Nevertheless, principals need to take into account the time limitations and workload implications for teachers, their family commitments and busy life styles. For example, several Teachers who were interviewed said that they don't have time to engage in professional learning programs but they are interested in them. They also favoured release time from teaching as a positive way of overcoming the time constraint.

Insufficient time is one of the most commonly cited constraints on professional learning in schools (Bredeson, 2003; Brown et al., 2000; Hoban, 2002; Ludwig & Taymans, 2005; Southworth, 1999), and this study supports this. The Principals indicated that the greatest challenge to implementing effective professional learning is in providing time during working hours. This supports the findings of Tearle and Dillon (2003) that, "running training programs out of working hours has difficulties for many teachers and consequently [this creates] a less positive attitude related to the training programs," (p. 2). It may be possible for principals to plan more effectively for such programs by applying new technology such as online professional learning programs on the Internet, video, audio conferencing, and electronic mail, but these ideas have to be 'sold' to teachers first.

Teachers do not currently have adequate structured time to work with colleagues. Traditionally, professional learning was shared as teachers talked informally in the staffroom about teaching practice and related matters. Generally, professional learning was something done elsewhere. Providing opportunities for teachers to discuss, spend time in each other's classroom, support each other and to practise new skills is a major challenge to principals (Paez, 2003; Sebring & Bryk, 2000).

Zepeda (2003) argues that the principal can consider two methods for extending learning time for teachers into the regular school day:

- *Rearranging existing time*: planning time for teachers is rearranged to create extended time for teacher learning and planning, and
- *Creating additional time*: planning time, in addition to the traditional daily planning period, is provided for collaborative learning. (p. 82)

The principal's own workload and time constraints must also be considered here. For instance, in School B, the Principal argued that he/she often has heavy work and time demands in which professional learning of teachers has to be managed against other work. Clearly, the principal has many duties as the main decision-maker in the school, and some principals also have instructional roles, and all have commitments in relation to the expectations of other stakeholders.

5.4.2 Inadequate budget

There was broad consensus among Principals and Teachers that their schools do not have enough money to adequately support professional learning, despite the increased funding from the NSW DET for professional learning in 2004 (NSW DET, 2004e). However, as this study indicates, providing professional learning and ongoing support is still an expensive exercise, which is supported by Diaz-Maggioli (2004) who points out that a problem common to schools is that of making a decision about a teacher professional learning program in relation to budget constraints, which often results in the choice of the cheapest available experts. This compromises the quality of professional learning programs (Fermanich, 2002).

As identified in the literature review, the cheapest methods of delivery have limited educational value (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998, 2003) while more effective programs may need expensive technology and equipment or to pay highly for invited speakers. Additionally, if the professional learning programs are implemented outside the school, there may be expensive costs for travel, accommodation, and relief teachers. This research indicates that the added cost of providing relief teachers even for in-school activities in school hours is a major financial constraint.

5.4.3 Teachers' lack of enthusiasm

A perceived lack of enthusiasm for professional learning programs has been identified as a constraint on implementing such programs. For example, the Principal of School B said that he/she had discovered that teachers often become 'sour' with professional learning, possibly because the programs may not meet teachers' needs; are not implemented at a convenient time or in a suitable place; the principal does not encourage teachers to be involved; or for other reasons such as little public recognition, inadequate preparation, or increased administrative duties (Sparks & Keiler, 2003). It could be that the teachers perceive that such activities are not directly related to their own professional needs or are unconvinced of their necessity for all teachers in the school.

Some Teachers, because of their extensive experience, believed that they did not need further professional learning; some were unable to participate because of limited time and other personal reasons; some were not interested in a professional learning program because they were close to retirement, which appears to support Huberman's (1993) finding that 50 to 60 years olds may enter a "serenity and effective distance phase" (p. 247).

Ramsey (2000) reports that in Australia one of the major criticisms of existing professional learning courses is lack of teachers' involvement at the planning and implementing stages, resulting in inappropriate content of the professional learning programs. This points to a need for collaborative planning for teachers' professional learning. Professional Learning Teams established in schools are an attempt to overcome this constraint. Unless content of the professional learning programs is matched to the teachers' needs then the school's efforts in implementing such programs may not be as effective. It seems reasonable that participation of teachers is important in determining or selecting professional learning content (Kwakman, 2003).

5.4.4 Lack of relief teachers

The need for relief teachers to facilitate teacher participation has already been emphasized. The Principal of School A said that every time a classroom teacher is

sent to do something, a relief teacher has to be found and that is expensive, and the Principal of School B indicated that difficulty in getting relief teachers is an important constraint, one of their Executive once making 25 phone calls before getting a casual teacher. As an Executive Teacher in School C said, money is available but relief teachers are difficult to find. One interpretation of the inadequate supply of relief teachers is that teachers in Australia have a very high workload (Ramsey, 2000). It seems that fewer people are interested in relief teaching because of travel demands, inadequate rewards, and demanding parents, high expectations of teachers which relief teachers cannot meet in limited time, and restrictive regulations for teachers in public schools (Sparks & Keiler, 2003).

