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Tracing complexities of teacher professional learning to evidence of transformed practice

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education and Social Work
The University of Sydney

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

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This thesis is the product of the most arduous yet enjoyable learning through inquiry I have ever undertaken. I was very privileged to share the journey with a number of wonderful colleagues and friends.

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Tracing complexities of teacher professional learning to evidence of transformed practice

Abstract

The inquiry with which this thesis is concerned examines the complex interactions involved in teachers’ professional learning experiences and the expression of such learning in transformed teaching practice. In this study, teachers described the interactions that they believed had influenced their learning about their teaching work. They were required to select and demonstrate evidence of their learning, and to reflect on the ‘fit’, as they perceived it, between their learning and their evidence. The study is temporally situated when, for the first time in the history of Australian teachers’ working lives, they are working with both a national curriculum and a set of national professional standards which bring with them expectations of transformed teaching, expressed through notions of ‘quality’ and ‘21st century learning’ (ACARA, 2012b; AITSL, 2012c). The centralised, managerial agenda, particularly as it relates to professional standards, creates a view of teacher learning as an activity undertaken by individualised teachers and heavily reliant on standards-accredited programs of professional development.

A reflexive response to the way teachers spoke about their learning experiences precipitated a move away from an approach that sought to categorise the variations in teacher learning towards Dorothy Smith’s ideas of ‘mapping the social’ in order to reveal the complex of social and textual relations that coordinated the teachers’ learning in each case. A dialogic analysis, based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, was employed in that it was able to reveal the subversive influences that enable teachers to resist a compliance agenda in the interests of producing knowledge that assisted them to transform their teaching practice.

This thesis seeks to make a contribution to research about teacher learning by highlighting: the complex interactions between learning experiences, people and ‘governing’ texts that influence teachers’ professional learning and expressing these interactions in the form of ‘informant specific maps’; the role of the ‘professional learning architect’ in context-specific pedagogical approaches to teacher and student learning that support ‘spaces of possibility’ for transformative professional learning; and the capacity for ongoing teacher education inherent in the process of teachers selecting, demonstrating and reflecting on evidence of learning that they value as having transformed their teaching work.
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List of acronyms

AAS – Australian Academy of Science
ACARA – Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority
AITSL – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
BOSTES – Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (NSW)
CKBS – Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools
ISM – Informant Specific Map
DECNSW – Department of Education and Communities New South Wales
NSWIT – New South Wales Institute of Teachers
PLA – Professional Learning Architect
SbD – Science by Doing

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Explanatory notes

1. Where quotations include non-standard or American spelling it has been retained as per the original.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The reorganization of the public sector... is known as the New Public Management (NPM). It involves the imposition of managerial regimes modeled on those already operative in the sphere of private enterprise... the adoption and adaption of strategies and textual technologies that revolutionized corporate management in the 1980's and 1990’s... institutional ethnographic investigations... explore how new managerial practices are imposed and operate in public sector services in which the major work focus for realizing objectives is done at the front line... particularly those objectives that seek to establish standardized evaluations of performance or outcomes and enable comparison with similar services (Griffith & Smith, 2014, pp. 5-7).

Situating the research

Between 2012-2014, when data for this study was collected, Australian teachers were experiencing the lead up to, public promotion and progressive implementation of a number of education policies that seek to exercise control over their ‘front-line’ work and learning in ways that differ from past approaches. Griffith and Smith (2014) highlight the importance of understanding the influence of the ‘new public management’ (p. 5) on what actually gets done at the ‘front line’ of public service industries, including education. For them, “the managerial 'boss' or governing texts” (p. 11) play varying roles in the ‘governing’ of people’s front line work depending on how such texts are ‘activated’. As Smith (2005) describes it, the way in which institutional ethnography recognizes texts is not as “a discrete topic but as they enter into and coordinate people’s doings. Indeed as activated in the text-reader conversation, they are peoples’ doings” (p. 170).

Successive Australian governments have followed close behind the rest of the Western world, particularly the USA and the UK, in instituting an educational agenda influenced by neoliberal priorities related to standardization, testing and accountability. Or, as Cochrane –Smith identifies this agenda, “market-based approaches to educational
reform” (2004, p. 194). The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2012c) and *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2011) sit within a suite of measures introduced in Australia since 2008 which also includes the *National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) and the *MySchool* (ACARA, 2013b) website. These measures, it is claimed, will respectively: “make explicit the elements of high quality teaching” (AITSL, 2012c); set “consistent high standards for what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling” (ACARA, 2012a); test “the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life” (ACARA, 2013c); and, provide access to “up-to-date quality data on the performance and resources available to more than 9,500 Australian schools” in order to allow “comparisons to be made between schools” (ACARA, 2013b). These policy texts seek to ‘govern’ (D. E. Smith, 2005) the work of teachers from afar, replacing often more contextualised and personalized mechanisms previously employed to determine professional learning priorities, curriculum design and assessment.

At the time of this study, I expected teachers to hold relatively fresh memories of their professional learning experiences prior to the introduction of the suite of policies outlined above, together with an assortment of more recent memories attached to their experiences since the policies were introduced. Beginning from an exploration of teachers’ actual doings (D. E. Smith, 2006) in relation to their learning experiences, the ‘problematic’ steering this research project attempts to discover how we can know that a teacher’s learning has transformed their teaching work and how support for such transformative learning is coordinated. In this study, I explored teachers’ recounts of a professional learning experience that they identified as having resulted in them learning something about their teaching work that they believed transformed their work, together with the evidence they selected and demonstrated of such learning. Teachers were asked to reflect on the ‘fit’ as they saw it, between the learning they had spoken about and the evidence they demonstrated.

In addition to outlining the focus and approach that guided this inquiry, this introductory chapter seeks to elucidate some aspects of the political and temporal landscape in which the inquiry was situated. The contextualization is important to the
study because on the one hand, the federal government was putting forward new policies as part of what it continues to call ‘education reform’ (COAG, 2012) while on the other, many researchers were warning of the negative implications inherent in policies that support what they see as a globalised ‘managerial’ agenda (S. Ball, 2013; Connell, 2013a; Lingard, Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). The focus here will be on some aspects of this globalised context of standardisation and measurement that have raised concern amongst researchers in relation to the learning and work of teachers. In particular, the neoliberal view of teachers’ professionalism being linked to their accountability for Australia’s declining position in the global economy, as measured by standardized international tests; and the sense of urgency and concern over uncertain futures invoked in these texts through the strategic invocation of the term ‘21st century learning’ accompanied by a lack of precision about what the term actually means.

Dorothy Smith’s (2005) sociology that she calls institutional ethnography (IE) provides the theoretical and methodological frame for this study. Working from a western post-Marxist and feminist perspective, Smith explains that Marx’s view of ‘consciousness’ as “identified with individuals and what goes on in their heads” (p. 14) requires modification to accommodate social relations that did not exist in Marx’s time and have arisen with the growth of capitalism. She draws attention particularly to those forms of social relations that are “objectified in the sense of being produced as independent of particular individuals and the particularised relations” (p. 14). It is such ‘objectified’ social relations that are ruled by the governing texts of neoliberal managerialism. In the last section of this chapter and continuing in a tradition of western post-Marxist thinking, I sketch some imaginings for ‘spaces of possibility’. It is within such spaces that the standardizing and accounting regimes of neoliberal managerialism might be resisted especially where they are seen to threaten opportunities for professional learning that is authentic, contextualised, and has potential to transform teachers’ work.
Focus and Approach

In this study it was the teachers who were the learners of interest and therefore, it was their ‘voice’ that was sought in order to understand how they learn about their teaching work. This kind of understanding is consistent with an epistemological perspective that views knowledge as partial, situated and socially constructed. The partiality of knowledge is relevant not only to the bounded nature of the study itself but also to the partial knowledge of the participants as they recount their remembered experiences. The knowledge is situated and embodied because it is dependent on “the embodied nature of all vision”, of the researcher and the participants, as opposed to “the conquering gaze from nowhere” (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). This situated and embodied vision, Haraway claims, “offers a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others’ practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that makes up all positions” (p. 579). Knowledge is considered as socially constructed in dialogic interactions between individuals as each one draws on their experiences with the phenomenon under consideration, in this case professional learning and their reflections on those experiences to formulate a response in a ‘living conversation’ (Bakhtin, 1981a). This is not to say that the world and the things in it only exist when a conscious mind perceives them and gives voice to their perceptions but rather that meaning is only made of the world when ‘meaning-making beings’ make sense of it (Crotty, 1998) through dialogic interactions.

I did not begin this study knowing that I would take an approach informed by institutional ethnography. Initially, I was working within a methodological framework consistent with phenomenography that would enable me to identify and describe variations in the nature of what teachers had learned, how they had learned it and also the forms of evidence they chose to demonstrate their learning. As I began the analysis of the first round of interviews it became apparent that teachers had a lot to say about their learning experiences that would not be adequately represented by this approach. These limitations are described more fully in Chapter 3. Most importantly, they related
to: how experiences teachers claimed as having transformed their practice had been supported and coordinated; and how, if at all, the local relationships involved in this support and coordination articulated with external, governing processes. The external forms of governing process particularly pertinent at this time were the implementation of a national curriculum and national professional standards for the purposes of accreditation and maintenance of accreditation.

My reflexive response to the richness of detail contained in the teachers’ recounts concerning the complex relations that had supported their learning was recognition of the need for an alternative framing of this research enterprise. A framing that would allow me to trace and re-present the connections and structures involved in the processes that had helped and hindered teachers learning about their work. Dorothy Smith’s (2005) approach that she calls ‘institutional ethnography’ seemed to offer a way forward. Consistent with an institutional ethnography, I had begun my inquiry: immersed in the field of my area of study; from the standpoint of teachers as the ‘knowers’ of the processes that assist their learning; and had set about detailing the ‘actual doings’ of teacher learning as described by teachers themselves (D. E. Smith, 1990, 2005, 2006). So in several respects, my approach thus far was consistent with that of institutional ethnography. The second change to the research approach was moving from a thematic coding of interview transcripts to an analysis that drew on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. This allowed for the interaction between the teachers, as participants, and myself to be recognized as dialogic in nature and for my positioning in each interview as a ‘participant’ in a research conversation. It also allowed for analysis of what Bakhtin calls “raznorecie” (1981a, p. 263) or the ‘heteroglossia’ of discourses implicated in teachers’ learning. In Chapter 3, I describe more fully my epistemological considerations of this move from the initial approach of categorizing variation in experiences to an approach which draws on institutional ethnography’s notions of ‘mapping’ the social and Bakhtin’s dialogism.

I now turn to outlining the way in which I use certain concepts that are critical to this study; some of the contextual factors that have a unique influence on teachers’ work and learning at this time; and the concept of ‘spaces of possibility’. The critical concepts
are ‘teachers’ work’, ‘teachers’ learning’ and ‘evidence’, all of which are problematic in that there exists for each of them, multiple possible definitions and descriptions. Contextual factors included here are the rise of the neoliberal agenda in education bringing with it mechanisms for controlling and making accountable the work and learning of teachers, and the appeal to the notion of ‘21st century learning and what that might be taken to mean. Finally, a brief lineage is provided for the development of the Marxist idea of ‘spaces of resistance’ into a reframing as ‘spaces of possibility’.

Critical concepts

Teachers’ work

The notion of what constitutes teachers’ work is important to this study. Smith (2005, pp. 151-152) talks about the term ‘work’ being used in the “generous sense to extend to anything done by people that takes time and effort, that they mean to do, that is done under definite conditions and with whatever means and tools, and that they may have to think about. It means much more than what is done on the job.” Thus, she extends the definition of work beyond merely the paid part of employment or what is performed at the physical work site. Smith tells us “this kind of conception of work...keeps you in touch with what people need to do their work as well as with what they are doing” (p. 154).

From her observations of teaching work in high-poverty and culturally diverse environments, Comber (2006) takes Smith’s ‘generous sense’ to specify what she sees as five kinds of work that teachers are required to engage in. She describes them as:

1. Interpretive work in which teachers closely observe their students and “carefully take note of their products and performances” (p. 61) in order to inform the teaching work.

2. Pedagogical work in which teachers utilize their knowledge of subject content and practical approaches to “assemble repertoires of theoretically informed practices, which they continually rework and modify” (p. 62).
3. Discursive work in which teachers think carefully about what they say and write. Teachers offer alternative explanations and modify their language in order to better connect with their students.

4. Relational work in which teachers demonstrate respect for their students. Importantly, this work is not just about having a good or friendly relationship with students it is about enacting belief in each “student’s potential”, having “high expectations” and making “sophisticated academic demands” (p. 63).

5. Institutional work “ensures that the routines, resources, physical facilities, and organizational practices of their institutions work for students, parents and coworkers” (p. 63).

Comber acknowledges the complexity of teachers’ work by drawing our attention to the fact that these five kinds of work are overlapping and may occur simultaneously in any moment of a teachers’ work. Taken together, Comber and Smith’s generous definitions allow me not only to recognize aspects of teachers’ work that may be easily hidden but also to look for ways in which learning about such work is supported.

**Teachers’ learning**

In much of the literature surrounding the learning of in-service teachers the terms ‘professional development’ and ‘professional learning’ are used interchangeably and often without explication or distinction. In the Australian context prior to the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, hereafter referred to as AITSL, state authorities, for example The New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSWIT), distinguished between these terms. ‘Professional development’ was taken to mean “an activity, experience or process that provides an opportunity for professional learning” (italics added) (NSWIT, 2010). Whereas, ‘professional learning’ was defined as “the growth of your expertise as a teacher. It is demonstrated through your professional practice” (italics added) (NSWIT, 2010). Adding to the ‘development/learning’ dichotomy are attitudinal variants that impact on the way development/learning is enacted. For example, two contrasting but not necessarily conflicting models of professional development are defined by Day and Sachs (2004a) as a ‘deficit model’ in which it is assumed that teachers need to be provided with knowledge and skills which they did not already have and an ‘aspirational model’
which acknowledges that teachers who are already effective at what they do can build on this in ways that grow and renew their practice.

The current ‘working’ definition of professional learning for Australian teachers is stated on the AITSL website. Professional learning

“is the formal or informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice, and a school’s collective effectiveness, as measured by improved student learning, engagement with learning and wellbeing. At its most effective, professional learning develops individual and collective capacity across the teaching profession to address current and future challenges” (AITSL, 2012b).

This definition combines the ‘activity’ with the ‘demonstrated growth in practice’, however it is problematic because it seems to point in two quite different directions. On the one hand, the first sentence expresses professional learning as the acquisition of certain technical skills that teachers dispense in the classroom to effect student learning and that these effects can be measured directly. There also seems to be quite a learning gap between how improvements in ‘individual professional practice’ improve a ‘school’s collective effectiveness’. My experience in schools leads me to believe that producing an ‘effective’ school is not as simple as assembling a collection of individually ‘effective’ teachers. The second sentence hints at a definition of professional learning that sees such learning as the acquisition of professional judgment and wisdom that allows both individual teachers and teachers working together to respond to challenges as they arise.

Drawing on the NSWIT (2010) statement, this study defines professional learning as learning that enables growth of expertise that is evident in a teacher’s professional work. The requirement that learning be ‘evident’ in a teacher’s work requires that such learning transform the teacher’s work in some way. In order to do this, transformative professional learning might be defined as learning that “provides a supportive, but challenging forum for both intellectual and affective interrogation of practice”
It is the kind of learning that: allows teachers to question the assumptions they hold about knowledge and knowledge formation; enables teachers to grow and renew practices associated with their teaching work; and is most likely to assist teachers to respond creatively to the temporal and contextual challenges they face in educating students for an unknown future. It involves the teaching context and the knowledge required for “real and sustainable change” in a “combination of practices and conditions that support a transformative agenda” (Kennedy, 2005, p. 246).

Evidence of learning

The determination of what constitutes evidence is indeed problematic, especially for me with years of formal education in the ‘hard’ sciences and equally formative experiences investigating the epistemological ground of qualitative research. In the context of the hard sciences, the purpose of evidence is related to hypothesis testing. Achinstein (2000) working from a positivist conception of evidence as objective, draws on the investigation of the nature of cathode rays and the disagreement between Hertz and Thomson about what the evidence actually demonstrated to illustrate the frequent disagreements that arise between scientists. When Hertz passed an electric current between charged plates in a poorly evacuated tube in order to test the hypothesis that cathode rays were charged particles he observed no deflection and thus concluded that ‘cathode’ rays were waves rather than charged particles. Following the invention of a better gas pump, Thomson repeated the experiment to find that the cathode rays were indeed deflected. Achinstein points out that for many scientists,

Their disagreement lies in whether, or the extent to which, what has been observed, or the experimental result, supports, or provides evidence for, the hypothesis. Moreover, they seem to treat this disagreement as an objective matter one for which there is a right answer, and not one for which different people can have different right answers (p. 180).

What is important is that while there can be agreement about what has or has not been observed and described there may not be agreement over whether these observations support the hypothesis. Furthermore, such agreement, where it does exist, may be
heavily qualified. While Achinstein rejects philosophical conceptions of ‘evidence’ as being too ‘weak’ to be useful to scientists he does acknowledge that basically what we are searching for in evidence is a good reason to believe that a hypothesis is true. The good reason to believe however, remains dependent on who is judging the evidence and the paradigm from within which they make that judgment. The good reason to believe has been associated by others, working in the positivist tradition, with “availability, admissibility, and ‘goodness’ of a piece of evidence” (Baltag, Bryan, & Smets, 2014, p. 49). While mathematical proofs of logical propositions are offered in such work as a means of determining ‘goodness’ of evidence they are of little use for deciding ‘goodness’ of evidence that teacher professional learning is able to transform teaching work.

The fundamental question of whether it is possible for evidence to yield ‘objective’ knowledge, as in knowledge that will be the same no matter who judges the evidence or from what perspective they make the judgment, remains problematic. Many epistemologies, including that of institutional ethnography, view knowledge as ‘situated’ (Siedman, 2013) and ‘entangled’ (Lather & St Pierre, 2013) hence judgments about the ‘admissibility’ and ‘goodness’ of evidence that produce such knowledge are also situated and entangled. For the purposes of this inquiry, I am less concerned with evidence as hypothesis testing and more interested in evidence that serves the purpose of responding to a question. In this case, ‘how can we know that teacher professional learning can transform teaching practice?’ My expectation is that evidence related to such a question will necessarily be ‘situated’ and ‘entangled’.

Not wanting to sit in judgement of teachers, I have shifted the ‘burden’ of evidence onto the teachers. They are the ‘knowers’ (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; D. E. Smith, 2005) of their own work and therefore, it is they who will be encouraged through a dialogic interaction to make the decisions regarding the nature, admissibility and goodness of their evidence. For my part, I will attempt to lay out this evidence in a manner that will allow the reader to make their own situated judgment about whether it supports a justified belief that professional learning can transform teaching work.
Contextual factors

Neoliberalism and the ‘reform’ of education

Turning now to the possible impact of government policies on teachers’ work and learning, I want to draw attention to those aspects of the neoliberal agenda that have resulted in new forms of the documents that teachers refer to in relation to their work, namely curriculum and professional standards. It has been argued elsewhere (Lingard et al., 2013) that the driving force behind the government’s ‘education reform agenda’ is the rise of high stakes, standardized testing conducted both nationally and globally by organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), amongst others. The league table rankings based on the results of these standardized tests underpins the use of the tests as a form of “meta-policy” (Lingard et al., 2013, p. 540) to justify the introduction of policy texts such as national curricula and professional standards, that govern the work of teachers. In the case of Australia, The rhetoric surrounding recent educational reform measures such as The Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013a), The Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2012g) and NAPLAN (ACARA, 2013c), focuses on improving students’ learning and skill acquisition to equip them for life in the 21st century by ensuring the ‘quality’ of teachers. The ‘quality’ of teachers or of teaching is identified as the key factor (AITSL, 2012b, 2012c, 2012e) in effecting the goal that “all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9). While these texts refer to teacher quality and improving teacher quality they are “ambivalent” (Ryan & Bourke, 2013, p. 416) about whether or not there is actually a ‘problem’ with teacher quality in Australia. Interestingly, the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (AITSL, 2012e), a text related to the professional standards that is as yet to be enacted in most schools, leads its discussion of the importance of such a framework with the following:

Australia has a high performing education system that fares well on international comparisons. This has been achieved in large part through the
efforts of highly skilled and motivated teachers and school leaders over
generations. However, the rest of the world is not standing still (AITSL,
2012e, p. 2).

My focus here is on the connection between the Australian government’s adoption of a
market-based approach to standardizing education and the view that the purpose of
‘education’, or perhaps more appropriately ‘schooling’, is to produce a workforce for
the 21st century and thus guarantee Australia’s economic competiveness. This
approach sits in direct contrast to a purpose for education as the development of
critical consciousness in the interests of creating a more ethical and equitable society
(Friere, 1972). The Labor government between 2007 and 2010 introduced a national
schooling agenda entitled the ‘education revolution’ which Lingard (2010) describes as
a “hybrid mix of the neo-liberal with social democratic aspirations” (p. 129). He claims
that while much of the policy agenda relates to market-based accountability measures,
two major initiatives, the National Partnership Low Socio-Economic Status Schools and
the commissioning of the ‘Gonski’ review (Gonski et al., 2011) into school funding, were
clearly aimed at addressing social inequity. These “multiple and at times contradictory
tendencies within the rightist turn” (Apple, 2005, p. 272) are common features of
global education reform policy and stem from, what Apple claims, has been a successful
and creative stitching together of a variety of right wing interest groups all with the aim
of what he calls ‘conservative modernisation’ of social and educational policy. The
words of former Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, reinforce the government’s
view of the purpose of education around this time.

There are disturbing signs that countries in our region are getting in front of
us and we need to address that…If we are talking about today's children
tomorrow’s workers I want them to be workers in a high-skill, high-wage
economy where we are still leading the world. I don't want them to be
workers in an economy where we are kind of the runt of the litter in our
region and we've slipped behind the standards and the high-skill, high-wage
jobs are elsewhere in our region (Franklin, 2012).

Education is depicted here as a means of ensuring Australia’s place in the world
economy by developing students as human capital (Apple, 2007; Connell, 2013a). Absent from this statement is any reference to Aristotelian notions of educating citizens for praxis in order to live a ‘good life’ (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). It provides but one example of how Australian politicians have sought to present education as a matter of economic significance and technical efficiency thus denying any genuine political debate about prioritising the value of education (Clarke, 2012; Connell, 2013a).

Gillard’s statement typifies the way in which neoliberalism presents itself as ‘commonsense’ in promoting desirable goals like better education and greater wealth that few would argue against (Duggan, 2003; Torres, 2013) while eliminating any democratic discussion about the broader purposes of education, especially as they relate to concerns about social inequality (Connell, 2013b; Mills, 2015).

To date, the recommendations of the ‘Gonski review’ (Gonski et al., 2011) have not been taken up by the current government, nor has any alternative been offered in its place, as a possible means of assisting all young Australians to receive the education to which they are “entitled” (ACARA, 2012b, p. 10). The neoliberal policy agenda has been retained but there has been little sign that funding for education might be increased or redistributed in order to address what may be revealed, in terms of unequal learning outcomes, by these policies of explication and measurement. It is important then, to consider whom this neoliberal agenda hold responsible for addressing what could be revealed by these policies, particularly in terms of students’ learning. Clarke and Moore (2013) argue that it is teachers who will be held responsible because professional standards themselves represent a ‘fantasmatic logic’ of certainty in the chaotic world of teaching and learning. Thus, teachers will be held to account for the “(non)realisation of fantasmic visions of social harmony and economic fulfillment in an unruly and unpredictable world” (p. 493). The dystopian, neoliberal narrative of Australian economic decline relative to the rest of the world positions teachers in the “frontline of national economic defense and in the centre of educational reform, thus justifying the detailed mapping and scrutiny of their work” (Clarke & Moore, 2013, p. 488).
Curriculum as a mechanism for controlling teachers’ work

In terms of ‘policy borrowing’, Lingard (2010) reminds us of the historical significance of research around curriculum and standards as reform mechanisms originating particularly from the USA and the UK and I will draw on this body of research together with recent Australian research to inform discussion of their possible implications for teachers’ learning and practice in the Australian context. Within Australian versions of such policy documents related to national curriculum and professional teaching standards our attention is consistently drawn to the message that these reform policies are aimed at ensuring the kind of learning that will be required for the ‘21st century’ (ACARA, 2012a; AITSL, 2012b, 2012c, 2012e) and by implication, that this learning may be different to what has served us in the past. Taken as a suite of policies, the combined purpose, as it is stated, is to support the learning of students and the professional learning of teachers, in order to ensure quality teaching, into the 21st century.

In understanding curriculum as one part of ‘market-based’ reform and control, Reid’s (2003) work to renovate ‘labour process theory’ in order that it might serve as a meaningful lens through which to understand the focus and purpose of controlling teachers’ has proven useful. This link to labour theory is relevant in light of what Clarke (2012) identifies as the “hegemonic penetration of human capital theory in education” that is used to bolster an “unproblematic link between education and individual economic success” (p. 300). Reid tackles “an identification and analysis of what lies at the core of the labour process of... teachers” (p. 560) in Australia. He establishes that “control lies at the heart of labour process theory, that... teachers have a labour process, and that this labour process is defined by the curriculum” (p. 567). He then sets out the main motivations for controlling teachers as the need “to make sure that the teacher actually does some work”, “reducing the costs of production” and to develop “the capacity for social practice” (pp. 567-568). It is this last reason that makes the work of teachers both different from other kinds of work, particularly the kind of manufacturing work that labour process theory historically describes, and is highly political. Economic, political and cultural interests all feed into the production of an
educational settlement which may represent, at least partially, the views of less powerful groups but usually

An educational settlement incorporates the dominant discourse, legitimates particular sets of social relations and the ways in which these are organized—including the sanctioned forms of educational governance—and establishes a hegemonic view of the purposes of education. All these components are embedded in the curriculum, which is the centre piece of an education settlement (Reid, 2003, p. 570).

For Reid it is “the curriculum that lies at the heart of the labour process of teaching. This is the genesis of control of teachers” (p. 571). He does not offer any discussion here of the role that professional standards may have in the control of teachers but does make the recommendation that further research needs to examine how teachers are currently being controlled and what effect such control may be having on their work.

An opposing argument to mandated curriculum content as an object for controlling the work of teachers and ensuring compliance of both teachers and students with existing regimes of knowledge and power, has a long and well-documented history. It is an argument that envisages the emancipatory possibilities of placing students and teachers in a relationship as co-designers of the enacted curriculum (Friere, 1972; Grundy, 1987; Pinar, 1975; Skillbeck, 1984). In a detailed analysis of the framing paper, The Shape of The Australian Curriculum Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2010), Ditchburn (2012) offers little hope that the Australian Curriculum will prove to be a vehicle for emancipatory education. She argues cogently that the populist discourse of 21st century learning serves to mask a narrative that “places knowledge as something to be prescribed by ‘experts’; that situates teachers as policy implementers; and, importantly, fails to acknowledge the real and valid contributions of students or others in the development of curriculum” (p. 348). In short, this is a mandated curriculum that fails to actively work against a view of students as empty vessels waiting to be filled with
prescribed knowledge (Friere, 1972) and teachers, as the fillers, therefore have their work controlled.

The emancipatory potential of curriculum may relate more to the pedagogy employed to deliver the curriculum content than to the mandated content itself (Bruner, 1966; Friere, 1972). Given that curriculum delivery is enacted by teachers we must bear in mind that factors such as teachers’ dispositions toward centralised control, their skills and the available resources all impact on pedagogical choices (Marsh, 2009). A new curriculum, albeit a first-time national curriculum that “includes learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities that together support 21st century learning” (ACARA, 2013a), which equates to new statements about ‘what’ young Australians should learn but not to ‘how’ they might learn it, may provide teachers with sufficient scope to make decisions about appropriate pedagogy. It may, on the other hand, result in no change to teaching and learning practices but rather serve to add to the burden of ‘content’ and an accompanying focus on ‘coverage’ and thus inhibit transformation of pedagogical practices (Gardner & Dyson, 1994). We might assume that teachers’ capacity to grow and renew their pedagogical repertoires is more likely to be influenced by professional learning than by a change in curriculum policy documents (D. Ball & Cohen, 1999).

Professional standards as a mechanism for controlling teachers’ work and learning

Professional standards for teachers draw heavily on the rhetorical notions of ‘teacher effectiveness’, ‘teacher quality’ and ‘the crucial role of the teacher’ (AITSL, 2012f). Teachers and teacher effectiveness are positioned as central to their students’ academic success in the literature on teacher effectiveness, on which the government’s policies are heavily reliant, chiefly by controlling for all other factors (Ballou, Sanders, & Wright, 2004; Skourdoumbis, 2013). Hattie (2003), whose research has been influential in some circles, attributes approximately thirty percent of variance in student performance as being attributable to teachers when effects related to the students themselves, their home life, peer effects and other factors related to the school are controlled for. Yet, these other factors are consistently omitted from policy
documents concerned with improving learning outcomes for students. In a suite of policies influenced by notions of ‘performativity’ (S. Ball, 2004, p. 143), the standards are offered as a means of ensuring both teacher effectiveness and teacher quality but because of the way these terms are defined, this may present a possible complication for the assessment of teachers against the standards. Effective teachers we are told “can be a source of inspiration and, equally importantly, provide a dependable and consistent influence on young people as they make choices about further education, work and life” (AITSL, 2012f). As such, ‘effectiveness’ may be difficult to assess in any particular moment of a teacher’s work.

The statements included in various sets of professional standards set out one conception of what it means to be a quality teacher as an unproblematic view. Clarke & Moore (2013) draw on Lacan’s notion of the symbolic to describe the standards as having the “character of Lacan’s ‘dead letter’ of the law” where they appear “to refer to some ‘natural reality’ rather than (as is the case) a particular picturing of reality” (p. 490). A critical discourse analysis of the Australian and UK versions of professional standards conducted by Ryan and Bourke (2013) revealed, in both cases, a “behavioural-heavy” list “with little regard for attitudinal, emotional and intellectual dimensions of the trustworthy professional” (p. 421). In comparing these two sets of standards, they noted that the underlying structure of the Australian version is that of problem/solution where the ‘problem’, unsupported by any evidence, is the quality of teachers and the solution, again unsupported by evidence, is the standards. They find that “(m)anagerialism and regulation are dominant discourses in both Australian and UK documents” (p. 420). Further, Connell warns, “The framework is not only specified in managerialist language. It embeds an individualized model of the teacher that is deeply problematic for a public education system” (p. 220). While the national version of the professional standards alludes to teachers working and learning within collegial and networked relationships, the system of accreditation remains an individualized process. Ryan and Bourke (2013) claim that the strong modality of the wording of standards statements allows “no room for alternative positions” (p. 417). This lack of any alternative position to that described in the standards is also identified by Connell (2009) who discusses the lack of clarity around, for example, what might happen to a
teacher, in terms of their accreditation, who reflects critically on any particular standard and finds that it is unsuitable or inadequate for the context in which they are working. Thus, the standards legitimate a particular form of professional teacher (Bloomfield, 2006) and position teachers as “unquestioning supporters and implementers of a competency-based, outcome-oriented pedagogy related to the world of work” (Ryan & Bourke, 2013, p. 412).

An alternative view would see teachers as practitioners capable of reflection on their pedagogical practice and able to select and demonstrate evidence of how such reflection had led to growth and/or renewal of their practice. Ryan and Bourke’s (2013) analysis of the national standards identifies the missing discourse as one of ‘reflexivity’ or ‘deep reflection’ and maintain that the only representations of reflective practice contained in standards documents are “as a controlled activity, with ambiguous definitions and purposes” (p. 418). The kind of ‘transformative reflection’ or ‘reflexivity’ they argue for is an intensive mental and self-referential process that requires consideration of ideas in order to determine how to act in particular sets of circumstances (p. 413). It is this form of reflexivity, they claim, that is essential to teachers’ mediation of the diverse working conditions that exist in schools and communities. They focus attention on the importance of rethinking the nature of evidence of quality teaching and the processes associated with its collection as intrinsic to the kind of reflexive practice that denotes professionalism.

Understanding these elements of teacher practice, reflection and learning that leads to transformed practice together with the evidence that such transformation has occurred, is important to the problematic that drives my research. As I have outlined above, the current policy context particularly as it relates to curriculum and professional standards as mechanisms for controlling teachers’ work and learning, provides a new milieu in which to examine these issues. Important to the rhetoric employed in this new milieu is the notion of 21st century learning for students. It is less clear as to whether the aspiration for 21st century learning holds for teachers as well.
21st century learning

Prior to beginning this formal doctoral research project, my site-based ‘research’ activities through my everyday work with teachers alerted me to the frequent occurrence of the term ‘21st century learning’ in school policy documents, school talk – of teachers and those in formalized leadership or management positions – and within the official policy documents. I became increasingly aware that there was not a shared understanding amongst teachers and school leaders, of what ‘21st century learning’ was, other than it had something to do with technology. It was however, talked about as if it provided the guiding principle for how all matters related to schooling needed to change. I turn now to an examination of the term ‘21st century learning’, frequently invoked in the current educational context, as it occurs in locations that are relevant to teachers’ lives.

The notion of ‘21st Century learning’ has begun to figure as a ‘commonsense’ (Ditchburn, 2012) notion, whose implicit meaning is understood by all, in the governing texts of teachers’ professional lives and is therefore integral to the contextual landscape in which this study is situated. At issue, is how the term ‘21st century learning’ is described and understood by teachers. Popular culture is replete with images of what teaching and learning might be like in the 21st century and cannot be ignored as an important contributor to the struggle over teacher professional identity (C. Mitchell & Weber, 1999). In 2012, The Jetsons celebrated 50 years since its first screening on American television. The cartoon series depicted life for the nuclear family in the year 2063, as imagined by its creators living in the mid-20th century. Novak (2012) claims, based on his monitoring of Google Alerts of words and terms associated with the way we talk online about the future, that the series “remains our most popular point of reference when discussing the future”. In the last episode of Series 1, Elroy’s Mob (Novak, 2013), we see Elroy in his first grade classroom with his robot teacher, Ms Brainmocker, a ‘feminised’ artist’s impression of a robot. Students are seated individually on lecture theatre style chairs with some kind of control panel in front of them. Their attention is focused on the robot teacher at the front of the room. They sit passively facing the teacher and a blackboard on which is written, with chalk it appears, a complex mathematical equation. The image of 21st century learning created
here hints at lessons with demanding intellectual content, delivered in a didactic mode by a pre-programmed robot in classrooms where students have access to some sort of personal electronic device for uncertain purposes.

Anderson’s (2002) dystopian novel *Feed* depicts a contrasting vision of learning in the 21st century. In this future society, the majority of citizens in the USA have been fitted with an implant, ‘the feed’, that connects their brains directly to the ‘feednet’. Through the feed, each person continuously interacts with a personalized version of what we would recognize as an expanded Internet, to be bombarded with information, advertising and social media in a continuous, inescapable stream. Corporations, through the feed, control access to information and the mining of personal data. The school system, ‘SchoolTM’, is run by the same corporations with the aim of producing a compliant workforce for the purposes of corporate gain. This view of learning in the 21st century depicts students as passive, online recipients of a standardized curriculum, formulated externally to their context and personal interests, for the purpose of ensuring their country’s economic success.

The appeal of the depiction of 21st century learning in both the *Jetsons* and *Feed* is that they both contain elements we can identify with. Both give us a sense they might be dangerously close to the possible but both contain elements that we might hope remain improbable. An interesting contrast between these two depictions involves the imagined role of ICT (information and communication technology) in future learning. The view from the mid-20th century, as portrayed in the *Jetsons*, hints at the potential use of ICT but the specific details seem to be beyond imagining. The *Feed* on the other hand, takes the involvement of ICT to a somewhat frightening level. This rapid change in the possibilities for ICT provide an illustration of how dramatically our world has changed in the past 50 years but we should remember that these changes were imagined and actualized by individuals educated in the 20th Century. The focus on ICT as one of the key differences between 20th and 21st century learning is a significant marker in the discussion. The use of ICT is picked up in the AITSL promotional video *21st Century Education* (AITSL, 2012a). The video tells us that we are “living through an educational revolution” and that “the pace of change is staggering”. Over one quarter of
the video running time is spent stressing young people's increased use of technology in their daily lives followed by a relatively lengthy segment detailing their uncertain future. The solutions that are proffered, without justification, are a new 'online' curriculum and teaching standards.

The claim to '21st century learning', without explication of what it signifies, has so infiltrated the lexicon of the neoliberal reform agenda that it is at risk of being regarded as an attempt at the recuperation of educational ideals concerned with preparing students for their future life, taken in a broad sense, beyond school. It would seem that Australia is not alone however, in its inability to clearly articulate what constitutes 21st century learning. As part of the OECD/CERI project New Millennium Learners all OECD countries and regions were invited in 2009 to participate in a survey. The results from the 17 countries and regions that responded, including Australia, indicate that while reference is made to 21st century learning in most countries “regulations, guidelines or recommendations for compulsory education there are few specific definitions of these skills and competencies at national or regional level and virtually no clear formative or summative assessment policies for these skills” (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009, p. 4).

Without a clear description of how general principles of 21st century learning, as they are variously described, align with more detailed descriptions of possible characteristics of ‘21st Century learning’ it is difficult to understand what is expected or how to recognise when and where it is happening, for both students and teachers. We are unable to ascertain whether claims of 21st century learning represent something more than a discursive trick for the purpose of creating a sense of panic about uncertain futures and thereby justifying the neoliberal agenda for the marketisation of education (Stronach, 2010). A clearer description of ‘21st century learning’ may assist us to move past its invocation as the ‘commonsense’ (Ditchburn, 2012) solution to all that ails us in an educational sense. A solution that impedes deeper engagement with how learning might truly be different in a world that no longer resembles the one for which mass schooling was invented (C. Campbell & Proctor, 2014). Of interest to this study is what the research literature, reviewed in Chapter 2, might identify as the kind of professional learning that assisted teachers to transform their teaching work in the
late 20th century and early 21st century and whether such learning can continue within an educational agenda governed by performativity and accountability.

**Spaces of possibility**

Professional teaching standards, a national curriculum, standardized testing, the publication of school results on such standardized tests and rhetoric related to uncertain futures in the 21st century have been associated with the neoliberal education agenda. Connell (2013a) urges us, as educators not only to understand the possible effects of the neoliberal agenda but to give serious thought to education as “a social process of nurturing capacities for practice” that may establish “equal citizenship”, “mutual respect” and sustain trust (pp. 104-105) and thus work against what might be called the marketisation of education. In the case of education, with a significantly weakened union movement effectively “frozen out” (p. 110), as Connell describes it, of policy making processes, it is not immediately clear how this democratic ‘revolution’ against the neoliberal agenda might be enacted. Of interest to this study is how teachers are currently being affected by the marketisation of education and how, if at all, they are finding opportunities to nurture capacities for practice, of the kind envisaged by Connell, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and support. This may require teachers to actively work against the neoliberal agenda in an individual or coordinated manner or perhaps to find the gaps, as it were, in which they might pursue an alternative approach to learning about, and enacting their teaching practice.

Ways of working against market-driven neoliberalism have been grappled with by many post-Marxist scholars who have tried to imagine a post-capitalist society. In their rejection of the mode of production, people’s labour, as the sole basis for the formation of socialist identity, Laclau and Mouffe (2001) point to the possibilities of new subject positions that may lead to radical forms of democracy. In the case of the labour of teachers, as the mode of production of student learning, imagined ‘new subject positions’ may envisage teachers as the determiners of their professionalism. In order
for these new forms of subject position to arise however, a ‘space of resistance’ must be actively created (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Smith (2005) develops Marx’s ideas about the direct link between ‘individual owner’ and the capitalist enterprise to show how ‘corporate ownership’ has given rise to “management as a distinct function” (p. 15), management in which objective organisation replaces subjective organisation. She argues that it is objective organisation, tied to quarterly reporting of the stock exchange, which has generated the systems of performativity and accountability that pervade the capitalist model and replace subjective forms reliant on relationships of personal trust. Objective organisation, in turn, creates an altered role for ‘professions’ as “a method of guaranteeing training, credentials, and standards of practice in the dispersed settings of professional practice” (p. 17). For Smith, the possibility of finding a space of resistance lies in first understanding how the texts implicated in objective organisation coordinate “subjectivities, consciousness, activities, and relations among people” (2014, p. 6), particularly “at the point where changes have not yet been settled and where there is room for manoeuvre” (2005, p. 32). This inquiry into the governing influence of ‘boss texts’ on the actions of those engaged in ‘front line work’ (Griffith & Smith, 2014) is the aim of the approach Smith calls ‘institutional ethnography’ (2005). The relationship of institutional ethnography to this study will be discussed in more detail from Chapter 3 onwards.

Such spaces of resistance or possibility have also be considered as ‘everyday utopias’ (Gardiner, 2004, 2006) in critiques of everyday life that focus more on the development of the experiential conditions of human life than on the abstract control of productive forces. From Bakhtin and Bloch’s mutual interest in “what is” and “what could be” (2013, p. 71), Gardiner traces Marxist thought through the central European tradition, particularly as it relates to the thinking of Benjamin (1969), Debord (1987) and Lefebvre (2002; Lefebvre & Regulier, 1999), in order to examine the effects on everyday life of ‘enforced’ routine associated with capitalist modernity (2013, p. 217). From the seemingly incongruous concepts of ‘everyday life’ and ‘utopia’, Gardiner develops his argument that the ‘everyday’ can be a site for “the development of non-
alienated or emancipatory tendencies” (p. 26). He provides a working definition of ‘everyday utopianism’ as a

theoretical position that imagines utopia not as an ideal society located in some romanticized ‘Golden Age’, or in some distant imagined and perfected future understood in a ‘blueprint’ or ‘social engineering’ sense, but as a series of forces, tendencies and possibilities that are imminent in the here and now, in the pragmatic activities of daily existence (2006, p. 2).