5.5 Summary

This study emphasizes the key role of the principal in facilitating and promoting teachers' professional learning programs. A common finding across the studied schools is that leadership and management functions regarding professional learning were shared between the Principal and other members of the school Professional Learning Team. This study also indicates that Principals provide teachers with moderate to strong support and encouragement to be involved in professional learning programs. Professional learning funding allocations were made by the school Professional Learning Team, comprising the Principal and Executive Teachers, with allocation methods more likely to have been acceptable because teachers had some input into the decision-making processes. The results also show that Principals attempted to balance professional learning priorities of the state and needs of the school and teachers. The data also indicate that not all teachers took the initiative in applying for professional learning. Rather, they were often identified or chosen by the Team and encouraged to be involved.

The principal's role includes assisting and supporting teachers in their endeavours to improve their teaching, communicating with teachers on expectations of professional learning programs, and acting as appropriate role models in terms of their own participation in professional learning activities (Sparks, 2002). In other words, the principal is expected to be a strong role model, and a knowledgeable and skilful supporter of teacher learning.

The principal needs to develop a range of capabilities in implementing the policy: the ability to communicate; leadership capabilities; management skills; collegiality; and supportive attitudes toward professional learning.

The constraints which the principal faces in implementation of the policy most frequently mentioned by the participants were insufficient time; inadequate budget; lack of teacher enthusiasm; and lack of relief teachers.

This chapter discussed the responses to the three research questions identified in the first chapter. From these responses, a number of emerging themes are drawn which lead to particular conclusions and recommendations, including those for further research and a detailed model of the principal's role, which will be identified in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This study provides insights into the role of the principal in teachers' professional learning that leads to better outcomes for teachers and ultimately the students they teach. By combining the findings from both the survey and interviews, and from the literature, a number of conclusions were reached. In answering the major question on what the principal's role is in teacher professional learning, and specifically, in implementing the NSW DET's *Professional Learning Policy*, the study shows that role to be centrally important.

The conceptual framework for this study (Figures 1.1, 6.1) centres on the role of the principal in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*.

Figure 6.1 The conceptual framework

As indicated, such policy is broadly determined by the Education Community. The views of this community have shifted over time toward a more school-based, collegial approach to professional learning, now defined, documented and mandated by the NSW DET in the *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a). The role of the principal as leader in and manager of the implementation of this policy, constraints on it and its results in terms of Teachers' Professional Learning are the major focus of this study.

This study examines this role through the perceptions of Principals, Executive and Teachers in three NSW public primary schools where the policy has been implemented. The results are the basis of the following conclusions and recommendations, and the construction of a detailed model of 'The Principal's Role' and specific factors involved in and impacting on its enactment in the implementation of the policy.

6.2 How do principals implement the state-wide policy on teacher professional learning?

Principals have repeatedly been recognised, both in the literature (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001; Hoban, 2002; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004) and in the perceptions of the respondents in this research, as the key people in leading and managing teachers' professional learning programs in schools. The Teachers in this study, like Sparks (2002), believed that the quality of professional learning programs depends on the instructional leadership provided by the principal. This study also indicates that for effectively leading and managing the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* at the school level, the principal requires broad understanding and knowledge in many areas, including adult learning processes, policy development, and planning for effective practice.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the principal establishes the school Professional Learning Team and, in leading the team, identifies needs, balances priorities, allocates resources, encourages and empowers staff to participate and learn collaboratively, implements a variety of professional learning approaches, and evaluates teachers' professional learning.

According to the participants in this study, the team assesses and responds to changing teachers' learning needs and supports the principal's leadership and functions in relation to teacher professional learning. The findings show that the principal directs the team's shared decision-making in identifying the content of professional learning programs, allocating resources, encouraging staff participation, providing for a variety of delivery methods, and evaluating the effects of specific professional learning activities. The Principals here were generally successful in creating a shared commitment among team members to carrying out their responsibilities. The importance of such commitment is evident in the literature which indicates, "Effective work teams operate in ways that build shared commitment, collective skills, and task-appropriate coordination methods" (Hackman, 2002, p. 28).

The principal, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Team, draws on a variety of sources to identify professional learning needs of the school and individual teachers within a framework of the priorities established at the state level. Different teachers need varying levels of support identified in the school Professional Learning Plan. The findings from the present study show that in the identification of professional learning needs, the principal communicates with groups of teachers and Executive staff as well as sometimes conducting written surveys of staff opinion, and that these forms of collected data are regarded as the most useful. These methods provide important information on teachers' professional learning needs and this in turn drives the teachers' professional learning programs (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

The principal and the school Professional Learning Team balance priorities of state, school, and teachers' career development needs and address these issues in the school Professional Learning Plan. The data show that professional learning plans take into account several factors: student learning needs; teachers' career development needs at all stages (Lynn, 2002); and availability of funds and resources.