As such, everyday utopia “seeks to engage successfully with the world in a genuinely transformative sense...rooted in the circumstances and experiences of daily life, with one foot in the ‘possible’ and the other in the ‘impossible’” (2013, p. 19). He draws our attention to the existence of spaces for resistance in terms of Lefebvre’s (2002) ‘moments’ which he describes as “flashes of perception into the range of historical possibilities that are embedded in the totality of being, but which cannot be disentangled from the activities of everyday life” (p. 215). In the sense of teachers’ work, ‘moments’ of everyday utopia might occur when reflection brings insight into the possibilities for transformation beyond the mundane or routine of a particular activity.

Cooper (2013) uses spaces including Speaker’s Corner, London and a Local Exchange Trading Scheme, to illustrate what she identifies as everyday utopias. These spaces however are, I believe, less like Gardiner’s concept of everyday utopia and more like Foucault’s (1986) concept of ‘heterotopia’, in that they represent ‘counter-spaces’ that exist in reality but are “absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about” (p. 24). Cooper uses these spaces to explain that she sees them working in the same way as everyday utopias, as per Gardiner, by “creating the change they wish to encounter, building and forging new ways of experiencing social and political life...building alternatives to dominant practices” (Cooper, 2013, p. 2). The criticism often leveled at this way of thinking about alternatives to hegemonic practices, she says, is that it does not support change in a scalable or generalisable way but focuses on the transformative potential of alternatives that are necessarily partial and contingent. These utopias are not about following an alternative ‘blueprint’ but are rather a way of
thinking about what might be possible given the existing conditions of practice. The unifying feature is that everyday utopias “all challenge basic presumptions about how things should work” (p. 4). Epistemologically, everyday utopias and Smith’s ideas of close examination of the social as the ongoing “coordinating of people’s activities on a large scale” (2006, p. 17) in order to reveal what might be as yet unnoticed spaces for resistance share a heritage in Marxist thought and Bakhtinian notions of the “‘dialogic’ qualities of both the human subject and society” (Gardiner, 2013, p. 73). Both emphasise the centrality of the everyday doings of people while rejecting any notion of the human subject as a means to an end.

Such spaces for resistance are already being created and exploited by teacher educators. Clarke (2012) draws on the thinking of Zizek (1989) to create a space in his work for ‘traversing’ fantasies that underpin neoliberal education policies. Within this space he and others use their involvement with pre-service teachers to encourage a close examination of hegemonic ideas embedded in such policies and raise the possibility that it is increased trust rather than increased accountability that lies at the heart of professionalism and educational excellence. Internationally, Apple (2005) draws our attention to the existence of local and regional groups, such as the National Coalition of Educational Activists in the U.S.A, that actively pursue counter-hegemonic work. Whether teachers can actively create a space of resistance or a space of possibility in which they pursue courses of action related to their learning that run counter to the hegemonic discourses of performativity and accountability is a ‘possibility’ I intend to explore in this study.

**Summary**

The types of government policies which contribute to the context in which this study is situated position teachers as the last in line of a management hierarchy that seeks to replace professional trust with standardisation of work processes, licensing, performance targets and accountability (Evetts, 2009) for what they teach and for the students’ results on standardized tests. The possibility of opportunities for teachers to engage with professional learning that enables them not only to question whether or
not students' needs are being met within such a regime but also to design appropriate learning experiences to meet identified needs may be impinged by such mechanisms of control and accountability. This is especially worth considering given that it is this same regime that 'licenses' the professional learning opportunities with which teachers are required to engage for a large portion of their accounted hours spent on professional learning. It seems that spaces for transformative professional learning would need to be ‘invented’ independently of a standardizing regime that may not, of itself, support such practices. Fortunately, “there are certainly enough lively minds in the teaching workforce to be confident that invention will come” (Connell, 2013a, p. 110).

In later chapters of this thesis I trace the ‘everyday’ work of eight teachers at the front line of teaching work in relation to how they learn to do their work in ways that they believe better meet the needs of their students and colleagues. Before this tracing begins however, a selection of literature related to research conducted in the late 20th century and early 21st century, and framed by an epistemological view that sees teacher learning as a situated and social experience, is reviewed in the next chapter. The purpose of this review is to examine not only how teachers learn to transform their work in order to better meet the needs of their students but also how we know this learning has resulted in transformed practice. Of particular interest to this study is the way in which previous research has considered evidence that teacher professional learning can and does transform teaching work.
Chapter 2: Teacher learning

The specific sets of activities, systems, and supports for learning we use in one context, with one set of teachers, may be quite different from those that would be necessary to achieve the same end in another context with a different set of teachers... Ultimately, we need more studies that investigate how the generative mechanisms of teacher learning appear in different combinations and sequences, with different weights, in different but concrete situations (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 394).

The terrain of prior research

This chapter reviews a selection of research conducted around the turn of the millennium in order to examine how teachers learn to transform their work in order to better meet the needs of their students. More particularly, what is of interest to this study is the way in which such research has considered evidence that teacher professional learning can and does transform teaching work.

I begin with an examination of several systematic reviews of research as a means of mapping the terrain of prior research about how teachers learn to transform their practice and how we know such transformation has occurred. In selecting the reviews for inclusion here, I was mindful of Andrews (2005) cautionary note that many such reviews are overly dependent on quantitative data and experimental designs, neglecting findings from research employing more interpretivist strategies. Thus, I have exercised care in selecting reviews that in most cases have been conducted within methodological frameworks that acknowledge the social and situated nature of teachers’ learning. There are instances however, where I draw on reviews, such as that of Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung (2007), which implement relatively restrictive selection criteria, in order to develop an overview of the international terrain of research pertinent to the framing of my study.
Classifying research about teacher learning

Borko (2004) reviews the terrain of research in the USA at the turn of the millennium from what she terms "a situative perspective" (p. 4). She defines this perspective on teacher learning in terms of teachers’ changing participation and use of knowledge in socially organised activities.

For teachers, learning occurs in many different aspects of practice, including their classrooms, their school communities, and professional development courses or workshops. It can occur in a brief hallway conversation with a colleague, or after school when counseling a troubled child. To understand teacher learning, we must study it within these multiple contexts, taking into account both the individual teacher-learners and the social systems in which they are participants (p. 4)

Borko’s analysis divides the research included in this review into three ‘phases’. Phase 1 research activities investigate the effects of an individual professional development program enacted at a single site and Phase 2 activities study the individual professional development program enacted by a number of facilitators at a number of sites. It is Phase 3 research activity however, that she considers pivotal to our developing understanding of teacher professional learning. Borko claims that ‘Phase 3’ research is required to provide evidence that different professional development providers can enact particular forms of professional learning with integrity in different settings. She describes it thus:

In Phase 3, the research focus broadens to comparing multiple professional development programs, each enacted at multiple sites. Researchers study the relationships among all four elements of a professional development system: facilitator, professional development program, teachers as learners, and context (p. 4)

She argues for the importance of this form of research to policy decisions about resource allocation and points out that to her knowledge “no Phase 3 research programs have been conducted, and none are currently underway” (p. 11). The reasons
for this she attributes to not only the enormous resources required for such a study but also to the fact that such studies are only appropriate “when well-defined interventions with demonstrated effectiveness already exist” (p. 12). Borko points out that up to the time of her review, most research about teacher professional learning in the USA was of Phase 1 type and generally concerned with middle school science, mathematics and literacy professional learning which may reflect an “historical unevenness in funding for research” (p. 12). From such Phase 1 research, Borko draws the following generalizations: teacher knowledge and practices can change through intensive professional development programs; strong professional communities can foster teacher learning; records of practices are powerful contexts for teacher learning. It is important to note here that the 'records of practice' referred to here include “artifacts such as instructional plans and assignments, videotapes of lessons, and samples of student work” to “enable teachers to examine one another's instructional strategies and student learning, and to discuss ideas for improvement” (p. 7). They are not to be confused, however with evidence collected for the purpose of linking professional learning to change in practice. Borko highlights the important contributions to knowledge made by all three phases of research and stresses that they need not be conducted in a linear sequence. She also draws attention to the possibility that new tools for data collection and analysis may be required in order to manage large, longitudinal, Phase 3 type research projects.

Given that most research about teacher professional learning seems to be of the type classified as ‘Phase 1’ it would seem productive to continue here with an examination of the findings resulting from large scale, systematic reviews of such research. The Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) conducted by Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung (2007) took international and New Zealand research as its scope in order to “promote teacher learning in ways that impact on outcomes for the diversity of students in our classrooms” (p. xxiii). The review analysed research, situated in the social context in which teachers work, against a framework of characteristics including: pedagogy and content of the professional learning opportunity; responses of diverse teacher learners; the impact of changed teaching practice on diverse student learners. The selected studies were required to meet a set of methodological criteria that included “when
identifying the characteristics of effective professional learning and development experiences for teachers. Effectiveness was judged from documented outcomes for students” (p. 15). The authors acknowledge that as a consequence many learning opportunities that might result in changed practice, notably more ‘informal’ opportunities that are rarely documented in the ways required for inclusion in this review, are therefore, not included (p. xxiv).

Timperley et al. focus their explanatory efforts on what they call two ‘black boxes’ (2007, p. 7). The first of these black boxes concerns the relationship between teachers’ actions and students’ learning. The second black box, which is more pertinent to my developing argument, is that which exists between particular forms of professional learning and changed teaching practice. They find that “what matters is that teachers consider their teaching practices and the theories that underpin them, in order to maximize their students’ opportunities to learn—and that they test the effectiveness of their efforts in terms of student outcomes” (p. 201). Additionally, they find that the acquisition of these knowledges can be fostered through participation in ‘professional learning communities’ or structured professional groups. They caution however, that some of the research included in their review demonstrates “that it is possible for teachers to be given generous amounts of time to collaborate and talk together, only to have the status quo reinforced, with change messages misunderstood, misrepresented, or resisted” (p. 201).

In terms of gaps in the evidence, Timperley et al. identify that while: there exists “extensive empirical evidence and theoretical development relating to children’s learning, what promotes it, and what limits it. The empirical evidence relating to the professional learning of teachers is sparse”; “we have identified the qualities of effective professional learning experiences, we have been unable to say much about the qualities of effective providers because the studies usually did not consider the matter”; tertiary institutions are involved in ongoing teacher education, the evidence related to their role “is very thin” (p. 228). In further analysis and discussion of the findings from the BES, Timperley & Alton-Lee (2008) state “there is a foundation for policymakers to progressively have confidence in making investments in the kinds of
professional development that, given the conditions of effective ongoing professional inquiry, evaluation, and development, can make a difference to the success and wellbeing of all of our children” (p. 361) thus reinforcing their perception of the importance of a more complete understanding of the characteristics of ‘effective’ professional learning.

**Consensus on characteristics of professional learning**

A number of reviews of research concerned with teacher professional learning (Borko, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008; Timperley et al., 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009; Wilson & Berne, 1999) provide support that there is indeed “a consensus about at least some of the characteristics of professional development that are critical” to teacher professional learning that ultimately impacts on student learning (Desimone, 2009, p. 183). The agreed characteristics about what makes for effective professional learning include opportunities that address both shared and individual learning and can be summarised as:

1. Intensive professional development programs (intensive workshop series followed by year long ongoing support) can help teachers increase their knowledge and change their instructional practices. A focus on content and how students learn that content together with follow-up have the greatest impact on teacher knowledge.

2. Duration of the teacher professional learning activity affects ‘opportunity to learn’ factors. Opportunity to learn factors include content, follow-up, active learning- collaboration, feedback and reflection.

3. Opportunities for active learning (including observing expert teachers or being observed with opportunities for feedback and discussion) and reflection have the greatest impact on practice. Examining records of classroom practice are powerful tools for facilitating teacher change.

4. Coherence- the extent to which the knowledge targeted by the professional learning opportunity is consistent with teachers’ knowledge and beliefs. Alternatively, this could be framed as the opportunities provided for teachers to
explore their knowledge & beliefs in relation to the focus of the professional learning activity.

5. Strong communities of practice can foster teacher learning and instructional improvement.

In relation to item 5 of the list above, while school principals and sub-groups of teachers within schools may claim to be a ‘community of practice’ or a ‘professional learning community’, such designations do not of themselves support teacher learning. Hord & Sommers (2008), propose a specific set of conditions, listed below, that must exist before the claim to ‘professional learning community’ can result in effective professional learning that can have the greatest impact on improving student learning.

A professional learning community displays:

• Shared beliefs, values and vision (focused on student learning)
• Shared and supportive leadership
• Collective learning and its application (to address students’ learning needs)
• Supportive conditions (structural and relational)
• Shared personal practice

As Kennedy (2011) states, these communities do not arise through a process of spontaneous generation but through work that is necessarily collaborative in the sense of teachers engaging with others on a common problem or task, for example, through school-based inquiry, to address a shared problem. Collaborative opportunities, she notes, are not the same as opportunities for co-location for example, participants at an in-service course, or co-operation, for example, stage or subject groups discussing curriculum, or agreeing to implement a particular pedagogical approach, often based on ready made materials.

It would seem that a rich and detailed description of the forms of teacher learning that are believed to transform teaching practice exists and that there is broad agreement on the features of such learning. Desimone (2009) goes further to suggest a “core conceptual framework for studying the effects of professional development on teachers and students” (p. 185) based on her version of the ‘agreed’ characteristics of effective professional learning. She claims that utilization of such a framework for further
research would strengthen theorising about both teacher change and enhanced student learning resulting from teacher professional learning. There is however, some concern about the underlying assumptions that support this apparent consensus around the characteristics of effective professional learning. The first is the presumed connection between teacher professional learning and improvement in student learning. According to Desimone (2009, p. 183), "We do not have sufficient evidence to indicate which features of professional development are effective for eliciting improvements in student learning". The assumption that teacher learning impacts on student learning is, according to Opfer and Pedder (2011), largely underpinned by a single piece of seminal research conducted by Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, Chiang and Loef in 1989 which found that students performed better if their teachers had participated in an “80-hour cognitively guided instruction” rather than a “4-hour professional development program” (p. 384). The second concern is the assumption that the existence of these agreed characteristics in any professional learning opportunity necessitates teacher learning. One possible implication for future research is the need for a shift in focus from identification of characteristics of professional learning thought to be useful to research aimed at developing an understanding of the connection between teachers’ learning opportunities and their practice.

The ‘Goldilocks Principle’

Opfer and Pedder (2011), published the results of an extensive, systematic review of extant literature (up to and including 2007) conducted for the Training and Development Agency for Schools in England (TDASE). Their frustrations with initial reviewing work for TDASE led them to adopt a complexity theory framework for the review reported on here. Complexity theory acknowledges the contextually situated, partial and contingent nature of knowledge about teachers’ work and learning. It also acknowledges the "simultaneity of the knower and the known" (2011, p. 388) as knowledge is created through the knower’s interactions with other elements of the learning system. The review, they claim, brought together various strands of research related to teacher learning that would not usually be brought into dialogue with each other. They were particularly interested in the “impact that learning experiences have
on their (teachers’) knowledge and changes in classroom practice” (p. 376). The review sought to elaborate “the identified relationships in the literature on teacher learning and teacher professional development to unpack how they have their effect” (p. 382). It is this focus on unpacking or elaborating the relationship between teacher learning and its effects that makes this review of particular interest to my developing survey of the terrain of research on teacher professional learning.

The bulk of the research reviewed by Opfer and Pedder, they claim, assumes that some measure of teacher change resulting from forms of activity is teacher learning (p. 377) and that this underlying epistemological assumption about teacher professional learning is flawed. They claim that most research views teacher learning as both a serial and additive process (p. 378) more related to sequence of activities and duration, as opposed to a cyclic process. They call this a ‘product-process’ approach resulting from simplistic constructs of teacher learning that “fail to consider how learning is embedded in professional lives and working conditions” (p. 376). As they point out, they are not the first systematic reviewers to make this observation. In fact, Borko (2004) and Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008), discussed above, make similar claims. It is Opfer and Pedder’s stated opinion that the review conducted by Desimone (2009) falls into this trap by failing to account for

“reports in this literature of teachers attending professional development with all the characteristics of effectiveness and yet learning or change does not occur. Conversely, we wondered why are there reports that some teachers learn and change via activities that do not have the identified characteristics of effectiveness? (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 377)

One of the aims of the Opfer and Pedder review was to avoid repeating what they saw as an inherent error in much of the research they were reviewing, namely, issues associated with aggregation of research that lead to a loss of information regarding scale and intensity of factors purported to affect teacher learning. For example, collaboration, as discussed above, is a factor thought to support teacher professional learning. Little’s (1990) research however, demonstrates that too much collaboration
can have the effect of stifling inventiveness and ensuring adherence to group norms, thus intensity of the factor, ‘collaboration’, is critical. The importance of getting the combination and intensity of factors ‘just right’ in order that learning occurs has been referred to as the ‘Goldilocks Principle’ (Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993). Opfer and Pedder shifted the focus of their literature review from a conceptualisation utilized in previous reviews of a “cause-and-effect approach”, to one that is focused on “causal explanation”, that is, research that examines “under what conditions, why and how teachers learn” (p. 378). They included both empirical and theoretical research in the review but excluded research or evaluation of specific programs or learning techniques and also theoretical material that did not reference empirical research.

Opfer and Pedder utilized complexity theory in order to avoid “underplaying the complexity of the problem” of teacher professional learning which “leads to focus on the micro context (individual teachers or individual activities of programs) to the exclusion of influences from meso (institutional) and macro (school system) contexts” (2011, p. 379). Through a focus on “why teacher learning may or may not occur as a result of professional development activity” (p. 382), they consider the ‘contextualised’ nature of knowledge, teaching and learning together with the ‘decontextualised’. They claim that it is consideration of the decontextualised that results in recognition of patterns across the contextualised and that these patterns support useful generalizations. They identify “three overlapping and recursive systems involved in teacher professional learning: the teacher, the school and the activity”.

In terms of the features comprising the professional learning ‘activity’, they support the ‘consensus’ discussed above. They caution however, against assumptions that the presence of particular features guarantee effective learning. For example, because much of the research demonstrates that teachers “need time to develop, absorb, discuss, and practice new knowledge” there is a tendency to extrapolate to conclusions that suggest teachers learn best when the activity is “sustained and intensive rather than brief and sporadic” (p. 384). This leads to an assumption that activities that extend over time are therefore, effective. Ultimately, what is required, they claim, in order to predict effective teacher learning is recognition that:
1. features may work together in different ways, under different circumstances, in different contexts;
2. variation in intensity of features plays an important role;
3. there is a reciprocal relationship between the system of activities in which teachers engage and the systems that moderate and mediate these activities in relation to teacher learning and change (pp. 386-387).

Considerations of why teachers learn and change, according to Opfer and Pedder, tend to assume a particular linear sequence for the relationship between change in beliefs, knowledge and practice. The fact that these assumed linear sequences differ one from the other leads to significant challenges for finding agreement amongst causal studies. Their complexity theory approach allows for many different conceptions of the way learning effects might be achieved and thus recognises the complex and highly individualised interactions taking place between the overlapping systems that result in any one teacher’s learning. In the conduct of this review they find that in terms of ‘evidence’ that teachers’ learning results in transformed practice, “few of these studies empirically connected the specific learning activities to specific changes in teacher belief. Fewer still go further to connect the learning activity to change in learning orientation and change in subsequent teaching practice” (p. 390). This is a significant finding and one that will inform design considerations for this study. If most of the existing research concerned with teacher professional learning does not extend to examining the impact of such learning on teachers’ work then there is a ‘gap’ in our researched knowledge that warrants further inquiry.

Causal connections between ‘characteristics of effective professional learning’ and change in teaching practice have also been questioned by Webster-Wright (2009) and Lieberman & Mace (2010) in reviewing a similar body of research to that of the Opfer and Pedder (2011) review. Webster-Wright extends her review to include research related to professional learning across a number of professions including teaching, nursing, engineering and architecture. She finds that the apparent consensus on characteristics of effective ‘PD’ (professional development) is shared across professions but “has had limited impact on PD practices” (p. 73) and that, as previously
asserted by Wenger (1998), “many PD experiences across professions still seem predicated on the assumption that learning consists of discrete finite episodes with a beginning and end” (p. 704). She argues for a shift in the conceptualisation of professional learning “from development to learning” to allow for the better understanding of “dilemmas in the current context for learning and individual variability in professional ways of being that shape learning” (p. 728). The Leberman & Mace (2010) review includes a greater focus on research related to the development of groups or communities in which teachers learn together. They remind us that teachers “have long perceived professional development, though well intentioned, to be fragmented, disconnected, and irrelevant to the real problems of their classrooms” (p. 77). Lieberman & Mace go on to say that their focus on the development of learning communities has deepened their understanding of “the complexity of creating the conditions for community and the complicated way that interactions over time changed both the relationships and the teachers’ ability to work in a group and learn together” (p. 80). Thus, some of the identified characteristics for effective learning are present – working collaboratively on a common task, duration, coherence, active learning – but there is also a strong acknowledgement of the complex and complicated ways in which these factors interact.

Consistent with a view that sees the importance of both the presence and strength of factors involved in teacher learning, Kennedy (2005, 2011) focuses on the relationship of professional learning to knowledge, power relationships and context in her exploration of collaborative continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers in Scotland. The research she reports on relates to that undertaken within the Learners, Learning and Teaching Network (LLTN) as part of the Applied Educational Research Scheme in Scotland and applies “social learning theory and the concept of community of enquiry to the exploration and enhancement of learning and teaching” (Kennedy et al., 2008, p. 400). At the time, Scottish teachers were involved in the introduction of a chartered teaching program which brought with it changes to teachers’ work via different pathways for becoming accredited as a teacher. As Kennedy states, “in current education discourse in Scotland, there is an emphasis on professional action that is not always supportive of what is perceived to be ‘academic’ as opposed to ‘practical’” (p.
The use of the term ‘professional’ here refers to modes of education for teachers that emphasise the practice-based element of teaching, tending to ignore issues associated with personal epistemology, values and beliefs, and lead to what Kennedy describes as a “discourse of anti-intellectualism” and “accusations of the irrelevance of the ‘academic’ work undertaken by universities” (p. 238), particularly in relation to the provision of award-bearing ongoing teacher education. I will expand on research related to the role of universities in teacher professional learning later in this chapter.

Kennedy (2005) explores a range of international research literature framed by concerns for the social and situated nature of learning from around the turn of the millennium together with specific examples from the Scottish context to propose a framework of types of professional learning opportunity (See Table 1, below). The framework identifies and classifies nine “key models ... according to their capacity for supporting professional autonomy and transformative practice” (Kennedy, 2005). It is not intended as an exhaustive list but is proposed as a way of using the “dominant characteristics” (p247) of various professional development opportunities to group and thus compare them. The appeal of the framework for my research lies, as Kennedy explains, in its exploration of the degree to which professional development “is perceived and promoted as either an individual endeavour related to accountability, or as a collaborative endeavour that supports transformative practice” (p247). She claims that her framework allows for analysis of the “purpose and the potential outcomes” (p235) of professional development. The Kennedy framework therefore, may allow for both an analysis of current professional development opportunities and, through the examination of “potential outcomes”, a prediction of the degree of resultant professional learning that might be manifested in observable changes in classroom practice.
Table 1: Spectrum of CPD models (Kennedy, 2005, p.248)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of CPD</th>
<th>Purpose of model</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The training model</td>
<td>Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The award-bearing model</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The deficit model</td>
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<tr>
<td>The cascade model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The standards-based model</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coaching/mentoring model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The community of practice model</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The action research model</td>
<td>Transformative</td>
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<tr>
<td>The transformative model</td>
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The ‘transmission’ models presuppose teacher learning as an individual act of cognition. These models are most often skills-focused (the how?) and sometimes knowledge-focused (the what?) as well but ignore both context and any consideration of the why? (Nieto, 2003) All of these models are compatible with both a centralized and a standardised approach to teacher professional development. The ‘transitional’ through ‘transformative’ models indicate that teachers may be working together in order to learn. The standards-based model fits with the approach currently being implemented across Australia. The coaching/mentoring model takes a variety of forms but the commonality is found in the importance of the one-to-one relationship which generally exists between two teachers. Coaching may be seen to be more skills-based while mentoring may involve counseling and friendship as well as a novice-expert relationship but in both forms the quality of the interpersonal relationship is crucial. The community of practice model involves more than two people and does not necessarily require confidentiality as for coaching/mentoring. It relies on a social theory of learning, “recognizing that learning within a community of practice happens as a result of that community and its interactions, and not merely as a result of planned learning episodes such as courses.” All of the models in this group have the potential to “perpetuate dominant discourses in an uncritical manner” but they are classified as transitional because they may, under certain circumstances, “act as powerful sites of transformation”.

Increasing capacity for professional autonomy
The action research model, the first model in the sequence viewed as having transformative potential, involves teachers as researchers in the study of a social situation in order to both understand and improve actions within that situation. It allows teachers to ask critical questions of their practice but Kennedy notes that “Sachs (2003) queries the extent to which it allows teachers to ask such critical questions of the political determinants that shape the parameters of their practice” (2005, p. 246).

It is the transformative model that is of primary interest to the discussion, raised by Opfer and Pedder (2011), of the importance of combinations and intensities of factors involved in teacher professional learning. This is because the transformative model is not actually a separate model but rather “a combination of practices and conditions that support a transformative agenda”. A community adopting a transformative model would take ‘learning’ or ‘inquiry’ as their defining characteristic rather than ‘practice’ as a means of “asserting a much more proactive and conscious approach” to integrating a range of models in order to meet teachers’ learning needs. This model could provide “an antidote to the constricting nature of the standards, accountability and performance management agenda” (Kennedy, 2005, pp. 237-247). It must be noted here that the development of the framework (Kennedy, 2005), described above, and the research surrounding it’s use (Kennedy, 2011; Kennedy et al., 2008) relied on interview data from teachers and other ‘key informants’ as to their ‘perceptions’ about useful professional learning. Data was not collected regarding any perceived or observed change in teachers’ practice resulting from such learning.

Mindful of the significance of contextualised, embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 2002) learning raised in each of the research reviews thus far, I will examine more closely research, particularly from the Australian context, associated with three pedagogies for teacher learning; collaborative practitioner inquiry, school-university partnerships, and cross-generational mentoring. These three pedagogies share something of the complex and cyclical nature of professional learning, identified by Opfer and Pedder (2011) as having the capacity to transform practice and they address matters of personal ontology, power relationships and context (Kennedy, 2005) through their
embeddedness in teachers’ lives and work. My purpose here is to identify what claims research makes about these pedagogies for teacher learning but more importantly, to learn from such previous research where the gap exists in connecting learning to practice. That is, the connection between the intended learning for teachers, the learning reported by teachers, and the associated evidence of such learning as it is expressed through teachers’ practice.

Embedded professional learning

Practitioner inquiry

Collaborative teacher inquiry or practitioner inquiry is a form of professional development in which teachers might genuinely collaborate in order to learn. It “is a way for teachers to know their own knowledge” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 45) and as such provides a structure for designing contextually sensitive professional learning that allows teachers to engage critically with their knowledge for, of and in practice, and, as Day and Sachs (2004b, p. 23) add, of themselves. According to Carr & Kemmis (1986), the “notion of the ‘self-monitoring teacher’ was based on Stenhouse's views of the teacher as researcher and as an ‘extended professional’” (p. 166) and it is this notion of the teacher investigating her/his own practice that has contributed to the rise of interest in inquiry-based teacher professional learning over the last twenty years or more. Reflecting on her involvement in the Innovative Links Project and National Schools Networks, Sachs posits “teacher inquiry gives teachers opportunities to break with conventional wisdom about the nature of practice itself and stimulates them to rethink how they can improve their practice” (2000, p. 89). It is this kind of collaboration that gives rise to professional learning communities which, when they last long enough, are “focused on critical issues of school reform, they place educational practice at their centre, providing the kind of social and professional nourishment that leads many members to invest time, effort and commitment far beyond what they give to the usual professional development opportunities” (Lieberman & Grönlind, 1996, p. 41). Practitioner inquiry involves teachers in a process whereby they focus on what they: know about the learning of their students; examine their current practice; investigate the effect of a change in practice on student
learning; reflect on the consequences of their action and plan for further action; and importantly, to have autonomy in their learning (Koshy, 2005).

“Teacher inquiry is in its very nature transformative in its intent” (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009, p. 98) but many would argue that the transformative agenda has been hijacked for one of government funding for practitioner inquiry for the purposes of ensuring compliance (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Kemmis, 2006; Mockler, 2011) and as such, has become a tool for implementation of government policy. Still, the goal of transformative professional learning through practitioner inquiry is highly prized and worth striving for because it is based on a vision for professional learning initiatives that is democratic, participatory and inexpensive. This vision of professional learning is intentionally local, humble, sustainable and intended to nourish both individuals and their communities. But is predicated on a vision of sharing your practices with others (Liebermann & Mace, 2010, p. 86).

Practitioner inquiry fulfills the description of continuing professional development (CPD), provided by Kelchtermans (2004) as

a learning process resulting from meaningful interaction with the context (both in time and space) and eventually leading to changes in teachers’ professional practice (actions) and in their thinking about that practice (p. 220).

This “action aimed at self-conscious change of people’s circumstances and of themselves” leads Kemmis (2010, p. 11) to describe critical participatory action research as a “revolutionary practice” after Marx, on a smaller scale. In terms of the characteristics of effective professional learning discussed above, practitioner inquiry fairs very well on matters of opportunities to learn, duration, coherence and its provision of a collaborative focus that may lead to the establishment and maintenance of a professional learning community. Practitioner inquiry does not assume that there is a linear relationship between these factors and change in practice but rather allows for their complex interaction in ways that are responsive to context and the personal
ontologies and learning needs of the teachers involved. The ‘evidence’ collected during and as a result of practitioner inquiry is generally specified and reflected upon by teachers themselves as part of the inquiry process. It is most often related to the problem that inspired the inquiry and therefore, focused on an aspect of student learning or welfare. Some teachers however, go on to publish their inquiries and these reports can be powerful evidence of teachers’ professional learning. For example Henderson’s (2014) article detailing the learning that resulted for her and two colleagues as a result of their collaborative practitioner inquiry.

A rare study of teachers’ individual learning in a collaborative inquiry setting conducted over the course of one year (Meirink, Meijer, & Verloop, 2007) examined teachers’ reports of learning related to their reported changes in knowledge and /or classroom behaviour. It was determined that only one learning sequence arising from collaboration in order to become familiar with what other teachers were doing, described as ‘experimenting with other teaching methods’ (p. 156), resulted in teachers reporting a change in their classroom behaviour. All other sequences in which teachers shared and discussed practice resulted in teachers reporting a change in cognition; knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, but not a change in behaviour. The most frequently reported collaborative learning in which teachers became familiar with other teachers’ methods resulted in teachers reporting ‘confirmation of own teaching method’ (p. 156). Observations of teachers’ classroom practice by ‘researchers’ were not included as a method in this study. The study relied instead on teacher self-reporting and as the authors note, this may distort results given that teachers may not be aware that their practice has changed in response to their learning. What is significant here is that ‘collaboration’ between teachers, a recognised characteristic of effective professional learning as discussed above, may lead to a perception on the part of the collaborating teachers that their knowledge has changed or grown but not the perception that their practice has changed.
School and university partnerships

School and university partnerships focused on classroom practice are thought to be powerful arrangements for professional learning on both sides of the partnership. This form of partnership has potential for resolving the issue of ‘who mentors the mentor?’ (Cameron, Mulholland, & Branson, 2013, p. 382) thus enhancing the professional learning of the within-school mentor of professional learning communities. In addition, Sachs (2000), reporting on such partnerships conducted in Australia in the 1990’s and known as The Innovative Links Project, describes the new skills developed by both teachers and their academic partners which enable them to take an active role in their professional learning. These skills include:

- establishing and developing new roles (critical friend, resource person, sounding board, advocate etc);
- establishing new structures (advisory groups, course writing teams, paper writing teams);
- working on new tasks (proposal writing, documenting practices, curriculum planning, public presentations);
- creating a culture of inquiry, where professional learning and dissemination are expected, sought after, rewarded and made an integral and ongoing part of institutional and personal life (Sachs, 2000, p. 90).

According to Darling Hammond (1998), the reason that this powerful learning does not happen in the school classroom or university classroom when they are disconnected from each other is because

The “rub between theory and practice” (Miller and Silvernail, 1994) occurs most productively when questions arise in the context of real students and work in progress, and where research and disciplined inquiry are also at hand (p. 8).

Thus, highlighting the importance of accessing and developing different forms of teacher knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) through a focus on students’ learning in a particular context.
Reflecting on the ways in which teachers and university faculty worked together across two school sites, Mitchell, Hayes, & Mills (2009) argue that “the interactions between teachers and researchers in these two cases enabled ideas, expertise and knowledge to be developed and transferred across two systems... in multi-directional ways and in ways that served professional learning purposes for both the school and university participants” (p. 17). In order for this to happen, careful attention to both context and power relationships was required. In one of the case study schools, the university academic had worked within the school across a number of consecutive government funded initiatives requiring her/him to take on different roles at various times. This variation in roles from researcher to 'critical friend' required a nuanced understanding of the power relationships involved in the change that were particular to this context. In both school cases, teachers and university faculty were involved in developing written documentation of their professional knowledge and practice. This rendering of knowledge as “explicit and public...represents a variation from the ways segmented and individualized discourses within schools can render teachers’ knowledge as tacit and private” (p. 16). The writing process and its products provided professional learning opportunities for both teachers and university faculty. The products constitute ‘evidence’ linking back to the learning and the intention of the learning through the partnership experience.

**Cross-generational learning as transformative mentoring**

An example, in the Australian context, of research that demonstrates how teacher professional learning and evidence of transformed practice may be simultaneously examined, can be found in the Australian Research Council funded project *Teachers Investigate Unequal Literacy Outcomes: Cross-Generational Perspectives 2002-2004*. Reporting on this research, Comber (2006) identifies the project “as a site for ‘teacher education’-induction and renewal” (p. 64) due to the opportunity it provided for “reciprocal mentoring for one of the most difficult problems teachers face - unequal student outcomes” (p. 65). The first characteristic of this project that supported ‘teacher education’ is the ‘reciprocal mentoring’. It occurred between the early career teachers who were recruited first for the project and the experienced teacher with 25-35 years of experience that each new teacher invited to be their co-researcher. Often in
mentoring models, particularly those used for induction processes, one party is considered to be the novice or dummy but in this project each partner in the mentoring relationship brought a different but equally valuable set of skills, “perspectives, assumptions, and ambitions” (p. 65). The second characteristic is that the problem the project sought to address was highly complex; related not only to teachers’ work in the classroom but also to education as developing capacities for “individual and collective self-expression, self-development and self-determination” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 24). Comber sees this recognition of teaching as a complex problem as vital to the provision of teacher education if we expect teachers “to show up and...stay for the long haul” (p. 66). It illustrates how teachers might take collective responsibility for the development of their own and each other’s praxis. In this case, praxis could be defined in both an Aristotelian sense, as “action that is morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field” as well as in the post-Marxian sense of “history making action” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 4) or action that has the potential to transform (Kemmis, 2010, p. 9).

The Comber (2006) study attends to teacher learning as a collaborative and social process that has potential to change classroom practice. The learning experience related to a complex, contextualised problem and occurred over an extended period of time with many opportunities for reflection, experimentation, trial and modification. It utilized the ‘expert’ knowledge of both experienced and new-scheme teachers while simultaneously providing opportunities for new learning for both of them through the involvement of an external ‘critical friend’ as a fellow learner. Teachers demonstrated their transformed practice to each other and to the researcher. The professional learning reported in this research demonstrates strong links between the intended teacher learning, the learning reported by teachers and the provision of evidence of such learning.

In their review of literature associated with the mentoring of pre-service and beginning teachers Wang & Odell (2002) focus on contexts in which experienced teachers were assigned to work with ‘novices’ and ask questions associated with the ‘what’ of mentoring practices in relation to novices’ learning to teach in ways that align with
professional standards. While the focus of cross-generational mentoring for the purpose of teaching ‘to the standards’ in this study contrasts with the focus on a contextualised, complex problem in the Comber (2006) study, the findings are of contemporaneous interest to my study because of their relationship to professional standards for teachers. Wang & Odell note that research in the area of mentoring has several limitations including the need for “more creative ways to capture the relationships between mentors’ preparation, their knowledge of teaching and mentoring, their mentoring practice, and the quality of novices’ learning to teach. As reflected in this review, many studies capture such connections by relying on fragmented information, inferences, and self-report” (p. 535). They assert that existing research is therefore, incapable of providing a strong evidence base for successful mentoring or mentor preparation programs.

Evidence of learning

In several studies, researchers have based their assertions about the kind of professional learning that makes a difference to teaching practice solely on teachers’ perceptions gathered through questionnaires and/or interviews (Cameron et al., 2013; Choi, 2013; Pedder, James, & MacBeath, 2005; Wells, 2014; White & Southwell, 2003; Yates, 2007). In some cases, researchers have reported their concerns that the teachers’ perceptions may be less than trustworthy. One reason given for this is the possibility that teachers find it hard to identify the link between learning and transformed practice (McMeniman, Cumming, Wilson, Stevenson, & Sim, 2000). Some studies have sought evidence of teacher learning by observing teachers’ classroom practices with a view to identifying predetermined indicators of learning that might be expected to result from a program of professional development (Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002; Gunel, 2008; Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2014; Windschitl, 2002b). In these studies, the selection of the learning focus, and control over the selection and judgment of ‘evidence’ of teacher learning resided with the researcher. Rarely have teachers themselves controlled the nature and demonstration of evidence of their learning.
Professional standards and evidence of learning

The observations made by Opfer and Pedder (2011) concerning the lack of empirical connection between teacher professional learning and change in teaching practice can be further explored through a number of Australian studies that also considered the effects of various forms of professional teaching standards. Procedures for certification, accreditation and maintenance of accreditation of teachers against professional standards (AITSL, 2012e, 2014a; BOSTES, 2015a) require teachers to develop portfolios of evidence that they have met the standards and that they have maintained standards through professional learning, choices about which have been guided by the professional standards. The texts describing these processes of accreditation seek to govern from a distance (D. E. Smith, 2006) the ‘what’ the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of teachers’ learning about their work, both pre-service and continuing, warranting the inclusion here of research related to the effects they have had thus far on teacher learning.

Early standards-focused research

Under the various state-based systems of professional standards, for example that overseen by the New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSWIT), data were collected regarding in-service teachers’ expressed levels of satisfaction with various professional development opportunities they had undertaken and how well teachers believed these opportunities aligned with the targeted professional standards. This type of data collection fits with what Borko (2004) has described as Phase 1 research. The NSWIT approach approximates a Phase 1 investigation of teacher learning since it focuses “on an individual professional development program at a single site” that is, on “the professional development program, teachers as learners, and the relationships between these two elements of the system” and while their may have been some questions in the survey related to the facilitator the “context remain(s) unstudied” (p. 4). This kind of survey fails to interrogate teachers’ perceptions of the relationship between the professional learning that may or may not result from these opportunities and what actually happens in the teachers’ classroom. In this sense, it fails to achieve
an important criterion of ‘Phase 1’ research and that is “to provide evidence that high-quality professional development programs can help teachers ... transform their teaching” (p. 5).

In 2002, a pilot project conducted by Education Queensland trialed the use of a state developed version of professional standards (Mayer, Mitchell, Macdonald, & Bell, 2005). In designing the trial project, Mayer et al. drew on research related to effective professional learning for teachers to engage teachers in collaborative learning focused on the standards and their use. The authors describe their interest in the “participating teachers’ perspectives” and provide opportunities for teachers to engage with each other and the text of the standards. From this design we might surmise a view of knowledge as that which is socially and culturally created between individuals as they negotiate the meaning of language both spoken and written. The evaluation of the trial employed a multi-methods approach which included questionnaires, focus group interviews with a sub-sample of participants, and observation notes of both the ‘immersion’ workshops and a small number of follow up site visits to participants’ schools.

Findings from this study that are of particular interest here include participants’ reporting that: they thought the standards could provide a useful framework for reflection on practice; they most often worked alone with the standards; and “they had little documentation that might be used to provide evidence of their learning” (p. 170). Case study interview data pointed to the importance of opportunities to network and discuss with other teachers in order to maintain the use of the standards for professional learning. In the final questionnaire, participants indicated that the main factors supporting their engagement with the standards related to a “sense of professionalism” (p. 170) facilitated by the pilot project design. The concluding remarks of the report highlight the “expansive model” (p. 176) of the pilot and some of the benefits teachers enjoyed in terms of professional learning. It remains unclear however, whether this learning was due to the standards themselves or to the well-designed model of learning, included in the design of the study, that engaged teachers in purposeful discussion around the standards and their subsequent use to formulate
contextualised learning projects that teachers would continue when they returned to their own schools. The authors argue that based on the evaluative data, policy considerations should be focused on the uses to which the standards are put in order to *find ways* in which they “support and extend professional learning” (Mayer et al., 2005, p. 160).

The Mayer et al. study also raised a concern about what was able to be determined from teachers’ responses to closed questionnaires and by contrast, what was revealed in a more ‘open’ opportunity. While the questionnaires included in this study were purposefully designed to obtain information about important aspects of standards and their use, the formulation of questionnaire items automatically presumes that each respondent makes the same meaning from the wording of the question, that they are not being forced to make a choice they would not make in the real world, and that their desired answer is in fact, one of the choices (Neuman, 2000). In this study, it was often the data obtained from the open-ended questions or from the semi-structured interviews that revealed important information, including that which the researchers may not have envisaged from the outset.

**The National Mapping of Teacher Professional Learning Project**

A much larger study in the Australian context, *The National Mapping of Teacher Professional Learning Project* (NMTPLP) (Doecke, Parr, & North, 2008) reports on a study of Australian teachers’ experiences and beliefs about professional learning. It reveals critical insights into the nature of professional learning undertaken and preferred by teachers, and their perceptions of the impact of such learning on their practice. In considering the knowledge claims made by this study with regard to teachers’ learning it is important to consider the theoretical framing of the study and the methods that were employed for data collection. The NMTPLP was an extensive, multi-sited survey research project employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. It utilised questionnaires and semi-structured interviews administered across 817 government and non-government schools that reported having a professional development program. One form of questionnaire was used to collect data from 20,000 teachers about current professional learning activities to determine “the
ways in which professional learning is being reconceptualised within the context of standards-based reforms that are currently being implemented in Australia” (Doecke et al., 2008, p. 1). The standards referred to here were various state-based versions which have now been replaced by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2012d). In the discussion of the questionnaire results, the authors comment on a suspicion that the construct of “formal professional development” (p. 224) may have inhibited teachers’ reporting on some aspects of their learning where the teachers interpreted their learning as not fitting the construct definition. This is an important insight for the design of studies that intend to investigate what teachers consider to be their ‘learning’.

The NMTPLP research team also conducted 83 semi-structured interviews with ‘key stakeholders’ from education departments, teacher registration authorities, higher education institutions, professional bodies, and some principals and teachers “in order to discuss teacher professional learning policy, practices, beliefs and experiences” (Doecke et al., 2008, p. 14). These interviews were important for providing documentation that led to a more nuanced understanding of “innovative or best-practice professional learning programs, activities and strategies… systems-led initiatives that seemed to be achieving positive outcomes for schools, teachers and students” (p. 14) than could be provided by the questionnaire. The schedule of interview questions (p. 239) reflect a strong focus on ‘identifiable’ programs of professional learning which may have excluded teacher talk about less formal professional learning opportunities that perhaps did not have an ‘official’ title. The framing of the interviews however, is of particular interest to my study. The interview process was consistent with a view of knowledge construction as occurring in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. The authors describe it thus:

The research team felt it was crucial for the interviewer to be able to engage in an as authentic a professional conversation as possible with his/her interlocutor. This required an extended interview and it required some flexibility. The research team believed, with Mishler (1991), that the roles of the interviewee and the interviewer would best be considered as ‘research collaborators’. The interviewer was most often guiding the conversation, but there was a strong sense in which both interviewer and interviewee were jointly constructing the interview” (Doecke et al., 2008, p. 14)
From these interviews, the researchers constructed cases allowing for comparison and contrast but more importantly, as they describe it, they were able to retain the socio-cultural context of each interview and simultaneously do justice to each individual’s voice (p. 15). The view of knowledge construction presented here and the affordances of interviews and limitations of questionnaires as data collection methods are significant considerations for the design of any empirical study.

The unsettling statistics contained in this report relate to teachers perceptions of the effect professional learning has had on changing their practice. Only 23% of teachers felt that the change was ‘significant’, 63% reported their practice had changed ‘a bit’, 12.5% said their practice had ‘not really’ changed and 1.6% were ‘unsure’ (p. 88). The most frequently offered (63%) and most popular form of professional learning with teachers (63%) was ‘workshop discussions (workshopping) with colleagues’ (p. 87). Teachers were not able to indicate whether or not this ‘workshopping’ may have included other features such as elements of action research or the involvement of a critical friend so we can only surmise that ‘workshopping’ holds little promise for learning that transforms practice. The study did not explicitly seek evidence that teacher learning had resulted in transformed practice and relied on teacher’s reporting their perceptions of the impact of their learning on practice. In their concluding remarks however, the authors highlight that the valuing of a variety of forms of evidence of professional learning is an area requiring further investigation on the part of government, teacher registration authorities and schools themselves (p. 223).

With respect to professional standards, the NMTPLP report concluded that professional standards are having an effect on the shape of professional learning. This finding came out of interviews held with providers of professional learning across all sectors and is largely due to standards being seen by education systems (public, private and Catholic) as “providing a specific focus on continuing professional learning by identifying knowledge, skills, capabilities and descriptors of accomplishment at various stages of the teaching lifecycle” (p. xiv). Further, the report suggests, “professional standards need to be living documents, facilitating continual inquiry, enabling teachers
to address the complex challenges they face at the start of the 21st century” (p. xiv). This suggests that there is a belief that standards can provide a framework for professional learning but it is also noted that “when professional standards are not supported by adequate resourcing and time for teacher reflection (and documentation of their practice), they can be seen to inhibit teachers’ engagement in sustained professional learning” (p. 33). ‘Time’, in adequate blocks and at appropriate points in the teaching/learning cycle, is an important resource for professional learning.

Importantly, both the Mayer et al. (2005) study and The National Mapping of Teacher Professional Learning Project (2008) draw attention to the need for further consideration of the nature and provision of evidence of teachers’ professional learning.

The provision of evidence for accreditation

It is not difficult to envisage how rich descriptions of teacher learning provided by opportunities, including practitioner research, school and university partnerships and cross-generational learning as discussed above, together with the demonstrated evidence of teaching practice they generate might be ‘backward mapped’ (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) to several of the teaching standards. The concept of ‘backward mapping’ evidence to the standards would appear to be consistent with the approach encouraged by the following advice to teachers appearing on the AITSL (2014b) website: “When applying for Certification you are required to provide evidence (in the form of annotated artifacts) of your practice against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers”. The examples provided on this webpage are for evidencing the standards at ‘Highly Accomplished’ and are all text based. There is nothing to suggest that enacted practice could be a component of the evidence. The advice is that “The examples provided here illustrate ways of evidencing the Standards … They are intended to support teachers in determining the variety and quality of evidence suitable for Certification applications… The evidence and annotations provided are examples only and are not intended to be used as a model on which to base a whole collection of evidence” (AITSL, 2014b). There are however, no further examples described or illustrated that might indicate to teachers what else could be included in that ‘whole collection’. The description of forms of ‘evidence’ that attest to standards
having been met remains problematic and the link to teachers’ professional learning tenuous.

**Concern about standards**

The purpose and effectiveness of professional standards, an international phenomenon, remain a hot topic for debate both here and abroad. In the USA, Darling-Hammond has written extensively on the limitations and dangers of investing too deeply in teaching standards reminding us that “they are not a magic bullet” (1999, p. 39) for overcoming structural inequalities and other factors that lie at the heart of school systems that are no longer able to meet the needs of their students. In Australia, Sachs warns of the dangers of a ‘one-size-fits–all’ policy as not being

in the best interests of teachers teaching in remote areas, in difficult schools, or in multi-age settings where their competence will be judged on the basis of some idealized notion of what competent, or excellent teaching might be. There needs to be some flexibility regarding the form of the standards to recognize the fact that context plays an important role in influencing how teachers teach, what they teach and the learning outcomes of their students (Sachs, 2005, p. 9)

Sachs’ concerns, particularly as they relate to schools in rural contexts, are supported in Australia by research that clearly illustrates the breadth of the differences faced by teachers in remote locations (Kline, White, & Lock, 2013). Connell (2009, p. 222) identifies the purpose of standards as being to “codify teachers’ work and teacher education in such a way as to make them auditable and allow control at a distance”. This notion of ‘control at a distance’ is a hallmark of systems of governance achieved through texts that seek to replace governance by local people, such as school principals, in local contexts (D. E. Smith, 2005). In a multi-cultural country such as Australia, where geographical regions also present communities with vastly different lifestyle choices the potential impact of context on teachers’ teaching work requires careful consideration (Wrigley, Lingard, & Thomas, 2012).

The second reason for concern about the standards that is of interest to this study is the effect that a standards regime may have on the nature, quality and frequency of learning experiences available to teachers. The extent to which the standards and accreditation of individual teachers encourages a view of teachers’ work as a set of
technical skills and their learning as cognition that takes place in isolation from other teachers are related and important considerations. In Australia, professional teaching standards operate to influence teacher education at both the pre-service and in-service level through an additional mechanism. All pre-service teacher education providers and the courses they offer must be accredited against the standards (BOSTES, 2015c). Providers of professional learning opportunities to in-service teachers and their courses or workshops must be accredited against the professional teaching standards they are aiming to explicitly address in order that the time teachers spend with such providers can be counted towards the teacher’s accreditation. Additionally, in-service teachers have a mandatory number of hours, at present this is set at fifty of the total one hundred hours, of professional learning that must come from such accredited opportunities over a period of five years (BOSTES, 2015b). The purpose of this governance of teacher learning we are told is to ensure the kind of “(h)igh quality professional development” that “helps teachers to continuously improve and maintain their teaching practice” (BOSTES, 2015c)

Others (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Sachs, 2003; Santoro, Reid, Mayer, & Singh, 2012) point to the constraining effect that designing teacher learning opportunities to explicitly comply with standards may have on the education of teachers, both pre-service and in-service. These constraints, they claim, operate particularly in respect of preparing teachers for an unknown future, allowing for advances in the field of educational research and practice, and acknowledging diversity of students, teachers and contexts. A process that too rigidly restricts the design of professional learning opportunities may proportionally reduce the capacity of the ensuing learning to respond to contextual needs that cannot be predicted. It seems that the effect on teacher learning of the mandatory division of learning time between opportunities that have been officially ‘accredited’ and the more contextualized ‘teacher identified’ professional learning has not been addressed in research literature at this point in time.

Recently, the AITSL interim report (Clinton, Hattie, et al., 2014) on the evaluation of the implementation of Australian Professional Standards for Teachers circumscribed its warrant stating that “(t)his evaluation is not concerned with evaluating the content of the Standards; rather, it is focusing on their implementation” (p. 4). In a national survey
of practicing teachers, school leaders, teacher educators and pre-service teachers, responses were sought in order to gauge participants’ “perceptions of (their) knowledge (of), attitudes and use of the Standards” (p. 30). Given that the use of the standards is a mandatory requirement for teacher educators, pre-service teachers and a significant proportion of practicing teachers it is not surprising that the findings indicate quite high levels of ‘knowledge’ and ‘use’ of the standards. In terms of ‘attitudes’ to the standards, the report notes the following challenges to implementation of the standards:

- Compliance-based, top-down, surveillance approach to the implementation process
- Misinterpretation of the Standards
- Difficulty in ensuring and encouraging teachers to engage with the Standards in the context of other significant national reforms such as the Australian Curriculum
- Understanding the application of the Standards to individual teachers at certain points in their career
- Geographical disparity and travel costs involved in sharing effective practices, information and resources across schools
- Difficulty in conceptualising national implementation of the Standards in very remote areas (Clinton, Hattie, et al., 2014, p. 12)

These challenges include not only serious concerns about the implementation process and the mandatory adoption of the standards in their current form but also raise issues concerning the ‘content’ of the standards statements; their lack of clarity and their appropriateness to a range of contexts. In her presentation at the AARE Conference, Clinton (Clinton, Pinchas, et al., 2014) discussed the importance of the standards for providing teachers with a ‘common language’ in the sense that any reading of a particular standard statement was expected to reveal the same meaning irrespective of the reader. This notion was somewhat discounted by Savage (Savage, Lingard, Dinham, Calnin, & Dabrowski, 2014), himself part of the AITSL evaluation team and presenting in the same symposium. He commented on statements collected from teachers, through more open data gathering methods than were provided by the national survey,
indicating that what teachers thought the standards provided was a focus for discussion in order to determine the meaning of the standard and its implications for practice. Raising again, the question of whether it is the standards themselves that lead to the professional learning or the opportunities for collegial discussions provided as part of the implementation process that is of most value to teachers and their learning. In the AITSL evaluation, the questionnaire, as data collection method, restricted what teachers could and could not comment on and in this case allowed an illusion to be created that teachers regard standards as supportive of their professional learning and their teaching practice. This study did not examine the connection between what teachers reported about their professional learning and transformed teaching practice.

These studies highlight the need for further exploration of teacher professional learning in relation to professional standards. Including whether: it is the standards as such or the opportunities for collaboration that have led to the professional learning reported by teachers; the standards encourage teachers to envisage profession learning as something that occurs in isolation from others or is this a side-effect of the accreditation process; the standards describe ‘quality’ teachers in a way that teachers identify ‘quality’ and thus are capable of providing a framework to support professional learning for quality teaching; teachers can use evidence to demonstrate ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ they do what they do and what forms such evidence might take.

**Within school factors and teacher learning**

The research literature reviewed thus far has made a significant contribution to a rich description of what teacher learning might look like. It may well be however, that “It does very little good to know what quality professional development might look like if schools and school systems are incapable of supporting it” (Elmore, 2002, p. 15). Opfer and Pedder find evidence from their systematic review of research literature that “It is now well established that the norms of the school, its structures and practices, both enable and constrain teachers” (2011, p. 390). They describe the alignment between individual and school level factors of “beliefs about learning, practices, and supports and practices for learning, a collective capacity for learning, and dissonance as a
catalyst for change when practices and beliefs do not align” as indicators of a reciprocal relationship that contributes to “the school’s orientation to learning” which is “influenced by and influences teacher orientations to learning” (p. 393).

Kemmis and Smith (2008) label the factors within schools, related to local context and having significant consequence for teachers’ learning, as ‘practice architectures’ and group them into three categories thus

1. cultural-discursive preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘thinking’ and ‘saying’ that orient and justify practices;
2. material-economic preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘doing’ of the practice; and
3. social-political preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘relating’ involved in the practice (p. 466).

While it is within the power of teachers, acting both individually and collectively, to reflect on and transform existing practice architectures, hierarchical school leaders generally have a significant role to play in the allocation of resources, including time, the provision of support in the affective domain and the management of local and systemic demands that allow such processes to take place (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003, p. 16). Hayes (2004), in discussing school leadership as pedagogical practice draws our attention to the focus in many schools on structural reforms related to class groupings and timetables as the reform end in itself. These structural reforms are, she argues, merely the scaffold for achieving “professional dialogue that builds shared understandings about curriculum and how it is aligned with assessment and pedagogy” (p. 19) through leadership that is focused on learning.

Drawing heavily on data collected during the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS, 2001), Lingard et al. (2003), in their publication Leading Learning, propose the importance of “dispersed leadership” for ensuring the “best social and educational outcomes for all students” (p. 54). Dispersed leadership occurs in schools “through coalitions of leaders who collaboratively negotiate the factional lines that invariably fragment and form communities” (p. 141). When this dispersed leadership
"is steeped in pedagogy" it becomes an “important resource for learning” because there is an “an emphasis on transforming existing, and creating new, knowledges about pedagogies and assessment practices within schools” (p. 146). The QSRLS did not collect empirical evidence of the relationship between school leadership, other school factors, and teacher professional learning.

York-Barr & Duke (2004) review international studies related to teacher leadership to find that the research; lacks a coherent definition of the construct of ‘teacher leadership’; lacks common or complimentary theoretical positions; is overwhelmingly descriptive rather than explanatory (p. 287); and is “relatively rich with claims of the potential and desired effects of teacher leadership and relatively sparse with evidence of such effects, especially at the levels of classroom practice and student learning” (p. 282). They assert a positive stance however, in relation to the possibilities for teacher leadership as a means of effecting change in schools in the interests of improved learning for both teachers and students. They propose a conceptual framework as a tool both for understanding the constituent conditions and processes involved in teacher leadership and as a framework for future research. This framework has strong resonances with the categories of 'practice architectures' (Kemmis, 2009) and notions of 'dispersed' leadership (Lingard et al., 2003).

Thomson and Blackmore (2006) draw on their Australian Research Council funded study along with other research they have been involved in to examine the organizational systems in schools that have allowed a stronger focus on pedagogical leadership. They provide case studies to exemplify how ‘diffuse’ leadership, achieved through the establishment of cross-curricula teams, and structural reforms, like the provision of two eighty-five minute blocks of time per week for teams to work together, have resulted in “shared pedagogical responsibility” (p. 165) and professional learning. While teachers’ lessons were observed as part of a school-developed appraisal system, the focus was on “what students do, not how teachers teach” (p. 166) and so evidence of the kind that might support an hypothesis that teachers’ leading learning resulted in a transformation of teaching practice was not reported.
Summary

At the dawn of the 21st century, there was an apparent, and oft quoted, consensus (Desimone, 2009) across research about what constitutes effective professional development that has the capacity to support transformative teacher learning. The key features of such learning include: opportunities for individual and shared practice; relationship to a complex, contextualised problem; duration of the learning provides time for reflection, experimentation, trial and modification; teachers’ ‘expert’ knowledge and that of external ‘critical friend(s)’ contribute to new learning for all. This consensus however, may be based on flawed assumptions of what constitutes teacher learning and is rarely supported by evidence that links claims about learning to demonstrated practice (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). It also fails to deal with the importance of the relative strengths of these characteristics acting in combination with each other.

In many of the studies reviewed, researchers asked teachers for their perceptions about how successful they had been in implementing their professional learning. In some studies, researchers observed classroom teaching to identify indicators, selected by the researcher, of transformed practice in line with a particular pedagogical approach. This may mean that other aspects of the teacher’s practice not aligned with the pedagogical focus may well have been transformed but are omitted from these kinds of structured observations. Also, while we might assume some control and input on the part of the teacher in designing the presented lesson as ‘evidence’, in none of the studies reviewed above was the teacher asked to link a claim about their learning to evidence of transformed practice. In relation to professional standards, some literature presents the argument that standards and the accompanying accreditation framework (including the forms of evidence), support teacher professional learning, growth and renewal in ways that will produce enhanced learning outcomes for students. The counter arguments present standards as a mechanism for accountability and compliance that will serve to narrow the view of teachers' work and their learning about that work.

In the largest, recent Australian study of teacher professional learning, Doecke et al.
(2008) highlight the importance of “vibrant cultures of ongoing professional learning” for “sustained educational reform” (p. 225) together with the need for government, educational communities and teachers to work together to support and enhance learning. The way in which teachers, government and educational communities work together is something that Kemmis (2010) sees as being very much determined by the way ‘learning’ as ‘opposed to ‘education’ is viewed by governments. Kemmis draws a distinction between ‘learning’ and ‘education’, for both students and their teachers. Whereas education, he says, is about developing capacities for “individual and collective self-expression, self-development and self-determination” he makes the claim that “questions of school education have largely become questions of administering the learning and the lives of all children towards enhanced participation in the economic life of societies” (p 24) and similarly the continuing education of teachers, “those whose lives and work are conducted for education” (p24), is referred to as “life-long learning” with a focus on administering and accounting for teacher ‘learning’. An alternative view to teacher professional learning might consider the development of a teacher’s praxis through ongoing teacher education that is assessed through the associated evidence of transformed practice. Pedagogies that seem to support such a vision for ongoing teacher education include practitioner inquiry, school-university partnerships and cross-generational mentoring.

The opening assertion of this chapter was that we need “more studies that investigate how the generative mechanisms of teacher learning appear in different combinations and sequences, with different weights, in different but concrete situations (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 394). Working from this assertion, in the next chapter I outline the methodological design for my study of teacher professional learning. One of the key features of the design is to enable an examination of whether or not teachers can provide a link between the learning they claim has transformed their teaching work and their demonstrated evidence of such learning.
Chapter 3: Developing a research methodology

“We must try, in every case, to mobilize all the techniques that are relevant and practically usable, given the definition of the object and the practical conditions of data collection...the extreme liberty I advocate here (which seems to make obvious sense and which, let me hasten to add, has nothing to do with the sort of relativistic epistemological laissez faire which seems so much in vogue in some quarters) has its counterpart in the extreme vigilance that we must apply to the conditions of use of analytical techniques and to ensuring that they fit the question at hand” (Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992, p. 227)

Design considerations

The opening quotation from Bourdieu and Waquant (1992) above has particular resonance with the process of ‘evolution’, as opposed to an act of ‘creation’, that has resulted in the methodological design of this study. As a secondary science educator, working with students and teachers, I have championed ‘inquiry’ approaches to learning as opposed to ‘verification’. As a researcher, I have learned that an important implication of a genuine inquiry is keeping a very open mind toward ones data and being prepared to make changes in order to facilitate the unexpected. Especially when that unexpected is possibly of greater interest than one could have imagined at the beginning of the research enterprise.

In this chapter, I will describe how, with due consideration of the problematic addressed by the study, its epistemological frame and the data collected, I have endeavoured to “mobilize all the techniques that are relevant and practically usable” (p. 227) in a reflexive response to what an initial analysis of the data began to reveal. Through this recount of the evolution of the methodology I have attempted to preserve something of the chronological order of my thinking about the study’s problematic, particularly in terms of how I initially thought I would situate the study
methodologically in order to analyse and re-present variation in the teachers’ learning experiences. While it seems obvious to me now that some of the initial choices I made with respect to these considerations were not appropriate to the kind of understanding of teacher professional learning I was seeking through the research questions I had posed, the evolving methodology, as described here, represents a very significant part of my professional learning and so I include it as ‘evidence’.

Teacher professional learning research, as the review of studies in Chapter 2 reveals, has produced extensive and useful knowledge about the ways in which we believe teacher learning occurs. Teachers have been consulted through questionnaires and interviews in most of these studies and the questions have generally been directed at finding out about teachers’ perceptions of their learning resulting from a particular form of professional learning. The assessment of such learning, through the production of evidence of learning, is often missing from the study methods. When it is present, as Opfer and Pedder (2011) make clear, it is based on an assumption that “some measure of teacher change” is “teacher learning” (p. 378) and often fails to account, in causal relationships, for the delicate balance between the degree to which supportive factors are present and the degree of resultant learning, known as the ‘Goldilocks Principle’ (See p. 35). Further, Opfer and Pedder argue for a shift in focus from such simple cause and effect views of teacher professional learning to research that more closely examines “under what conditions, why, and how teachers learn” (2011, p. 378).

Observations of teachers’ classroom practice across a range of contexts conducted as part of my professional practice as a consultant, both before, during and after various forms of professional learning activities contribute to my appreciation of this reported uneven transformation of teachers’ practice resulting from professional learning and the importance of getting the balance of contributing factors ‘just right’. In this sense, I have been immersed in the everyday world (D. E. Smith, 2005, pp. 40-41) of teacher professional learning observing, listening, and noting the problems that individual teachers experience in learning about their work.

My work as a classroom teacher and as a facilitator of teacher professional learning positions me as internal to the praxis of education. Kemmis (2010) draws our attention
to the two ways in which the word ‘praxis’ is commonly used by research communities. In what he sees as a predominantly northern-hemisphere view of praxis in the post-Marxian, critical-emancipatory sense, it is social action as “history making action” (p. 25) that gives rise to social formations, ideas and theories. The aim of praxis research, taken in this sense, would be to reveal the social interactions and structures that hold potential for transforming the way things get done and thereby “shape social formations and conditions as well as people and their ideas, their commitments and their consciousness” (p. 10). The alternative use of ‘praxis’ is consistent with what Kemmis and Smith (2008) describe as the Aristotelian view of praxis that is, action that is “morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field” (p. 4). Taken together, these two definitions of ‘praxis’ encourage me, as an educational researcher, to focus on the interests of teachers as learners in order to make a contribution to knowledge about the social formations and conditions that support ongoing teacher education that is transformative. As Opfer and Pedder (2011) note, what is required in order to increase our understanding of how and why teacher learning occurs are research designs that “illuminate multiple causalities, multiple perspectives, and multiple effects that constitute complex activity” in order to identify “the edges of generalizability and variation that characterize the patterns of processes and interaction of these (complex) systems” (p. 396).

In terms of this study then, it was the teachers who were the learners of primary interest and it was their voice that was sought in order to understand how they learn to transform their teaching work. The kind of knowledge sought by this study is consistent with an epistemological perspective that sees knowledge as situated and socially constructed (Haraway, 1988; Marton, 1986; D. E. Smith, 2005). Whether the construction of knowledge occurs for each individual as a result of self-sufficient reflection on their interactions with the social, or occurs as part of the relationship with others, particularly the researcher, as a shared meaning-making experience, has significant implications for the framing of this research and I will have more to say about this as I outline the methodology for the study.
My research disposition has undoubtedly, been influenced, particularly in considerations of the trustworthiness of research, by my undergraduate studies and secondary teaching experience in science and mathematics. Yet, I have always argued with my teaching colleagues, that the paradigm in which most science related research is conducted is but one of many. The ‘medical’ model of research involving a control group or at the very least, controllable variables, and employed in school science experiments as the ‘the scientific method’ engenders widespread societal confidence in its findings with little acknowledgement of the necessary limitations of such research design, particularly in relation to the interpretation of evidence (See p. 9 ) as it applies in the social field. My studies at Masters level served to familiarize me with a broad range of research methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, employed in educational and health sciences research. Initially, as I worked with my own historically developed needs for a systematic and trustworthy approach, I was seeking a methodology that would enable me to engage with teachers in a very open interview about the professional learning that had been useful to them and, to systematically examine the variations in what they spoke about. The choice of an open interview as the primary data collection tool was informed by the findings of The National Mapping of Teacher Professional Learning Project (2008) (See p. 51) and my interest in the ‘variation’ in participants experiences supported by the Opfer and Pedder (2011) systematic review discussed in chapter 2.

I planned to use phenomenography to theoretically frame the study because of its focus on people's experiences of a phenomenon, in this case professional learning, and its view of knowledge as being constructed by the individual through their interactions and experiences in the world. Phenomenography incorporates the methods of an open, extended interview together with a rigorous and well-described interview data coding approach to categorise the variation in what teachers might choose to speak about (Akerlind, 2005; Marton, 1981; Norden, Avery, & Anderberg, 2012; Wennas-Brante, 2013). While this approach facilitated a deep familiarity with the interview data it also revealed the limitations of the approach for this study. My concerns about the appropriateness of phenomenography for this study arose from my sense that the categories of description, the primary method for re-presenting the results of data
analysis, were constraining what could be represented. It seemed that they could not adequately reflect the complexity of the relationships between what teachers learned, why they were interested in learning it, how they learned it, and how such learning was supported or inhibited by both within school factors and the enactment of policy documents. In the first instance, this is because the process of constructing categories of experience requires excision of quotations from the transcript as a whole. Even though great care was taken to ensure that meaning, in relation to the whole transcript, was preserved (Marton, 1986, p. 32) the connection to the whole transcript is unavoidably lost once the coding process is completed. Second, the categories must be parsimonious (Akerlind, 2005, p. 323) further contributing to the difficulties associated with an attempt to trace connections within and across participants' data sets.

Compounding these more obvious considerations associated with methods of analysis was a deepening concern about the way in which phenomenography, as a theoretical framework, positioned knowledge, participants in the research and me as the researcher. This was in a manner that was not consistent with my emerging sense of the way I had positioned each of these constituent entities, and which I elaborate on in this chapter, particularly as my professional relationship with each of the participants developed during the course of the three data gathering 'moments'. I use the term 'moments' here to draw attention to the finite and transient nature of these brief periods of time that comprise only a small portion of each teacher's working life.

My 'reflexive' response arising from 'deep reflection' (Ryan & Bourke, 2013, p. 418) on the data at hand, drew me to the work of Dorothy Smith (2005) and her methodology known as institutional ethnography with it’s focus on “what people are doing, with whom they are doing it, and the conditions under which their activities are carried out” (ISA, 2011). Mikhail Bakhtin’s work provided a way in which to consider individual teachers as not finalized but rather constantly in a state of 'becoming' with respect to their teaching work and their learning about that work.

What I now faced was a challenge of having framed my study in terms of certain assumptions about knowledge and its creation that were consistent with a phenomenographic approach that may or may not be consistent with the ontological
and epistemological assumptions of an alternative framework. Later in this chapter, I attempt to bring phenomenography into dialogue with institutional ethnography, as a methodology, and Bakhtin’s dialogism, as an analytic method, through the consideration of questions about how the researcher and the participants are positioned by each of these frameworks in relation to knowledge. My purpose is to describe how I have responded to Bourdieu and Waquant’s (1992, p. 227) entreaty to “mobilize all the techniques that are relevant and practically usable” while at the same time avoiding “epistemological laissez faire” through a rigorous justification of my actions. I will include in this chapter, aspects of the phenomenographical framing, analysis, and findings where they are important to the narrative of my thinking and the development of my methodology.

**Research methods**

Originally the study sought to examine the connection between teachers’ experiences of professional learning and the evidence they were able to demonstrate that such learning had transformed their teaching work. It was anticipated that both the nature of the learning experiences and the forms of evidence might exhibit significant variation from one participant to another. In seeking to understand teachers’ contextualised experiences of learning about their work through their own words I wanted to avoid two possible misconceptions about what ‘counted’ as learning and could therefore, be spoken about in response to my questions (See NMTPL p. 51). First, that only formalised professional learning opportunities counted for teachers. Second, that the focus was on technical aspects of ‘practice’. By taking ‘inquiry into practice’ as the defining characteristic of what might signal professional learning opportunities, I hoped to assert “a much more proactive and conscious approach” to acknowledging a range of models in order to meet teachers’ learning needs (Kennedy, 2005). In exploring across a period of time teachers’ involvement in various forms of professional learning and the impact that this learning has had on their work, the study also sought to describe “learning as changes in participation in socially organized activities, and individuals’ use of knowledge as an aspect of their participation” (Borko, 2004:4).
**Research Questions**

The set of questions that guided the inquiry, initially was:

In the context of a political landscape that positions professional learning in terms of “performance and development” (AITSL, 2012e),

1. How do teachers
   
   i. describe an experience that has resulted in significant learning about their teaching work?
   
   ii. provide evidence that demonstrates the impact of the learning they have spoken about on their teaching work?
   
   iii. assess the connection between their learning and their evidence?

Preliminary analysis involving coding for the variation in the learning teachers chose to speak about hinted at complex relationships of support and impediment to this learning resulting in the inclusion of a second set of questions.

2. How do local social relationships
   
   i. support professional learning that has the potential to transform practice?
   
   ii. articulate with the generalising of institutional processes related to teacher learning, particularly as they are effected through governing texts?

**Selecting participants**

If I was to gain access to stories of professional learning experiences that went beyond the normal range of courses and workshops, then participants for the study needed to have had the opportunity to engage in professional development activities that encompass more than “transmission models” of professional development as described by Kennedy (2005, p. 248) and discussed in detail in Chapter 2. I was looking for participants who may have experienced professional learning that was focused on inquiry into their practice. Given the history and scope of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, one might think that it should be relatively easy to identify teachers in schools that have had such opportunities in recent times but this was not the case. My
2011 review of accredited professional learning opportunities described on the DECNSW website, the AISNSW Professional Learning website and the Catholic Education Office Sydney website revealed that the most common form of professional learning offered was the ‘transmission’ model short course or workshop. This is not to say that other forms of professional learning were not supported by these agencies it was just not easy to identify how and where they may have been happening. Nor does it imply that the ‘transmission’ model cannot support transformation of teaching work.

Through my own experiences with The Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools (CKBS) (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2011) and a group of schools involved in the 2010 trial of Science by Doing (SbD) (AAS, 2013) I was aware that other models of professional learning had been encouraged and were currently supported in a range of NSW schools. What is important about the CKBS schools, and to a lesser extent the SbD schools who were all focused on ‘inquiry’ pedagogy, is that they pursue counter-hegemonic practices in loose alliances, or forms of “decentered unity” (Apple, 2005, p. 288) that don’t dictate any one particular alternative agenda but seek “pedagogies of enlightenment” (Wrigley et al., 2012) appropriate to the local context and the skills and interests of the teachers involved.

In the case of the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools (CKBS), member schools have expressed a “determination to find valid and worthwhile ways to capture young people’s perceptions of their school experience” (Groundwater-Smith & Kemmis, 2005). Each of the member schools have endeavoured to design and conduct inquiry-based professional learning associated with an aspect of the lives of students and teachers and particular to the context of their individual schools. Student-voice is central to the methodology employed for many of these inquiries. The member schools meet four times per year and attend an annual conference in order to share their learning with each other. Teachers at these member schools may be involved in action research as a form of professional learning as well as choosing or being required to participate in other forms of professional development. As a new head of department at the end of the 20th century, I became a founding member of the CKBS when my colleague, also new to the position of Director of Teaching and Learning, and I joined forces to design
an inquiry-based teacher learning opportunity at the school where we both worked. Since that time I have remained a friend of the CKBS and have regularly attended meetings over the years.

*Science by Doing* (SbD), a project supported by the Australian Academy of Science (the Academy) and funded by the Australian Government, provided professional development associated with an inquiry approach to teaching. The schools involved with the 2010 trial of the SbD approach and resources committed to the intent of a long-term professional learning project that aimed to assist science faculties within schools to move from being primarily a structure for management and administration to becoming professional learning communities as described by Hord and Sommers (2008) through a focus on inquiry in their classroom practice. While science faculties had the support of an outside critical friend provided by SbD, they were responsible for the overall design of their learning and free to choose from support materials supplied as part of the project. Teachers who participated in the 2010 trial of SbD may have simultaneously chosen or been required to participate in other forms of professional development. In 2010, I was employed by the Academy to design and deliver a three-day workshop to introduce heads of science faculties to the SbD approach and resources and then to assist these leaders and teachers in NSW and QLD with designing an implementation strategy to suit their contextualised needs. My direct contact with these schools ended with the trial project in 2010.

These two groups of schools not only provide a sample of schools from each of the sectors (government, catholic and independent) drawing students from a range of socio-economic groups across NSW but included schools where some members of staff had engaged in possibly transformative forms of professional development. Inviting these schools to participate in the study was the first step in a purposive strategy to recruit participants.

In 2012 the invitation to participate in the study was sent, by post, to the principals of schools who were current members of CKBS and also to the principals of schools who participated in the 2010 trial of *Science by Doing*. The Invitation to Principals
document was accompanied by the Invitation to Participants, Participant information Statement, Participant consent form, The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics approval letter (See Appendix 1) and in the case of DECNSW schools, the SERAP approval letter (See Appendix 2). The nature of the study, including possible associated risks and benefits, was explained to all potential participants (See Appendix 3) and informed consent sought. Participants were made aware that they would be expected to participate in two research conversations and to demonstrate evidence of their professional learning. They each returned a completed consent form together with brief biographical details about their teaching career. The 2012 invitations to participate in the research resulted in a positive response from three teachers at one Coalition school and two teachers at one SbD school. While there existed considerable variation amongst this group of five in terms of years of experience, position in the school’s hierarchy, NSWIT involvement and teaching subjects I was concerned that only two schools were represented in the sample.

In 2013, I sought and received ethics approval to extend the study by inviting a number of schools whose teachers had participated in a mentoring program for early career teachers during 2011-2012. Mentoring is not classified as ‘transformative’ in the Kennedy spectrum because coaching/mentoring programs have the potential to “perpetuate dominant discourses in an uncritical manner” however, if the mentoring relationships are focused on participation in a community of practice then they may, under certain circumstances, “act as powerful sites of transformation” (2005, p. 245). My professional network had alerted me to the existence of a number of schools in which the mentoring of beginning teachers was considered a valuable practice not only in terms of induction into the existing culture of the school but also for the perception that it was making a difference to classroom practice. This small number of schools were not part of any group, in the sense that they acknowledged shared aspirations, but they did offer another potentially interesting and complex site for professional learning where more than just the learning through mentoring activities might be taking place. From the extended invitation a further three teachers from three schools expressed an interest in joining the study. Meanwhile, in 2013 a new member school of
the CKBS expressed interest and later one teacher from that school agreed to participate thus taking the sample to a total of nine teachers across six schools.

One teacher from the Coalition school withdrew from the study prior to the first round of interviews, due to personal reasons. Prior research suggests that gender and age are not likely to be significant to this study. In the case of gender, my decision was based on the finding from The National Mapping of Teacher Professional Learning Project (Doecke et al., 2008, p. 80) that “there were no significant differences between female and male teachers” on seven of the eleven government and teacher identified priority areas for professional development. Age is of little significance compared to years of experience when teachers have often had a career in some other field before entering the teaching profession and may therefore, be relatively inexperienced teachers for their comparative age. A range of years of teaching experience was provided across the sample and this assisted to maximize potential variation of other forms of professional learning experiences. A mix of teachers was also achieved in terms of whether or not each teacher had obtained and was required to maintain their accreditation against state-based professional standards by participating in professional learning opportunities. It is important to note here that the population that this sample purports to represent is not the whole population of in-service teachers but only that part who have had an opportunity to experience forms of professional learning that have the potential to be ‘transformative’ according to the classification provided by Kennedy (2005). Participants were from all three schooling sectors; Catholic, Independent and State. This was considered to be potentially useful since school-based factors that influence professional learning may show some variability across sectors. Table 2: Participant details, below, is provided as a summary.

An extended research conversation was also conducted with a ‘leader’ of professional learning in each context. The identification of this ‘leader’ was made possible through the preliminary coding analysis of each teacher’s first research conversation and was the person they identified as playing a major role in the establishment of social structures that had impacted the teacher’s learning experience. In three cases the leader was in fact, the school principal and in the fourth case was the mentor who had
worked across different school contexts with three of the teacher participants.
Table 2: Participant details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Sector</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Teaching area</th>
<th>Population group</th>
<th>NSWIT accreditation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Secondary Science</td>
<td>SbD</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Secondary Science</td>
<td>SbD (indirectly)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Secondary Industrial Arts</td>
<td>CKBS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Secondary Teacher librarian, learning support</td>
<td>CKBS</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Secondary English</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>CKBS</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Secondary Industrial Arts</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Secondary English</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collection

Data collection occurred in three related stages:

- stage 1 - research conversation
- stage 2 – teacher selected evidence
- stage 3- reflective interview.

The data collection occurred over varying periods of time for each participant and was governed by when the participants could spare the time thus at any point in time, I may have been involved in collecting data from any one of the eight participants for any one of the three stages.
Stage 1 – research conversation

The interview, or ‘research conversation’ is the data collection method central to a phenomenographic approach. Marton recommends the use of questions “that are as open-ended as possible in order to let the subject choose the dimension of the question they want to answer” (Marton, 1986, p. 42). I have used the term ‘research conversation’ to designate this first data collection opportunity because my aim was to keep it as open as possible. The third data collection is referred to as a ‘reflective interview’ because it was consistent with the form of a semi-structured interview in that there was a pre-formulated guide for the interview. The opening invitation to ‘talk’ in the first conversation was simply to ask teachers to think about a time when they felt that they had really learned something about their teaching work and to tell that story. Further clarifying questions were used as the talk evolved in an attempt to elicit more detail about what it was that teachers felt they had learned, how they knew they had learned it and how the learning had happened. A research conversation differs from a semi-structured interview in that the ‘talk’ is kept as open as possible by following ideas raised by the participant and allowing useful data to emerge, or not, from what teachers have to say. If toward the end of the interview the participant had not commented on professional standards or the Australian Curriculum then prompting questions similar to “What effect do you think professional standards have had, or might have in the future, on your learning?” and “What effect do you think the Australian Curriculum has had, or might have, on your learning?” were posed.

Phenomenography considers it important that the interviewer ‘bracket’ their assumptions in order to genuinely follow the train of conversation as the interviewee reveals it.

It is the researcher who is supposed to bracket preconceived ideas. Instead of judging to what extent the responses reflect an understanding of the phenomenon in question which is similar to their own, he or she is supposed to focus on similarities and differences between the ways in which the phenomenon appears to the participants (Marton, 1994).
The greatest bracketing challenges for me were first of all to contain my excitement and accompanying expressions of approval when teachers talked about learning experiences that they believed had resulted in positive changes in the quality of their students’ learning. Second, it was to resist launching into detailed explanations of either professional standards or the Australian Curriculum when participants expressed either a lack of knowledge or a misconception about either or both of these policies and their contents. Inevitably, as I made decisions during the interview about which participant statements to ask probing questions about and which to leave unexplored a form of researcher bias entered the interview process even though I was not introducing material that the participant had not already raised, however I made every effort to minimise possible bias.

Each first-round conversation was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. I undertook all of the interview transcriptions in order that I might thoroughly familiarise myself with the data. A first-pass coding was conducted to identify occurrences of participants talking about what they thought they had learned about their teaching work. In some transcripts, the topic of learning was easily identified because the teacher had addressed the opening question of the research conversation very directly and had focused on describing what they thought they had learned about. For other transcripts the topic of what had been learned was entangled in talk about how the learning had happened for that teacher. In reviewing the transcripts I became aware that this was sometimes a direct result of my interviewing technique and the prompting or supplementary question or comment I had made to stimulate the participant’s recall but at other times it was just the way the participant continued to answer supplementary questions. A topic descriptor was assigned to each different aspect of learning that the participants discussed according to the selected quotations from each interview transcript.

A document entitled Choosing evidence notes (see Appendix 4, for an example) was compiled from these topic descriptors, along with a selection of the related quotations that had led to the identified topic, and emailed to each participant to provide them with feedback on the learning they had spoken about. This document also served as a
way of reminding them of what they had said about their learning and assisted them in the selection of evidence that might demonstrate the learning they had described. It was a form of ‘member checking’ of my preliminary analysis given that teachers were able to challenge my interpretation of their meaning-none did.

Most participants had more than one topic from which they might choose. The email message accompanying the Choosing evidence notes invited participants to contact me if they wished to discuss the selection of evidence phase. At this stage, I remained open to the idea that some teachers might respond to the Choosing evidence notes with an alternative topic for their learning once they realized that they now had to select and demonstrate evidence. In which case, a second research conversation or further email communication may have been necessary but no one did. Most participants were very appreciative of the feedback as a tool for focusing their selection of evidence. One participant took the opportunity to discuss with me over the phone how she might address the evidence stage based on her Choosing evidence notes. As a result of our conversation I added highlighting to some areas of her notes, added brief comments and emailed the modified document to her. Others emailed their thoughts and questions for clarification. These were all easily resolved. I kept an email folder for each participant so that I could easily track all on-line communications. This was a useful and reassuring tool for the odd moments when individual participants seemed unclear of the expectations of any stage of the data gathering process. It allowed me to make informed decisions about the effectiveness or not of my communication strategies and whether there was a need for a wholesale or individual clarification strategy. In all cases the queries were sufficiently unique to the participant to require a personalized approach.

Stage 2- Teacher selected evidence data collection

The inquiry into evidence of professional learning represents an attempt to validate what teachers have said in the interview about how their professional learning is evidenced in their practice and to guard against the tendency for teachers to misreport their fidelity to and success with implementation of reforms (Gregoire, 2003). Teachers were encouraged to consider the selection of what they believe to be appropriate
evidence of the professional learning they had talked about in the first round conversation, bearing in mind the requirement for evidence as it is proposed in the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012e). It was envisaged that this evidence would take a variety of forms but might include:

- classroom observation of at least one lesson selected by the teacher for its potential to demonstrate one or more aspects of the teacher’s professional learning. The classroom observations to be recorded by the researcher in such a way that they will form the basis of a ‘lesson diary’ in the manner described by (Hayes, Johnston, & King, 2009) for the construction of “day diaries”. This method relies on an emphasis on “recounting the sequence of events” rather than “assigning meaning to actions” at this point in the research. (Hayes et al., 2009).