The principal, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Team and within constraints of availability, provides financial support and allocates resources to professional learning programs within an endorsed School Plan. Teachers are

reimbursed only for specified costs associated with particular professional learning activities, but not, for example, for involvement in tertiary study, or the provision of materials, equipment or celebratory functions.

In the main, the principal and, to some extent other members of the school Professional Learning Team, also encourage and motivate teachers to be involved in professional learning activities. The data here show that, where the Principals participate in professional learning programs with their teachers, the teachers are more motivated to participate themselves and attach more importance to the program (Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005). It is also apparent that when principals take part in teachers' professional learning, they will be better able to evaluate these programs (Desimone et al., 2002).

The principal empowers staff to use and share their knowledge, talents and abilities, and provides conditions in which the teachers trust and value learning together and support each other in their classrooms. The principal also encourages teachers to share common learning needs, innovate, engage in discussions about their learning needs, and help each other engage in collaborative learning in the school (Fleming & Thompson, 2004). Other research indicates the value of learning together to focus on curriculum and their quality of teaching (Crow et al., 2002; Sparks, 2005; Stone & Cuper, 2006). For the principal this means providing time for staff for conversation, for observation of each other's teaching, and to share with each other in the adoption of different teaching methods.

In this study Principals perceived that teachers learn best when they have sustained opportunities to study; experiment and receive feedback; collaborate with other experienced teachers; and have influence over the content and process of learning. This is supported by the literature on professional learning in schools (Cuttance, 2001; Lingard et al., 2001; Ramsey, 2000; Rowe, 2003; Rowland, 1999; Vinson, 2002).

Along with collaborative learning, the principal and Professional Learning Team implement a variety of in-school methods in professional learning activities including workshops, seminars, peer observation, and coaching. The majority of Teachers who were involved in such activities here indicated that they were most

satisfied with workshops, peer coaching, and collaborative learning. Where opportunities existed for teachers to be involved in individual professional learning they did so, however, most preferred learning activities with colleagues. This finding is supported in the literature (Crow et al., 2002; DuFour, 2001; Harris, 2002a; Parr, 2004; Rhodes & Beneicke, 2003) showing that effective professional learning approaches, “allow teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of groups in which teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect one another’s work” (Carver, 2003, p. 37).

The principal, in conjunction with the school Professional Learning Team to varying degrees, evaluates professional learning activities, mainly through teachers’ self reports. Teachers are required to report on the outcomes of their involvement in professional learning activities funded by the school, whether they are involved as individuals or in small groups. The most popular reporting mechanism is for teachers to report orally to the principal on the professional learning activity undertaken and to identify changes in knowledge, teaching practice, or student outcomes as a result of their involvement in the activity. The importance of the reporting process is supported in the literature which indicates that the principal should evaluate the impact of professional learning on the basis of the effect it has on teachers’ knowledge and students’ achievement (DET Victoria, 2006; McCulla & Gereige-Hinson, 2004; Tallericco, 2005).

6.2.1 Recommendations on policy implementation

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions drawn from this research on the role of the principal in implementing the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a).

1. Differences among teachers and their divergent professional learning needs should be closely related to students’ learning needs, and acknowledged in the school Professional Learning Plan.
2. Individual teachers should, where necessary with the encouragement and guidance of the principal, identify their own professional learning needs

based on their own career development and student learning needs (Glickman et al., 2004).

3. Systems should increase financial support for professional learning activities not currently funded including scholarships for tertiary study in specific areas and provision of materials or equipment for professional learning activities.
4. The principal should provide optimum workplace learning opportunities for staff to learn, share expertise, give and receive feedback, collaborate with other teachers, and undertake collaborative professional learning activities such as action learning and mentoring.
5. The principal should, where possible, participate with teachers in professional learning programs to encourage and foster teacher commitment to taking part in these programs, and to create a positive professional learning climate in the school. Such a climate should engender ongoing professional learning, collaborative decision-making, and the most effective possible work environment for teachers (Bhindi, 2006).
6. The School Plan should include specific mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of professional learning programs. The DET should consider providing more explicit guidelines for such evaluation. Results of evaluations should be shared with teachers and other relevant stakeholders.
7. Teachers should be required to report in writing as well as orally on the nature and outcomes of professional learning activities to more effectively evaluate and improve such activities (Rowland, 1999).

6.3 What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

This study shows that successful implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a) is facilitated by five major areas of a principal's capability: communication ability; leadership skills; management skills; collegiality; and supportive attitudes toward professional learning.

Principals need communication skills such as discussing and listening in order to give as well as receive ideas, information and advice. Principals here generally tried to develop a shared view with teachers about how teachers learn and how to improve students' learning outcomes. They also provided opportunities for teachers to clarify ideas about their learning needs and problems. Blasé and Blasé (2002), like Harris and Muijs (2005), suggest that effective principals need to be open, accessible, good communicators (Burke, 2003), and create a collaborative environment and collegiality for the most effective professional learning.