- student work samples used for assessment which provide evidence of the implementation of the teacher’s professional learning. The collection of student work samples may reduce the pressure on the teacher both to demonstrate too much in too short a time period and to control classroom factors related to student disposition on any particular day.

- students’ perceptions of their teacher’s approach to learning may be gathered through a questionnaire or focus group and any changes that students perceive have occurred for their learning could be compared to the teacher’s descriptions of their professional learning.

Teachers chose to demonstrate their learning using video footage of both teacher and student work, lesson observation, lesson plans and student work samples. My notes on the evidence, which varied slightly in form according to the form of the evidence presented, were emailed to each teacher together with a guide for the stage 3 reflective conversation and a request for them to advise a suitable time for this conversation to take place. The interview guide had a standard format (see Appendix 3 for an example) but was personalised to account for individual differences in the learning that had been described in the first research conversation and the subsequent evidence presented.
Stage 3- reflective conversation data collection

The importance of teachers reflecting on their practice, as integral to their professional learning, arises in almost every study of teacher professional learning (Borko, 2004; Day & Sachs, 2004b; Desimone, 2009; Korthagen, 2010; Timperley et al., 2007). There is a difference however, between reflecting on procedural matters associated with teaching work and critical reflection. Most teachers continuously reflect on the technical aspects of their work, either individually or in conversation with others, in terms of what they would do differently next time. The purpose of such reflection is generally to improve the management of student learning. Brookfield (1995) succinctly describes the two purposes of the kind of critical reflection important to teaching work as:

... to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests (p. 8)

In the first question of the final research conversation, participants were asked to discuss the 'fit' as they perceived it between their self-selected evidence and the professional learning they had described in their first conversation. The second guiding question asked whether or not they felt they had learned anything through their involvement in the study. The final question asked them if they could identify the top three characteristics, as they perceived them, of professional learning opportunities that led to learning about their teaching work. The guiding questions and comments offered during the interview allowed scope for a critical perspective in the participant’s analysis of the veracity of the evidence they had presented and on the kind of learning that worked for them. The level of reflection with which participants engaged was ultimately determined however, by them. Feedback on the 'fit' of the evidence they had presented from my perspective was given only if the participant requested it.

At each of the data collection stages, participants were engaged with checking and clarifying the themes that emerged from their conversations with me in order to
ensure that the transcription process did not result in a misrepresentation of intended meaning (Dortins, 2002). This was achieved chiefly through the documents Choosing evidence notes and Final reflective interview, each of which had been personalised in order to indicate what I had taken to be the main points related to their learning and their demonstration of evidence. Additionally, the hope was that this would also serve as a means for the participants to involve themselves in the researching of their own knowledge claims and associated practice.

**Preliminary analysis reveals a complex web**

The following description of the phenomenographic analysis is provided as a means of tracing its contribution to the development of the methodology. Some results of this analysis are referred to here in order to illustrate my rising concerns and the subsequent decisions I made.

Each of the stage 1 conversations was transcribed verbatim and uploaded into NVivo for computer-assisted analysis. From these transcripts I was able to allocate quotations to categories that represented the range of participants' experiences of topics they discussed, and which I identified as phenomena. These phenomena included characteristics of the learning experience, effect of the Australian Curriculum, and effect of professional standards. I have chosen not to include the complete representation of categories here because, as I will explain in the discussion below, I feel that they do not adequately represent the complex relationships involved in the learning that teachers had described. Instead, I will provide a summary of the results only in so far as they illuminate how the coding process allowed me to become familiar with what teachers were describing about their learning and any relationship this learning had to the governments' education policies. This will facilitate a discussion of what I was noticing in the data but could not adequately represent in categories that were meant to reflect the meaning as consistent with the entire transcript but simultaneously be parsimonious.

The first of these phenomenon, characteristics of the learning experience, revealed close agreement with the key features of professional learning thought to support
transformed practice as identified by Desimone (2009), amongst others, and discussed in Chapter 2. All of the teachers chose to talk about an experience that provided opportunities for collaboration that fostered creativity and problem solving. They all reported having had help from a knowledgeable outsider who assumed the role of a critical friend. Most of them talked about authentic tasks that were sufficiently complex to allow for differentiation to meet a variety of teacher learning needs and interests, where modeling was provided and where duration allowed time for reflection, moderation and practice. What the reporting of categories of description could not reveal was the often complex, overlapping and non-linear patterns of participation of teachers in a variety of forms of professional learning. Also, while the forms of support and encouragement provided to teachers to participate in professional learning could be coded separately, the connection to both the forms of learning and the learning that resulted was not reflected by representation as distinct phenomenon each with its own categories.

The coding process however, alerted me first, to the importance of the supportive relationships that existed within each school context and which fostered the learning that each teacher spoke about. Second, that each of these teachers had been motivated to learn more about their teaching work through reflection on the learning needs of their students rather than the effect of either the impending implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) or National Professional Standards for Teachers. In fact, most teachers did not mention either the AC or standards until I specifically asked about their perceived effect. All teachers said they thought it was possible to remain focused on what it was they really wanted to achieve with their student learners even though there would be a new curriculum. Some described a process that might be called ‘backward mapping’ to a different set of content descriptors. With regard to professional standards, most teachers thought they could be used to appraise current practice and develop professional learning goals, though only one teacher reported having done this in a limited way. Those teachers not currently required to engage with standards or accreditation stated that financial cost was a deterrent to participation in a scheme they viewed as being more about paperwork than their learning.
It was also becoming evident that there were two kinds of differences in the way individuals spoke. First, how they spoke to me changed according to how well they knew my history as an educator. For example, one participant knew me because we had both attended meetings of the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools in the past. This participant knew that I worked as a consultant supporting school-based professional learning. Another participant and I, however, had no previous connection and at times I felt that this participant spoke to me almost as if I was a researcher with no pre-existing knowledge of schools or how they worked. Second, the way they spoke about matters related to their learning experience sometimes changed within their interview in a way that seemed like they had multiple identities even with regard to the same issue or aspect of professional learning. The phenomenographic analysis was not able, and nor is it designed, to trace these differences and what they may reveal about the evolution of teachers’ learning experiences.

I harbored ongoing concerns that as a researcher working ostensibly alone on the phenomenographic coding of the interview data, the dependability of the coding remained questionable particularly in the sense that the categories of description I had created might serve to reinforce the prevailing discourses around professional learning, standards and curriculum with which my own thinking was imbued. A primary means of ensuring dependability of coding in a phenomenographic analysis is to have at least two coders working together to analyse the data and check the validity of coding categories as they are formed (Akerlind, 2005). Additionally, the decisions made at each step of the coding process remains opaque to the reader of the research and therefore, dependability of the coding is difficult for them to assess. Overwhelming, I felt that the teachers’ rich stories of their learning together with the evidence they had carefully selected and prepared warranted analysis that could more fully reveal the contribution they might make to a discussion of the complex relationships involved in teacher learning. Thus, my search for an alternative methodological framework had begun.
Moving within and across frameworks

Responding reflexively to the data

As I worked with transcripts of the first research conversation and completed the phenomenographic analysis described above, I was simultaneously relating the analysis of what individual teachers had said about their learning to my observations of the evidence of learning they had selected in the second stage of the study. I began to feel that the disaggregation of the data achieved through the coding process of the phenomenographic analysis was obscuring connections within individual teacher’s first research conversation, between their research conversation and demonstrated evidence, and also between the learning they had experienced and the conditions they were describing within their school context that had impacted their learning.

What I was searching for was a way to not only make explicit these connections but also to explain my role in what I had recognized as a dialogic interaction with participants in which our responses each to the other had some bearing on what they were prepared to ‘let me in on’. I also wanted participants to be able to ‘speak’ more directly for themselves through the ‘text’ of the research than the phenomenography allowed them to do in order to reveal their multiple voices, or perspectives, as they appeared within a single conversation. At times, these multiple voices gave such differing views on some issues that it created the perception within the phenomenographic analysis, that there were more than eight participants in the study. Finally, I wanted to reveal more explicitly the connection between their individual learning and teaching practice, as they described it; their school context; and the broader landscape of education policy and practice.

In 2013, I signed up to attend the Australian Association for Research (AARE) theory workshop with the express purpose of investigating how other researchers were currently theorising and analysing dialogue with their study participants. The pre-workshop readings produced an almost instant resonance for me with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. His ideas as they pertain to dialogic interactions and the production of knowledge seemed to offer a way forward for my analysis. Following the presentation
of part of my ‘Bakhtinian analysis’ early in 2014 at the Fourth International Interdisciplinary Conference on Perspectives and Limitations of Dialogism in Mikhail Bakhtin, a collegial interaction alerted me to the work of Canadian sociologist, Dorothy E. Smith and her “sociology for people” which she calls “institutional ethnography” (2005, p. 1). Institutional ethnography develops its epistemology from Bakhtin's ideas concerning knowledge and knowledge creation and proposes a form of inquiry that begins from people's experiences. I had framed my study in relation to the epistemological assumptions consistent with a phenomenographic approach which acknowledges a position of no divide between the ‘inner’, mental world of the subject and the ‘outer’, imposed world which is consistent with Bakhtin’s thinking. Phenomenography however, assumes that reality is perspectival, that is, interpreted differently by people in distinct subject positions (Bowden & Green, 2005) and this would seem to be inconsistent with a Bakhtinian perspective that assumes the co-creation of socio-cultural knowledges in an ongoing and never-ending process (Bakhtin, 1981a). I believed that the methodological limitations of phenomenography, as they pertained to this study, could be transcended by infusing an approach consistent with institutional ethnography that utilized Bakhtinian notions of dialogic interactions for further analysis of the data.

**Examining theoretical frameworks**

In order for me to *learn* something about teachers’ professional learning as opposed to verifying what I already believed I *knew* I felt that I had already adopted a ‘standpoint’, as researcher, that did not position the teacher-participants, in the way Dorothy Smith describes, as “objects of investigation and explanation” whose lives are the focus of the research (2005, p. 22) but rather as the “knowers” of how an institutional process such as learning about their teaching work actually happens and is coordinated. As Smith writes, “phenomena of mind and discourse – ideology, beliefs, concepts, theory, ideas and so on – are recognized as themselves the doings of actual people situated in particular local sites at particular times” which become observable through “language as talk and/or text” (p. 25) and I would add in the case of teaching work, through pedagogical practice. In an institutional ethnography Smith explains, “The ethnographer isn’t studying the people she or he talks to. She or he is establishing
a standpoint” through conversations with people about there actual doings “as the starting point of investigation of the institutional process” (p. 207) that coordinate such doings.

Smith, Bakhtin and Phenomenography share a connection to the underlying assumption of phenomenology that experience is the source of all knowledge. In terms of professional learning, a phenomenological study would attempt to arrive via individual’s experiences, at something concerning the essence of the phenomenon of professional learning. Phenomenography, on the other hand would be interested in the substance of how people “perceive, experience and conceptualize” (Marton, 1981, p. 181) professional learning as revealed by their own words. It allows the researcher to describe the ‘variations in the ways an aspect of the world has been experienced by a group of people’ (Mann, 2009). Thus it assumes that reality or knowledge is constructed by the individual through their *experiences* of an aspect of the world and their reflections on those experiences and that this knowledge is communicated through their descriptions of those experiences, that is through their words. Bakhtin, who was influenced by the phenomenological writings of Scheler, Husserl, Cohen, Buber and others (Poole, 2003) as he worked to develop a philosophy of his own also subscribes to the view that knowledge is constructed. Rather than this construction being an individual pursuit however, he sees it as occurring in a shared territory between speaker and listener as part of the process of engaging in dialogue. He explains it thus

> The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 280).

While phenomenography encourages the researcher to have prior knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation (Mann, 2009) at the same time it requires the
researcher to 'bracket' (See p. 75) their own experiences in order to remain open to new meanings. This notion of bracketing in order to uncover meaning represents both a philosophical and a methodological breaking point between phenomenography and Bakhtin’s, and hence Smith’s thinking. While phenomenography assumes that the determination of meaning is performed solely by the researcher, in isolation from the participant, after the interview or research conversation has taken place. Bakhtin and Smith (2005) understand meaning making as a continuous process that occurs in an “interindividual territory” (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 12, emphasis in original) between speaker and listener where the word acts as a sensitive indicator of competing social forces. In the reporting of the research, the researcher remains responsible for representing the meaning that has been created between researcher and participant but must ensure that they attend to the ways in which this is done such that the dialogic nature of the interaction is preserved.

**Dialogic interactions**

Dialogic interactions between participant and researcher are dependent on the exchange of words that takes place between them. Voloshinov, writing as a member of what has become known as ‘The Bakhtin Circle’, posits that the word is the most sensitive index of social changes, and what is more, of changes still in the process of growth, still without definitive shape and not as yet accommodated into already regularized and fully defined ideological systems...The word has the capacity to register all the transitory, delicate, momentary phases of social change (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 19).

It is the ‘word’ or ‘sign’ as a site of struggle that is, according to Voloshinov, of particular interest in times of political change or upheaval because it is only at these times that “the inner dialectic quality of the sign comes out fully” (p. 23) and through the word “in the mouth of a particular individual” is revealed the “living interaction of social forces” (p. 41). The word then becomes what Gardiner refers to as “a kind of semiotic litmus paper” (2002, p. 16) for indicating the presence of competing discourses. The word or sign, argues Voloshinov (1973), does not however, belong to the individual and is not created solely as either an internal psychological process of
understanding or as an external social effect. Rather, “understanding is a response to a sign with signs” (p. 11) exchanged between two individuals who are “organised socially” (p. 12) and each sign they generate “reflects and refracts existence” (p. 19).

Like Voloshinov, Bakhtin rejected subjective psychologism's false division between the individual and the social bringing these two levels together in the word (Morris, 1994). Bakhtin does not hold with the ‘personalist’ view of language, that we can through speaking appropriate to ourselves the impersonal structure of language which is already there or with the ‘deconstructionist’ view that the human voice is just another means of registering differences. Bakhtin’s view is summarized by Clark & Holquist (1984, p. 12) as my “voice can mean, but only with others – at times in chorus, but at the best of times in dialogue”. Bakhtin provides us with a way to acknowledge the essential role that the researcher plays in the construction of meaning through the dialogue they are engaged in with the participant. As Voloshinov (1973, p. 85) describes it, meaning or knowledge is made in the space between the speaker and the addressee as a product of sharing dialogue. Thus the dialogue between researcher and participant is not merely an opportunity for one to collect information about the other but rather an opportunity for each to develop new meanings in an authentic sharing of the ‘word’. Bakhtin’s view is that

“The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system that determines this word, within the alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver; he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this system” (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 282).

Thus what teachers have to say cannot be considered an “isolated, self-sufficient monad” (Gardiner, 2003, p. xi) from which the researcher somehow brackets their influence.

The researcher and their informant are involved as speakers in a shared experience of meaning construction through dialogic interaction. The analysis of such shared moments should seek not only to reveal the possible meaning of what has been shared but also preserve the contribution that each speaker has made. When Bakhtin writes
The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it—it does not approach the object from the sidelines (Bakhtin, 1981b, p. 276)

he gives us a clue as to the types of analytical techniques consistent with a Bakhtinian theoretical framework that a researcher might employ to uncover the forces at play in the formation of teachers’ knowledge of professional learning through their utterances. The ‘utterance’ is the activity that is simultaneously able to comprehend the individual self and also incorporate what is shared with others. It is a process rather than a location and is always expressed from a point of view (Clark & Holquist, 1984).

Voloshinov is even more specific about methodological considerations essential to capturing the “genuine dialectical refraction of existence in the sign” and spells out three steps necessary to accomplish this task as

1. Ideology may not be divorced from material reality of sign (i.e., by locating it in the “consciousness” or other vague and elusive regions);
2. The sign may not be divorced from the concrete forms of social intercourse (seeing that the sign is part of organised social intercourse and cannot exist, as such, outside it, reverting to a mere physical artifact);
3. Communication and the forms of communication may not be divorced from the material basis (1973, p. 21).

Thus, a Bakhtinian framework for analysis would consider the participants’ utterance in its entirety against the socio-ideological background of its constitution and the material and relational conditions of its production with respect to the ‘other’ for whom the utterance was intended. “The sign and its social situation are inextricably fused together” (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 37). Comparatively, phenomenography attempts to stick as closely to the words of the participants as possible in the process of forming the categories of description and in this way also treats the participants spoken words as the fundamental unit of analysis. The reporting of a phenomenographic analysis
however, cannot avoid excising and isolating the participant’s spoken words from the
general flow of a text and from the responses of the other person who was part of the
dialogue and so it is inevitable that some meaning, related to connections within the
text, is lost and that this loss can be hard to trace and difficult to recover.

While both phenomenography and Bakhtin’s dialogism reject any notion of objective
truth and regard knowledge creation as social and situated and both, in there own way,
explore the notion of difference in order to find meaning. There is no doubt that
dialogism offers significant challenges to the relativistic view of knowledge adopted by
phenomenography. Bakhtin opposes any phenomenological approach deemed to be
individualistic and not premised on the dialogic interaction with the other as the means
for co-creation of socio-cultural knowledge in an ongoing and infinite process. Where
phenomenography attempts to reduce the effects of the researcher as the other party
to the conversation through the researcher actively bracketing their influence, Bakhtin
(1993) embraces the idea that knowledge is simultaneously shared at the same time as
it is distinctly incarnated by individual subjects in the ‘event of being’ and the ongoing
process of ‘becoming’ through dialogic interaction.

While an analysis of the research conversation transcripts using a Bakhtinian
perspective held possibilities for revealing more fully the competing discourses
involved in conversations about professional learning experiences, the problem
remained of how to account for the effect of localized conditions in each school. The
sociology known as “institutional ethnography” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 29) provides a
framework for consideration of how the local doings of people are coordinated by both
social structures and texts. Given that my study was interested in the possible effects of
two particular texts, the Australian Curriculum and National Professional Standards for
Teachers, institutional ethnography provided a means to examine the possible effects of
these governing texts on the actions of teachers as they enacted their teaching work.

The coordination of the social
The epistemological foundation of Dorothy Smith’s Institutional Ethnography lies in a
Bakhtinian view of knowledge as both embodied and shared through language as
dialogic interaction rather than knowledge as something that stands independent of subjects and subjectivities. The commitment of institutional ethnography, Smith describes as being

"...to remain in the world of everyday experience and knowledge, to explore ethnographically the problematic that is implicit in it, extending the capacities of ethnography beyond the circumscriptions of our ordinary experience-based knowledge, to make observable social relations beyond and within it in which we and multiple others participate" (2005, p. 42).

When Smith talks about the ‘problematic’ she is not referring to the ‘problem’ that may have arisen from the researchers direct experience and sparked the research in the first place but rather to the statement that "sets out a project of research and discovery that organizes the direction of investigation from the standpoint of those whose EXPERIENCE is its starting point" (2005, p. 227, emphasis in original). In the case of this study the ‘problem’ related to why some teachers seemed unable to continue their learning in ways that transformed their practice. As such, the problem, or set of problems, focuses on the individuals concerned and their concerns. The ‘problematic’ that steers the research project, by contrast, attempts to discover how the conditions that resulted in transformative professional learning for some teachers were coordinated both locally and extra-locally (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 40).

Smith’s (2005) notion of embodied ‘knowers’ takes experience as the source of all knowledge and posits that it is “the people’s experience of and in what they do – their ‘work’ ...- and the knowledge based in their work” (p. 125) that makes them the most valuable resource in any attempt to uncover the social conditions that coordinate their actions in the world. Institutional ethnography Smith says, “does not claim to transcend indexicality, that is, the actualities from which its findings are extracted and to which the later refer back” (p. 52) but maintains that the social as the focus for study “is to be located in how people's activities or practices are coordinated” (2005, p. 59, emphasis in original). By maintaining this focus on the coordination of actual people’s actual doings while at the same time exploring ‘translocal’ ways in which people’s work is
coordinated, institutional ethnography, according to Smith, attempts to bridge a gap left open by other forms of sociology which may either dispense “with individual subjects, their activities, and experience” or “reify “the social as system or structure” responsible for control (2005, p. 59).

Institutional ethnography does not assume that the social relations responsible for control are necessarily “malign” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 36) but rather by working from people’s experiences as they relate them and their doings as they may be observed it attempts to trace “how their everyday lives and doings are caught up in social relations and organization concerting the doings of others, although they are not discoverable from within the local experience of anyone” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 61). How this ‘discovery’ of the concerting of peoples’ activities is achieved is not laid out in terms of any particular set of methods other than the stipulation that the inquiry must begin in the doings of actual people. A form of preliminary coding however, is often used by institutional ethnographers to break up transcripts into large chunks of text organised around themes and some even employ computer-aided techniques to achieve this thematic analysis. While this ‘chunking’ assists in giving a broad appreciation of what informants may be speaking about it remains very much a process considered preliminary to the analysis proper (D. E. Smith, 2006, p. 39). Smith does however, assert that the way in which institutional ethnography extends beyond normal ethnographic procedures is by bringing into the inquiry “the textual…as integral to coordinating local actions with others elsewhere and elsewhen” and that this consideration of ‘texts’ provides scope to reach into “the forms of organising power and agency that are characteristic of corporations, government, and international organisation” (2005, p. 44). Smith draws on Bakhtin’s (1986) explication of ‘speech genres’ to justify the assumption that a text has the capacity to be dialogic and can therefore, operate in different ways with different individuals to coordinate their actual doings. She views these texts, that may well be “prescriptions of the law”, as not existing in “an abstract theoretical space” but rather that “they are locally incorporated into people’s work and the coordinating of their work as a sequence of action” (2005, p. 67).
The product of an inquiry conducted along the lines of institutional ethnography should describe, in some way, how the coordination of people's activities or work processes is achieved. It needs to attend to complimentary accounts of others involved in the same context in such a way that these accounts are placed in relation to each other “not subdued or subjected” and eventually displaced by “an overriding interpretation” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 64). In this way Smith claims, “Inquiry is given primacy over theory, subordinating theory or concepts to the explication of just how people’s ongoing activities are coordinated” (2005, p. 70) and that it is “finding their articulations and assembling them that is the work of the analysis” (p. 145). Smith provides the caveat however, that “There is no point where” the explication offered as the product of the inquiry “becomes fixed and objective and frozen in time. Rather, as in Bakhtin’s view, each act is ‘dialogically’ engaged with a past that is not concluded” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 66).

Institutional ethnography is not without its critics. Walby (2007) criticises institutional ethnography’s methods of analysis and reporting of research as “re-mystifying knowledge production (to a lesser degree of objectification) in its own method of configuring the social relations of research” (p. 1010) which he says, is contrary to it’s own ontology. Working from Smith’s original explication of the ontology and purpose of institutional ethnography (IE), as a sociology that preserves the presence of the subject (D. E. Smith, 1987) he takes issue with what he sees as IE’s “authority over representation of the subject” (p. 1026) and its lack of reflexivity in this regard. One of Walby’s main complaints about IE is that it “could be more attentive to... representation of participants” (2007, p. 1026). Smith however, makes clear that “investigators use informants’ accounts not as windows on the informants’ inner experience” (2006, p. 15) but rather, “the social as the focus for study is to be located in how people’s activities or practices are coordinated” (2005, p. 59). In this sense IE does not claim to represent the informant but rather the coordination of the informant’s actions. Walby draws on a limited set of IE studies (M. L. Campbell, 1998; DeVault, 1991; S.M Turner, 2002) to illustrate the ways in which he believes IE researchers have objectified the participant’s knowledge through analytic methods that lack reflexivity with regard to the explication of how the researcher gathered the interview data and
used it to arrive at the interpretation presented. A broader survey of studies utilising institutional ethnography illustrates how the methods employed have been further developed (Comber, 2012; Daniel, 2004; De Montigny, 2014; Kerkham & Nixon, 2014; Kerr, 2006; Nichols & Griffith, 2009) with a view to making more explicit the connections, and how they have been made, between interview data, texts and the governing social relations as the product of the research.

Summary

During the phenomenographic analysis of the first research conversations it became increasingly clear that meaning was happening in a process of co-construction between the participant and myself as researcher, teacher and professional learning consultant. Across the three pieces of data making up the set for each participant, connections were also at risk of being either lost or difficult to track as were the connections across data sets from one individual to another. Perhaps more importantly, the analysis of these first round interviews pointed to a variety of structures and relationships within each school setting that operated to support or hinder the kind of learning that the teachers were talking about. While the phenomenographic analysis allowed for categorisation of these structures, relations and processes it did not allow for their interaction with each other and with the participant’s learning to be traced. The phenomenographic analysis was unable to portray the state of disequilibrium, in the sense that it is used in chemistry to describe movement in reactions from one possible set of products to another, that existed for participants on certain issues related to their professional learning, especially in relation to the use of professional standards.

It is apparent that phenomenography and a Bakhtinian perspective have significant points of divergence and that both the data I had collected, and the manner in which I had collected it, were perhaps more consistent with a dialogic approach right from the outset. Each of the data collection moments employed in this study constitute, what Clark and Holquist (1984) identify as a ‘performance’ in the Bakhtinian sense. A performance which results, if we accept that “the activity of being is generated by the constant slippage between self and other”, in the authorship of a text that parallels the
building of ‘selves’, both the teacher’s and my own. These texts which included visual and aural as well as written materials, may be considered as being composed of ‘utterances’ for according to Bakhtin, ‘utterances’ are found not only in written texts but also in thoughts and in deeds (1984, p. 64). The texts also provide a means for examining the “actual doings” of people in order “to create something like maps of how things work beyond the scope of our everyday knowledge” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 206).

At all points, a ‘dialogue’ had been conducted with participants in which they had significantly, if not always equally, contributed to decisions about the form and content of the performances that comprised the data. Which leaves my data collection methods open to the criticism that they were flawed from the beginning in terms of a phenomenographic analysis since I had failed to adequately bracket my interactions with the participants during the open-ended research conversations. Fortunately, important aspects of the method employed are I believe, defensible as being consistent with an approach informed by institutional ethnography and founded on considerations of Bakhtin’s ideas as they relate to language and meaning. The first of these methods is the selection of participants which sought to maximize variation in “the actual diversity of perspectives, biographies, positioning, and so on” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 125) of those who had volunteered to participate in the study. The second is the data collection through research conversation and finally, the initial coding of the data for the purpose of familiarization.

The evolution of the methods and accompanying analysis continues over the next three chapters. Chapter 4 describes the methods used in the dialogic analysis of the three performances that make up a key informant’s data set and the implications for reporting the findings of such analysis. The dialogic analysis of one key informants complete data set is also presented here. Chapter 5 provides the findings from close dialogic examination of the forms of evidence demonstrated by teachers and their reflections on this evidence. The set of ‘evidence’ presented in this chapter is based on a purposive selection in order to illustrate the range of responses from those participants who had prior experience of presenting evidence for the purposes of accreditation as well as those who had not. In Chapter 6, the method employed to map
the social relations, in terms of the actions of others and textually mediated forms of control of participants’ actions, is described. ‘Maps’ are presented as analysis in order to illuminate social structures that were responsible for the coordination of people’s doings as they related to these instances of professional learning resulting in transformed practice.
Chapter 4: A dialogic interaction with data

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 272).

The ‘struggle’ over meaning

Beginning in this chapter and continuing into Chapters 5 & 6, I refocus the methodology from the standpoint of an institutional ethnographer in order to better understand and explicate the social relations implicated in teachers’ experiences of what, how and why they learned something about their teaching work. For the evolving methods explained in this chapter, the key Bakhtinian notion that meaning making is a shared experience between speakers in a dialogic interaction (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 282), discussed in Chapter 3 (See p. 87), provides the basis for the primary analytical tool utilised to understand what is revealed in the participant-researcher interaction as participants’ related their experiences. Bakhtin constructs a metaphor, based on forces associated with circular motion, to describe the struggle over meaning in any utterance between the dominant language or discourse exerting a centralizing effect and multiple subversive social discourses producing decentralizing effects. Bakhtin tends to use the term ‘discourse’ to mean ‘a way of speaking’. Bakhtin would argue for the necessity of these centralizing discourses as a means for ensuring a cohesive society able to understand each other’s intentions and practices. Simultaneously, there exists a multiplicity of other social discourses, arising in the participant’s world as language brushes up against other ‘dialogic threads’ (See p. 88), which can work to subvert the process of centralization. It is the struggle he claims, between these forces of “verbal-ideological centralisation and unification” and the “uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification” that the heteroglossia of multiple social discourses afford (Holquist, 1981, p. 75) that creates the conditions of possibility for greater
degrees of personal and political liberty (Clark & Holquist, 1984, pp. 5-11). Thus, individuals are, “not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourses” (p. 7). The struggle between discourses of accountability and compliance, associated with the government’s education agenda, and other heterogeneous educational discourses associated with teachers’ learning takes place in the context of a teacher’s work and life. These contextualised struggles between discourses underpin the problematic that drives this study, particularly in relation to how professional learning for transformed teaching work is locally coordinated.

In this chapter, the three performances, initial research conversation, demonstration of evidence and reflective interview for one key informant, Lucy, are presented in chronological order together with the analysis. The purpose of this is to preserve the socio-cultural context of the data gathering process, and to examine the discourses, or ways of speaking, present in this key informant’s story about professional learning as they are revealed within the developing dialogic relationship with the researcher. This preservation of context and the order of events is important because, as we see in the case of Lucy through the dialogic interaction with the researcher, her ‘multiple voices’ regarding professional learning are expressed and exhibit changes as meaning is shared and developed through dialogue with the researcher during the course of the interview. In the preliminary coding process, these multiple voices of single participants produced an impression that there were far more than eight participants in the study. The preservation of the context of the data assists in maintaining the participant as a person in the process of becoming, one whose thoughts and opinions are constantly in flux as they interact dialogically with the world (Bakhtin, 1984; Frank, 2005). In this way, criticisms leveled at research which claims to credit the knowledge of the subject and make plain how new knowledge has been produced and yet through the study’s methods of analysis manages to ‘remystify’ knowledge, might be avoided (See Walby, p. 92). The chief constraint on reporting in this manner is that the text generated for each participant is substantial in length and therefore, beyond the scale of the requirements of this thesis to report in full here. This is why I have chosen to present the full analytic text for only one of the eight participants by way of illustration of the method of analysis and the results revealed. What I hope to illustrate is how I
have interacted dialogically with the texts of the interviews and the evidence in such a way that a reader, through dialogic interaction with my analytic text, might understand how I have arrived at the meaning I have made hence, verifying the trustworthiness of my findings. The dialogic analysis for all eight participants’ data is utilized in the ‘mapping’ analysis of the social relations that supported their transformative professional learning experience and is presented in Chapter 6.

The key-informant reported on here, was selected because she described a learning experience that resulted in a significant transformation of her classroom practice. The evidence she demonstrated illustrated that this transformation was towards a more dialogic interaction with her students resulting in increased student engagement in learning. The evidence presented by several other teachers also demonstrated transformation in the direction of greater dialogic interaction with their students so, in this sense, Lucy exemplifies the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of professional learning also valued by others. Chris’ evidence is discussed, as another example of dialogic pedagogy, in Chapter 5. Additionally, Lucy’s performances illustrate the dialogic relationship that becomes evident between her, as participant, and myself as researcher. A spectrum of relationship was evident from those like Lucy, with whom I shared a pre-existing professional connection to another participant with whom I shared no pre-existing connection. It was not until the data gathering for all three stages was completed that this other participant realised I was an experienced teacher rather than the academic or researcher he had assumed would have little understanding of school education and school work. For him, the process of data collection tended more towards a recount of his experiences.

**Dialogic methods**

In surveying the work of institutional ethnographers over the past two decades, DeVault & McCoy (2005) note that while institutional ethnographers tend not to use formal coding strategies some do use data analysis software to ‘chunk’, often large sections of, transcripts according to themes or topics (p. 38) as they relate to
“particular sites, texts or moments in the process” (p. 39). They argue against a “prescriptive orthodoxy” when it comes to methods employed in institutional ethnography (IE) and in favour of an understanding of IE as “an emergent mode of inquiry, always subject to revision and the improvisation required by new applications” (p. 16). The first step in my method of analysis, the coding of interview transcripts for variation in participant’s experiences of professional learning, had been completed for all first round conversations as part of the original methodological approach framed by phenomenography. This preliminary coding used NVivo software to store groups of quotations as ‘categories of description’ according to what was being spoken about. The categories had been formed in such a way as to acknowledge the variation in what participants had been prepared to say about their experiences. The coding process served two very important purposes; familiarisation with each participant’s experiences across their entire interview transcript, as well as differences between participants’ experiences; developing awareness of possible loss of connections within and across data that I believed had important explanatory potential. NVivo software allows for both the grouping of excised quotations and the viewing of selected quotations within the context of the entire transcript and so continued to be of ongoing use as I worked back and forward between the original audio files, the highlighted transcripts and my developing analysis.

Having recognised the limitations of the phenomenographic methodology, described in Chapter 3, for answering the questions associated with this study, I returned to the interview transcripts for the first research conversation with each participant and as I read through them I listened again to the audio files. It was apparent that the subtleties of meaning conveyed through the speakers’ own emphasis, inflexion, pauses, laughter and even gestures had not been captured in the original transcription process. In his commentary on Bakhtin’s approach to language, Eagelton (1996) remarks

“For Bakhtin, all language, just because it is a matter of social practice, is inescapably shot through with evaluations. Words not only denote objects but imply attitudes to them: the tone in which you say ‘Pass the cheese’ can signify how you regard me, yourself, the cheese and the situation we are in” (p. 106).
I considered it important then, to the intent of a dialogic analysis to try and capture ‘tone’ wherever possible so as I listened again to the audio recording of each conversation and simultaneously read the transcript I employed a code, based on standard conscription conventions, to mark up the text at key points to serve as reminders of where intonation, phrasing, laughter and such might contribute to the meaning implied from the spoken words of the text (See Table 3).

Table 3: Transcription conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lo:ong</td>
<td>Extended vowel sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Turns at talk are closely latched together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>//</td>
<td>Interrupted talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Overlapping talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Transcriber’s comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>Brief but noticeable pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>Pause of n seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^ `</td>
<td>Upward and downward inflexion respectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_______</td>
<td>Syllable or word stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Between words run together quickly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next phase of the dialogic approach presented a problem of how to preserve the context of the ‘talk’ in the research conversation, or evidence, by not isolating stretches of talk for analysis from the context of the transcript as a whole or from the evidence and reflection which goes with it. What was required was a systematic way in which the text of ‘talk’ might be interrupted at appropriate points in order to offer an analysis of what was being spoken about or demonstrated in terms of my interpretation of its meaning at that point in the text and in relation to the text as a whole. For Bakhtin, in his dialogic conception, that point is marked by the ‘utterance’ and he tells us that “The very boundaries of the utterance are determined by a change of speaking subjects, that is, a change of speakers” (1986, p. 71). He also says
We learn to cast our speech in general forms and, when hearing others’ speech, we guess it’s genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length (that is, the approximate length of the speech whole) and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is, from the very beginning we have a sense of the speech whole (p84).

In the course of the research conversation, participants tended to ‘run on’ from one topic to another often without my intercession but because of the social organization (Voloshinov, 1973) existing between us we were able to continue a useful interaction based on certain common understandings of the “languages of social groups, ‘professional’...languages” (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 272) existing between us. I offer this as justification for the liberties I have taken in determining the beginning and end of utterances, without necessarily waiting for a change of speaking subject, in order to facilitate the insertion of smaller sections of commentary at relevant points. The questions ‘What is being spoken about here?’ and ‘Are they still speaking about elements which lie within the same subject or theme?’ were used to determine where an utterance began and ended, often before the change of speaking subject. I have labeled ‘discourses’, used in the way Bakhtin (1986) does to mean ‘ways of speaking’, as they occur within an utterance or part of an utterance in order to reveal contradictions and tensions in what participants are saying. In labeling these discourses, I have endeavoured to stick with the Bakhtinian notion that primacy belongs to the response and that ‘a word in the mouth of a particular individual person is a product of the living interaction of social forces’ (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 41) but to simultaneously remain conscious that the style and substance of any response is affected by its generation being ‘oriented towards an addressee, toward who that addressee might be’ (p. 85 emphasis in original). While I have made no deliberate attempt to incorporate any of the categories of description arising from the preliminary coding analysis, it is to some extent inevitable that this prior analysis has informed my selection of terms as both sets of labels were informed by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.
In the analysis of utterances, I did not attempt to extract quotations for coding but rather employed a method in which I used highlighting combined with ‘Insert Comment’ within a Word document of the entire transcript, as in the example below, to draw attention to both discourses and social relationships, including texts, related to the participants learning experience as they recounted it.

This allowed me to review both the meaning I had ascribed to the participant’s words in light of the whole transcript and also to review the labels I assigned to various discourses, or ways of speaking. The individual analysis of each first research conversation transcript was then reviewed and reflected on in relation to meaning across each participant’s data set as a whole. Knowledge of what participants said later or demonstrated through their evidence afforded interpretation of the significance of talk about their ‘doings’ and how they linked into social relationships, locally and extralocally (D. E. Smith, 2005). Only then was I able to interrupt the flow of the transcripts with moments of commentary that I felt made sense in terms of the meaning making that the participant and I had shared across the whole set of their three performances. In each section of commentary, itself an exercise in meaning making informed by my positioning as a researcher immersed in the field of teacher professional learning, I endeavour to highlight how the influences of shared meaning making in a dialogic interaction between the participant and I, as well as influences acting from other parts of the participants’ world, are implicated in what participants have to say about their doings in relation to their professional learning.

While not every part of the original transcript was preserved because, for example, I excised sections where a participant repeated something they had already discussed
without adding anything new. Nevertheless, I tried to maintain a sense of the entire data set for each participant and its socio-cultural and political situatedness by constructing a text in which the utterances are reported in the order in which they occurred in the original performances even though they are interrupted at various points by the corresponding analysis. Frank (2005) describes how the authorship of such a text as part of a dialogic research process “offers an account of how researcher and participant came together in some shared time and space and had diverse effects on each other” (p. 968). He maintains that
dialogical research requires hearing participants’ stories not as surrogate observations of their lives outside the interview but as acts of engagement with researchers...The researcher, by specific questions, and even by her or his observing presence, instigates self-reflections that will lead the respondent not merely to report his or her life but to change that life (Frank, 2005, p. 968).

This method of presenting interview analysis varies slightly from what DeVault & McCoy (2005, pp. 40-41) identify as the two most common strategies used by institutional ethnographers. The first mode is where the researcher uses the interview data to produce a written analysis in the ‘writer’s voice’. The second involves the use of quotations to enhance the description in such a way that the quotations become “exhibits... windows within the text, bringing into view the social organization of my informants’ lives for myself and for my readers to examine” (G. Smith, 1998, p. 312). My method might almost be seen as the reverse of what George Smith is describing here in that my commentary forms the ‘windows’ into the participant's account of their doings. These windows reveal my interpretation whilst simultaneously acknowledging, through their positioning in a more complete transcript, that it is not the only interpretation that might be made.

Throughout the analysis of the transcripts I also sought to identify any talk about social relations involved in the coordination of the doings of the teacher-participant in relation to the learning experience they were describing. These social relations might involve not only interactions with other people in their school context but also interactions with various forms of texts. Texts are defined as: words as they might
occur in policy documents or teaching resources; images in the form of photographs of classroom displays, diagrams and video; or sounds such as recordings of interviews, student talk or music. These texts are set into some material form that is replicable and are of interest because while the influence of a text is noted in the local setting it is also “hooking up an individual’s consciousness into relations that are translocal” (D. E. Smith, 2006, p. 66). Smith’s understanding of the dialogic importance of texts is based on Bakhtin’s distinction of speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986) as not just direct experiences of dialogue but also those that are mediated by texts. An institutional ethnographer is interested in the “differences in the ways in which language coordinates people’s doings – that is, whether what people are doing is on interindividual territory anchored in a shared, experiential world or whether the interindividual is a territory anchored in texts” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 95).

The *Australian Curriculum* and the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*, as examples of regulatory texts produced extralocally, were of interest to this study because of their potential to affect the coordination of teachers’ local activities. Not only was it suspected that individual teachers’ direct experiences of these extralocal texts might vary but that the influence of these extralocal texts on locally produced texts implicated in the coordination of teachers’ activities might also vary. As Smith describes, it “Texts suture models of action organized extralocally to the local actualities of our necessarily embodied lives. Text-reader conversations are embedded in and organize local settings of work” (2005, pp. 166-167). The ‘text-reader’ conversation referred to here is situated in the time and place and actual activities of the reader involved, and the text is activated dialogically by the reader in such a way that it becomes part of their doing in a manner that is unique to them. Smith is not however, advocating the analysis of texts in “abstraction from how they enter into and coordinate sequences of action” but rather in examining how texts are “embedded in what is going on and going forward” (2006, p. 67). In Lucy's story, we see how varied activation of externally developed ‘governing’ texts influences the production of local texts and social relationships that support or inhibit transformative professional learning.
Results of the dialogic analysis of a key informant’s data – Lucy

1. Open – ended research conversation

The first performance with Lucy, a primary school teacher with 19 years of classroom experience and who is not currently required to engage with accreditation against professional standards, was the initial research conversation about her professional learning. The conversation took place in a small office at her school. Lucy knows that part of my work is as an education consultant because we are both members of the same professional association. In conversations and emails we shared outside of the ‘official’ data gathering moments, Lucy expressed an understanding that we shared common educational ideals. In the following analysis I draw attention to those parts of the interview that illustrate how using a Bakhtinian framework to analyse and connect across the data gives a better representation of how different, competing discourses around professional learning are expressed by Lucy at different times throughout the interview and how my historical and temporal professional relationship with Lucy influenced the dialogue.