Principals need to be honest and consistent in their talk and actions. This study shows that such consistency is highly valued by teachers. The principal should be clear about his/her role in the professional learning process, its implications and intentions, and be able to express and communicate these through both talk and actions. Similar views are expressed by Philippon (2004) and Hancock and Lamendola (2005). Perceived inconsistency here creates a negative school climate as was evident in some of the interviews with the Teachers in this study.

Principals in this study felt the need to improve their team leadership capabilities (Jones, 2005) by creating conditions and making an effort to raise the motivation levels of less enthusiastic teachers and to encourage them to work collaboratively. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) investigates the conditions that make teams effective over time and argues that effectiveness is increased when a "team is heterogeneous, team members are interdependent, team members are individually accountable, team members interact simultaneously, all team members should have the chance for equal participation, and team members need to learn the core cooperative skills that will help them succeed" (p. 26). These Principals to varying degrees tried to create these conditions for their school professional learning activities through participatory decision-making, and by providing sufficient time, support, and rewards (Drago-Severson, 2004; Louck-Horsely et al., 2003). As Lindstrom and Speck (2004) conclude, shared leadership is a key component of teamwork of an effective school culture (Lambert, 2003; Morrissey & Cowan, 2004).

Principals need to use various managerial skills for the successful implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*: planning, coordinating, budgeting, directing, and

evaluating as leader of the Professional Learning Team (see 6.2, above). This is evident both in this research and the literature (Daresh, 2001; DuBrin & Daglish, 2003; Murphy, 2002).

Collegiality and peer mentoring among principals is seen as an important strategy for principals to enhance their capabilities (Kochan et al., 2002). This study shows that where principals are involved in peer networks, their capabilities, both generally and in relation to professional learning in the school, are enhanced. This supports the finding of Armour (2005) that collegial exchange is important for principals' professional growth (DuFour, 2001; Petzko, 2003). The continued professional learning of the principal must not be overlooked and the Principals in this study indicated that the NSW DET also provided ongoing professional learning for them in school leadership, problem solving, and fostering collegial attitudes and behaviors in the school.

6.3.1 Recommendations on principal's capabilities

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions drawn from this research on the capabilities required by the principal for effective implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*.

1. The principal should employ a collaborative, democratic leadership style, both in the school Professional Learning Team and the school generally, as far as is possible, and this requires training and motivation of staff to take an active part in processes of decision-making, including decisions concerning professional learning.
2. The principal should develop and utilise effective communication skills, particularly with other members of the Professional Learning Team and teachers: listening; discussing; questioning; accepting suggestions; and respecting others' views.
3. The principal should maintain consistency and integrity between his/her words and actions both generally and in relation to professional learning.

4. The principal should, as far as is possible, be involved in staff professional learning activities, both to enhance staff participation and to assist in the evaluation of the activities.
5. The principal should enhance his/her communication, leadership and management skills through involvement in peer networking with other principals (Brown et al., 2002; Petzko, 2003; Scott, 2003).
6. Principals should have sound knowledge of theories and practice in adult learning and change management.

6.4 What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?

Principals face some important constraints in attempting to fulfil their role in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* (NSW DET, 2004a). The constraints most frequently mentioned by these Principals and Teachers were insufficient time; inadequate budget; lack of relief teachers; and lack of teacher enthusiasm.

Darling-Hammond (1999) also highlights the issue of insufficient teacher time to participate in professional learning, and the Principals here stated that this was a major barrier to the implementation of professional learning programs. Teachers are rarely provided enough time for learning, sharing and reflection and to consider new instructional practice. Teachers in this research clearly preferred that they be provided with release time from their teaching duties to be involved in professional learning activities during school hours, a finding consistent with other studies (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Graninger & Tolhurst, 2005; Tearle & Dillon, 2003). Such methods as student-free days, staff meeting times dedicated to professional learning, relief to have time to observe or share colleagues' expertise and knowledge and use of technology should all be considered.

Limited principal's time was also a barrier to the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*. The principal's role in teachers' professional learning has to be managed against other demands which are equally important and equally demanding

of time. If the principal is to be a mentor, counsellor, motivator, and evaluator, he/she needs more time to consult, discuss, support, and share views on teachers' professional learning (Adey & Jones, 1997). Perhaps more distributed leadership approaches, where the principal delegates authority to teachers to work out Staff Development Days or agenda, would help overcome this problem (Spillane, 2006).

Financial limitations continue to be a constraint on teachers' professional learning (Fermanich, 2002), despite the dramatically increased budget for such learning in NSW in 2004 (NSW DET, 2004e). Principals and Teams must balance funding for a wide range of professional learning expenses: travel, accommodation, instructors/facilitators, relief teachers and so on. In relation to the latter, even when finance is available, the limited availability of relief teachers can itself be a constraint.