The three phases of data collection with Lucy demonstrate, I believe, the development of the dialogic interaction between us that becomes itself a professional learning experience. In between the first research conversation and Lucy’s demonstration of evidence she continues her professional reading and research as she plans learning experiences for her students that might best demonstrate to me what she claims to have learned. Lucy uses my observation notes of her demonstration lesson for further reflection and critique of her classroom practice such that by the time of her final reflective interview she has ‘experimented’ in her classroom further with what I identify as dialogic pedagogy for its focus on engaging students in shared meaning making.

*DT: Thinking back over your professional learning, I’d like you to think about a time when you learned something about your work as a teacher and you really knew that you’d learned something. I’d like you to talk about what you learned, how you knew that you’d really learned it and how that learning came about.*
might ask a few clarifying questions along the way but basically just tell the story in whatever way you like.

Lucy: It probably started here in about 2005 or 2006 and I think as a teacher I suppose as the way I was taught in primary school, even though I went to university, impacted a lot on the way I approached teaching. And I must say to about 10 years ago I came in with the knowledge that I knew, knew everything. That the students-back then I would have said I differed-but on reflection that my job was to impart the knowledge and while the students brought their experiences to school to a degree I thought yes they do but still I'm the teacher. I would not say that blackboard/slate (she gestures writing on a slate) you know that they can pick up everything but to some degree it was sort of (...) teacher pointing to herself-listen (pointing to imaginary class).

Lucy identifies the major influence on her earlier teaching practice as her own experiences as a student at school. She outlines her personal theory of knowledge at that time as one in which knowledge is held by the teacher and imparted to the students in a manner determined by and controlled by the teacher, independent of the students’ experiences within and outside of school. This influence of a teacher’s own schooling on their teaching practice is consistent with what Ball & Cohen (1999, p. 5) had to say about pre-service teacher education in the 1990’s in that even when it aimed high it offered “a weak antidote to the powerful socialization into teaching that occurs in teachers’ own prior experience as students”. Lucy is able to share this philosophy with me in a manner that might be considered shorthand because of our shared understanding as teachers of educational discourses that position learners in relation to the teacher. It is, as Voloshinov says, that “the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction” (1973, p. 21).

...very fortune here to have the Early Childhood Centre and I went down and just observed, for no particular reason, worked with (name) the director and observed the principles of Reggio Emilia, their foundations, and how they really see the
learner as um (.) powerful, you know (.) no limits, that they re:ally bring the wealth to - to actually acknowledge that. They actually did it authentically, I felt, and so then I wanted to learn more about it so I read books and so forth and I was very fortunate to go across to Reggio Emilia with (name) and the principal who was here before and (another teacher).

Motivated by her own curiosity, Lucy observes the practice of another teacher in a different setting and with students slightly younger than those she was currently teaching. What she sees is a teacher successfully putting theory into practice in a way that Lucy feels, improves the quality of the learning experience for the students. The principles of Reggio Emilia that the demonstrating teacher is employing and that Lucy is interested in learning about have not been identified for mandatory implementation by any external body. It is Lucy's choice to explore this area of professional learning based on her professional judgement that what she has observed makes a difference to student learning. Her reading of texts that explicate the philosophical and pedagogical approach of Reggio Emilia schools coordinates the next step in Lucy's learning.

DT: Where ... did you go?

Lucy: Reggio Emilia in Italy. And that was the best learning...I mean I virtually did have to pay for it so it wasn't full but the school did support it to some degree but you've sort of got to think you're half way across the world it's got to be good but really, you know, how good? And I remember meeting people at the airport and I said, how long have you been here for and have you been here before? and they said Oh, this is our third time. And they were people who were um// they were older than me and they had different experiences and I thought then this is your third or fourth time and you're paying money by yourself to come so it must be pretty good. So I was very excited.

Lucy's motivation to learn is enhanced by the knowledge that her school has supported her financially with her choice of learning experience and that other experienced teachers she has spoken to, value the learning she is engaging with.
And it was the learning...And I suppose specifically, what was it? I think it was action based. While you have the theoretical, the face-to-face lectures, you also had the observation in the different schools. So they're talking about these students you know these 3 or 4 year olds being powerful learners well what does that look like? And I think as a teacher, especially today with so much there's so much information we are accessible to but actually seeing it. I think for me that seeing it and talking to other colleagues that share your frustrations especially when you're trying to implement change, had the powerful effect on me...I think for me it was manageable um by actually seeing it myself. So I think what for me as a learner is to actually see and speak to people in the field...I came back thinking well that framework really worked. So they had keynotes every day and then you went out on field visits and then you came back and you/they established networks. So networks that the idea would be that they would be sustainable when you got back to your area... You would come back, you would debrief so it was that you know sharing. So it was the seeing what was happening in the province and then the sharing and that was excellent as well

The characteristics of the learning experience identified by Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman (2002, p. 83) as being “effective in improving teaching practice” being spoken about here are ‘reform type’, ‘active learning’ and ‘coherence’. Lucy had the opportunity to establish networks in order to discuss with other teachers outside her own school context difficulties related to implementing change in the sense of reforming teaching practice. The field visits provided opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged in the meaningful analysis of teaching and learning and contributed to coherence in that these experiences were consistent with teachers’ goals and encouraged continuing professional communication among teachers.

I think I always have to come back and ask myself what impact does this professional learning experience going to have on the children. And that’s sort of where (.) we’re not struggling but on this campus we would like to think we’ve got a quite innovative...
professional learning model but is it for the teachers’ learning which will impact we’re hoping or should we have the students at the centre of it? (.) ...we’re very lucky to have opportunities to a lot of professional learning. And we’re at the quandary now where it doesn’t, it’s not cheap and what are we seeing? We’re not seeing-well no we are but-how can we measure it? How can we measure the impact of professional learning?

Interwoven with Lucy’s description of the highly effective time she had learning about her teaching work in this way, she begins to speak about professional learning as a privilege that can only be justified if it can be measured in terms of its impact on students’ academic learning outcomes reflecting her personal struggle with these two competing discourses. On the one hand, the ‘unofficial’ discourse of measurement of improvements in student learning, in all senses, as measured by teacher observation and professional judgement. On the other hand, the ‘official’ discourse of quantitative measurement of students’ academic performance by external, standardized tests. Voloshinov would describe this as a ‘struggle over the sign’ of professional learning, which consequently affects what is valued as professional learning, and is a part of the larger struggle going on for most teachers in a landscape dominated by compliance measures such as standardized testing, the results of which are made public on the MySchool website (ACARA, 2013b). Lucy returns to this discourse later in the interview when talking about her professional reading as a form of ongoing learning.

I try to get more detail about her learning by attempting to paraphrase what she has already said.

*DT:* ... So the chief thing that you learned from this professional learning experience was that students hold their own knowledge and are capable of...

*Lucy:* Well the principles of Reggio and I suppose one of them -there’s seven- so the power of them all working together. So first of all it’s the image of the child. I learned, I can actually articulate the image of the child for me is that they bring great wealth of knowledge to the experience and to use those experiences to direct their learning. [Right, OK] And in conjunction with that looking at the importance
of the environment, the importance of partnerships. I just think that the principles-partnerships, projects, collaboration, image of the child. For me it was authentically and it was done. I could see the principles of Reggio Emilia that was the learning for me. And I came back with the question How can I, not replicate Reggio Emilia but how can I put-adopt-foster those principles in my learning environment? ...letting go^, not having that full control^. In the sense that you set the boundaries but you give- and that’s sounding silly- but I think that was probably the main learning as well

DT: So would two things that were really different in what you saw in Reggio Emilia and what was going on in your practice before, be that acknowledgement of the knowledge that the students bring? [Yes] And also this idea of a task that’s authentic?

Lucy: Yes and that real project based learning. [Right] Struggling with that with also the accountability. [Yes] And taken for granted-well I suppose a pre-school setting doesn’t have the curriculum well the um they have a curriculum now but not that responsibility where you have to address specific outcomes...I tried to come back and tune-in and listen to their interests and try to structure a curriculum that was meeting that but also accountable

For Lucy, observing the practice of others in her own school and in the course of the organised professional learning experience has had two important consequences. First, it made her conscious that her need for control in the classroom stemmed from her earlier view of students as not being capable of making choices about their own learning. Second, it provided her with evidence that an alternative practice arising from a view of students as ‘powerful learners’ is not only possible it is highly desirable in terms of the engagement that students demonstrate when offered such learning experiences. This liberating discourse about learning is however, struggling alongside a discourse of accountability in the sense of compliance with state-based curriculum documents. Lucy regards accountability as important but places it second in her consideration after the interests of the students.
Duration of the professional learning activity in terms of “span of time over which the activity takes place”, as identified by Desimone, et al., (2002), is achieved when Lucy returns to her school. She describes it thus

So I came back and I did this, I taped myself (in the classroom) and I just I talked excessively and the listening was (...) I was cutting children off in a polite way-but/So I became more reflective as a learner and I suppose that’s what sparked on to me to go back and do research from different areas and so I listened and I had different activities where the children um they were-they had to-they listened...I tried to come back and tune-in and listen to their interests and try to structure a curriculum that was meeting that but also accountable. [Mm]. But I couldn’t do it for a big-I thought I can’t address the whole curriculum so I’ll just did it for PDHPE...they wanted- they asked to create a dance. And so in the nights they went home they bought back costumes the next day. These were 5 year olds. They were coordinating the dance, they were showing signs of you know different leadership roles in the group, timetabling their practises outside and just those life-long skills, cooperative, social skills from where I came from before I wouldn’t have factored into programming. But what came out of me listening to them and then what we did was that kids who didn’t want to write I took photos, videos of the dance they then wrote about it. So I found other-by listening in, by responding to them but also being accountable to where I needed to go it was just a huge, a huge learning curve...the learning was listening to the students.

DT: So you know that you learned that because you came back and you actively took steps [yes] to critically appraise your own practice in terms of listening [yes] by making your tape recordings ... [she is nodding].

Lucy: ...they really pushed the fact that you can’t just take this from here and put it where you are [right]. What you’re seeing here are the principles of our philosophy and they were really big on um how can you apply these principles in your setting.
Lucy turns the Reggio Emilia experience, one that might still be considered by many as a one-size-fits-all approach, into an individual reflection embedded in her own classroom practice and thus a potentially transformative learning experience (Desimone et al., 2002; Kennedy, 2005). It is interesting to note that Lucy selects what might be considered a 'low-stakes' area of the curriculum, PDHPE, to experiment with. This reflects the influence that accountability to the state curriculum documents has over the coordination of Lucy's practice.

DT: And so bringing that back to your own school setting, how have you been able to continue that learning? Implement that learning? What's happened with it since you've come back?

Lucy: ... it's always good to send (.) more than one and perhaps someone in leadership that can have an influence. So we did take the head of primary, she's since left. I was and still am on the leadership team. But a change of principal does affect if they are not sharing a similar pedagogy... And also what I found too, Deb, was shifting mentally of staff that are very entrenched and a lot of staff which you're probably familiar with, I'm not sure about primary, unfortunately don't see themselves/ I^ think^ they were moving but don't see themselves as learners [Mmm] ...I know everything not that I'm really bright but I've got this far in my career, I can teach the content, I'm happy, I don't have the interest to move further (she's talking about the prevailing attitude of other teachers). I suppose for me, what motivates people?

Lucy highlights the importance of one of the school leaders validating the form and substance of the professional learning through their participation and embedding the learning in the school context through the actions they took to set up structures to support continued learning with the same focus over a significant time span. The dialogic nature of the interaction is evidenced here in Lucy's comments to me as a fellow educator who shares her understanding of the kind of teacher mentality that obstructs the transformation of practice. She talks a little bit more about this in
response to my asking whether or not well-behaved primary-aged children can be masking a lack of genuine engagement in their learning but then moves back into the accountability discourse that she touched on earlier.

Lucy: Most students are very-most kids want to please. And most kids, especially in this sort of setting, are- we have some behavioral but not a big percentage- that could be. I just think too their mind frame but I think we’re also lucky here- and I probably can speak because I’ve worked in other (sector) schools-we’re very lucky to have opportunities to a lot of professional learning. And we’re at the quandary now where it doesn’t, it’s not cheap and what are we seeing? We’re not seeing-well no we are but- how can we measure it? How can we measure the impact of professional learning? (.)

DT: And is that measuring it through student outcomes? Is that what you think you’re heading towards?

Lucy: Um it’s shifted.

By way of explanation of this ‘shift’, Lucy goes on to describe one of the structural changes supported by the previous principal. This was the employment of two knowledgeable outsiders, in this case university academics, to help contextualise the Reggio Emilia learning and also to establish an inquiry approach to ongoing professional learning tailored to meet teachers’ individual needs. The university academics were able to act in the capacity of critical friends, asking hard questions and thereby preventing the action research from becoming a self-congratulatory process but at the same time maintaining a good working relationship based on trust and respect (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009).

Lucy: Teachers actually looked at their own learning and picked an area that they had to/ that they wanted/ that they had questions or/ and they had to actually write it into a question...the teachers were engaged we provided release to them so it wasn’t out of school time. I think that’s another big thing with learning. I think
um to some extent if you can meet them half way and give them in school
time...but we had a showcase of the teachers’ learning and the end of the term’.  
And I suppose it’s like coming into the teacher’s classroom for some staff it was
added pressure...and it was so specific that it was manageable

DT: And would you be able to describe in what ways that assisted you to keep the
projects going?

Lucy: OK. I think credibility, first and foremost well I don’t know about first and
foremost but it helped. Teachers see that oh we’ve got access to external
facilitators. Just the idea to some we’ve got access to external facilitators from a
university. I think the presenters themselves were very engaging...

DT: Were the outside researchers able to ask hard questions [ah yeh] in a way
someone internal may not be able to?

Lucy: Hard questions and they listened [Right] Um yeh very hard, really hard
questions... Hard questions that made you actually think about what you were
doing. Hard questions that helped you develop a question because the developing
the question took ages because you had to really, you know, when you’re teaching
you need to know what you’re looking for...And we did it over a period so we
structured it that kindergarten year 1 worked with them and then we moved up to
2 and then 3 so we’re up to year 4 and it was about a 3 year project...

DT: So those research skills that they brought from outside [Mmmmm] people felt?

Lucy: Challenged! Threatened! Engaged! A real mixture

The longevity of the professional learning initiative and the development of
personalized inquiry questions meant that there was scope, provided through
complexity, for differentiation of the learning to meet teachers’ individual needs. The
importance of teachers’ learning was recognized through making time within the
school day for teachers to engage in this work but teachers were expected to provide evidence of their learning through a ‘showcase’ of what they had been working on. Lucy continues to add to the discourses of ‘leadership’ and ‘differentiation’.

_DT:_ So your leadership was obviously important in that project. Who else’s leadership was closely tied up with the success of that project?

_Lucy:_ The principal!

_DT:_ Right and the principal’s since changed?

_Lucy:_ … I think at the top you’ve got to have someone whose/ well they’re influential aren’t they [yeh] they can actually make the decisions [yeh] and that’s where I, personally speaking, that’s the shift (referring to the change in focus not the progress of the teachers).

_DT:_ Do you think also that this kind of/ that there’s not the patience for this kind of long term? [Quick fix.] So it does take quite a lot of vision and leadership to say this is for the long haul we need to hang in there.

_Lucy:_ Yeh, and it’s not a one-off so this is our inquiry question this time… it’s that/ people aren’t sometimes with you at your learning journey. I think the acknowledgement that everyone is at a different stage [Mm] where someone that’s further on can say OK I can see the big picture. I’m working with these facilitators to start a framework so I can enter back into that framework [yes] for my next area. Where some people were seeing it as a one-off, an additional workload. And that was a challenge and I do sometimes think sometimes the society we live in we do this - we need to see change straight away.

In the course of our conversation Lucy did not raise the Australian Curriculum so I asked about it directly. Her comments indicate that she has not been so panicked by its pending introduction that she has felt the need to study it in any great depth. For Lucy
it is another set of content ‘outcomes’ to which her classroom practice will need to be ‘backward mapped’.

DT: And what effect do you think the Australian Curriculum will have on something like Reggio Emilia to the pedagogy that’s involved?

Lucy: Mm? Um it seems to be very more stringent [the AC?] Yeh, look to be honest I haven’t had a great- a great- coming back from leave- work with it but just from the documents I’ve seen’. Look I think that there is in the primary school a place for the project based learning but it’s like you need the skills as well so it’s that balance. You need your tool kit to engage in those activities, those principles. And those principles of Reggio to me are I suppose they’re just good practice. You want partnership with parents, you want a community, you want students to feel powerful. It’s nothing out of the box but it’s made explicit and I think in an authentic community you see it.

DT: So you talked earlier that even though your dance was your focus for your student interest projects you saw ways to include your writing [Oh!] and your other curriculum. So do you think that you would probably [backward mapping]. Yeh, once you got your head around the AC content do you think that would be possible still?

Lucy: Yeh and look that’s what I’m doing at the moment …So we’re doing a unit on sustainability so I’m sort of going from the real-life experience, mapping out the activities and then going back to the syllabus. And it’s amazing. If people worry less about the outcomes they’ll be surprised with the outcomes.

Lucy’s talk about a mathematics project designed around student interests leads her to think about numeracy in general and NAPLAN (National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy) emerges as a significant accountability discourse.
Lucy: I think with the whole NAPLAN (.) debate um I think that’s reflecting on my teaching – that has influenced it to some degree. Um and our results aren’t great here and you can see that on the MySchool website so we are under a lot of pressure. An increased amount of pressure over the last two years for those results to shift. So when you’re looking at project based learning and principles of/well I think the principles still apply but I think teachers are feeling very pressured.

Further on in the conversation Lucy returns to NAPLAN.

Lucy: Our staff are at the moment feeling despondent –look if you look at our results (NAPLAN) there not up to where I think (the parents want them)... There again you know because a lot of teachers are becoming despondent because after NAPLAN everyone just breathes a sigh:h [Yes]. And I think if you just do what you do everyday and you go in and you do it well it’s that persistence over brilliance you know if you just keep persisting and you’ve got good teaching, you know pedagogy, why are you doing anything different?

We return to discussion of features of professional learning that have worked for Lucy and that she feels are also important for other teachers. Chief amongst these is observing a non-standard classroom (Johnston & Hayes, 2008) practice enacted successfully.

Lucy: We had sixty year fives in one room yesterday and it was a tight fit but the activity was from a real-life experience on camp. They were engaged. The quality of work we got out of 50 minutes(.) [Mm] You’d be flat out getting that at the end of a 10 week [yes]

DT: Seeing it done successfully [Mm] is extremely important isn’t it?

Lucy: It really is. Yeh. I think when you go to any professional learning and they virtually/ OK we’ll show you a video of what happened look you don’t know if it’s been/ you have to sometimes put your cynical cap off but I think it can be/ I think
they're the power/ when you see real life and you get someone up there speaking
you know who says yeh, I've had those challenges and workshop it. And I think
that's what that forum you know up until then there was no professional dialogue.
The professional dialogue in these sessions was so rich [in your action learning
sessions?] Yeh, with the university people.

Towards the end of the interview Lucy and I engage in a conversation that is clearly not
an example of a researcher bracketing her own standpoint and views.

DT: Are there any other professional learning opportunities you’ve had that have
thrown a sharp contrast to what you’ve just described?

Lucy: OK. So there’s one of them I think I mentioned it when you first came in. John
Hattie... saying you need to be able to measure your shift\(^\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\). If you’re not making a
difference of point 4\(^\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\) in your marks then that/ that’s your benchmark point 4”. And
so um I want to have /I suppose what I like about him is there’s impact, you need
to know your impact so what are you doing to shifting their learning? Because
that’s why we’re here not just/ while I/my first and foremost is for lifelong
learning but that also needs a shift in learning so I just really like his/ and I must
say/ I’m/ that’s a challenge for me at the moment because I suppose when I’ve
got/ when we’ve got/ NAPLAN is not going to go away, children are going to have
to sit standardized tests so we want to equip them for that. So it’s finding that
balance because he does, he does throw a spanner in to\(^\text{\textsuperscript{3}}\).)

DT: So when you are trying to measure this point 4 are you measuring/ Ah, so say
you teach Billy Green this year in year 3 is it point 4 of an improvement in Billy
Green’s results in year 5 that you’re after?

Lucy: No. Probably if I was teaching a unit on multiplication in year 5 and at the
end of 2 weeks like I gave him a post-test [right] I would need to see a shift [OK]
We continue on to debate ideas associated with measurement and also the factors that lie outside the classroom that influence student wellbeing. This is a truly dialogic interaction between two educators. I am shocked to learn that Lucy interprets John Hattie’s ideas about measuring impact in the way she does, particularly in light of what she has already said about the kind of learning she values. Lucy, for her part, changes the direction of her talk to become more skeptical about such notions of measurement and as such begins to accommodate changes to her “inner world” through “structured and stabilized expression on experience” (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 91).

DT: So you’d give a pre-test and a post-test and that’s where you want to see the shift?

Lucy: Yeh. Which—my argument is what about their engagement? What about their learning dispositions? How is that/you know, does John not take into account those learning dispositions. But I think/

...So it’s finding that balance because he does, he does throw a spanner in to^ (.)

...So I think while I take his messages, they do resonate with me, I think because I’m task oriented—I like to be accountable I suppose that’s what’s drawn me in but it challenges me too because I think OK this person may have shifted the point 4 but(.) they approach Maths with a dreary face ... So I think (.) I think it’s a balance. [Mm] And I think it’s that project based philosophy too that’s what drives me but I’ve gotta make sure that my students are also equipped with the skills.

This interaction results in learning for both of us in the sense proposed by Bakhtin when he wrote

Active agreement/disagreement stimulates and deepens understanding, makes the other’s word more resilient and true to itself, and produces mutual dissolution and confusion, The clear demarcation of two consciousnesses, their counterposition and their interrelations. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142)
Towards the end of the conversation as Lucy talked about the evolution of professional learning following the replacement of the school leader who had facilitated the previous ‘Reggio plus inquiry’ model, professional standards were mentioned.

*Lucy*: So after that journey we’ve now got a different model where we’ve got a 3-year strategic development plan. Rather than having a weekly staff meeting people have a pathway. So we have what we call compulsory meetings and then modules and then master classes. So depending on where staff are in their learning journey they-which are linked to their professional learning goals.

*DT*: Which they formulate themselves?

*Lucy*: With their learning guide...So from their professional learning goal say for instance their learning goal is a maths focus that are linked to our-their goals need to be linked in some way to their own learning but also to the College goals [Right?] the campus goals. I suppose though we’re all operating from the same platform. [Yeh] But say it’s the Maths block oh I don’t think I’m doing it justice. That could be written into a goal form then what they’d look at the pathway and then select perhaps a module-a maths module and that would run for 2 hours each term so it would be consecutive... So we have a professional learning booklet where there’s an outline of all the different courses and then the journal which is the goal template, the reflection template and the pathway...

*DT*: Is there anything of the sort of your Reggio Emilia where people are actually observing successful implementations?

*Lucy*: Look that is- we’ve got that under Principle Future Focus Learning... We’ve got the compulsory-this is just for term 1- the compulsory that every staff member has to do [right] um and then we give everybody a whole day planning, and this term was on Maths and RE, and then and that’s linked to the standards...
DT: And you said that this, the options, the workshops are mapped to the standards [Yes] is that for everybody having an eye to the standards even if they haven’t been required to be accredited?

Lucy: Yes. Just so we can promote that document and promote the use of it and on their goals we’ve got the standards their goal links to... (Lucy scrolls through various screens on her laptop). That’s the goal, the link to our goals, the link to the teaching standards, indicators of success for that goal, key actions. We included indicators of success this year because it was just that accountability.

Lucy goes on to provide an example of a fictitious teacher to demonstrate how the formulation of the plan and the goals might play out. I am left with the feeling that this is an intricate paper chase that attempts to respond to NAPLAN results and is inspired by accreditation against a set of professional standards for the purpose of accountability rather than on any of the characteristics of professional learning experiences that have the potential to transform practice. Characteristics that were present in the school’s earlier approach to professional learning that had led to what Lucy described as her own transformative learning experience. Griffith and Smith (2014, p. 13) would describe this an example of an “institutional circuit” in which a “boss text”, in this case the NSWIT version of the professional standards, puts people to work in a process of producing a textual representation of their activities that conforms to the authoritative or ‘boss’ text. Interestingly, Lucy is highly involved in the development and implementation of this ‘accountability’ system and speaks in support of it with a different ‘voice’ to the one used when speaking about her own significant learning experience. This ‘multi-vocality’ illustrates the presence of competing discourses, or “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 272) in Lucy’s work as a teacher and her learning about that work. It could also be viewed as an instance of what Smith and others have termed “institutional capture” (2005, p. 156) in which Lucy's description of learning based in her experience has been displaced by the institutional discourse of teacher learning in relation to professional standards. Smith points out the increased likelihood of ‘institutional capture’ when both the researcher and the informant “are familiar with institutional discourse and know how to speak it” (p156).
On the one hand, Lucy values choice over the direction her learning might take in order to grow and renew her practice. She prefers to engage in ‘authentic’ experiences by which she means experiences that have a direct connection to her classroom teaching and where evidence of implementation in the classroom is provided. Her chosen experiences are closely linked to her goals for her own teaching and for her students’ learning. In applying her learning in the classroom she is simultaneously, influenced by her professional judgment of her students’ responses to her teaching expressed through their engagement with learning and accountability discourses related to compliance with state based curriculum documents and external standardized testing, for example NAPLAN. A change of leadership in her school resulted in a change in the dominant discourse surrounding professional learning within the school to a discourse of accountability. There is now an expectation that teachers should be accountable for demonstrating a ‘shift’, as Lucy calls it, in students’ academic learning outcomes as a result of any opportunities teachers have had for professional learning. As the school-wide discourses have become more closely aligned with external accountability discourses associated with national professional standards for teachers, Lucy has become a contributor to the development of a school-based design for the professional learning of other teachers which sees a drastic reduction in possibilities for self-directed professional learning for teachers and an emphasis on learning associated with a narrow interpretation of literacy and numeracy aimed at improving NAPLAN results.

2. Demonstration of evidence
In the next phase of the research I sent Lucy a document entitled Choosing Evidence (See Appendix 4) in which I outlined, using quotations from her words, what I saw as the main areas of her professional learning that she had spoken about in the first interview. These were listening to the students, formulating a project based on students’ interest and how she had adapted the principles of Reggio Emilia to suit her classroom context. I invited her to consider the form and content of the evidence she would choose in order to demonstrate her learning about one or more of these identified areas and to contact me to arrange a suitable time for this to occur. Lucy
chose to invite me to observe an extended lesson with her Year 5 class. This lesson came towards the end of a unit of work based on National Reconciliation Week and the selected focus in terms of Lucy’s demonstration of evidence was ‘listening to the students’.

Upon entering Lucy’s classroom I made the following observation notes and took photographs with my phone as the students came into the room.

The walls of the room are covered with displays of student project and art work. 3D works are arranged on a tall bench on one side of the room. Student work tables are arranged in 2 groups of 4 and 2 groups of 6 seats. The students are seated on a mat on the floor in front of the IWB. They have brought with them (from home) an iPad or other tablet for use in class. On the IWB is a slide “Learning Intent. To Explore the declaration of Human Rights during Reconciliation Week”.

Image 1: Students’ work

While Lucy had specifically identified that the focus of her evidence would be on ‘listening’, I was also interested to see how the arrangement of the classroom would support such listening. The displays, while not directly related to listening, indicated through their careful arrangement and maintenance, that student work is celebrated, valued and respected in this classroom in line with the broader approach of Reggio Emilia to children as ‘powerful learners’. The arrangement of furniture in the room into various ‘zones’ certainly indicated that both individual and cooperative activities for learning were a possibility. While students were initially seated as one group for the
first activity, BYOD (bring your own device) made it possible for students to record, using a variety of media, whatever they found significant from the discussion. The verb ‘explore’ in the heading “Learning Intent. To Explore the declaration of Human Rights during Reconciliation Week” on the IWB (interactive whiteboard) was a significant statement indicating that learning in this lesson would be through inquiry.

Lucy opens the lesson by engaging students in recalling prior learning. Rather than a monologic teacher recap of what she thinks students should have learned from previous experiences, she asks a question with the intent of engaging students in a dialogue.

Lucy: We’ve been very fortunate to celebrate in class and with the school community different aspects of reconciliation week... What’s been a highlight for you during National Reconciliation this week?

Student 1?

Student 1: The gathering we had with the [inaudible]

Lucy: OK. And why was that a highlight?

Student 1: Well because we got to see a person from [inaudible] the tribe [inaudible] us what we did to those people.

Lucy: Excellent! Student 2?

Student 2: I really liked yesterday’s assembly when in the afternoon (visiting aboriginal elder) told us her story of the first day she came to school and saw the sorry sign.

Lucy: That really impacted on me as well. And yesterday in the staff meeting I referred to that as well. Really captivated my attention. Thanks Student 2. Just two more, Student 3^.
Lucy builds the dialogic interaction by adding her personal response to the same story and how she had dialogued with her peers about that story.

_Student 3: I really enjoyed speaking to (male aboriginal elder) because I could really know his story better and I um yeh and it just helped me recognize that it was very family, community..._

_Lucy: Great! Student 4?_

_Student 4: I also liked listening to Pete’s stories because it’s not like a normal story that we hear everyday [inaudible]. It’s like a really good story that you hear from once in a while._

This student is responding directly to the student who just spoke and not to Lucy, the teacher. The dialogue is building from a two-way interaction to a multi-voiced interaction.

_Lucy: And it’s-what was really special about it?_

Lucy stops herself from giving ‘the answer’ in order to actively listen to the student’s interpretation.

_Student 4: It’s because he was- it was from when he was around- when his grandparents were around and his family knew all the stories._

_Lucy: OK^_

As the lesson progresses a number of explicit strategies are employed by Lucy to encourage dialogue with and between the students.
Lucy: OK. Who can piggyback Student 1’s idea and keep going? Any other words that you can talk to? Yes, Student 2.

Asking students to ‘piggyback’ off an idea that has just been expressed keeps the discussion focused on something Lucy considers important without her ‘re-voicing’ the idea. It is also a way of acknowledging the sufficiency of the student’s words. Lucy also ensures that everyone has said what they feel they need to before moving the topic of discussion along.

Lucy: Great! Anything else on this that you want to share before we move on? Yes, Student 3.

There are two significant points in the lesson when one of the students voices opinions about aboriginal people in relation to National Reconciliation Week that are clearly offensive to Lucy. This student's opinions lie outside the attitudes and values Lucy is hoping her students will develop as a result of the learning experiences she has exposed them to. The first instance occurs during the whole group discussion. Lucy shuts down any further discussion of the expressed opinion however, she does not attempt to negate the student’s view.

Lucy: That’s a different perspective^*. (Lucy then asks another student about her work).

The second instance occurs when the students have moved to small groups and Lucy is moving around the classroom discussing and working with small groups and individuals. The student engages Lucy in a discussion while the other two members of the group look on and listen.

Lucy: Well why do you think? It’s a great question, Student 5...
Great. You made the link yourself.

[Lucy speaks to the other student on the floor]
Lucy: Why do you think? Why do you think they are still upset?

...That’s really good puzzling-wondering...

Lucy avoids ‘telling’ the student how she should be thinking about these issues and simultaneously gives students permission to take risks with the views they express in class and therefore, keeps the inquiry open. I can’t help wondering though, if I had not been present in the room whether Lucy might have invited other students to consider Student5’s views and a more productive discussion may have ensued.

A large part of the activity of the lesson is centered on a picture book, *Nyuntu Ninti*, for which the student’s, individually or in pairs, have prepared a retelling of a double page section. The students sit on the floor in “a circle of viewpoints”, as Lucy calls it. The retelling of the story through students’ thinking and wondering reflects a dialogic attitude to the knowledge contained within and made available by the story. Each student enters into a dialogic relationship with the story and continues the story in a way that allows them to make the dialogue internal to themselves.

*Student 1:* I see a rock, lots of trees, dry land and dead grass and two aboriginal people. I think that this picture is taken in a desert. I also think that the people need some shelter. I wonder if these people are starving for food and I also wonder if they live there in the dead grass and surrounding bush.

*Lucy:* I really like your wondering... *Student 2* and *Student 3* nice loud voice. If you’ve got any questions for your friend at the end you might just raise your hand for clarification^

*Student 2:* I see countryside, green land on one half of the page. On the other side of the page I see the green gradually fading out and going into black and white. I also see two men walking on grass and hard, rocky floor carrying heavy objects. (.)
Student 3: I think that the men in the picture are catching food for them to feed upon. (.)

Student 2: I wonder why the author has chosen to –to fade out the colour. Does it represent something^? Maybe a land of happiness falling into a land of difficulty (.)

Lucy: Impressive wondering^ . Student 1 do you have a question?

Student 1: Yeh, you know how you said there’s two men well I remember we went on an excursion to somewhere and they said that the man is holding a spear and the lady is holding that little fur thing on their head.

Lucy: That’s great Student 1 that you’re linking other experiences and you’re bringing it to this. Excellent! That’s actually helped clarify my understanding. Thank you Student 2, thank you Student 3 and Student 1.

S4: What I see is a sad aboriginal waiting to be noticed and sharing-and wanting to share his story and wanting to know more about us. What I think is the man is upset because of the facial look on his face and the picture is black and white.

S5: I wonder^. I wonder why he cannot share his story and tell us more about him and why can’t we tell things about us^. Is he scared? Why can’t we not meet him? What’s the big problem?

S4: I think the best sentence was ‘Not many people know much about us’. (.)

Lucy: OK Thanks, Student 4. I’m so excited. I can’t wait to go further with some of your wondering questions. I want to keep stopping and asking you more questions but I’m conscious that might interrupt the flow of us retelling the story.
Lucy makes her thinking behind the strategy she is using clear to the students as a way of encouraging them to be aware of questions as they are raised that offer possibilities for further inquiry.

Following this presentation of Lucy’s evidence I prepared and emailed to her the observation notes from which the excerpts above were taken along with a guide for the final reflective interview (See Appendix 5). I did not offer Lucy the interpretation that appears here or any other specific feedback on the demonstration of evidence before the reflective interview was conducted.

3. Reflective Interview

In the final reflective interview I asked Lucy to talk about how well she thought the lesson I had observed fitted with the learning she had spoken about in the initial interview. I also asked her to include any comments she wanted to make about the research process and to try to identify three key features of professional learning that she believes works for her.

The interview began with an exchange of pleasantries and Lucy thanking me for the thoroughness of my observation notes. I reminded her that the completion of my observations had been assisted by audio recording some of the interactions as they happened in the course of the lesson and we spoke briefly about what a useful strategy this is for a teacher working in isolation to gather evidence of classroom dialogue for later analysis and reflection.

DT: ... I think that we’ve got something really quite thorough here to comment on [Mm] when we answer these first few questions [Yes] about how [Yes] you feel [yeh] about the relationship between what you talked about in terms of listening to your students and what you saw in that – those notes of the evidence [Mm] and thinking back to what happened on the day.
Lucy: Look I sup/ I’ve certainly learned a lot^ and look I view myself as a learner and I think that helps me in my whole professional learning and just learning in general”. (much louder) Um but listening/um I think what I was trying to do with that ‘see, think, was being very conscious () when I say listening not just to be an airy fairy well I want to practise listening [MmHm] So I researched effective ways that I thought I could um- such as Harvard Thinking Routines – ways that I could engage the students in authentic listening. You know that ‘see, think, wonder’ um was able to elicit from them what they were thinking of the picture book [MmHm] So I wanted to listen to the picture book through their eyes- not through my eyes- through their interpretation of [Mm] it. So I think the purpose of that/so that was the context of why I chose it – that strategy [MmHm]. ’Cause I thought it was an authentic listening tool in and they were familiar with it as well. However, when I looked at the notes too I find that I interject a lot, scaffold/at times scaffold their thinking and that’s good and bad ‘cause it prompts those students to clarify their ideas but sometimes I think I impose some thoughts to them as well.

DT: Do you think that that comes from our natural reaction to support them from failing as well [ it is!] that we’re quick to step in because we want them to succeed [Mm] rather than fail^.

Lucy: We definitely do! And it’s from my own experience as a learner in a primary school and what I was conditioned [Mm] So I know and I think it was that Reggio experience where I could see the turning happening [Mm]. You know that ah- ha moment? [Mm] I was getting it! So I think/but I’m still carrying^ a lot of that how children learn is in the way I learned and how I was conditioned to learn, exactly. And that whole idea of expectations and we want children to succeed [Mm] and um yeh and so while we say we want to hear their view point – what do I really mean by that? [Mm]

A great deal is revealed in this early exchange. While Lucy generously acknowledges that she has learned something from her engagement in this research process she retains authority by reminding me that she sees herself as a learner and that this is just
another part of the learning process. Lucy identifies the need for carefully thought out pedagogy to ensure that students learn the skills required for authentic dialogic interactions. What is of even more interest to me here, is that the particular pedagogical strategies Lucy employed in the demonstration of her evidence about listening were not an established part of her practice prior to her engagement in the research. Rather, having thought about how she was going to demonstrate a ‘listening’ lesson she continued and extended her professional learning through independent research from secondary sources, trialed and practised some strategies with her students before selecting those she would include in the demonstration lesson. Toward the end of Lucy’s comment she critically reflects on her success with this activity in a balanced way. She recognizes the ongoing need to scaffold her students learning but also the subtleties of fine-tuning the level of provision in order to encourage increasing independence in student thinking and dialogue. What is illuminated here are three phases in Lucy’s learning: (i) reflection on her prior learning and current pedagogical repertoire together with the impending requirement for the ‘performance’ of evidence lead to (ii) self-initiated research and practising of new pedagogy and (iii) further reflection leads to the setting of new personal learning goals.

The important learning for me in this dialogic process that came out of the interaction with Lucy and her students together with the analysis of Lucy’s three performances was that Lucy was in fact, consciously trying to build her students’ skills for engaging in dialogic interactions.

Lucy: I wanted ... for you to see the development of the listening to each other, listening to different viewpoints.

This is a clear indication that for Lucy, the dialogic interaction is not just between her and individual students but student to student as well.

Lucy: I perhaps would have tried to use more of the world/ um examples from their world/ collection of media articles about indigenous issues^ where they could actually/ the um circle of viewpoints of what/in hindsight at that stage of
the week that would have been to me and my reflection on the evidence that would have been probably a more authentic and purposeful task.

To increase the dialogic nature of the learning, or what some might call student centred learning, Lucy, on reflection, would have the students choose the focus material for learning and allow the learning to develop from there through dialogue about content that the students determine has relevance for them in relation to the focus on human rights.

Lucy: I really want my learners to know why/I really want to know what my learners (.) um or not my learners, the learners to know why they’re doing it actually outside the classroom [Mm] Take that learning you know the action

Lucy has begun to embed this form of dialogic pedagogy in her ongoing practice.

Lucy: So we do a media watch everyday where students bring in articles and they have to summarise the article and um they have to identify the human right issue that’s related [Mm] Then we do a circle of views and we see the issue through different/ through a sort of listening um (.)

DT: They’re listening to each other?

Lucy: Ye:es. Listening to each other. And there’s tension in the group... And they’re a class um/I do job share as well and Maree is very astute with where they are as well and () that praise as opposed to feedback () they’re very conditioned that would/well we all like positive feedback but that different viewpoint or perhaps being well sometimes wrong [Mm] yeh we look at yes and no/that’s what we’re working on [Mm] um

This is a crucial recognition on Lucy’s part that dialogic education is not just about reaching agreement. She acknowledges that students need to be supported in learning
how to deal with viewpoints that are different from their own in a way that extends their learning.

Later in the interview, Lucy talked more about the research process itself in terms of its usefulness to her ongoing professional learning. Her comments reveal that the requirement to demonstrate evidence has encouraged the migration of theory into practice.

*DT: So in the course of the process and the conversations we’ve shared in the course of the research [Yep] do you have any comments to make about that?*

*Lucy: I’ve found it very effective. It’s been very streamlined, concise. Um:mm you know a combination of theory and practice – it’s made me go back and read but then apply. It’s definitely enhanced my professional learning- the process that you know you/ the initial interview, then the planning of the evidence and now the reflective interview. I think too it was timely [OK] taking into consideration we had school holidays in between [Mm] Um and it’s /the feedback has definitely impacted on future practice. I found the, you know, the qualitative data um the process has been very beneficial*

Lucy outlines the parts of the research process that were most helpful to her learning. She expresses a sophisticated understanding of how to integrate various discourses related to teaching practice without losing her focus on what she values as the purpose of teaching. Lucy goes on to explain the difference in impact on her learning of providing a ‘traditional’ form of evidence of practice and wanting to provide something authentic, not just a ‘showcase’ lesson. She also talks about the future action she is now planning that has resulted directly from the research process we have shared.

*DT: OK. ... Even though I didn’t give you any sort of critical feedback?*

*Lucy: No. Just the evidence I suppose [Yeh]. The evidence and your notes [OK] and my own self-reflection [Mm. OK. Good]. And also to I suppose the comment it*
helped me engage with the principles of Reggio and the power of listening. It invited me to return to reading, past teaching experiences (she reads from her notes) where listening had made a difference to practice. I think in the business of teaching there’s so much coming in- new ideas and um/ but I actually think if you just have a / if you as a professional learner/a learner have a strong understanding of how you learn [Mm] and what a learner is then no matter what comes into play it should align.

... I could have said oh you know, I am listening, this is an example and we can all annotate in the program [Mm] but to actually/and in all honesty to actually plan that session when you came in it fitted in/ I was really conscious that it wasn’t an addition [Mm] I wanted to ensure that it was part of the program

...Um and just the conversation (Emma checks against her notes) delve deeper, generate ideas for implementation of practice for example, embedding Reggio principles cross-campus. So what this has allowed me to do is not only go back to one principle of Reggio but actually look at all the principles [Mm]. Collaboration, communication, relationship – so I’ve initiated some cross-campus projects with (kindergarten), Year 10 geography and now we’re doing one/we’re listening to the children um (.) on ‘What does (this school) mean to us?’ [MmHm] and moving into developing an app [Mm] So we’re listening to them [Mm] Um and that sort of/ that project’s sort of some learning I’ve taken from this (.)