The unwillingness of some teachers to participate in professional learning programs has also been perceived as a constraint and to be related to factors such as poor rewards (Kelley & Finnigan, 2004); age and years of service (Walsh & Gamage, 2003); perceived inappropriate professional learning content; time limitations; classroom workloads; family commitments; and competing out-of-school life styles. Ramsey (2000) reports that in Australia one of the major criticisms of existing professional learning programs is the low participation of teachers in decision making on professional learning content, design, and implementation of programs. Related constraints have been identified in the literature: top-down decision making; lack of ownership; lack of variety in the delivery of professional learning; inadequate consideration of learning needs and characteristics of teachers in programs; inadequate follow-up; and lack of systematic evaluation of professional learning (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Fullan, 1982; Southworth, 1999; Villegas-Reimers, 2003), however, these did not appear to be significant in this research.

The existence and functioning of the school Professional Learning Team helps in reducing some of these problems but only to the extent that the principal, as school and team leader, is willing and able to share decision-making and management responsibilities.

6.4.1 Recommendations on constraints

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions drawn from this research on constraints faced by the principal in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*.

1. Principals should endeavour to include professional learning time as part of teachers' loads within working hours to enable participation in professional learning programs (Sebring & Bryk, 2000) and collegial sharing of expertise and knowledge (Paez, 2003).
2. To minimise expenditure, principals should provide for teachers to network with their peers, to develop mentoring and collegiality, and to introduce more action learning programs (Dinham et al., 2006; Hoban et al., 2005). Expert input from outside can be an expensive professional learning strategy and should be limited to only the most essential forms of learning related to major changes in policy, curriculum and technology.
3. The establishment of structured in-school, collaborative professional learning activities may facilitate the employment, on a regular part-time basis, of relief teachers.
4. Principals should engage continuously with the DET, district education office, and other schools for coordination and shared utilisation of their facilities and resources to overcome as far as possible particular professional learning constraints within the school.

6.6 Concluding summary

The role of the principal is critical in relation to the implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a). This study has provided a more fine-grained analysis of the factors in and connections between the principal's role and teachers' professional learning. The following model (Figure 6.2) maps the emerging findings of the study on these factors and their interactions. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the model represents a detailed examination of the principal's role in teacher professional learning from the conceptual framework

(Figures 1.1, 6.1). The model indicates the four major areas of the principal's role, specific aspects of them and the nature of interactions among them.

Figure 6.2 A model of the principal's role in teacher professional learning and in implementing the *Professional Learning Policy*

The principal as leader of the school Professional Learning Team has the central role in leading and managing teachers' professional learning (Bredeson, 2003; Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004;

Speck, 1999; Turbill, 2002). According to the research findings and the literature reported here, the important functions of the principal's role are planning; encouraging teachers to participate; implementation of programs; and evaluation of teachers' professional learning and student outcomes (Ehrich, 1998; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004; Speck, 1999). This study indicates that there are interactive relationships among these functions and the principal's attention to one role without concern for the others will result in unsuccessful and ineffective professional learning programs (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Tallerico, 2005).

Although the principal is a central figure, however, he/she cannot carry out these functions in isolation but does so through shared leadership, or distributed leadership; leadership in which collegiality empowers and builds capacity of other teachers as well as enabling them to show leadership themselves (Bhindi, 2006). To the extent that this is so the principal is better able to cover all the complex roles which he/she is required to carry out.

This model highlights that the *Professional Learning Policy* impacts on the principal's role and vice versa. The policy is a major determinant of the principal's behaviour and the principal, through ongoing evaluation of professional learning programs (Earley & Bubb, 2004; Zepeda, 1999, 2003) reports and provides feedback to the NSW DET which can be used for improving and developing future state policies (Seifert & Vornberg, 2002).

Effective implementation of teachers' professional learning programs has positive though perhaps indirect effects on students' learning outcomes (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Crow et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Hattie, 2003; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Porter et al., 2000) and the outcomes of students' learning are, in turn, useful in evaluating programs and planning future programs. Researchers (Guskey, 2002, 2003; Mizell, 2003; Parsad et al., 2001) generally agree that evidence of students' outcomes can be a useful tool in guiding and designing professional learning activities.

The findings demonstrate that the principal needs to develop a range of capabilities such as the ability to communicate, educational leadership, management skills, collegiality, and supportive attitudes toward professional learning. These capabilities allow principals to lead and manage in the context of their other functions and the

projected learning needs of their school and teachers in relation to the NSW DET's *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) or other such policies in other systems.

Constraints which principals face in implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* most frequently mentioned by the participants and in the literature are insufficient time; inadequate budget; lack of relief teachers; and lack of teacher enthusiasm. The leadership and managerial skills of the principal, both individually and in the Professional Learning Team, will largely determine the extent to which these constraints will be overcome in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy* in their school.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

Given the exploratory nature of this study, the findings may have relevance for other schools, which further investigations may confirm or otherwise. This recommendation and others following from this research, are presented below.

1. More research is needed to examine the role of the principal, improve the preparation process, and explore alternative school leadership models in teachers' professional learning. For example, innovative structures such as school leadership teams and other distributed leadership models (Spillane, 2006) for professional learning may be more viable alternatives in today's schools.
2. Further study is needed to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* (2004a) in promoting professional learning of teachers at the school level.
3. Although the roles of other stakeholders such as parents in teachers' professional learning are not mentioned in this study, they may be important. Further research should consider whether such stakeholders could be involved in or with the school Professional Learning Team in decision-making in planning, implementing, and evaluating of professional learning activities at the school. This is consistent with the view of Loughridge and Tarantino (2005) that it is impossible to provide comprehensive and

continuous professional learning without the support of all stakeholders (Louck-Horsely et al., 2003).

4. It is important that all stakeholders recognise the interaction indicated in the model (Figure 6.2) between the principal's wider leadership role and his/her central role in the school Professional Learning Team, and encourage and enable other staff to share responsibilities in relation to professional learning activities. Further research is needed to investigate these connections. This study provides only limited evidence in this area.
5. This study should be replicated in other settings, e.g., secondary schools, to assist in explaining variations in responses here and to increase the generalisability of this study's findings.

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Appendix A

Department of Education and Training Permission Letter

Appendix B
Initial Application Approval

Appendix C

Letter to Principal

Dear Principal

I am a postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Wollongong. In my research, I intend to investigate the principal's role in teacher professional learning in relation to the implementation of the *DET Professional Learning Policy for Schools*. This will involve an evaluation of the implementation of policy and not the performance of individual principals. I am seeking your permission to survey all the teachers in the school and conduct interviews with the school's Professional Learning Team and you as the Principal. Your name and school name and any other personal information will not be collected. The research will involve 3 schools, as such. Every effort will be made not to identify individual schools and the identity of respondents. No comparisons between schools or principals will be made. All efforts will be made to cause minimal disruption to your normal routine during the research.

You can be assured that I would check every part of the process with you. If you require further information please contact me by phone or email. Alternatively, you might like to contact my principal supervisor for more information. I would very much appreciate your approval to implement my research in your school. Your confirmation by letter or email would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

University of Wollongong
NSW 2522
Email:
Phone:

Principal Supervisor:

Attachments:

The approval letter of the NSW Department of Education and Training
Participant information sheet
Survey Instrument
Research Proposal

Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet

Doctor of Philosophy
Research Student
University of
Wollongong
TEL:
E-mail:

Participant information sheet

(Required for interview)

Dear participant,

I am a postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. In my research, I intend to investigate the principal's role in teacher professional learning in relation to the implementation of the DET Professional Learning Policy. This will involve an evaluation of the implementation of policy and not of the performance of individual teachers or principals. I request your participation to conduct an interview with you at a mutually convenient time. The interview will be tape-recorded. Your name and school name and any other personal information will not be collected. Interview responses will be coded and will remain anonymous to everyone other than the principal researcher. The research will involve 3 schools, as such. Every effort will be made not to identify individual schools and the identity of respondents. No comparisons between schools or principals will be made. All efforts will be made to cause minimal disruption to your normal routine during the research.

Participation in this research is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your participation or data from the research at any time. All the information I will gather will be confidential. Any information pertaining to your identity will not be

accessible to any second party. The data will be used only for the purpose of my thesis and research publications. All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Wollongong and destroyed when the study is complete. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is, or has been conducted, you can contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on

If you have any questions about the study, please ring me on

If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the consent form below.

In appreciation of your impending participation.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

(Required for interview)

I, -----(Name of participant)

Consent to participate in the research conducted by A. Ghaleei as it has been described to me in this Information Sheet. I agree to participate in this research, realising I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is, or has been conducted, I can contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on . I

understand that the interview will be tape-recorded, the data collected will be used for research purposes only, no personal data recorded, all data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Wollongong and destroyed when the study is complete. I consent for the data to be used in that manner.

Signed -----

Date -----

Appendix F

Questionnaire

**University of Wollongong
Faculty of Education**

The Principal's Role in Teacher Professional Learning

I am a research Doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong and seek your assistance in completing this questionnaire. The questionnaire is part of a research study that investigates ways in which principals implement state-wide policy on professional learning in their schools. The survey questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete. The survey questionnaire has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong and the New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

The information you provide is confidential between you and the researcher. It will be used strictly by the researcher for analysis and to compare results between different groups of respondents from the different public schools without identification. The names of respondents are not required. All participants are asked to answer all questions. Confidentiality is assured, and you will not be identified in any part of the research. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason, and to withdraw any data you have provided to that point. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is, or has been conducted, you can contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on . Please read the information carefully before you proceed to complete each section and return your completed survey questionnaire to:

Research Student
335/67 Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
NSW 2522

1. Are you: Male ☐ Female ☐

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Head of Department | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Advanced Skills Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deputy Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. Highest current level of education:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Diploma | |
| Graduate Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Degree/Honours Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Masters Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Doctoral Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Yes ☐ No ☐

Yes ☐ No ☐

8. The professional learning plan was implemented effectively in 2004?

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Please indicate who was mostly responsible in your school for the following functions related to professional learning.

| Functions | Principal | Executive Staff | Professional Learning Team | Other/Not Done |
|--|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Collection of information on teachers' learning needs. | | | | |
| Determination of the school's professional learning priorities. | | | | |
| Documentation of school Professional Learning Plan. | | | | |
| Allocation of funds between professional learning programs. | | | | |
| Informing staff on available professional learning programs. | | | | |
| Permitting staff to participate in professional learning programs. | | | | |
| Managing of the school Staff Development Days. | | | | |
| Collection of participants' data for evaluating. | | | | |
| Evaluation of professional learning programs. | | | | |

11. If your school has a *Professional Learning Team* please answer the following questions. If you do not, please go to question 14.