In discussion of the key features of professional learning that work for her, Lucy recognizes the importance to her of being able to choose her own focus for providing evidence of her professional learning but acknowledges that this is not without risk. She feels that knowing that she was trusted as a professional supported the risk taking.

DT: ...being able to choose what you talked about and what you provided as evidence [Mm] was that important?
Lucy: It was important. It definitely was because I remember going back to that first interview we had and you said what what one/ and I think just being given that (.) you know, being given that option to select and value um (.) and I suppose quite courageous and risk taking cause you’re actually going out on a limb (.) to you know, whether this will work^, or you know [MmHm] um definitely, yeh the choice factor... I think that by giving somebody choice your actually telling them ‘I trust what you’re going to be doing’. So it’s that mutual rela/you know that relational trust [MmHm] between colleagues [MmHm]. Um (.) and that gives you the confidence where you know, you obviously value the professional learning that I’ve done and you trust that I will select... So I think that all impacts.

The second key feature Lucy identifies is the presence of ‘authentic collaboration’ and the relational trust that must exist from the outset and will be enhanced throughout such learning.

DT: Mm. Great. So other features of professional learning that you know works for you or [um] if you want to expand on=

Lucy: ... authentic collaboration [MmHm]. I just think being able to collaborate and building relationships with colleagues [MmHm] is essential.

DT: Within your school? Outside the school?

Lucy: Yeh, within the school, definitely. That relational trust is extremely important and the collaboration with people um within your wider community, your local community but also you know for example the Coalition as well [MmHm], definitely enhances the features of professional learning as well. Because I just think you know you’re learning, you’re building, you’re extending that network.

Lucy identifies the importance of skill or content-based activities for her learning if she can access such activities at times that are relevant to the demands of her teaching.
work. Significantly, what Lucy is advocating here is that professional learning for her is about bringing these different, and often seemingly contradictory, educational philosophies into dialogue with each other.

DT: OK. So for professional learning to work for you^, [Mm] you’ve got to be able to pursue sort of, almost more than one theoretical agenda.

Lucy: You do. You do. I mean my passion, you know, as I say/ look I um/ the principles of Reggio, ah you know the principles that underpin the Melbourne Declaration, all those, life-long learning, co-constructer of meaning [Yes] I would hope that they’re at the core of really who I am as a learner[ MmHm]. However, I can also see Hattie’s impact on learning and you know, um while that may differ, to some extent, I can see that you know I admire his work and I’m not shut out to it [MmHm]. So it’s being able to see/being able to have a balance and sort of see it through all the different lenses but see the big picture as well, the influence.

DT: So to be able to be eclectic, [Yeh!] small ‘c’ catholic about all of this [Yeh, yeh] Yeh [So] Ok. Great. Um:m do you still think that you’re at the stage where you benefit from kind of skills type workshops or are you more interested now in um developing those skills in practice by working with colleagues and that sort of thing? Would you ever still go out for a kind of ...

Lucy: Yeh, no, definitely. [OK] For say, for example, now I’m in upper primary but if I was going back to kinder a skill based one would be Reading Recovery I’d probably want to do. Just to tie/ I suppose it’s just like anything, you know [Mm] if you’re doing sport you could be a professional athlete [Mm] however, you might want to refine some skill [Mm, hear what the latest is] Yeh, definitely.

The following segment is not describing a feature of the professional learning that Lucy has experienced in the past but is rather an expression of how she sees the approach we have taken in this research can work in with the ‘professional standards’ regime she
is now being forced to think about. Lucy’s experience as a curriculum designer of learning experiences for her students has taught her that the best learning happens when she begins from a context that will engage her students with what they want and feel they need to learn about. With only one eye, as it were, on the syllabus outcomes she plans the learning through interaction with the students in a dialogic way. Lucy achieves compliance with accountability documents such as syllabuses and school programs by ‘backward mapping’ from the learning experiences to these documents. Through the dialogic process Lucy and I have shared in the course of this research, Lucy sees how the same ‘backward mapping’ from an authentic task to syllabus outcomes can be used for authentic professional learning back to standards.

DT: … I’m quite interested to see (.) how having a free choice and how it fits in with the broader picture [Mm] of learning has worked for people. So it’s really great to have that/ to have you talk about [Mm] the whole school’s focus, (.) what you’re doing on this campus [Mm], who you’re working with across campuses and how this has fitted in with that.

Lucy: It Has. It has um it’s definitely just complimented, complimented it all. And I think it’s that backward mapping. You know, I think when we talk about that, your approach, it’s like rather looking at the outcomes, you know with the students, but to actually look at that trans-disciplinary (.) [Mm] and then you know if you actually went back to those standards you’d probably tick off a lot.

DT: Oh, absolutely! Yeh, yeh.

Lucy: And I think it’s a lot more effective. I think in that, you know, transferring that to the classroom, if you look at it...[Mm] And it’s much more authentic! (.)

The map of coordinating influences that contributed to the production of Lucy’s three performances is represented visually and presented in the next chapter as part of the analysis of the institutional context in which her learning took place. The map is an attempt to represent how her learning about her ‘work’ “is articulated to and
coordinated with others active in institutionalized processes” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 158).
Summary

The dialogic analysis of utterances contained in Lucy’s three performances provides a particularised view of one person’s professional learning. It allows us to see her as an individual in the process of becoming, not as “something totally quantified, measured and defined to the last detail” but rather as being neither “hopelessly predetermined” or “finished off” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 58). It allows us to examine the struggle between the dominant discourses of compliance and accountability and the subversive discourses related to new imaginings of how best to meet the needs of student learners. It is this struggle that influences Lucy’s actions in the world.

Returning to Bakhtin’s (1981a) centrifuge metaphor, the higher order thinking skills of analysis, evaluation and creativity with which teachers in this study engaged in the professional learning experiences they spoke about together with an emphasis on dialogic interaction and collaboration have allowed them to resist the centralizing force of compliance with a professional learning agenda that can be more about accountability. In the physical sense of circular motion, this accrued knowledge and wisdom would be analogous to acquiring additional mass, thus reducing the acceleration towards the centre. Rather than being easily ‘forced’ towards a centralised position of compliance teachers have been able to activate (D. E. Smith & Turner, 2014) the policy documents, in particular professional standards and the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, to ensure that they are working together in the interests of improved student outcomes. Each teacher is in a slightly different context and hence a different centrifuge spinning at a different speed. If the subversive discourses focus on teacher learning for growth and renewal and student needs, thus supporting transformative learning, the centrifuge spins at a slower speed and less of a centralizing force is exerted on individual teachers.

Analysis of the utterances contained in the performances of each of the other participants revealed a similar ‘struggle’ between the textually mediated, centralising compliance discourse and the heterogeneous, subversive discourses particular to each
teachers’ context. The dialogic analysis of each participant’s utterances contained in their learning story has been utilised to generate a ‘map’ of their learning and these are presented in Chapter 6. The conditions for learning in each teachers’ centrifuge or context were made different by the different ‘practice architectures’ (Kemmis, 2009) or ‘social relationships’ (D. E. Smith, 2005) that existed to confound or support transformative professional learning within their context. The maps produced from this dialogic analysis present the social relationships that supported each teacher’s transformative learning experience. They are related, in the analysis, to what ‘leaders’ of professional learning in each context had to say about how teacher professional learning is conceptualised, organised, implemented and sustained within their school context. The analysis reveals the relative importance of extra-local governing texts, locally produced texts and collegial relationships in supporting professional learning.

Before moving to the maps as the final stage of the analysis, the next chapter, Chapter 5, focuses on the evidence that teachers demonstrated in support of their claims about learning that had transformed their teaching work. It examines teachers’ doings as they engaged in the pedagogical sequence of reflecting on their learning, demonstrating evidence of their learning, and reflecting on their evidence of transformed teaching work.
Chapter 5: Learning and transformed practice

The King turned pale, and shut his note-book hastily. 'Consider your verdict,' he said to the jury, in a low, trembling voice.
'There's more evidence to come yet, please your Majesty,' said the White Rabbit, jumping up in a great hurry; 'this paper has just been picked up.'
'What's in it?' said the Queen.
'I haven't opened it yet,' said the White Rabbit, 'but it seems to be a letter, written by the prisoner to — to somebody.'
'It must have been that,' said the King, 'unless it was written to nobody, which isn't usual, you know.'
'Who is it directed to?' said one of the jurymen.
'It isn't directed at all,' said the White Rabbit (Carroll, 1907, p. 153).

Evidence for no one

In this chapter my intention is to stay close to the actual doings of teachers in order to highlight the nature of the evidence provided by them and to draw attention to the role evidence production, as part of a dialogic interaction focused on learning, may have in ongoing teacher education. In this study, teachers were demonstrating their evidence to ‘someone’ with whom they had engaged in a dialogic process leading to the selection of that evidence and with whom they knew they would engage in a dialogic process of assessment of that evidence. In continuing to draw on the experiences of the participants I am trying to maintain the dialogic nature of this research enterprise and to resist taking on the role of the authorized speaker in the formation of ‘hybrid statements’ (Bakhtin, 1981a) that subordinate or reconstitute the actual experiences of the teachers to fit with a singular perspective (Gardiner, 1992; D. E. Smith, 2014). Such a singular perspective might, for example, seek to highlight only that evidence which supports the view that one-day courses and workshops are ineffective forms of professional learning. I remain conscious also, of a desire to present the teachers involved in this study and the conclusions drawn from their utterances as neither final
nor complete (Frank, 2005) but rather as they appeared in the moment of a small slice of real time now passed. Finally, I want to reflect on the evidence provided by the study itself and what I am therefore, able to speak about in a way that might be considered trustworthy as well as what remains unclear.

Evidence of transformed practice

In the context of a political landscape that positions professional learning in terms of “performance and development” (AITSL, 2012e), the first set of research questions posed by this study was:

1. How do teachers
   iii. describe an experience that has resulted in significant learning about their teaching work?
   iv. provide evidence that demonstrates the impact of the learning they have spoken about on their teaching work?
   v. assess the connection between their learning and their evidence?

The answers to these questions are as varied as the human beings whose learning they aimed to describe. For the three participants in this study who had not been involved with accreditation against standards, the selection and demonstration of evidence of transformed teaching work was accomplished as a result of careful reflection on their practice. Lucy, whose evidence is detailed in Chapter 4, was one of the teachers not required to engage with accreditation. These teachers were very aware of the limitations inherent in what a ‘snapshot’ of their practice might reveal or not reveal about their practice and thus their main concern in making a selection of evidence was whether it would be a sufficient demonstration. In the final reflective interview, all three expressed satisfaction with what they had demonstrated while remaining open and critical of their learning and their practice.

The landscape of accountability and compliance in which this study is situated prompted me to consider the experience of producing evidence of learning particularly
for those teachers who had been required to engage with accreditation against the New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSWIT) version of professional standards. These teachers thus had previous experience of a process of deciding on and presenting evidence in relation to their teaching practice. Two of these teachers, Chris and Nicole, were early career teachers with two years of in-school experience and who worked with a DECNSW provided mentor. The third teacher, John, who I highlight in this chapter, had six years of in-school experience and was first accredited against the NSWIT professional standards some five years ago. I will attempt to illustrate the varied nature of evidence and its complex relationship with what these teachers said they had learned. These three teachers provide some insight into the variation in how teachers’ experiences of working with the standards affected their consideration of ‘evidence’ for the purposes of this study. The fourth teacher, Sarah provides an example of a teacher who had not experienced any process associated with accreditation against professional standards. She is a teacher with more than twenty years of classroom teaching experience and at the time of the study held the position of head of a subject department in a secondary school.

**Chris**

Chris is a new scheme teacher who had a career in media arts prior to becoming a secondary teacher and as such has been required to engage with the NSWIT version of accreditation against professional standards. Chris’ content teaching area is secondary English and he reflects on learning and provides video-recorded evidence for the purposes of my study, that was in essence ‘completed’, in collaboration with the DEC provided mentor, in the previous year at a different school to the one in which he now works. This evidence he provides to me was not however, used as part of his evidence presented for accreditation against the professional standards. It relates to his work with the mentor after the process of accreditation against standards had been completed. His learning, exemplified by this evidence, represents what he calls the “high-water” mark of his learning about his teaching work, so far.
Chris identifies working with the mentor, once accreditation processes had been finalised, as the experience resulting in significant learning about his teaching work. He says,

Well a good example was – I will talk about mentoring... we quickly finished the accreditation process and we did all the documentation and he was available kinda as a resource. He's there in the school, he had a certain amount of time allocated to us (beginning teachers) so I did ask a hypothetical. “So we’ve done this. Are you available to come and work with me in some other way just to kinda develop my teaching?” and he said yeh absolutely I'm keen to do that. So o we came to an arrangement where he'd come into my classroom or we'd discuss something I wanted to learn to do with a particular unit, when time's appropriate. He would help me in whatever way and that could be either sit down and have a chat about how things were going, how the resources were going or he'd actually give me some hands-on help in formulating some sort of activity or something that was beyond what I knew.

What Chris wanted to learn about was how to encourage a group of very able but quiet students from mostly non-English speaking backgrounds to develop the confidence to interact with dramatic texts, such as Shakespeare, through performance as the intended purpose of the text. Through modeling and team teaching the expert-novice relationship of mentoring supported Chris’ learning until he felt confident enough with the new elements of drama practice introduced by the mentor, to take full control. This was a crucial relationship that contributed to the “social coordinating of [Chris’s] doings” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 62), illustrated in Chris’ map in Chapter 6 (p. 219), and facilitated Chris’ learning.

The evidence that Chris selected to demonstrate was of just how far he had been able to take this learning in terms of transforming his practice related to the production of a seven-minute video in the style of Tropfest (2015). The evidence consisted of a set of six video-recordings, student journals and an article he had written about the project for a professional journal. The videos captured students as they worked in class discussions with him and in groups independently of him to collaborate on script writing, develop sets and special effects, cast and act, direct and film the action. In the
course of the project, Chris and his students worked with teachers across a number of subjects including Visual Arts, Industrial Arts and Science as well as during their English lessons and in their own time. Chris was able to draw on his industry experience in media arts where he had worked prior to becoming a teacher. While Chris had specialist media skills he lacked the confidence to attempt a project of this scale on his own. The assistance and encouragement of his mentor and the increasing involvement of other teachers in the project contributed to his sense of success with the project. This network of social relations between teachers supported Chris’ learning and the learning of his students and presumably some learning on the part of the other teachers involved. This cooperation between teachers on a project that extends beyond any one secondary subject area and any individual teacher contributes to a ‘subversive’ discourse of collaboration for learning that runs counter to the ‘dominant’ discourse (Bakhtin, 1981a) of teachers working in isolation to achieve compliance individually with the accreditation requirements of professional standards.

In reflecting on the connection between his learning and his demonstrated evidence, Chris makes some interesting observations about the standards and accreditation process in connection with his past, current and imagined future learning. In relation to his past learning, he clearly acknowledges that the work he did with his mentor after accreditation was completed was not “within the framework of the (maintenance of) accreditation process which is you do so many hours therefore you’re approved competent”. He views the maintenance of accreditation as a process by which

I just have to find a course that I’m signed up for or one of these things comes through, sign up for that and it’s accredited by the Institute—that’s your professional development.
You can’t get accreditation for something you want to do.

He acknowledges that he could write up the kind of learning that he wants to do as part of his ‘teacher identified’ hours but he already has enough of these hours because he is highly motivated to engage in learning through practitioner inquiry. It’s the Institute accredited hours that he is having difficulty fulfilling. He says,
I can see the accreditation process is very document driven and heavy to make it accountable but then what it’s morphing into is just another task you have to perform and have evidence that is really at odds with what we’re trying to do - if I’m into student-centred learning why am I as a teacher being taught by teacher-centred methods. It’s a colossal waste of money. So I pay for the course, they cover the relief and that’s a huge amount of money that’s available to start with, you know... and I’ve got to do all of these courses on line out of hours... I’ve only got so much time and this is going to bite into it. I’ve got to do some type in a response, print it out and you know, it’s lip service. It’s not meaningful, it’s not driven by needs. Whatever course is up there I’m going to learn about.

Chris’ critical reflection on the evidence of learning he provided to me as a participant in this study attenuates his frustration with an accreditation system that seems to mitigate against him using evidence of his professional learning as he wishes. He is restricted in this regard by the current system of accreditation that requires a fifty-fifty split of hours spent on professional learning between teacher-identified opportunities and those, such as courses and workshops, provided by accredited providers.

John

At the time of my first interview with John he had been teaching for six years and had been accredited some five years previous, at the level of ‘proficient’ against the NSWIT professional standards. John teaches at Suburban Sydney High School where a well-developed professional learning plan integrates teacher learning with student learning. In the first round of the three-staged data collection with John, he spoke about a peer-mentoring program in which he was paired with another teacher for the purposes of observing, critiquing and supporting each other’s learning about classroom practice. He also talked about other whole-school professional learning initiatives aimed at building a cohesive school community, and improving literacy and numeracy. At the very end of the reflective interview, after I had turned off the audio recorder, I asked John about his ongoing involvement in the Coalition (See Chapter 4 for participants from Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools). The conversation led to John remarking “Oh, that was my best learning ever” in relation to a School-University cooperative project, known here as ‘the architecture project’, in which he and his students had participated. John agreed
that we should start the data collection process over again and focus on this aspect of
his ‘best’ learning. Later, John said that the reason he had not talked about this learning
experience initially was because it had happened some time ago and he thought that he
should focus on more recent professional learning. For me, this provided evidence of
how the participant’s construct of what is being investigated can be at odds with the
researcher’s intention despite the researcher’s best efforts at clarity (See discussion in
Chapter 3 regarding the construct of ‘professional learning’ in relation to NMTPL
(Doecke et al., 2008)).

John talked about his ‘best’ learning as being how to motivate his students to persist
with their Higher School Certificate (HSC) major works through to completion. He said,
“my aim was to get my students motivated because I could motivate them to start a
task but always struggled to keep that momentum going to completion”. His
demonstrated evidence of this learning was to show me through the exhibition of
student major works discussing how each piece of work fitted with the student’s
interest and how he had kept that student on track to completion. While John talked
about the ‘architecture project’ as his most significant learning experience, his learning
was actually much more complex, extending beyond and interweaving with other
professional learning activities he was involved in within the school context both
simultaneous with and subsequent to the architecture project. Through these other
professional learning experiences he was learning many skills that supported his
success with the learning from the architecture project and which ultimately led to his
demonstrated evidence. He was working in supportive co-mentoring partnerships with
other teachers in order to critique and improve classroom practice, he was involved in
whole staff professional learning aimed at creating a cohesive and supportive school
environment for student learning. He was learning about improving literacy and
numeracy skills across the curriculum in the context of the particular needs of the
students at his school. John successfully integrated the learning from these experiences
with his learning from the architecture project and applied it to the student learning
need he had identified. He began with a big concept, maintaining the motivation of his
students, and drew on a range of professional learning resources to support him over
several years. While John was clearly learning subject content and technical skills that
could possibly be backward mapped to the standards, his approach to learning did not begin with the standards nor did he use the standards to identify what it was he needed to learn. The impending implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* did not feature as an influence in John’s story of his professional learning though he did make some comments, when asked (See p. 75 regarding inclusion of this question), about its impact on his work as coordinator of a secondary subject department.

John’s learning, as he spoke about it and demonstrated it through his evidence, exemplifies the ‘overlapping’ nature of the aspects of teachers work as outlined by Comber (2006) and discussed in Chapter 1 (See p. 6). Through close observation of student’s past products and performances John began to identify some of the learning challenges his students faced. His observation of and interaction with his students ‘on campus’ at the university gave him a very real understanding of how important it was for these students to be exposed to experiences that helped them to imagine a range of possible futures for themselves. This kind of ‘interpretive’ work was closely connected to ‘relational’, ‘discursive’ and ‘pedagogical’ work (Comber, 2006, p. 63) as John demonstrated respect for his student’s ideas by researching background knowledge related to those ideas in order to ask the right questions and provide the prompts needed to keep his students motivated and on track. He reflected on the knowledge he gained about the practical aspects of the design process through involvement in the architecture project together with knowledge developed from other school-based professional learning aimed at supporting student learning. His learning assisted him to think carefully about what he might say to students to encourage them with their ideas rather than close them down. The parameters of the students’ major works were set by the ‘boss’ text of the HSC syllabus text. John engaged in ‘institutional’ work in order to develop curriculum to meet the governing demands of that text while simultaneously meeting the needs of his students in ways that developed their ‘human potential’ (Hill, 2010).

John demonstrated evidence of his learning by providing me with a guided tour of the exhibition of his students’ major works on the day prior to the ‘official’ opening of the exhibition. As we walked from one project to the next, John said
You know, previous years we've got uncompleted jobs – I'll show you- we've got a store room there with previous work that kids really didn't (he takes me over to the store room and opens the door on a room full of unfinished projects) – they gave up easily or they just thought this is too much to do any more. So this group have done quite well and um like I said it's probably just from my own learning and experience in trying to motivate them right through to the end [Mm]. Because yeh, you can see the times where they miss a few days (of working effectively on their projects) because nothing's going so well. They're frustrated because things are not working [Mm] technically, and so it's about encouraging them, getting them to look at what's working, getting them to think about it positively-part of the whole project. So all that really comes together [Mm, OK].

There were twelve students in this Year 12 class and ten completed projects were on display. The missing projects belonged to two students who had some finishing details to add to their portfolios before the 'official' opening of the exhibition on the following day. In the final interview, I asked John to reflect on the 'fit', as he saw it, between his learning he had spoken about and the evidence he had demonstrated. He said that he thought the projects showed that he had learned how to get the students to be “self-managed” rather “than me forcing them”. “They saw the benefits of taking control of what they wanted to do right through to the end” and “that speaks for itself”.

Considering the storeroom full of unfinished and unclaimed projects from previous years it would seem that John had indeed learned how to maintain the motivation of his students through to the completion of their projects. John made no mention of professional standards in relation to this story of his 'best' professional learning or his selection and demonstration of evidence. In my very first interview, when he had not voluntarily raised the matter of standards, I expressly asked John about their relationship to his learning. His response indicates a view of the standards as necessary in order to maintain accreditation and to fulfill promotion requirements.

DT: So can you tell me about something that you've been focusing on in your own practice fairly recently?
John: I have put in my initial application to do the Professional Accomplishment standard. So there are a few things that I need to get in place in terms of my teaching strategies,
how I structure my lessons so I get outcomes out of the students and so um yeh. I’m looking at that. I’m also looking at um in the near future becoming the head teacher so I am going on a few professional developments to get me up to speed to where I want to be in terms of my academic career.

John’s reflection on his evidence also demonstrated his capacity for ‘reflexivity’ (Ryan & Bourke, 2013) in the sense that he indicates a transformed way of thinking about not only his professional learning but also his teaching practice.

DT: Was there anything else, in terms of evidence, that you might have liked to have been able to demonstrate?

John: Perhaps involving some students to give some feedback about how they felt about the (HSC major work) project... obviously the impact of my professional learning is more valid if we have some sort of feedback as to what they (the students) learned.

Consultation with students was not offered by any of the teachers in this study as a form of evidence of the teacher’s professional learning nor was it referred to by me in any of the conversations with participants. John’s suggestion of consulting his students in this way represents new thinking for him about his ‘relational’ work with his students. I asked John about how he viewed the process of the research as a participant in my study in terms of his ongoing learning. His comment was “I really value it” and he went on to talk about what he had learned from our discussion about the pedagogical possibilities of a particular piece of software. So, a reflection on what might be considered as the technical aspects of his practice. He then said

in (this school) we go through a lot of professional learning ...there is no time to consolidate ideas...you don’t get to implement it fully...we need to consolidate professional learning and see how it’s working before we move on and before we implement another professional learning” [So time for implementation, measurement/evidence, reflection?] “how effective it’s been.
He felt that his involvement in my study had provided him with an opportunity to do this work of reflecting, integrating his learning, and considering evidence of how effective his learning had been for the learning of his students.

Nicole

Nicole was in her second year of teaching at the time of this study. She had completed her accreditation at the level of ‘proficient’ during the previous year and so the process of providing evidence aligned with the NSWIT standards was fresh in her mind. In the first research conversation, Nicole recalled a classroom incident involving a difficult student and her resulting discomfort with the way she handled the situation at the time. After a very unsettled day following this incident, she engaged in a conversation with her mentor about which she says:

*I just got to learn about the holistic nature of teaching. Which is why I kind of came into teaching that it wasn’t just for me about teaching content but it’s about supporting the whole child and knowing that a whole other life, a significant part of their life is beyond these school walls and school fences. So that actually helped me. He shared his philosophy and I remember saying, how have you kept so enthusiastic all these years? and he said you’ve just got to love the kids. And just that phrase was enough for me to go Wow! I actually can do what I’ve always wanted to do as a teacher.*

Nicole goes on to talk about how working with her mentor helped her to learn how to mark student work “properly” and provide feedback. She quickly returns however, to talking about the relational aspect of her work; “I mean that was significant and memorable because it was such a vulnerable moment, that first instance”. Throughout the interview, Nicole interweaves aspects of her learning about the pedagogical and discursive nature of her teaching work through her interest in making the mandated curriculum content appropriate to the students’ context, but the relational remains the strongest theme for the learning that occurred with her mentor.
The other important way in which Nicole worked with her mentor was on producing a portfolio of evidence for accreditation at the level of ‘proficient’ against the NSWIT standards. She comments

that was a huge ordeal for me - just to put together the pieces of evidence that you needed to put together. To be able to learn the language of the professional standards-professional teaching standards - all very unfamiliar things-to know what was appropriate evidence... So you know it went down from things like having to do a 50-page document to something that needed to fit inside a plastic sleeve... What really is evidence?... It consumed a lot of hours for me.

In the personalised version of the Choosing evidence document I sent to Nicole, I made suggestions for her selection of evidence related to three types of learning experiences she had talked about. As with each of the participants in the study, I encouraged Nicole to think about ‘evidence’ in a creative way and especially to think about how to involve what the students might be doing in the demonstration of evidence. For her evidence, Nicole prepared and emailed me a transcript of approximately 500 words of a classroom conversation that she had recorded amongst six students responding to some questions she had posed. The transcript demonstrates that her aim is to learn about students’ prior knowledge of the curriculum content focus as well as to find out something about the students’ context in relation to this content. This evidence however, cannot be said to provide the same rich picture of transformed teaching work, in the sense of demonstrating how Nicole had grown or renewed her practice, as was the case with most of the other study participants. But to leave Nicole and her learning journey here would be to do her a grave injustice. Nicole has come to teaching after a career in the corporate world and she says of the standards

it kind of saddens me that there is this increasing accountability in a kind of KPI (key performance indicators) way. So that kind of disappoints me even as an early career teacher. I find it a little bit sad. I get it- I get why it's happening but that kind of bottom line stuff in a socialist venture is kind of sad for me.
In her second year of teaching, Nicole’s talk during the first research conversation indicates that she is aware and alive to the complexity of her teaching work in the context of her current students and their learning needs. While her major learning has been around the relational aspects of her teaching work she also spoke about a great deal of other learning with which she has engaged. The form of her evidence was markedly different from any of the other participants, even the other three who had also recently been accredited as ‘proficient’.

**Sarah**

At the time of this research, Sarah was the head of the Science faculty in a secondary school and had been teaching for twenty-three years. The learning she chose to speak about was aligned with the school focus on project-based learning (PBL). The principal at Sarah’s school had introduced the exploration of PBL as a pedagogical intervention approximately five years prior to my first research conversation with Sarah. Sarah had been an early adopter of PBL in her own classes and in the years prior to our research conversation, had introduced and fostered the approach with teachers in her own department. At the time of our first research conversation, she was engaged in the process of supporting teachers, some of whom had resisted the school-wide intent to trial PBL, with enacting this pedagogical approach in their own teaching. In talking about how she has applied her understanding of PBL to assist the professional learning of others she said

> as a professional...leading professional learning within the faculty we use that model to help critique the work we’ve been doing. It’s a non-threatening scenario. You start with well this is what I really liked. Since you’ve spent 6 hours on it or 8 hours on it, it can be very demoralizing if people come in to attack what you’ve done because of certain faults. And that was something that not only in our teaching but in our professional experiences at the school we’ve adopted

Sarah is committed to “looking at the whole (PBL) approach not just in your classroom but also running the school from top to bottom”.

Sarah felt that my observation of her practice would be a credible way for her to demonstrate the learning she had spoken about. She could have asked me to observe her classroom practice related to PBL and one might think this would have been well within her ‘comfort zone’ given she had been an exponent of PBL for some five years. Instead, she asked me to observe a professional learning session that she would provide, in collaboration with one other teacher, for those teachers who had not yet incorporated PBL into their classroom practice. This choice would give me a glimpse of Sarah’s teaching work right on the edge of her current professional learning.

As I observed Sarah facilitating the session with nine teacher participants, I made notes of the action and discussion in a manner inspired by ‘day diaries’ (Johnston & Hayes, 2008), recording what was said and done while withholding evaluative comments. The following extract provides an example of this style of entry (CT is the collaborating teacher and ‘NtK’ stands for ‘Need to Know’).

CT reminds participants that she and Sarah are trying to model the PBL process and introduces the notion of "workshops" as gathering students together in small groups for explicit teaching/learning moments.

Sarah agrees with what CT has said and adds to CT’s comments with a brief description of how workshops can be used to develop higher order thinking.

Sarah runs “a quick workshop on group work” for anyone who still has questions about group work up on the ‘NtK’. 2 participants go up to the whiteboard to work with her. CT watches on.

[Some of the remaining participants join in conversations, generally in pairs, about the task. 2 work individually.]

Sarah explains carefully, with examples to clarify meaning, the issues around group work raised on the ‘NtK’ sticky notes. She includes CT, as co-presenter, in the discussion through eye contact, hand gestures and physical positioning. She maintains a cheerful and gentle but serious manner. Sarah moves ‘NtK’ stickers to ‘K’ as the participant agrees that their question about group work has been answered. She affirms each participant with a “thank you”, a smile and a nod.

...Sarah takes participant questions about choosing student groups for group work. She allows the conversation and participant contributions to run so long as they are moving in a direction that is positive to resolving the question and then pulls the focus back to herself, as presenter, to summarise and add how she chooses groups.

Sarah indicates to participants her understanding of the complexity of their task by being happy to say "I don't think we have to solve that today"
My observations were made during fifty minutes of this whole-day professional learning session. I was interested to note the presence of the principal at the session and the way in which she used a very small number of affirming comments to support both Sarah and the collaborating teacher, CT.

In the reflective interview that followed Sarah’s demonstration of evidence she indicated that she had been satisfied with the way the professional learning session had gone but acknowledged that there was still more work to be done with some teachers before they would feel confident to implement PBL more independently. What she was more interested in discussing was where she felt her own professional learning needed to go in order to develop her teaching work in the future. She said:

*I would—well I’m actually interested in ‘leader of learning’ which is looking in the other faculties as well, not just the Science faculty [Yep] and the teaching practice involved in that. So first of all getting an insight into how that runs so I have an opportunity to act in that position soon. So that would obviously be very beneficial for me as far as PD’s concerned. With new syllabuses coming through obviously I’m going to have to develop myself professionally in those. Make an active effort to make contact with people who have the right information*

Looking back over the research conversations for all of the participants and the evidence that teachers demonstrated that their learning had transformed their practice I am struck by a possibility for generalisation. Each of these teachers demonstrated evidence that they had transformed their practice in a way that took them closer to working more dialogically (Skidmore, 2006) with their student or teacher learners. For all of them, this was manifested through a focus on more effective conversations for learning with their learners and for some, it included dialogue and negotiation with their learners of what and whose knowledge was valued and how it might be accessed and/or demonstrated.
Reflecting on evidence

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 provided substantial evidence that researchers in the field of teacher professional learning believe that teachers can learn about, in and through their practice in order to transform that practice so as to better meet the learning needs of their students. There is a general consensus about the design of teacher professional learning experiences that can facilitate such transformation and this study provides further evidence in support of some of these agreed characteristics. The question remains however “When is a belief justified by evidence?” (philpapers, 2015).

The schools, from which the teachers in this study were purposively selected, had provided opportunities for teachers to participate in professional learning experiences that were believed to have transformative potential. Teachers in these schools volunteered to participate in the study in the full knowledge that they would be asked to demonstrate evidence of the learning about which they chose to speak. In that sense they are not representative of all teachers but only of a group of teachers who believed they could demonstrate how professional learning had transformed their practice. Nevertheless, they were able to do it. Furthermore, I was convinced, as part of the three-phase process of data collection implemented in this study, that a belief in the transformative capacity of professional learning was justified. The evidence however, in isolation from the dialogic interactions that led up to and followed its demonstration, would be insufficient on its own because it would be impossible to understand its relationship to the teacher’s perception of their practice, past and present.

The assertion I make, as a result of this study, that these teachers provided sufficient evidence to justify the belief that teacher professional learning can transform teachers’ work might be vulnerable to criticism on the grounds of the ‘quality’ of such evidence and the extent of the transformation of teaching work. Consistent with principles of differentiated learning (Maker, 1982), I adopt the standpoint that each teacher learner selected goals for transformed practice and evidence of same appropriate to their individual learning needs. In examining the evidence that each teacher demonstrated of
the learning they had spoken about, I sought primarily to satisfy myself that there was a connection between the learning, the evidence and the reflection. The judgment of how well the learning ‘fitted’ with the evidence was made by the teacher as a result of the dialogic interaction we shared in the final interview. I did not seek to assess any teacher’s evidence against that of another or against any sort of ‘gold standard’ of evidence. In defense of such criticism I will say first, that in the majority of cases the evidence demonstrated by the teachers exceeded my expectations when compared to the relatively modest claims they had made about their learning. In these cases, the evidence demonstrated rich repertoires of practice that enabled the teachers to respond to a wide range of student learning needs, many of which could not have been anticipated and planned for prior to the demonstration of evidence. The second point I wish to make follows on from this issue of that which cannot be planned in advance.

The notion of what counts as evidence needs to be expansive enough to incorporate those aspects of teaching work, particularly the ‘relational’, that are not so easy to make happen in an isolated moment of ‘assessment’. For some of the teachers in this study, the learning they spoke about as being the most significant for them had occurred in the relational domain. It was perhaps not obvious to them how they would demonstrate evidence of such learning given that they could not engineer how their students would ‘relate’ to them, especially with a stranger in the room observing them. While the evidence that these teachers demonstrated linked with their learning, as judged by them and by me, it would not be reasonable to attempt a comparison on the grounds of ‘quality’ between demonstrations of evidence related to ‘relational’ work with say an aspect of ‘institutional’ work. This has possible future implications in terms of the accreditation against standards and the maintenance of such accreditation as it is described in the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012e) which requires teachers to set learning goals and then provide evidence of such learning. If a teacher envisages that the evidence of their real learning will be difficult to demonstrate or that the evidence of such learning will be judged unreasonably then they may choose to avoid setting that particular ‘relational’ type of goal and focus rather on technical aspects of their practice.
Summary

In the course of this research enterprise a group of only eight teachers have produced a variety of forms of evidence in support of their claims that their professional learning had transformed their teaching work. This evidence included live and video recorded demonstrations of their work with whole classes or small groups of students or with other teacher learners in a variety of different learning spaces. It included the products of student learning and transcripts of student-teacher interactions. I have argued that while it is not constructive to compare one form of evidence with another or indeed to compare any single performance of evidence to a pre-conceived standard, it is possible to productively compare each performance of evidence to the teacher-identified learning that the evidence purports to demonstrate. In all eight cases, teachers were able to critically reflect on how well their demonstrated evidence supported the learning they had claimed and were able to identify not only strengths and weaknesses in their evidence but what they had learned from the experience and in many cases, what they thought they needed to learn next.

This study was focused on the connection between teacher’s reported learning and evidence of transformed practice but it also sought to understand the effects that professional standards for teachers and the impending implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* might be having on such learning. The methodology of institutional ethnography allowed the governing effects of these two ‘boss’ texts to be traced through the actual doings of the teachers as they related and demonstrated their learning. In some cases, teachers or teacher leaders made reference to locally produced texts that had effects on the governing of their work and their learning about that work. While I have connected these locally produced texts in the maps of individual teachers, presented in the next chapter, where they were reported as having an effect on the teacher’s learning I have not fully explored how governance by these texts was achieved. In the case of K-6 Campus, the locally produced text that was heavily influenced by the standards and accountability regime, was reported by Lucy in Chapter 4 as having a constraining effect on teacher professional learning for a finite period of time. There were however, other locally produced texts in other schools that
seemed to provide positive support for teacher professional learning. A more thorough investigation of how these local texts coordinated the social relationships within a particular context may enhance our understanding of how transformative learning is ‘governed’ at the local level.

I have sought to ensure the trustworthiness of the evidence I have presented in the course of this research by providing a detailed ‘map’ of how each participant’s evidence was produced through dialogic interactions with the participant. Though the analysis presented in Chapter 4 is wordy, I believe it was necessary to my objective of not overriding the experiential knowledge of the participants (D. E. Smith, 2005) in producing the series of ‘maps’ that are presented in the next chapter and providing a text of the research that would encourage a dialogic interaction with its readers. My hope is that the “indexicality of (my textual) map is dialogic” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 161) and that readers of my methods will be able to refer it to their journey.
Chapter 6: Mapping social relations

“The aim of the sociology we call ‘institutional ethnography’ is to reorganise the social relations of knowledge of the social so that people can take that knowledge up as an extension of our ordinary knowledge of the local actualities of our lives...mapping the relations that connect one local site to others...And though some of the work of inquiry must be technical, as mapmaking is, its product should be ordinarily accessible and usable, just as a well-made map is, to those on the terrain it maps” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 29).

Producing a map

The Baktinian analysis of each participant’s performances, as exemplified by Lucy in Chapter 4, revealed the ‘struggle’ between the textually mediated, centralizing compliance discourses associated with the government’s reform agenda and the heterogeneous, subversive discourses particular to each teachers’ context. It was becoming apparent that while similarities existed from one teaching context to another there were also differences in the ways in which heterogenous discourses had arisen, been struggled over, been supported and had, in turn, supported the transformative learning of individual teachers. Working from Bakhtin’s notions of heterogeneous discourses as the counter-forces to the “monologic objectified perspectives” imposed by the “ruling relations” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 123) institutional ethnography aims to trace, or map, the social relations that influence the actions or ‘doings’ of an individual as they carry out their work at the frontline (Griffith & Smith, 2014), including teaching.

In describing how a researcher might conduct an institutional ethnography Smith draws attention to several key features including ensuring that the study “represents some kind of range of potential differences (this doesn’t mean a large sample)” and includes “observing the work or using informants in different positions and assembling them as sequences” (2005, p. 211) of actions. The function of these ‘sequences’ she
says, is to check “out what she or he has learned from others” and to examine “how the person positioned next in a sequence picks up and builds on what has been done at the previous stage”. Through sequences of action contained in such maps “(t)ranslocal forms of coordinating people’s work are explored as they are to be found in the actual ways in which coordination is locally accomplished” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 38). The coordination of activity is achieved through interactions with other people together with the role of “texts as major coordinators” (p. 211) of the doings of people involved in the sequence. Further, Smith claims that incorporating “texts into sequences of action establishes a double reach: the first as coordinator of work done by people positioned differently in a social relation (conceived as a sequence of action)” (2005, p. 213). In the case of a single school context, this would require an examination of the way in which texts developed by one person or group within that local context influence the actions of other people within the same context. The second she sees “as the textual coordinating of a particular person’s or group of people’s work in a particular local setting with the regulatory intertextuality of the institutional hierarchy that standardizes across multiple settings and through time” which in this case represents the interaction between local people and locally produced texts with extra-local documents such as state developed curriculum, the Australian Curriculum and state or national versions of professional standards.

As with my study, mapping the social relations, that is, the connections among work processes, is adopted by many institutional ethnographers as a means of “highlight(ing) the analytic goal of explication rather than theory building” (DeVault, 2006, p. 294). In most studies the mapping of sequences of relations is represented in the form of a written description where each “stage or step orients to the work with which it coordinates sequentially; each next stage or step articulates to the foregoing and defines it as well as orients to what follows” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 162). Though in some cases, such as the work of Turner (2003) investigating how municipal planning organises land development, the maps of social and textual relations have been presented in diagrammatic form. Turner makes her maps in order to provide “an account of the day-to-day text-based work and local discourse practices that produce and shape the dynamic ongoing activities of an institution” (2006, p. 139), namely, a
municipal planning authority. The map represents a ‘process’ built from a careful tracing of the ‘doings’ of individual informants but these informants do not feature as entities in the map. She uses labelled symbols to represent such things as institutional actors, texts, the site, the public process, and the planning process. Her diagrams summarise the connections between components and sometimes look almost like a flowchart of steps while at other times they are a complex arrangement of interconnected subgroups. As Turner says, the “diagram is of course not exhaustive. There is always more that goes on than we can see and make visible in this kind of textual representation” (2006, p. 146). The diagrams do however, layout the analysis of the social relations in a visual text that affords different opportunities for activation by the reader than would a written text.

A contrasting use of diagrams to ‘map’ the social relations revealed by an institutional ethnography may be found in the work of Daniel (2004). The focus of her work is to represent the social relations that result in what she calls “a ‘textualized’ child” (p. 101) as a student with special needs is turned into a case folder for the purpose of a funding application. In her mapping of the relations involved in the production of a funding claim it is the various forms of texts that are the focus. Daniel connects symbols representing one form of text to another text in order to represent the flow of work processes. People, as actors in this “textual work” (p. 92), are included as they relate to the production of each text. In Daniel’s completed map it is clear that ‘texts’ play the major role in ‘governing’ people’s ‘doings’ rather than the actions of and interactions with other people such as co-workers. The finished map represents the ‘process’ that turns a living child into a funding application but it is not representative of any one child’s experience. In both Turner’s and Daniel’s maps we are provided with a visual means of examining the ‘contextualised’ doings of people, in the sense that the maps arise from the study of a particular context. These maps represent processes of coordination within a particular context, one municipality and one school board respectively, but they have not been utilised in either of these research studies to allow for ‘decontextualised’ comparisons that may support the recognition of generalisable patterns across contextualised instances (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 381), say between other municipal planning authorities or other school boards.
The sequences of interest take a slightly different form in my study from those described above, and indeed many reported in other studies informed by institutional ethnography, in that they follow the way in which the same person picked up on the influences of other people and texts implicated in the coordination of work processes associated with their learning to inform their next action. This represents a significant variation on the way such maps have previously been constructed by institutional ethnographers in that my ‘informant specific maps’ (ISM) do not seek to portray a process of how social relations influence the professional learning of a ‘generalised’ teacher built up from a number of accounts of the ‘doings’ of teachers in relation to professional learning in a given context. The individual teacher informant, as the subject of the social relationships associated with their personal professional learning, remains very much present in each of the informant specific maps. The need for this variation, I believe, is justified by the analysis which demonstrates the highly personalised, within the contextualised, and varied set of social relations that have supported each teacher’s transformative professional learning.