How did your school choose members of the Professional Learning Team?

- Appointed ☐
- Elected ☐
- Volunteers ☐

12. Who was represented on the school Professional Learning Team?

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Principal | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Teaching staff | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Executive staff | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| General support staff | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent/Community representatives | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student representatives | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

13. Who was the chairperson of the school Professional Learning Team?

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Executive Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other member of school staff | (Position:) |

14. Professional learning programs at this school match my professional needs.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

15. Are you aware of the NSW Department of Education and Training policy, “*Professional Learning Policy for Schools*”?

Yes ☐ No ☐

16. What is the role of the principal in successfully implementing the *Professional Learning Policy for Schools*?

.....

.....

.....

.....

17. What capabilities are necessary for the principal to successfully implement the *Professional Learning Policy for Schools*?

.....

.....

.....

18. What are the practical constraints on implementing the *Professional Learning Policy for Schools*?

.....

.....

.....

.....

19. What are the various professional learning approaches used in your school and how effective are they?

| Varieties of methods | Extent of use | | | | Effectiveness of methods | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|--------|-------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| | Always | Usually | Seldom | Never | Very Effective | Effective | Not Effective |
| Seminar | | | | | | | |
| Invited speakers | | | | | | | |
| Courses | | | | | | | |
| Workshops | | | | | | | |
| Online learning | | | | | | | |
| Peer observation | | | | | | | |
| Action learning | | | | | | | |
| Collaborative learning | | | | | | | |
| Coaching/ mentoring | | | | | | | |
| Other (please describe) | | | | | | | |

20. In terms of how participants were selected for professional learning activities, which of the following procedures was used in your school, and how effective was that procedure in meeting participants' professional learning needs?

| Procedure | Extent of use | | | | Effectiveness of process | | |
|--|---------------|---------|--------|-------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| | Always | Usually | Seldom | Never | Very Effective | Effective | Not Effective |
| Staff were chosen and encouraged to be involved by the school Executive. | | | | | | | |
| Staff were permitted on the basis that the professional learning activity is in line with the School Plan. | | | | | | | |
| Staff were permitted on the basis that the professional learning activities were identified by themselves. | | | | | | | |
| Staff were given funds directly for their own professional learning activities. | | | | | | | |
| Other (please describe) | | | | | | | |

21. What do you think is the relative importance of national, state, regional, local and individual teacher priorities in determining the overall pattern of the school Professional Learning Plan?

| Priorities | Very important | Important | Unimportant |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| National | | | |
| State | | | |
| Regional | | | |
| School | | | |
| Individual teacher | | | |

22. If your school has a Professional Learning Plan, how often is it reviewed either as an individual document or in conjunction with the overall School Plan?

Don't know. ☐

Once every two years ☐

Every 6 months. ☐

Every three years ☐

At least once a year. ☐

Other ☐

(Please describe)

23. In 2004, how often was a report form used in your school for participants to report on the outcomes of professional learning activities? How useful was this process for evaluating and developing teachers' professional learning?

| Type of activity | Varieties of reporting occur | | | | Usefulness | | |
|---|------------------------------|----------------|--------|-------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| | Always | <i>Usually</i> | Seldom | Never | Very useful | Fairly useful | Not useful |
| Teachers are involved as individual members of staff. | | | | | | | |
| Teachers are involved as groups of staff. | | | | | | | |
| Teachers are involved in whole-school activities. | | | | | | | |
| Other (please describe) | | | | | | | |

24. When reporting did occur, what form did it usually take?

Oral presentation ☐

Written report ☐

Questionnaire ☐

25. In 2004, how often did the school provide the following supports for teachers to participate in professional learning activities? How important do you think these supports were in encouraging teachers' involvement in these activities?

| Forms of support | Extent of use | | | | Importance | | |
|---|---------------|---------|--------|-------|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Always | Usually | Seldom | Never | Very important | Important | Unimportant |
| Provision of release time | | | | | | | |
| Reimbursement of costs, e.g., registration, travel | | | | | | | |
| Scholarship or payment of fees for studies undertaken | | | | | | | |
| Provision of learning materials/equipment | | | | | | | |
| Provision of a celebratory function | | | | | | | |
| Provision of clerical, technical assistance | | | | | | | |
| Other (please describe) | | | | | | | |