The *Australian Curriculum* and professional standards, as texts developed externally to any particular teacher or school context, are important instruments of what Smith calls the ‘ruling relations’ (1987). They represent what she calls objectified forms of consciousness because they are “constituted externally to particular people and places” (2005, p. 11). These textual modes attempt to organise in some way the everyday activities of schools and all who work in them. They may result in teachers no longer being ‘ruled’ by their principal and executive teachers, individuals they might have known and worked with for some time, but rather by individuals who work in organisations and corporations such as ACARA (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority) and AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) who are removed from the opportunity to interpret the nuances of local conditions. The extent to which the locus of ‘ruling’ has been shifted from local to extra-local may depend on a number of factors including the degree of autonomy provided to local leaders through flexibility within the texts themselves. If local leaders have both the scope and the capacity to exercise their professional judgement in activating these
texts to suit local conditions (D. E. Smith & Turner, 2014) then the locus of organisational control may remain within the school. Dialogic analysis of participants’ ‘doings’ in relation to both internally and externally generated texts may reveal something about the capacity of such texts to govern the everyday activities of teachers as they go about their work and their learning about that work.

**Informant specific maps**

The dialogic analysis of each teacher’s three performances (as described for Lucy in Chapter 4) comprising the data for this study revealed discourses, that is, ways of speaking, associated with a centralising agenda of compliance and accountability. The analysis also revealed a number of heterogeneous, subversive discourses some of which were shared between teachers within the same context as well as across contexts but others were particular to the local context. The ‘struggle’ between these two types of discourse was bound up with a variety of local conditions that either supported or inhibited transformative professional learning. Across all participants’ performances however, it was apparent that differences related to the teacher’s learning experience were strongly contextual. For example, what was becoming obvious, as a shared aspect across contexts, was that a teacher acting in a ‘leader’ of professional learning role had played an essential part in the prevalence of the various discourses that surrounded professional learning and the establishment of the local conditions, or “practice architectures” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 266), that had supported the participant’s learning. As was revealed by the mapping analysis, there was often more than one, even a team, of such ‘leaders’ acting to coordinate the supportive social relations. In keeping then with the architecture metaphor, I will introduce here the term ‘professional learning architect’ (PLA) to identify these people in a way that avoids confusion with other formalised leadership roles and styles of leadership commonly recognised in schools (See discussion in Ch 2 p. 58).

In response to this finding, and mindful of what Smith says about the ontology of institutional ethnography proposing that “the differences in perspective and
experience of participants be recognized and taken advantage of in mapping given processes or organization” (2005, p. 158), a research conversation with each PLA, as identified by the participant, was added to the data collection strategy. What I wanted to know was how the PLA negotiated the tensions between the various competing discourses in order to facilitate conditions that led to transformative professional learning for teachers within their context. Lucy experienced three changes of PLA spanning the time of the learning experience she chose to talk about and the conduct of this study. These changes of leader brought with them a marked difference in conditions from those capable of supporting transformative learning to not and back again. In the case of four participants in two different contexts it was the school Principal who had been identified by the participants as a PLA. For the remaining three participants, all of whom were beginning teachers, it was their DECNSW appointed mentor that they identified as playing a critical role in their learning. Table 4, below, provides a summary of the relationship between, context, teacher, and the PLA they identified which may be helpful in navigating the results of the ensuing mapping analysis.
Table 4: Contextual relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Teacher identified ‘professional learning architect’ (PLA)</th>
<th>Teacher represented in Informant-specific maps (ISM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-6 Campus</td>
<td>Sally, Denise, Kate</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Sydney High School</td>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>John, Louise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBL High School</td>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Sarah, Zoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with a mentor</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Chris, Jeff, Nicole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I provided each school leader with a copy of the Interview Guide-PL Leader, (See Appendix 6) which included the following quote from the work of Kemmis (2009, p. 266) related to “practice architectures”.

"an individual person's praxis is shaped and formed by ‘practice architectures’ that constitute mediating preconditions for practice:
(1) cultural–discursive preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘thinking’ and ‘saying’ that orient and justify practices;
(2) material–economic preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘doing’ of the practice; and
(3) social–political preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘relatings’ involved in the practice.
These practice architectures are the densely interwoven patterns of saying, doing and relating that enable and constrain each new interaction, giving familiar practices their characteristic shapes.” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 466)
My purpose was to provide leaders with some theoretical basis for what I wanted to discuss with them and to indicate to them the regard that I, and other researchers, paid to the influence of local conditions, as they might describe them, on teaching and learning practice. As with the teacher interviews, there was only one opening question, see below, that was standard to all the interviews however, the question did vary slightly in wording depending on the form of the immediately preceding pleasantries exchanged. These preceding pleasantries were sometimes influenced by the ‘action’ that the PLA had been caught up in immediately prior to or upon my arrival and in which I often became an observer, and later a discussant, of the daily complexities of teaching work. The introduction and question generalised to

*What I'd like to be able to do is put what the participants have told me in some kind of context with some of the details of how the initiatives have been led within their schools. Can you tell me about the decisions you’ve made along the way or how you actually worked to facilitate the sort of professional learning that you believe works for your teachers? (See Appendix 6)*

Subsequent questions were asked as pertinent to the account being given in order to clarify or seek further information about something they had said. The PLA interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed dialogically, as described in Chapter 4 for the participant interviews, in order to identify the presence of discourses related to professional learning as well as any evidence of the social relationships, both human and textually mediated, that connected to professional learning within the local context.

In the spirit of genuine inquiry vital to any institutional ethnography, it was important to approach the analysis of the PLA’ research conversations dialogically as I had no pre-conceived notions of what they might be prepared to tell me about how teacher learning happened from their perspective. I identified from the PLA transcripts, talk that relates to the coordination of teachers doings and presented this analysis as text interrupted by commentary (See p. 100). The full interview text for each PLA is not presented here because of the length of the text and also because there was considerable overlap and reification of many of the essential points that had already
been made. Also, the main purpose of the interview with each PLA was to shed further light on how the social relations, already identified by each of the teacher participants, were coordinated. While this makes the presentation of the analysis somewhat more succinct it does run the risk of skipping over some of what PLA's may have briefly alluded to with the result that my clarifying questions sometimes appear as ‘leading’ questions when they actually refer back to something the PLA had already mentioned but perhaps not elaborated on at the time. I have endeavoured to point out such moments as the analysis unfolds. Through this process of laying bare my thinking I have tried to ensure the transparency and hence trustworthiness of the analysis. The analysis of the PLA interviews is provided so that a reader may follow the analytic process if they wish however, they could choose to go straight to the maps, described below, in order to examine the social relationships related to each teacher’s transformative learning experience.

Accompanying each PLA’s transcript analysis is one or more diagrammatic representations, maps, for each teacher, working in the same context as this PLA. Each of these teacher maps was formulated according to the analysis of what each teacher had described and demonstrated through their three performances, of how people, experiences and texts influenced the ‘learning about teaching work’ processes for them within that context. The maps allow us to see at a glance what the dominant influences were on a teacher’s learning about their work, as they described it. The visual portrayal in symbols provides for instant recognition of the presence, absence and relative frequency of relations with people, texts or other experiences that make up the sequence of action for each individual. Rather than attaching only a label to each symbol, I have included a quotation from the teacher’s transcript as further explanation for the selections of symbols and connections that I have made.

The symbol for ‘experiences’ was added because one of the aims of this study was to identify the characteristics of the learning experiences that teachers identified in their stories about their learning. Of course, these experiences were largely designed, delivered by and involved other people and so the distinction between ‘people’ and ‘experiences’ was often difficult to make. For the purposes of my analysis however, it
allowed me to keep some clarity between general design principles of effective professional learning and the personal nature of social relations that support or inhibit professional learning. The textual influences include any reference to either professional standards or externally set curriculum as well as any other text involved in the sequence of action. Here text refers to “words or images with some definite material form that is capable of replication” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 166) and as such includes transcripts of talk from interviews or online forums, books, research papers, reports, policy documents, photographs, video and websites. Bold arrows on each map indicate the main flow of a participant’s ‘doings’, particularly as it relates to changes in their thinking about, or execution of their teaching work. As illustrated in Chapter 5, each of the participants had demonstrated evidence and reflected on the veracity of their evidence in support of their claims that their learning had transformed their teaching work. This demonstration of evidence lends credibility to the maps in that we can be confident that the social relationships represented in the maps have in fact, supported transformative professional learning.

The third component of this analytic process was then to explicate from the PLA’s talk and the participant’s maps within each context:

• general patterns of how local social relationships had been coordinated in order to support transformative professional learning;
• and how these local relationships articulate with the governance of institutional processes related to teacher learning.

Results of the mapping analysis

K-6 Campus
Lucy, who was introduced as the key informant for the dialogic analysis in Chapter 4, is the teacher whose professional learning is the focus at K-6 Campus. She is a teacher of some nineteen years experience who has not been required to be accredited against professional standards. The transformative learning experience that Lucy chose to speak about occurred under the influence of Sally’s time as the Head of Primary and as professional learning architect (PLA). In Lucy’s description, Sally was followed by Denise and then Kate as the Head of Primary and as the PLA identified. During Denise’s
time as the Head of Primary the ‘system’ for organizing professional learning changed to one that was influenced by the professional standards for teachers and the perception that the school’s NAPLAN results were unacceptably poor. From Lucy’s comments we gather that a high priority was placed on accountability. Kate, the current PLA, was at the school as the deputy head of primary throughout Sally and Denise’s time, witnessing and experiencing first hand the changes that occurred. Kate is now the Head of Primary and is the only PLA I interviewed as Sally and Denise are no longer at the school. Because of the unique nature of the change of leaders at this school I have grouped Kate’s comments into four categories; those that apply ‘overall’ to the whole time she has been at the school, during ‘Sally’s leadership’, during ‘Denise’s leadership’, and under her own leadership as ‘Kate’s leadership’.

The interview with Kate took place in her office during the school holidays when Kate was at school to attend to other school business left over from the previous term as well as things that needed doing before the commencement of the new school term. While Kate had a full schedule for the day, we were not interrupted by the usual comings and goings of school activity.

**Overall**

*Kate: *... And over the time um () since I’ve been here professional learning for the staff has been held very highly by the (members of the school leadership team).

There is a large professional learning budget for our staff across the (school) from kindergarten right through to Year 12 um:am and it’s at the discretion of the head (formal leader, in the case of K-6 Campus, Kate) of each campus to determine how that budget is used...So:O we have to develop our objectives for professional learning we meet at the beginning of the year and we plan our targets, or our aims are going to be, or our focus areas.

Kate feels that teacher professional learning has always been strongly supported by the leadership team of the school and by those who determine the school’s funding priorities and that generous financial support is made available. The Head of Primary has discretion over how those funds are expended and therefore, one would assume, a
high degree of autonomy in establishing and supporting the pedagogical approach to teacher learning that they value.

**Sally's leadership**

*Kate:*...So when I first came here Sally was the head of primary (this is the head who went with Lucy to Reggio Emilia) and she had a very strong:g um (.) focus on/particularly in the area of literacy and also in the early years...And for a number of years it was literacy um (.) therefore the professional learning really focused on that particular area for the year all year. And it involved a lot of ah using the expertise of the staff um it involved a lot of collaboration and sharing ah it didn't involve so much going out to in-services. It was mainly/I mean there was opportunities for that sort of particular areas of need but a lot of it was in-house. Or when we had somebody come in:n (.) um (.) who worked with the whole staff or small groups of staff...a literacy leader was appointed by Sally... So:o the teachers have somebody to access on staff to be able to go in and mentor with them or observe lessons and give feedback, to run professional learning sessions after school um to just sit down and have a professional dialogue with them.

...we moved then from literacy into numeracy and numeracy also became a focus. So then I was appointed, this was when I was deputy head, as numeracy leader [MmHm]. So then I/I didn't have a lot of skills I would say but I had a lot of passion and I continued to develop along the way. So whenever there was a whole school focus there was an opportunity for staff to have as much professional learning and resourcing available to them as they required.

Kate seems to imply here a level of differentiation in the way professional learning was supplied. There may have been some differentiation in teacher access to this form of learning based on need, as assessed by whom is unclear, and it is highly likely that there would have been some differentiation to meet individual needs within the learning experiences themselves.
So I made contact with (knowledgeable outsider)... and together we implemented with our staff... a way to collect the data and then a way to inform teaching and learning. And again because it was a whole-school focus and we had it as our goal for the year all the staff were onboard, the conversations were going on [Mm] all the time in the classroom and around and um I was then able to touch base and work in rooms to support the teachers, to provide some feedback on their programs or their practices or whatever it might be.

...So for us (the mentors) too we still had someone to provide us with feedback and you know, a way forward and give us professional readings to do [Mm]. So we also got to continue our professional learning.

Kate as an in-house mentor, is supported in her professional learning by the knowledgeable outsider, in a formal, school-funded arrangement. Part of the mentored professional learning experience is coordinated through professional readings supplied by the knowledgeable outsider. The whole-school focus for professional learning supports the learning of all through ongoing dialogue related to the focus areas.

When Kate started at the school in the role of deputy head of primary, during Sally’s leadership, she describes professional learning as being focused on the school-identified priorities of literacy and numeracy. It is unclear however, whether or not this focus related to NAPLAN testing, as an extralocal coordinating text (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 166), which did not begin until 2008, or was determined through teachers’ assessment of their students. The essence of Sally’s pedagogical approach was the appointment of a school-based ‘specialist’ as mentor and learning experiences were focused on teachers working with this mentor and sometimes with other knowledgeable outsiders, to develop their classroom practice within the whole-school focus areas. The mentor’s professional learning was also facilitated by the knowledgeable outsider. This approach had the potential for differentiation to meet individual teacher’s learning needs in the context of the needs of their student learners. At this time there was no formal requirement for teachers to participate in any prescribed form or quantity of professional learning. It is unclear when and how the Reggio Emilia approach, previously adopted by the Early Childhood Centre, became part of Sally’s professional
learning plan but the influence of this experience with inquiry learning continues through the Denise years and emerges again in Kate’s time as a professional learning focus on the inquiry approach associated with the Primary Years Program of the International Baccalaureate.

**Denise’s leadership**

While the in-house literacy and numeracy specialists continued to work under their respective titles through Denise’s time as leader, she introduced significant changes to the organisation and conduct of professional learning sessions including the time spent with these specialists.

*Kate:*...*When Denise came in we decided to change our professional learning so that it was/ had a lot of options in it and only a couple of mandatory. So optional things in the time that she was here/ you picked and had to do so many hours though of professional learning [right]. It was ten hours a term. So you could opt in and do some observation survey which our ‘Reading Recovery’ teacher ran, you could do master classes in Mathematics which I ran one and (external consultant) ran one for those that were really interested in that area. There was um units that Denise ran/ professional learning that Denise ran on inquiry learning and backward mapping. There was professional learning in what (literacy specialist) ran in English (.), there was an RE one (.). So they were/I can’t remember the rest of them/ but they were/ even some were training sessions like how to take a running record, how to administer um some tracking data [MmHm] um so some of them/so the teachers popped into things that they thought they needed along the way. Ah: h it was too hard to manage structurally (gasps) [Right] ... there was so many things being offered [Yep] that we couldn’t keep track of it [right]*

This approach to professional learning reflects a more atomized approach to meeting teachers’ learning needs. It is based on assumptions that ‘deficits’ in teacher knowledge or practice can be filled by short-term, content-focused workshops that will automatically translate into transformed classroom practice. It is interesting to note
that according to Kate, the main reason for abandoning this approach was the difficulty in tracking each teacher rather than any concerns about it’s efficacy for teacher learning, the later having not been evaluated or reflected upon.

*DT:* Were you attempting to map that then against the professional standards for those teachers? Or/

*SP:* (softly) No. We didn’t do that.

*DT:* But was that an intention to begin with [No] of that scheme? [No, I don’t think so] OK.

This contradicts what Lucy had to say about the same system. In my interview with Lucy she spent considerable effort ensuring that I understood the details of this ‘new’ system. At one point, based on something she had already mentioned, I asked the clarifying question:

*DT:* And you said that this, the options, the workshops are mapped to the standards [Yes] is that for everybody having an eye to the standards even if they haven’t been required to be accredited?

*Lucy:* Yes. Just so we can promote that document and promote the use of it and on their goals we’ve got the standards their goal links to. [Right] So um just say for example (Emma scrolls through various screens on her laptop). That’s the goal, the link to our goals, the link to the teaching standards, indicators of success for that goal, key actions. We included indicators of success this year because it was just that accountability.

Given that Lucy and I were examining the documentation that accompanied the professional learning system at this time as we were speaking, I’m inclined to think that Kate was either unaware of the importance of the mapping against standards or has forgotten that teachers were expected to do this.
Kate goes on to say

Kate: ...But staff were just so: o (.) caught up on just counting the hours (.) and as soon as they got enough hours that was it. Even if something brilliant was coming along^ (.) they just said no, no I’ve done my ten hours I don’t need to do anymore [right]. So um (.) and it wasn’t supposed to be about counting hours. It was just so you had a minimum so teachers who were lazy could still [Mm] you know, still had to be accountable for their learning.

DT: And is that a big issue^?

Kate: No, not really. There was a few, just a couple but um this year (now that the counting hours system no longer exists) it’s not like that at all. Teachers are just keen!

According to Kate, it seems that the combination of atomized workshops and mandatory counting of hours for accountability were directly responsible for the development of poor attitudes to professional learning. The poor attitudes, she believes, dissipated immediately these conditions were removed and a more contextualized, inquiry approach reinstated with the same group of teachers.

Kate’s leadership

Kate’s professional learning pedagogy retains the two-objectives for whole-school professional learning focus and is coordinated through the social relationships involving two ‘specialist’ teachers who have a dedicated time allocation to work in the role of mentors, assistance as required, from knowledgeable outsiders and selective attendance at external professional learning opportunities. The provision of in-school time for teachers to collaborate with the mentors and their colleagues on professional learning has been extended and generously supported through funding to provide relief teachers. The idea of ‘options’, introduced in Denise’s time, has been downgraded
in authority to mean genuinely optional in that teachers can volunteer for certain opportunities or not as they see fit however, the P-12 administration of the school has introduced other aspects of forced choice professional learning associated with the school’s mission statement, in recent times. Kate is involved in a very hands-on way working alongside teachers on professional learning foci and relieving them from their classes so that they can engage in dialogue with other colleagues. Her involvement sends a strong message to teachers about how those in leadership positions at the school value engagement in professional learning. Kate is cogniscent that change takes time and expects that the integration of PYP with the Australian Curriculum and implementation of the product will take three years.

The professional learning ‘doings’ are locally coordinated through dialogue at the meetings, and textually through the notes taken at the meeting and emails as follow up and as a lead in to the next set of doings but doings are not ‘checked off’ in any other way. The accountability agenda has a significantly lower status than during Denise’s leadership. The primary school leadership has not had to engage with professional standards as an external, regulatory text as they do not currently employ any new scheme teachers and their current staff are not required to be accredited against the state-based standards. Kate’s justification of mapping individual goals against professional standards is purely in terms of an accountability discourse requiring familiarity with the standards document but she does not comment on any pedagogical significance of the standards.

DT: ... the impending implementation of the national professional standards and the national curriculum via the Board of Studies syllabuses, how’s that impacting on what you’re doing professional learning wise?

Kate: Ah:h the end of last year we started to plan for the English curriculum and we used the CEO modules that they put out for their staff um and (literacy specialist) and I went and did the training for that with Denise (former head of primary). The three of us did the training and then (literacy specialist) and I came back and we implemented the modules to staff
And later in the conversation

DT: And how are your teachers finding mapping their PYP program and work and curriculum with the Board of Studies requirements? Is that any sort of issue or is that happening quite easily?

Kate: A: ahh. Well. Um (.) at the moment with our units of inquiry we’re mapping it only with HSIE, Science and Technology and PDH is our main curriculum areas. And that is actually working OK [MmHm]. Where there is (.) authentic fit with other KL/Key Learning Areas [Mm] then we will draw it in (.) but only if it’s authentic at this stage. We’re not using all of the/not presenting all of the KLA’s into the one thing just yet. We are still teaching stand-alone English, we’re still teaching stand-alone Maths unless something fits in beautifully which comes out of conversations [Yep]

Earlier Kate had talked about the importance of teachers learning about the PYP inquiry approach as a way of developing their overall pedagogical repertoire. I ask the clarifying question:

DT: And are you able to/ or are you seeing any transfer of the inquiry approach from the PYP into those stand-alone subjects in the way they’re being taught, or do you think they are still being taught in a very traditional way?

Kate: Ah well Maths we had always had a bit of an investigative, an inquiry approach [MmHm] um (.) and so in Maths that was always there. ... In the area of English though, English is still taught as stand alone, it’s quite traditional in the way it’s being taught [MmHm]

DT: So seeing this as a longer-term implementation sounds like it’s an important part of the process because you’re able to kind of/ you don’t have to feel a pressure to get it right in a short space of time? [No]. You can have these increment/
Kate: That's correct! We're aiming for three years.

On standards

Kate: OK. Um one of the things that I didn't mention that we do our goal setting, we actually do map it to the professional standards [Oh, OK] So we actually do map the goals the teachers look at. So we link it to our College strategy [MmHm] and then we also link it to the professional standards [OK] and I honestly think if we didn’t do that they wouldn’t even know they existed [right] So its good to be able to open it up and tap into it with them.

DT: So given that, what do you see as the purpose here of the professional standards?

Kate: OK. I think () Oh, it's a great resource to have, for teachers to know that there are different areas that they need to look at is you know in the professional standard.

Below, is Lucy’s Map of Sequences of Action, a visual representation of Lucy’s version of her learning experience that transformed her teaching work. Following this map, I draw a comparison between Lucy’s map and Kate’s interview analysis in order to address the research questions related to the ways in which professional learning was coordinated in the local context.
Connecting Lucy’s map to the ‘leaders’ of learning

The social relationships related to Lucy’s transformative learning experience have their foundation in a shared appreciation of inquiry pedagogy for fostering student engagement in learning. In the case of the pre-school, this inquiry pedagogy includes interest-based learning through the adoption of the Reggio Emilia (RE) approach. Lucy was supported through her social relationships with the Director of the preschool and the Head of Primary (Sally) to explore inquiry pedagogy. The external network established through attendance at the RE workshops also supported her learning for approximately one year after the event. The only significant externally produced texts influencing Lucy’s learning at this time were related to the RE approach and pedagogy in general. The local texts that reassured her that this approach made a positive difference to student engagement and learning were the work samples produced by students attending the RE schools she visited. As Lucy attempted to implement an interest-based, inquiry approach with her own students she found the state-based syllabus, as externally produced text, a constraining influence in that her interpretation of that text was that she should be able to cover all the content it described in equal depth irrespective of what her students were interested in learning more about. She was supported however, in a relational sense by the time allowance provided to her to conduct her own inquiry as professional learning and in the sense of locally produced texts, by the work that her own students produced. Her students’ work provided her with evidence that the interest-based, inquiry approach she was investigating was transforming her practice in such a way that students’ engagement and the quality of their work had improved.

A change in the Head of Primary (Denise) brings a different focus on the professional standards and student NAPLAN results as external texts resulting in the development of a complex local text designed to ‘account’ for teacher professional learning in an atomized way, including completion of mandatory hours. Kate’s description together with the paperwork Lucy had shown me during her interview that related to this system of professional learning creates a picture of a range of workshops attempting to meet learning objectives that bear little relationship to each other and may not relate to
the classroom context of individual teachers. This approach to planning for professional learning in a way that is so tightly influenced by the external text of standards provides an example of what Smith would call ‘institutional capture’ (2005, pp. 155-156) in that the particulars of teachers local work have been displaced by the ‘institutional’ account. It also illustrates an interesting example of the way in which Smith describes the formulation and operation of texts on people’s doings. First, “People’s actualities become a resource on which work is done to extract formalized and highly restricted representations” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 186) as in the case of the formulation of professional standards, drawn from a particular view of teachers’ work. Second, the institutionalised representation, that is the professional standards, then “overrides individual perspectives” as it is later applied in the frontline context. In this case, the way in which professional learning was previously coordinated. Third, “the translation of the actual into the institutional is an essential step in making the actual actionable institutionally” as is the case in accreditation of professional learning against the professional standards. We learn from Kate that this system seems to inhibit teachers developing attitudes to professional learning that support the possibility of any of them enjoying the kind of transformative learning that Lucy had experienced.
Suburban Sydney High School

Sylvia is the Principal of Suburban Sydney High School (SSHS) in which two teachers, John and Louise, agreed to participate in the study. Both John and Louise commented in the final reflective interview about how useful they had found the research process in guiding reflection on their learning. At the time of the first research conversation, John was a teacher with six years of teaching service who had been accredited against the NSWIT professional standards. In casual conversation following the completion of John’s reflective interview, he mentioned an experience that had been “the career highlight” but it was not what we had just spent the three data collection performances talking about. When I asked John why he had chosen not to discuss this experience he said that he had assumed I would want to talk about something that was “official” professional learning and so had chosen to talk about ‘peer coaching’ which was a whole-school professional learning initiative. In my opening question to John I had not mentioned the term ‘professional learning’ and so it was his interpretation of what I meant by ‘learning about his work’. The mis-conception was revealed because the dialogic relationship that we had built during the first round of data collection ensured that our conversation continued after we both thought data collection had been completed. John generously agreed to go through the entire data collection process again in order to talk about his ‘highlight’ hence there are two separate maps for each of the learning experiences he spoke about. Louise had twelve years of teaching experience and had not been required to seek accreditation against the NSWIT professional standards.

My interview with Sylvia, the principal, took place in her office which is located immediately adjacent to the front door of the school and the reception desk giving everyone easy access to her door. At first it was difficult for us to settle into the conversation because there were so many others who wanted ‘just a moment’ with her but once we closed the door and got started, Sylvia’s passion for learning lent animation and fluency to her story. From Sylvia’s interview transcript I have kept the chronological order intact but have focused on the parts in which she describes the underlying philosophy that directs her pedagogical decision-making, the structural
measures she has instituted to support professional learning within this school and any
texts that play a role in coordinating professional learning.

_DT:_ ... what I’d like to be able to do is put what the participants have told me (_) in
some kind of context of some of the details of how the initiatives have been led
within their schools [OK]

_(Sylvia takes an A3 page with the heading ‘Teaching and Learning Wheel’ down
from her office notice board and organizes for her assistant to photocopy it)_

_Sylvia: It’s really important, I believe, (_) um (_) in schools like this, ... in schools
where ... the learning outcomes for the kids sort of sit at the bottom, there’s low
expectations about what the kids can do: o, the kids have low expectations, the
teachers have low expectations – that we challenge that [MmHm] every way, which
way. And I think that the success we’ve had with the school is two ends of the street.
We look one end it’s the amenable learning environment which is about the
meticulous supervision, the pastoral care, the student welfare, additional staff to
support that sort of thing to happen. And then you get additional funding or you
spend your money in terms of painting the place and sort of flashing up the
facilities [MmHm] etc etc. So you’ve got all that. You’ve got a decent place to work
in [yeh] for the children and the staff.

But the other end of the road is professional learning and improving the pedagogy
and coming to some sort of collective understanding within the context of the
school about how professional learning should be developed to meet the needs of
the students. So I would like to see a curriculum that is contextual, so we start with
where the kids are at... I’m (_) I’m doing doctoral studies but I’m very concerned
about cultural capital and the children not having the cultural capital. I haven’t/I
wasn’t able to frame the conversation like that originally but I’ve always been
concerned about why it is that these kids don’t do school [Mm]. And I’ve always
been concerned about the fact that that i:is because they simply don’t understand
what we’re talking about part of the time. They don’t understand it at all sorts of
levels. But the whole idea of professional learning for me is for people to understand the complexity of the clientele, if you like [Mm]. The complexity of the learning needs and then they need to be supported in knowing how to operate effectively knowing those sorts of things.

So I guess what we’ve developed over the last couple of years is a structure where we look at both ends of the street. So for me it’s been strategic and it’s been wholistic. So professional learning is not an adjunct. It’s essential to how we do our job [MmHm]. It’s been systematic and it’s been whole school right from the beginning.

The ‘bottom-line’ of Sylvia’s pedagogical approach is to challenge the underlying reasons for low expectations, low expectations of student learning but also of teacher learning with respect to better meeting the needs of students. She takes on the raising of expectations first, through the school environment by improving the physical conditions for learning, and this includes conditions for learning how to socialise, and second, through professional learning for teachers to assist them to better understand the needs of their students and how to provide for those needs. Sylvia sees the key to her approach as being its systematic involvement of all who work and learn in the school. It is interesting to note that Sylvia is pursuing her own professional learning through doctoral studies and she indicates how important this has been to her in her reflections on the ‘cultural capital’ for ‘doing school’ that students bring with them to this school.

_Sylvia: I took over in 2008. I had very luckily in some ways, a vacuum in terms of senior leadership so I was able to employ people. I was able to tell them this is their portfolio._

Control over hiring allowed Sylvia to employ four deputy principals into the roles required to begin enacting the two-pronged strategy for raising expectations. Based on their titles, these roles could appear in many schools however, it is the way in which
they have been enacted here that has enabled the coordination of professional learning.

...the DR (digital revolution) was coming, so we looked at integration of ICT into the curriculum. We started with the ICT road map which was developed at executive conference and what it then/it had a resourcing side and a professional learning side but it was all whole school. So that was the direction across the school. The next year we did teaching English language learners which was the literacy, once again a whole school frame. Then the next year ... But all of that learning has been at a whole school level.

Each year there has been a specified focus for professional learning that is led by one of the deputy principals and maintained for the whole year across the whole school. Each focus has been designed to assist teachers to develop their pedagogy in ways that meet the needs of students in this particular school.

Sylvia: Structurally? You have (.) a timetable for whole school professional learning and it was originally as part of a 3 week cycle. So our meeting cycle was staff meeting, faculty meeting, professional learning meeting (.) [MmHm] throughout the year... As well as that we have faculty professional learning once a fortnight. So the faculties all meet together for a period which is in their timetable which is allocated [MmHm]. Since we've been doing Peer Coaching we've had another period of professional learning which is in the timetable. So then you've got structurally, you've got your professional learning meeting whole school, you've got your faculty professional learning meeting and then you've got your one-on-one peer meeting [Mm].

As well as that, 2011 through staff conference we developed the platform for collaborative education [MmHm] and that there has these spaces and time built into it for people to get together to do professional learning [right] and what we did then was we looked at the curriculum more particularly and created teams. So every staff member is in one of four teams they are also organs for professional
learning as well. ... The meeting structure has changed so now what we have for this year is we have a faculty meeting and then a teams meeting. The focus/that’s fortnightly rotation [MmHm]... Last year we trialed them... and then we also had an academic partner come in and evaluate them (the projects) through focus groups with the kids and with the teachers [Mm] and as we went all of those issues were then addressed (.) at executive meetings, at faculty learning/you know the faculty learning period I was talking about [Mm] and then also translated into the broader whole school conversation [Mm]. So what we’ve come up with now is a collective understanding and Geoff (deputy in charge of professional learning) seems to think we’ve transcended professional learning as such, it’s just become a part of everyday conversation about how we go about what we’re doing and what we’ve learned and that then becomes part of the collaborative and collective dialogue that’s ongoing.

Peer coaching is an example of a form of professional learning that started out as a one-year focus in the school but has continued beyond that year. Regular dedicated meeting time for professional learning is part of the timetable cycle. This is quite different to the adhoc nature of professional learning in many other schools or the approach that sees teachers as passive recipients of information on designated ‘staff development days’ as the only planned form of whole-school, in-school professional learning. In this school, the ‘staff development day’ is replaced by a ‘staff conference’ at which teachers are involved in the development of school learning policy and also present their own work as a vehicle for shared professional learning. We see here a parallel with the leadership pedagogy of the principal at PBL High School (see below) in the way Sylvia has trialed and evaluated the ‘teams’ approach to developing multi-disciplinary units of study. A ‘knowledgeable outsider’ was involved in evaluation and feedback, an important strategy for ensuring that assessment of local professional learning initiatives has a critical capacity. When Sylvia says, “we’ve transcended professional learning as such” I think she means that professional learning is no longer seen as an activity that only goes on within in its own dedicated capsule of time.
Sylvia:... So we came up with this (she shows me the poster of the ‘Teaching and Learning Wheel). So this is the task right at the centre of the circle [Mm], this is the instructional core, this is according to Elmore et al [Mm] and the task is right at the centre. And these two are sort of the curriculum and the task etc and they very much supposedly/ I’m trying to raise this idea about um who the kids are who we are talking to. And then/

The Teaching and Learning Wheel is a locally produced text designed to coordinate the learning of students and the professional learning of teachers. The development of this text has been informed by the texts of pedagogical research developed extra-locally.

DT: Can I just ask a question there? Is the focus on the task there (pointing to the centre) is that because you want to create a message through the task that it indicates what’s valued about the content? [Yes] That’s why the task is central? [Yes, yeh]. MmHm.

Sylvia: And then when we’re looking at what we’re going to do, where do we find our information? We look then at the Australian Curriculum for guidance [MmHm] and then we look at (.) programming from assessment – this is the method/I don’t know what you call that/ the structure of the programming, I suppose/ [backward mapping?] backward mapping/ [Understanding by Design?]. We’re also looking at concept mapping to differentiate it [MmHm] ...[What’s IEPS?] There? Individual Education Plans are what they are. So you might, you know, you’ve negotiated the learning with a child on an individual level. We do this in a couple of classes in Year 7 and 8 and all of Year 9 [Mm. All of Year 9?] Yeh, with their parents.

The Australian Curriculum is looked to for guidance rather than compliance after the learning task for students has been determined, although in reality this process may be concurrent as few teachers operate in complete isolation from knowledge of the requirements of state and national curriculum documents. What remains important however, is that the main focus for task selection is potential to engage students and provide them with a means to demonstrate what they know and can do. Individual
Education Plans are texts developed in consultation between a student, their parents and their teachers to coordinate their learning.

Anyway, so we’re looking at these (the focus areas for teacher professional learning are arranged around the wheel concentric with the student task). Now these are the things we’ve (teachers) been learning about and they’ve got to go in and they inform what we’ve been doing.

DT: ... A few moments ago when you said developing a curriculum I thought you were about to launch into talking about developing a curriculum for professional learning but you were talking about a curriculum for the students. But what you’ve actually laid out here is almost the curriculum for professional learning within the school, isn’t it?

Sylvia: Yeh ... They’re (teachers) starting to understand that this is how I work out how to teach these kids.

The Teaching and Learning Wheel provides a visual representation of the relationship between student and teacher learning. ‘Teachers will understand how to work out how to teach these kids’ could be considered the ‘enduring understanding’ (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) that this curriculum for teacher professional learning aims to develop.

DT: In terms of the practice architectures, as Kemmis would call them, ... where have you gotten that time from?

LO: We’ve bought it first of all through Priority Action Schools. It’s usually all come from equity funding [Right] which is essentially you’ve bought extra staff [ah ha]. And then National Partnerships bought Peer Coaching and then we employed 3 people under National Partnerships. But the other thing that National partnerships/Peer Coaching’s also done is given us some of that architecture. There’s protocols about how meetings are run [Mm] you know, with the coaching model and we use that for executive meetings.
Government funding has been spent in ways that support the whole-school, in-school focus of the pedagogy for professional learning by employing extra teachers in order to create windows of time for all teachers. The communication protocols that Sylvia refers to here have become an important tool for productively coordinating the social interactions in various meeting forums. Dialogic communication is also fostered in other forums that feed directly into ongoing planning and decisions. Sylvia describes a complex network of communication and feedback between the ‘executive’ and the various groups of teachers involved in professional learning activities.

...so they come back and report what they’re doing and that sort of gives once again a sort of driver for the direction of the professional learning within the teams and it’s being shared at executive meeting. ... It’s generally a very ethical conversation and I find them to be very productive.

Sylvia demonstrates how the student assessment task at the centre of the *Teaching and Learning Wheel* can be used to drive professional learning. In-school expertise is used to provide just in time learning at little or no cost. Attendance at these learning opportunities is voluntary which acknowledges an ethos that teachers want to learn and know what it is they need to learn. There is also provision for teachers to attend external learning opportunities as they deem them to be required.

... the other thing we were doing at that time was embedding ICT into all assessment tasks... everybody had individual goals, their learning goals for ICT improvement and then we ran these Thursday afternoon snapshots. So there’s expertise in the school and they are school people and it’s voluntary – you could go to snapshots whenever you wanted too.

*DT:* And in terms of your professional learning budget, lump sum, bucket, whatever you get ...
Sylvia: I spend it on the faculty planning days that I was talking to you about [right], the multi-disciplinary days. I also spend it on people-so people can go out whenever they want to too.

DT: And do people tend to go out a lot/[not a lot]/ ’cause there’s so much going on here/ [Not a lot!] Mm

I ask Sylvia if they have any form of annual evaluation of professional learning within the school.

Sylvia: ... I have conversations with everybody twice a year [MmHm] ... and then I transcribe them and I had one (. ) at the beginning of the year. And I talk about this (referring to the Teaching and Learning Wheel) ’cause this is basically the school plan and I um (. ) I talk about this and their understanding of this.

...As I said one of the things I’m concerned about is ... being classified as disadvantaged, being classified as poor, low socio-economic, so forth- it’s a stratifying thing and it puts you at the bottom and therefore expectations sort of (. ) um people don’t see the children as capable [Mm] and you can only see them as capable if you challenge them with/and challenge yourself about what ideas you think are valuable. ... And so I’m having conversations with people about Where do you think-when can these boys be successful? How can you help them to become successful? What is it that they know that you don’t know? or How can you build on what they know? So in that way I’m evaluating not only their understanding of this (The Teaching and Learning Wheel) but their understanding of what kind of a curriculum they think they need to present at our school.

... we had a Saturday conference beginning of August and I went from group to group to group just to listen to what they were talking about [Mm] and they’re very lively and very engaged in their professional learning.
... but there’s a lot of positive exchange I have with people about the work that they’re doing ... and it’s pretty exciting that most have got their heads around it

There is a dialogic way of doing business in this school. Sylvia assesses teachers’ progress towards developing the ‘enduring understanding’ of the professional learning plan through dialogue focused on the coordinating text of the *Teaching and Learning Wheel*. Teachers are being asked to account for their practices and their contribution to the learning of their students in an informal but challenging way. These conversations also serve to reinforce the view of curriculum design as a localized, contextualized process to meet the needs of these learners in this school. While Sylvia is clearly excited about the level of progress she believes teachers are making she is also realistic in her assessment of the extent of the success. She does not make off-hand or false claims about the teachers all being ‘on-board’ with the reform agenda.

In the closing minutes of the conversation, I explain to Sylvia that my study has also been interested in what teachers might have to say about the Australian Curriculum and professional teaching standards.

*Sylvia:* ... *The Australian Curriculum is in some ways superfluous to our needs. What we need to focus on is a curriculum for (Suburban Sydney) High School which accounts for the needs of the students in this school. I want them to be literate, numerate, you know, um team workers with you know [Mm] good communication skills who are given opportunities to show, create whatever they like and to be adventurous and resilient. You know, I want all those sorts of things to happen and then you can - the Australian Curriculum is based on the Melbourne Declaration and so therefore that’s what your curriculum should look like.*

According to Smith, reading a text

“is a special kind of conversation in which the reader plays both parts. She or he ‘activates the text (McCoy, 1995) – though probably never quite as its maker intended – and at the same time, she or he is responding to it or taking it up in some way. Its
activation by a reader inserts the text’s message into the local setting and the sequence of action into which it is read” (2005, p. 105).

Sylvia’s ‘activation’ and reading of the Australian Curriculum focuses on the overall purpose of the Australian Curriculum to support the Melbourne Declaration (ACARA, 2012a). She does not focus on the prescription of content outcomes.

Sylvia: ...The other thing that’s interesting too is the principal’s standard for me. I um (. ) you know that developing self and others [Mm] - one part of the standard – when I went along last year to a PARS meeting, Principal Assessment Review meeting, about developing self and others that was basically a suggestion that we might like to write about and we were asked these questions and they were about staff under-performance and I said look I don’t think that that’s what this means and I’m not going to answer those questions. Developing self and others is about leading the learning of teachers [Mm, mm, absolutely] It’s not about smackin’ people around and saying your bad, get outta here [Yeh] which was what these questions implied and that’s/ and I want people to be really excited about what they do at their work and you can’t do that unless you’re inquiring constantly [Mm] and I want to be able to give people opportunities to do that and I think we’ve got the structural arrangement to allow that to happen.

Sylvia’s objection to the principal standard related to ‘developing others’ being considered from a deficit view is consistent with the philosophy she holds for both student and teacher learning. Sylvia’s reading of the standards as a coordinating text is different to the way in which many others choose to read it and thus it results in a different set of ‘actions’ in her school context. She goes on to say that this does not mean she avoids prescribing certain forms of professional learning that she believes will contribute to the targeted ‘enduring understanding’ (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) for teachers but she acknowledges that no one, including teachers, can be forced to learn against their will.
Sylvia: ...The other thing too, is I prescribe certain things ... but I'll give you time (.) to work it out for yourself [mm]. It's not an authoritative, punitive sort of [you will do it in this way] No! I can't do that to anybody really. You'd be kidding yourself if you thought you could. But I think a lot of anxiety around prof/ around teaching is about trying to do it one-way.