26. On the whole, the distribution of the professional learning budget across the school was:

Very fair ☐

Acceptable ☐

Very Unfair ☐

27. The provision of information to staff concerning available programs or activities was:

Comprehensive ☐

Adequate ☐

Inadequate ☐

28. The collection and reporting of participation data for the school as a whole was

Comprehensive ☐

Adequate ☐

Inadequate ☐

29. On the whole, I would rate the school's professional learning program in 2004 as:

Very effective ☐

Moderately effective ☐

Not effective ☐

30. How was the total funding for professional learning distributed within the school in 2004?

- a) Retained in a central pool and allocated by the principal or Professional Learning Team on the basis that activity is in line with the School Plan. Yes ☐ No ☐
- b) Distributed according to teachers' own needs or applications. Yes ☐ No ☐
- c) Distributed directly to individual teachers. Yes ☐ No ☐
- d) Other (please describe):

31. How is the school accountable for the expenditure of funds for professional learning?

.....

.....

.....

.....

32. Have you any further comments or suggestions regarding implementing the *Professional Learning Policy for Schools*?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Appendix G

Sample Interview Questions

1. What are the management functions in the implementation of *Professional Learning Policy*?
2. What is the Principal's role in teachers' professional learning?
3. Can you explain to me how does your school plan for the professional learning? Who does plan it?
4. How does your school identify teachers' professional learning needs?
5. What kind of methods do you use in the delivery of professional learning activities?
6. Does your school use external professional learning providers (such as: university or educational institution)?
7. Can you explain to me how your school allocates the resources and budget for professional learning activities?
8. To what extent is your school accountable for the expenditure of funds for professional learning?
9. How does your school evaluate professional learning activities?
10. How would you generally describe the implementation of the NSW DET *Professional Learning Policy* at your school?
11. What aspects of the policy are implemented in your school?
12. What recommendations would you make on implementing the policy in your school?
13. What do you consider the essential factors needed in successful implementation of the professional learning program?
14. What kinds of capabilities do principals need for implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?
15. What constraints do principals face in the implementation of the *Professional Learning Policy*?
16. Do you have any comments to add that I haven't specifically asked about?

Appendix H

Sample of Respondents Information Gained from School A and Analysed Using SPSS

Appendix I

Sample of NVivo Analysis

In response to the question: Principal's role in teacher professional learning, 6 teachers comments are given below:

Teacher 1 from School A

I think the Principal role is giving to teachers lots of opportunities to engaging to professional learning. Some of that done in the school level through the staff meetings where we get consults in. Sometimes is sending teachers to courses and then they comeback and present in the staff meetings. All staff benefit from that person going. so, the Principal role is a guiding role if you like and make sure the money is spent properly in the areas out lined in the professional learning policy and whatever professional learning happens during the year it matches with goals and needs and the school needs. Briefly, the Principal is in charge of making sure is money spent correctly and there is planning for professional learning in our school plan and there is professional learning policy in the school. The Principal role is to make sure that the plan developed collaboratively with staff and make sure that every body has an equal opportunity to engage in professional learning.

Teacher 2 from School A

... look after professional learning in terms of education and to a lesser extent considering the future carrier. The Principal is one of members of the School Professional Learning Team. He contributes in many ways, but also He has to identify those areas. He must make sure particular teachers are targeted for student management. That is a particular thing that he do. He do target a teacher for a year. So, the Principal role is to try to identify the needs and make sure the teachers get the training before the Principal has to to say look, I am pretty worried about your teaching.

Teacher 1 From School B

Well, I think making staff aware of the courses available or get speakers and that sort things to the school, providing, organizing professional learning programs according to teachers' needs, and encouraging teachers to participate these programs. It is his role to develop professional learning plan. But also, he does need main information not only from executives but also other important information from other staff. The Principal is doing this kind of thing what specific areas people are, they are interested in, do they have specific concerns about eighty learning areas and also taking on board not only looking after that key learning areas but also I am in process of putting folders together.

Teacher 2 from School B

His role is planning for school plan, running Professional Development Days, and running some of the courses however there are not many courses. The Principal has evaluation role too.

Teacher 1 from School C

The Principal is a leader. All professional development courses go through her in first place. She decides whether or not it is worthwhile. She is very well organize. She decides about value of courses, needs and staff needs. She makes staff aware of it and group work together and decide what is going on.

Teacher 2 from School C

I guess it is identifying with the staff, school needs, and priority areas and making sure that those priority areas are targeted and actually documented as a target and working collaboratively with staff when you have identified the targets and how do you best meet those needs, we might go through some formal external professional development we need to go outside the school. All staff benefit from that person going. So, the Principal role is a guiding role if you like and make sure the money is spent properly in the areas out-lined in the professional learning policy and whatever professional learning happens during the year, it matches with goals and needs and the school needs. The Principal role is to make

sure that the plan has developed collaboratively with staff and make sure that every body has an equal opportunity to engage in professional learning.