...But they also want to be (.) good at their job because they've grown up in a system that rewards the right answer. So there's that tension there and so “tell me what to do, am I doing it right, have I got it right?” [Mm] and you've gotta say to them (.) yep and no and (.) how's it going? Whatta you need?

...you just keep at it but you also recognize I think that people are going to be resistant and that you tackle that resistance in a nurturing sort of way. What is it that concerns you? Because it's about that anxiety about getting the answer wrong and not doing the right thing because it’s such a highly charged emotional occupation.

...histeresis is that effect. But they/ basically what happens is there's an elasticity because people hold onto their old thing and they sort of stretch to the new place and then they return to some place which isn’t where they started from and it’s not where they were going to...and arriving in a different place to where you started from.

These closing comments reveal much about Sylvia’s perception of her role as the leader and facilitator of learning for the teachers in this school context. She acknowledges that teachers’ own experience of school and their assumptions about doing ‘school’ often inhibit their inquiry learning and that resistance is a part of the social that she overcomes through a dialogic approach. A sophisticated understanding of the change process allows Sylvia to recognize that not only the rate of change but also the end point for each individual is different in any change process.
The first map below, represents John’s recount of his learning experience when he thought he had to talk about something ‘official’. The second map represents the learning experience that he claims transformed his teaching work. The third map is that of Louise’s learning experience. The maps are followed by a comparison between each of these maps and what Sylvia had said about how professional learning is focused and supported at SSHS.
Johns Map 1 Sequences of Action

**Peer Coaching**
"A model that looks at refining teaching ideas...you partner with your colleagues"

**Leadership**
"We started using technology and then moved on slowly into literacy and sometimes numeracy"

"It's pretty much every day there is constant learning and I feel like I'm always learning"

"You've got your deputy principals who are part of that"

"I think they'll be looking at... how to get teachers working with new syllabuses."

"I coordinate all the TAS curriculum...I need to...find more opportunities to embed a lot of differentiation"

"Maintaining my accreditation...I'm also looking at the near future becoming a head teacher."

**Inter-school**
"I learn a lot from interacting with other teachers from other schools"

**Professional Association**
"Professional development here is quite a phenomenon...and we've seen a lot of great results."

**Negotiated assessment task**

**NSWIT Professional Standards**

**Australian Curriculum**

**Knowledgeable Outsider**
"We have a consultant from our team...from the DET who comes in."

"I take a keen interest in the 'positive behaviour' in schools"

**PBRS Team**
"I'm part of the school's PBRS team"
"There's a lot of transformation."

**Quality Teaching Model**

**Deputy principal... He coordinates and manages everything**

**Collaboration**
"Working with other teachers & building their capacity... using ICT in their classrooms"
John’s Map 2 Sequences of Action

State curriculum
Mandated major work

“I was struggling to continuously motivate my students.”

University/School Partnership
“Students from my class were going to be the clients... for the university students who were the architects... a real life situation.”

Students
“Its that sort of consultation”

Knowledgeable Outsider
“We were fortunate that she invited us back to the university.”

Negotiated assessment task

Observation
“The university students and my class...learning alongside each other”

Teachers of other KLA’s
“We were able to do some like that”

Reflection
“I’ve realized that the students who come up with their own ideas generally do well”

Inquiry
“The aim is getting them to take ownership... every year I come up with different strategies”

“...research into whatever they want to do and so guide them all the way through”

Planning more inter-disciplinary unit
“Integrated learning... so it was design and technology... English... as well as history.”

“Expanding the classroom... giving students, especially from our area the rich tasks.”
Connecting John’s and Louise’s maps to the ‘leader’ of learning

John’s Map 1 illustrates more of an influence on coordination by texts than either his Map 2 or Louise’s map. By comparison with Lucy’s map however, all three of the maps for John and Louise demonstrate fewer textual influences on their professional learning experience. This may be due to Sylvia’s activation of externally developed texts, such as the Australian Curriculum and national or state professional standards, as documents that may be consulted for guidance rather than compliance. Sylvia regards the ‘Melbourne Declaration’ (MCEETYA, 2008) as the most important coordinating text for curriculum design and the work of teachers though this is not mentioned by either of ‘her’ teachers. Sylvia has led the collaborative development of the key locally produced text, *The Teaching and Learning Wheel*, a synthesis resulting from the activation of externally produced texts for the particular context of Suburban Sydney High School. *The Wheel* too is subject to “text-reader conversations” that are “embedded in and organize local settings of work” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 166). *The Wheel* is not mentioned by either John or Louise however, they do speak about the importance to their professional learning of several of the key structures described in *The Wheel*.

John and Louise strongly acknowledge the coordination of professional learning through the social structures that have been established around *The Wheel*, particularly the peer coaching teams and the multi-disciplinary teams. These teams have provided essential support for teachers to inquire collectively into their practice, develop new pedagogies, implement cross-curricula units of work designed to enhance student engagement and evaluate students’ responses to these initiatives. Knowledgeable outsiders have been put to good use in the provision of specialist content knowledge tailored to meet the teachers’ needs within their local context and also as critical friends in the evaluation of the learning for students that has resulted from the applications of teachers’ learning resulting from these team efforts. Both teachers convey a sound understanding of how the various aspects and arrangements for professional learning are led within the school and how they articulate and contribute to the overall focus on improving outcomes for these students in this particular school. Sylvia’s description of how professional learning is organised, led and supported at Sydney Suburban High
School is evidenced by what the teachers have said about what they have learned, how they have learned it and the evidence they demonstrated of their learning.
Anne is the Principal at PBL High School where both Sarah and Zoe spoke about their involvement in project based learning (PBL) pedagogy as being connected to the time when they really knew they had learned something about their teaching work. Sarah is a head of department with twenty-three years of teaching experience, part of the middle management team and was one of the earliest adopters of PBL within the school. She clearly identifies the principal, Anne, as the leader of the PBL initiative in the school. Sarah is Zoe’s head of department and was her mentor for her accreditation process as a beginning teacher. Zoe is now in her second year of teaching. For Zoe, Sarah plays a greater direct role in leading her professional learning than does Anne.

The interview with Anne took place in her office situated at some remove from the front door of the school and accessible only via approval from the receptionist at the front desk. Anne had formally set aside time in her diary to speak with me and so we were not interrupted during the interview.

**DT:** ...So what I would like to talk to you about is some of the decisions that you’ve made along the way or how you actually worked to facilitate the sort of professional learning that you believe works for your teachers—some of the structural stuff around it

**Anne:** I guess firstly I’m passionate about innovation if that’s going to lead to improvements in learning for students... I guess structurally it’s about putting the time where it’s needed to allow change to take place because you’re not going to be able to implement any significant changes without people having the time to do that [MmHm]. So that’s providing/allocating financial resources basically in terms of school budgets to make sure we can provide that release time where it’s necessary. Ensuring ... the timetable structures are set up in such a way that class groups can actually work together so that the team teaching, that’s really been a very significant shift in our pedagogy here, can happen ... So I guess finances, timetable and then it’s the enthusiasm to of/you know/ of (.) being part of the
I understand Anne’s very direct answer to the question to be an indication of the consideration and reflection she has already given to the processes that she thinks work in supporting professional learning. The first pillar of these processes is her ‘passion’ and enthusiasm for any proposed innovation. Anne acknowledges that her presence at professional learning times sends a strong message to staff about her valuing of the innovations she is asking them to support. She sees herself as a participant in the professional learning associated with introducing changes in practice which she makes apparent to her staff through her attendance and involvement, particularly in the initial stages of a new professional learning initiative. The second pillar is challenging the existing ‘practice architectures’ (Kemmis, 2009) in order to create time for teachers to explore and implement innovation. This ‘time’ costs money but as principal she is able to prioritise the school budget in ways that provide funding for ‘time’. Other changes to practice architectures, such as the timetable, do not necessarily require additional cost.

DT: And in terms of taking a school-wide approach to the Project Based Learning [Mm], as a sort of vehicle for professional learning [Yes], what kinds of decisions and influences led you there?

Anne: ... I guess at the heart of any innovation and change here is my ongoing search for learning ... when I heard about project based learning being implemented at (name of school) I went along to the first session that they held and really got interested in it and then obviously researched it more myself. I looked at how it was working in other areas and then started slowly in terms of trying to get some people interested here^ [MmHm]. We actually had a lot of people who went to that first preliminary session ‘cause I had really encouraged attendance [Yes] and so people responded really positively to that which was really good. And then () from that initial very widespread range of interests we got a couple of key people who were really keen straightaway [MmHm] to take it further. So I arranged for training for them initially and so we started at that small level^
And so then it was really, over now quite a number of years (.) [About how many?] Ah:h really it’s probably been close to ... But really in the last two and a half much more extensively – I’d say two and a half years ago I took the decision um in collaboration with others that this was going to be the way we’d go forward [OK] and so therefore having been convinced of that by seeing from those early stages the success^ [MmHm] greater engagement of students – what they were doing, what they were producing- and I guess becoming even more convinced of the relevance of this approach in terms of contemporary learning was then well, OK, how do we up-scale it, basically? [Mm]. And, you know, move it from pockets to becoming ultimately how we do our work here in at least year 7, 8 and 9 (year groups).

Anne’s long-term outlook including a ‘pilot study’ forms the fourth pillar. The fifth pillar is about collaborative reflection on evidence of improved student engagement in learning and collaborative decision-making to embark on a school-wide implementation of the innovation.

... And so then it was investing significantly in training ... So the first group of ten were ... trained over ... and last year we took another group similar size and also did our own internal training of about a dozen ... So we had a very large proportion of staff who had between three and five days of intensive training... And that’s very significantly embedded it and this year, next term we’ll be training another fifteen
which pretty much means at that point everyone on staff who’s here has had that extensive and intensive immersion [Right] in what it’s like to be part of a PBL and then our expectations are that that’s translated, particularly with the National Curriculum coming in, to the way that we rewrite our programs, in general [Mm]. So that’s how it’s worked out

Anne views professional learning as ‘investment’ in teachers and their capacity to foster the kinds of learning experiences for students that she believes are important. The training in PBL is targeted at particular groups of teachers and is incremental. This is a form of differentiation in that Anne has identified those staff most likely to be early adopters and therefore most likely to see how PBL can be modified and implemented in ways that suit this school’s context. Interestingly, it seems that the while the Australian Curriculum may be a trigger for rewriting programs it does not seem to be considered as an inhibitor to the pedagogy associated with PBL.

DT: So you made that commitment after, I suppose you could call it a pilot stage/ [Yes]/ with those initial/[yes absolutely because]/ enthusiastic people/  

Anne: What it – the motivation for the other school was quite different to ours. They saw that as a vehicle because they had a lot of disengagement we actually didn’t have that as our issue^ [right] but I could still see the benefits of the process and that approach in terms of collaboration and team work which is so necessary these days and all of the other benefits appealed to me [Mm]. So I went down that path for a very different reason to the others [mm].

While improved student engagement was not the primary motivation for investigating PBL it was an important consideration in evaluating the ‘pilot study’. Anne is looking to develop the type of learning that will prepare students for a future in which skills like team-work and collaboration are valued, skills that have been associated with 21st century learning.
DT: So the collaboration and teamwork it sounds like not just for the students but also for the staff/[Absolutely!]/ who were involved/

Anne: Absolutely!... the biggest shift that we made in recent years:s, and we’re not there completely yet in all KLA’s but it’s increasing, is deprivatisation of practice of staff [That’s an achievement!] Yeh! So that’s/that’s been you know a long road but I think we’re very much towards the end of that journey in terms of it being again the norm [Great] Still a few little pockets (laughs) but that’s life at this moment.... The other aspect of deprivatising practice which has had a significant impact this year is that we’ve been engaged in learning walks on a regular basis where a number of leaders in the team in school visit the classrooms on a very regular basis... people will be coming into your classroom and chatting to the students and the students are expected to know what they’re meant to be learning^ [Mm]... the other big change we’ve made here is a physical one in terms of the classrooms now all have windows-very large windows so anyone working around the school can see in all of the classrooms. So that in itself has changed the atmosphere too because it’s not secret business anymore it’s the business of learning that everyone is part of and can see what’s happening [Yeh].

Building collaborative practices in order to ‘deprivatise’ individual teachers’ practice is a key objective of Anne’s professional learning agenda. Anne is realistic and honest about the current level of progress with the innovation. This is important for the continued development and embedding of the changed pedagogy she is hoping for. Anne is realistic and honest about the current level of progress with the innovation. This is important for the continued development and embedding of the changed pedagogy she is hoping for. Building in new windows that provide a view from the hallway into every classroom is a significant physical change to practice architectures designed to make teachers' practice more public and accountable.

DT: Are there any other specific and explicit professional learning initiatives that you’ve taken in conjunction with the project based learning?
Anne: Yeh! I think we've allocated very significant time toward creating professional learning communities linked into particular groups... and it's a focus – a two-fold focus – one is very explicitly on looking at literacy because that's one of our school goals and then the other week in the month that we have a cycle around is that they are going to be talking about how their PBL's are going and planning for that [mm]. Creating that time where they are together, you know, has proved incredibly valuable. Of course, now everyone wants... You know, I give it great priority but there's a limit to what you can do within a school budget for time allocations... we make sure everyone's on their absolute maximum load^/

DT: Does that maximum load include those meeting times?

Anne: Yes, exactly. They are actually counted in their teaching load.

As was the case at Suburban Sydney High School, other professional learning initiatives such as improving literacy learning across the curriculum are structured in such a way to be complimentary to the main focus of PBL. The time allocated for professional learning is counted as part of the teachers work load sending a strong message that ongoing learning is part of teachers’ everyday work. The ‘struggle’, in a Bahktinian sense, for Anne represented here is between a discourse that recognizes the importance of providing time for all teachers to have opportunities to work collaboratively and the discourse of budgetary constraints.

Anne: ...we start every staff meeting with what we call an ignite session which is just a 5 minutes of sharing a great idea... often our staff development days are very much led by teachers on staff [Mm] where they're seen to be valued in their expertise through, you know, running the sessions themselves. So it's really building up everyone else's competence through the expertise that we already have [Mm] here on staff.
Pedagogy and learning are up front as the core business of staff meetings. Teachers ‘exhibit’ and share the products of their professional learning and both their learning and their expertise are highly valued for their contextual significance.

DT: And in terms of the sort of political factors, how do you feel the Australian Curriculum and the National standards for teachers have helped or hindered what you’re trying to do here?

Anne: I think the Australian Curriculum will be great in terms of um giving us the opportunity to look again at what we’re doing and because you’d have to be making adjustments anyhow^ . [Yeh] OK we’re going to be making the adjustments anyhow but we’re going to be making them with this particular approach in mind (meaning PBL). For us here I think that’s actually a good thing [a lever?]. Yeh

My earlier suspicion that Anne sees the implementation of the Australian Curriculum as an opportunity to reflect on what they are doing rather than as a threat to PBL pedagogy is confirmed.

Anne: ...In terms of the standards for teachers, in all honesty we haven’t really done very much with those... it’s been fine in terms of new teachers – we’ve had a very effective program here in getting people to their level of professional competence within 12 months because we’ve had a lot of – we’ve got a really very stable staff... we’ve actually taken a very explicit focus that within their 12 months we’ll get them through everything they need to so that if they haven’t got a job at the end of that time they can at least know they’ve got that behind them... I think it’s actually a really good thing [Yes?]. I think it’s really important that there’s on going learning so I think that requirement for very experienced teachers to recognize that they’ve got to have ongoing learning and that they’ve got to be meeting these, you know, levels of professional competence can only help.
This is a very ‘professional’ response to the standards in that Anne recognises an obligation to these beginning teachers to assist with their career progression. Compliance with the standards and the accreditation process for beginning teachers in this school has been facilitated by the stability of the staff guaranteeing a continuous mentoring process. Anne sees the future impact of professional standards on experienced teachers as being most important in its expectation of continuing professional learning.

*DT:* … expecting teachers to produce evidence in this research has been an interesting exercise

Anne: And I think it's a really important one because one of the challenges for the teachers is to get them to have that mindset that we have to be able to produce evidence of what we've done… It’s been traditional to think well the test results are evidence of whether I've taught a good lesson or taught a good unit or whatever but it's much more than that [Absolutely] And that's the shift that I think we’re in at the moment in terms of no, how do you know if a student's here and you want to get them to there, what evidence are you going to look for that you can say, yes, they’ve demonstrated that [Mm]. What’s it going to look like? And the same for your own learning then, what's it going to look like? In some ways it’s easy um because there are some obvious things (integrating technology). So that’s an easy one where they can say well I know I can use this and this and this in these particular ways um so people are generally becoming quite competent in that fairly quickly because there’s the end post.

Anne’s concept of ‘evidence’ of professional learning is much broader than simply looking at student results on tests, both standardized and in-house. She compares teacher learning to student learning in talking about the importance of adding value to an individual’s understanding measured through enacted practice, as evidence of learning. Following Sarah’s and Zoe’s maps of their learning experiences I draw out the connections to what Anne said about supporting professional learning at PBL High School.
Sarah’s Map: Sequences of Action

Support Networks
“Up on the web... and in our diocese”

School Leader
“The principal took a selection of staff out to do some professional development on what we learned over there to start training staff”

Other Teachers
“If you ask all the staff they’re not all on board with it. Not yet because they all haven’t had professional development

PBL Instructors
“They adjusted their instructions based on what we were doing... exemplified what good practice was”

Observation / Feedback / Discuss ideas
“A trip to America to do an in-service on project based learning”

Connected to other learning
“There were connections made with the work I had already done on the 5bD project and obviously my own teacher training with regards to inquiry learning”

It was a wonderful opportunity to network with different types of educational facilities as well as people”

PBL Instructors
“Critical friend... Positives were discussed first of all and then... change to improve your product”

Modeling it in the staff meetings... So each year we’re developing more and more projects”

When you’re used to doing chalk and talk you feel like you are in control... but the kids aren’t necessarily learning”

“Not just in your classroom but also running the school from top to bottom”

Accreditation process... it’s an imposition. I don’t have to be committed to that”

“(School based) appraisal... it’s a very affirming process”

“There’s so many goals that we are having to fulfill”

Other Teachers
“I’d have no problem with... my colleagues coming in to evaluate my lessons in regards of what I’m doing or how I’m leading

NSWIT Professional Standards

Explicit modeling
“It was looking at the whole approach not just in your classroom but also running the school from top to bottom”

Australian Curriculum
Prescribed content

Melbourne Declaration etc.
goals for 21st C learning

NAPLAN
Literacy data
Zoe’s Map of Sequences of Action

**Personal experience of school**
“When I was a student I tended to be in the higher classes and I didn’t have any exposure to any kids in the lower classes”

**PBL training**
“A 3-day PBL training that the school held for a few teachers... Learning different types of teaching methods... especially in developing students as independent learners”

**Learning in context**
“I’ve been able to come back and apply to the classroom and it’s had a big effect, a big impact on how the students learn”

**Other teachers**
“That’s helped to sort of model how I was going to teach that topic and make sure I’m addressing those areas”

**Australian Curriculum**

**University teacher**
“... was fantastic and she really set me up well for the new model of teaching through inquiry learning”

**Personal experience of school**
“I did have a bottom Year 9 class last year... certainly my perception of going into that class was that OK the kids are at this level so I teach them that level”

**Leader / Mentor**
“Sarah is very much into it as well... a lot of conversations with Sarah that’s how I’ve sort of started teaching... the principal and Sarah on board so much”

**Explicit modeling of PBL training**
“The way that it was taught was through us doing a project”

**Learning / work**
“I think it (PBL) certainly allows them to have the scope to push themselves... a little bit more because it is more open-ended”

**Australian Curriculum prescribed content**

**NSWIT Professional Standards**

**I’m attending some programming professional development... incorporating the new curriculum**

**Other teachers**
“All the new scheme teachers get together... and we just go through teaching strategies”

**“I think the best way to learn it is through doing it”**
Central to Anne’s approach to reforming practice at PBL High School has been the progressive ‘training’ of teachers in the pedagogical principles associated with project based learning, a scaffold for inquiry teaching and learning. Sarah and Zoe were both identified by Anne as having potential to be early adopters and so were amongst the first groups of teachers to receive the training; Sarah, as a middle manager, some five years ago when the approach was in the ‘pilot’ phase, and Zoe as one of the first of the group of new scheme teachers. While Anne articulates a clear understanding of how PBL is the centerpiece to which all other professional learning can be linked the relationship is not so clear for Sarah and Zoe. As Sarah says, “there’s so many goals that we are having to fulfill” when she speaks about improving literacy outcomes and embedding ICT as two examples. The external training of core groups of teachers has been followed up with a combination of practices including what might be called a train-the-trainer model but more importantly a system of teachers learning from each other through the sharing and modeling of successful PBL units appropriate to the context of this school. Anne clearly articulates the factors that she believes have been important in the successful adoption of PBL and the transformation of practice that has resulted. Anne’s process might be summarized thus:

1. The leaders enthusiasm and tangible support for the proposed innovation must be evident
2. Create regular, real time for teachers to explore and implement the innovation
3. Develop a core team of early adopters who have the potential to model success with the innovation
4. Start small with a pilot study of implementation
5. Collaboratively reflect on evidence of improved student engagement in learning and collaboratively engage in decision-making concerning a school-wide implementation of the innovation.

This process is heavily dependent on the building of a network of social relationships between people. Beginning with a small core group of teachers who then become leaders of other groups to work both within and across subject content areas.
The influence of the Australian Curriculum as an externally developed text, is mediated by Anne and Sarah's breadth and depth of experience with curriculum documents. Both of these leaders understand that while the AC may stipulate changes in content compared to the state based curriculum they have been working with, neither form of curriculum inhibits the adoption of project based, inquiry pedagogy. As they work to ensure compliance with the Australian Curriculum and its offshoot syllabuses in NSW, they are confident that it's just a programming exercise for accountability that will not present any barriers to the continuation of PBL as a school wide approach to pedagogy. As was the case at Suburban Sydney High School, the leaders ‘activation’ (D. E. Smith, 2005) of externally developed texts is critical to both the development of local texts and the coordination of people's actual doings.

The National Professional Standards for Teachers have had no impact as a coordinating text on the planning or otherwise of school-wide professional learning. Their only impact has been in terms of compliance for the accreditation of new scheme teachers. The potential for standards to assist teachers to plan for continuing professional learning in the future is recognized by both Anne and Sarah but Sarah is resentful of both the mandatory compliance aspect and the possibility of being judged by anyone other than her own colleagues in respect of her performance as either a teacher or a leader.

Of interest, in terms of textual coordination, is that the learning about PBL as recounted by these three teachers has been entirely through direct instruction from other people. It would seem that no texts about PBL pedagogy, academic research papers or other reference material has been consulted. This may, in fact not be the case but I can only relate what the teachers themselves chose to mention as important influences during the research conversations.
Working with a mentor

Sam is the DECNSW mentor who worked across multiple school campuses to support beginning teachers, Chris, Jeff and Nicole, with the process of accreditation against the NSWIT version of professional standards. My interview with Sam takes place on the balcony of a university café. We chose to meet at the café because it was a geographical midpoint for the two of us and while there is some background noise we are not interrupted and can speak freely.

DT: ...so how the mentoring came about.

Sam: Well for me personally, it was just an option that appeared on the DET job file [MmHm] um and the program had been running for ... a good eight years prior to that [MmHm]. So it was initiated when the institute standards were initiated in New South Wales... So usually with the mentoring program in government schools they’re attached to a couple of schools so there’s different categories of mentor. I’m attached to two schools and I basically structure my own day and my own week making sure that I’m quite even with, yeh, my school time across the two schools. In that sense, I guess I generate my own agenda^.

I notice that the recruitment process as far as Sam describes it, does not seem to involve any induction or professional learning for him before he takes up his role as a mentor in the schools.

Sam: ... and I have to build the relationships with each person individually and I think that’s been- that’s been the benefit of the program is you get the long-term relationship with each individual um to a greater or lesser extent depending on who they are and what they want out of you. My view of the mentoring is it’s not an imposed agenda (...) um I’m there to support so I take a view that the principal thing I’m there to do is support the person in the early stage of their career (...) [MmHm] and I try to get them to tell me what they would like from me. So some people like
Chris, he twigged quite early that I could like, help him practically in the classroom [MmHm] through team teaching or demonstrations... So I said well you can do more. We don’t have to just worry about talking about stuff or just doing the legislative requirements with respect to accreditation. So we were quite heavily into the team teaching approach where he’d say well can you show me how to do this and I’ll watch you and I’ll do the back up for the lesson and we did a lot of that [Mm]. That I think is the – the best model of mentoring when it’s like that^.

Sam’s pedagogical approach to mentoring is to take each of his mentees on an individual basis, assess their learning needs through discussion with them and develop a focus for what it is they wish to learn in the context of the school in which they are working. He then works collaboratively with the mentee to provide whatever support he can to facilitate the mentee’s learning. This facilitation takes a variety of forms and depends to a large extent, as Sam says, on the quality of the relationship he is able to build with the mentee. It also depends on the degree to which Sam understands the content of the mentee’s teaching subject and their level of readiness to enter into a relationship that might expose their practice to scrutiny even though Sam works hard to explain that this is not what the mentoring relationship is about.

Sam: Jeff was an industrial arts teacher so I can’t know how to teach his content. So I’ll do more just walking with him so shadowing him in the classroom and watching what he does and we’ll have some quite rich, informal conversations... there are cases where the principal may say look I need you to support this person more heavily. So there was a teacher who was on a program of improvement so it became a more intimate and regular ah type of support structure but I had to be careful that I didn’t somehow cross over into being a supervisor making () you know, definitive judgments about their [Mm] their capacity to teach. Because that would, for me, it would ruin the spirit of what mentoring is about.

In some cases, the mentee is so concerned with fulfilling the requirements for accreditation that the mentoring relationship remains bound by requirements of
meeting the professional standards, which was actually the DET's intended role for mentors such as Sam. He explains why this is sometimes the case in the following way:

Sam: ...a lot of the new teachers are concerned simply with the compliance issues, so I need to get my accreditation done, can you help me do the accreditation? So that becomes quite a monotonous cycle of sitting with them regularly and working through their evidence um shaping that so it suits the spirit of what that’s meant to be. Um that can sometimes generate some nice conversations but some are quite reluctant to have you interfere more directly in the classroom.

DT: And is that because of their preoccupation with the workload of the standards process, do you think?

Sam: I/teaching’s really busy- it’s really hectic [Mm] (.) I think in part it’s just the busyness of the work life and if there’s something extra you’re suggesting to them and it’s another, perhaps area they have to consider, they don’t really have time to do their work in a whole lot of classes and do their program, their marking, getting used to the systems (.) and to be-to be fair the two schools I’m in, I suspect and it’s an assumption on my part, the majority of teachers don’t actually perceive that there are issues they actually need to address. So a lot of them don’t buy into the idea that this is a good opportunity to just have a critical friend and engage in some reflection... it can be like a low key action type learning model [yep] they don’t buy into that because the tone of it being supervisory and this is about judgment, I think that still exists in a lot of – in the minds of a lot of them.

When the culture of the school is not one that supports critical reflection on practice it is difficult for Sam, working alone in the mentor role, to encourage new scheme teachers that this is an important and effective form of professional learning. Sam comments that it is difficult for him to make any attitudinal or structural changes on a larger scale within the schools because he doesn’t “feel like (he has) political capital in the school” and he sees this as “a limitation of the role”. By positioning himself in a central or
common room area when he is not working directly with a new scheme teacher, Sam has found ways to extend the influence of his role and his usefulness to other teachers.

Sam:... when I’m not working with someone I’ll sit in the public area [MmHm] because people will talk to you then. And they’ll be people from a wide range of experience levels or different positional levels in the school and they’ll ask me for advice. So: o, so that’s one way I’ve tried to sort of stretch um (.) the extent of my role [Mm]. So, so some practical examples of that are, are people asking me about the upper levels of accreditation and what do I need to do about that? Can you help me? Can you support me? Can we work together on you looking at some way of how I can actually facilitate myself gaining one of those upper levels of accreditation? So I will do that. Some will come to me and go, um I’m looking at applying for a job can you help me with my CV? Will you look at it? So there’ll be some nice discussions [MmHm] that are beyond really. I guess if I look at the policy that frames my role, I’m stretching it beyond that.

DT: Does anyone ever approach you any mentoring outside the framework of the standards?

Sam: Definitely!... I’d say that’s really informal though... a new head teacher in one of the schools who’ll/who will seek my advice regularly and we actually have a weekly time slot where we meet just for her to go over things that she’s concerned about being a new executive. So that’s completely separate [Mm] yeh, from the standards-based approach to early career teachers.

Sam models inquiry and critical reflection on practice by offering professional learning opportunities for teachers in their nominated areas of interest.

Sam: ... they wanted to do group work so I said how about we film it? I’ll teach a lesson, we’ll film it, we’ll show it to some of the other young teachers and they can use the standards to, you know, critique that lesson. So that was another really
structured way that I bought a lot of teachers into that system of reflection on learning [MmHm]. And that generated a cycle where some of them were happy to have their own lessons filmed and brought back and publicly viewed and coded against both the Quality Teaching Framework and the standards. But those things are just frameworks, you know, they’re frameworks that offer you a structure, they’re important but … what Chris and I did together, I see that as being much richer and deeper in terms of what you want out of a highly reflective practice.

We talk in some detail about the funding available to support new scheme teachers through the accreditation process depending on whether they are employed on a casual, temporary or permanent basis. According to Sam, these funding differences not only impinge on the likelihood of him having time with teachers for the kind of professional learning that goes beyond the process of accreditation but it also means that some teachers, particularly casuals, are in danger of not completing their accreditation. As Sam highlights this will have serious implications for schools in the future.

DT: And so there’s actually two tiers of support to beginning teachers going through accreditation. So if you are temporary for a number of years depending on the way the school chooses to view that support you could actually miss out quite badly.

Sam: Absolutely! And I think that’s something that I’m conscious of particularly this year because I suspect this program will wrap up this year^ [MmHm]. That’s my assumption only because of the other structural changes that are happening at the system level in the state. Um [Yeh] plus the arrival of the push for the national framework for teachers I think they’ll recontextualise it. So I’m trying to identify even the casual teachers who you really don’t get to see a lot because trying to match time with them when I’m across two schools and they may be there on Thursday and I don’t see them until the next Thursday [Mm] I’m trying to build in some structures to support them because their time ticks away in which they can actually meet the accreditation requirements… But they are a concern in terms of meeting the compliance um (.) yeh, and you meet some of them who are into their
last three months and they've not done it and they've worked in another school for 6 months and they could have done it there but they didn’t know what to do and the school didn’t guide them. So you do try and be really conscious of those people [Mm] and help them specifically through gaining that competency with the view that if we don’t have a casual pool of teachers who are competent then we don’t have casual teachers

In his concluding remarks toward the end of the interview, Sam raises some important suggestions about how he feels the effectiveness of the in-school mentor could be improved and also discusses the lack of consistency he perceives in the way in which the role has played out across schools.

Sam: it would be better personally, if I could be in one school- be the allocated mentor in one school [MmHm]. Have a significantly reduced teaching load because I think that would be one way I could/ I’d be happy to have a teaching load one class and go right, you come and watch me teach all of you at once [yes]. I can’t do that and it’s false to go can I borrow your class for a lesson and do one lesson [yes]... so if they do recontextualise mentoring my view would be you put a mentor in every school where it’s of high importance and they have a specific teaching load so they can generate that [Mm] action learning, reflective model that I think that’s where the greatest benefit is [MmHm]. And if teachers can buy into that then the rest of it takes care of itself because you do meet the compliance and you can demonstrate the standards

(I turn off the recorder and then Sam indicates that he has thought of something else he wants to say)

Sam: The um (.) when I meet temporary teachers that’ve been elsewhere and the schools they’ve been at have had mentors, often they will comment oh, the only thing we were required to do was attend a meeting in the afternoon or were told what to do but there wasn’t the hands-on support to do x,y or z [Mm]. So I’ve been really conscious that my role is to be quite hands-on... that’s why I want the one-on-
one model so I can build the relationship that works and they will see that it’s beneficial. So I’m conscious that mentors work differently in different school contexts but I have tried to be I guess, as eclectic as I can be in terms of how I’ve operated and really appeal to what each individual teacher wants me to do.

DT: ...you’ve got a sense that that’s not the case for every mentor in the way/

Sam: Oh, yeh. At the risk of sounding arrogant, I would say that I’m quite certain that’s not the case in all instances.

Chris, Jeff and Nicole’s maps represent the variety of learning experiences they each had as a result of Sam’s mentoring. Following these maps is the analysis of how their experiences connect with what Sam had to say about the mentor-mentee relationship and the way in which it can support professional learning.
Jeff’s Map of Sequences of Action

Observation / Feedback / Discuss Ideas
“Debriefing sort of took some of the pain out of what I was experiencing”

Mentor
“He was observing my lessons in particular one class that I was having trouble with...he was very good.”

“I was...in some of those dark places that teachers can be in when they’re having trouble”

Mentor
“He had lots of ideas that he brought from his experience”

“IT was just a matter of finding something that was engaging and entertaining to start the lesson off”

Mentor
“he helped me see I could... change that format if something else worked”

Success with implementation
“We’ve tried a Bingo type game...So that was a very successful activity”

Mentor
“He was very much like...do it the way you feel comfortable... before it was here’s an example... should probably follow”

“It was because I was trying to run the lessons straight after lunch in a very teacher centred manner”

Lack of continuity
“When I moved to the next school they didn’t want to sign off on something that was done at a different school”

Mentor
“I sort of need to pull back a bit and rationalize what’s important to do like where’s my actual focus... for professional development”

Learning / work
“With all of the professional learning that I’ve done, and I feel like I do more than others, that you need to ask for it or you don’t get it”

Learning
“Staff development days... a course with the teacher’s federation... online on the departments website... professional networks and forums”

“I’m more in tune with what’s going on than my peers on average...usually the stumbling block is staffing the subjects that students want to pick”

NSWIT Professional Standards

Other teachers
“I’m working with the high achievement team and that’s a cross KLA group... focusing on group work”

Australian Curriculum

Mentor
“Pick one of the teaching standards and focus on that for the year... It’s been an ongoing professional relationship”
Connecting Chris, Jeff and Nicole’s maps to the ‘leader’ of learning

While Sam understands that his role in schools is to assist beginning teachers with the accreditation process he does not allow his praxis to be constrained by this requirement. Sam’s actions in supporting the mentee’s to develop their classroom practice to better meet the needs of student learners, sometimes well beyond anything described in the professional standards, are indicative of his ethical commitment to transforming practice. Through discussion with each mentee, Sam identifies their individual learning needs and works collaboratively with them both in and outside the classroom to provide support to develop their pedagogical repertoire. He has control of his working day allowing him flexibility to schedule learning time with each of his mentee’s that fits in with their teaching work. Sam’s assertion that not all DECNSW appointed mentors take a praxis orientation to the mentor role are supported by Jeff’s comments about his experiences with other mentors in other schools. This may be attributable to the lack of professional learning opportunities provided to mentors in relation to how their role might best support transformative teacher learner rather than merely serve the interests of compliance as the dominant discourse (Kennedy, 2005). Sam and the three mentees all attribute the effectiveness of the mentoring experience to the strong personal and professional relationship established over time as they worked together. To a lesser extent subject content knowledge was also a contributing factor to transformative outcomes. For Nicole, the mentor-mentee relationship was established initially in the affective domain in response to difficulties she was experiencing with both students and staff. The emotional support she received from Sam helped her to work more effectively with both groups and allowed her to move with confidence towards relationships with her students, fellow teachers and with Sam that ultimately impacted to transform her practice. Sam sees his role as mentor being most important when support is not provided to the new scheme teacher by another ‘leader’ within the school or subject faculty.

As Nicole explains, Sam acted as both a filter and an interpreter of the text of the NSWIT standards to ensure that each mentee “really felt like (they’d) really authentically engaged in the standards” through a focus on the particular standards that related to
what they most wanted to learn in relation to their practice. It was Sam’s broader understanding of the possibilities for his role as mentor in the accreditation process that enabled him to see how to make the process of accreditation a journey of personalised learning for each mentee rather than a one-size-fits-all exercise in compliance with a list of technical capabilities. According to Sam however, his capacity to work in this transformative way depends very much on the combination of two important factors; the attitude of the mentee and the existing culture within the school. When the mentee sees the accreditation process as purely an exercise in compliance and there is not a culture of inquiry in relation to practice within the school Sam feels his ability to assist teachers to transform their practice is constrained. Sam sees the nature of his role as being across more than one school and not being a member of the executive or leadership team in either school as contributing to his lack of political power within the school and therefore his power to effect any meaningful transformation of personal attitudes or school culture towards an inquiry approach to professional learning. From the perspective of the mentee’s, the local enactment of the NSWIT standards served to create a two-tiered system within schools where teachers like them who were required to engage with accreditation were forced to take ongoing professional learning seriously while others could simply ignore it. They saw the implementation of the Australian Curriculum as an important opportunity to bring all teachers to the table to discuss what they were teaching and how they were teaching it. They expressed hope that this opportunity would not only support pedagogical change but would provide them with ‘a voice’ as practitioners who saw how learning might be rather than simply how it has always been done here.

Summary

The aim of the preceding map making was not to enable generalisations as if they could, by extension, be applied to all school contexts but rather to enable recognition of “the relations that connect one local site to others” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 29). That is, “to find and describe social processes that have generalizing effects...The general relevance of the inquiry comes, then, not from a claim that local settings are similar, but from the
capacity of the research to disclose features of ruling that operate across many local settings” (D. E. Smith, 2006, p. 18). The ‘informant specific maps’ (ISM) keep the representation of social relationships operating within a particular context open enough to allow for “the exploration of patterned behaviour of agents interacting locally according to their own principles, beliefs and interests” before attempting to determine the “common affordances and patterns of evolution” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 396) by making comparisons across maps. In that sense, the most significant ‘feature of ruling’ that I see across the maps from one informant to another as well as from one site to the next is the importance of those acting in the role of ‘professional learning architect’ (PLA). This PLA was not in every case, a person who occupied a formalised leadership or managerial role but they were essential to decisions and processes related to the “practice architectures” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 266) within the local context.

The PLAs in each site served as intermediaries in the interpretation of the externally formulated or ‘boss’ texts (Griffith & Smith, 2014, p. 12), related to curriculum and standards implicated in the relations of ruling. This determined the nature of their ‘activation’ (D. E. Smith & Turner, 2014, p. 5) or local enactment and created the pre-conditions that made transformative professional learning possible. In the case of PBL High School, the principal, Anne, primarily played this activating role. Strong support from teacher PLAs, such as Sarah who utilized their experience with several iterations of external curriculum change to recognize that these changes posed no threat to inquiry pedagogy for both teacher and student learning was important. At Suburban Sydney High School it was the principal’s understanding of externally developed texts as ‘guiding’ documents that focused her collaborative work with her executive team. Together they worked as a team of PLAs to translate these external documents into local texts suited to local conditions and local aspirations for learning of both students and teachers and provided the ‘practice architectures’ necessary for the support of transformative practice. Similarly, Sam acting as PLA across a number of school sites, recognised that the potential for professional standards to transform practice depended on their activation in such a way as to meet the contextual needs of individual teachers. K-6 Campus provides an important illustration of how dramatically the effect of these external texts can change according to their activation by those acting in the role of PLA.
within the school and the corresponding effect this can have on the way a teacher regards the purpose of professional learning. Across all sites, it was the capacity of those in PLA positions to activate externally developed texts such as the *NSWIT Professional Standards* and the *Australian Curriculum* that worked to minimize the negative aspects associated with compliance effects of the ‘relations of ruling’ inherent in these texts.

In each site we see teachers engaging with the moral and ethical dimensions of their existing teaching practice together with a combination of pedagogical practices that have contributed to their learning. Often the learning seems to occur in a ‘just in time’ or serendipitous way but in all cases it happens because the existing ‘practice architectures’ within each school site are supportive rather than constraining in regard to these opportunities. Importantly, in each site funding has been used to create time for teachers to engage with professional learning as an integral part of their ‘work’. In the case of learning with a mentor, direct funding from the DECNSW provides the mentor and the time for the new scheme teachers to work with him through their release from face to face teaching or for him to be in their classrooms through his release from face to face teaching. In the other three sites, funding is used to provide time for teachers to work in a variety of collaborative teams for the purpose of professional learning that has a clearly contextualized focus on the learning needs of their particular students. These highly contextualized teams offer teachers an opportunity to differentiate their professional learning. This differentiation may be achieved through consideration of teachers’ existing knowledge and experience with translating that knowledge into their practice; the combination of learning processes in which they engage, for example, inquiry, attendance at a course or workshop, professional reading; whether the learning occurs entirely within the context of their own school or learning together with teachers from a network of schools; and finally their choice of what they consider to be evidence that professional learning has occurred and made a difference to their teaching work.

The maps demonstrate that it is not just a matter of ensuring that isolated professional learning opportunities exhibit a set of characteristics that teachers say have led to learning that has transformed their practice. Rather, they demonstrate the importance of the relationship between these experiences, over which the teacher has some control.
in order to meet their learning needs as they arise. Additionally, the connections between these experiences, the other people involved in supporting the learning and the mediated influence of the external texts that constitute the relations of ruling that seek to govern teachers’ learning about their work are also made explicit. The maps do not provide however, a kind of formulaic blueprint for professional learning in that anyone might take one of these maps and follow it as a means of guaranteeing the same professional learning journey. As Smith reminds us “(t)he indexicality of a map is dialogic. The reader of the map is referring it to the actual terrain on which they’re travelling or plan to travel…It does not stand independently of the terrain it maps” (2005, p. 161). Thus, as with any map, one might end up at the same end point of having learned something about one’s work but the actual nature of the journey - the complex relationship between learning experiences, other people and the influence of governing texts - is dependent on the traveller.

In the following, and final chapter I will outline the broader theoretical and methodological contribution I believe this study makes to research concerning teacher professional learning and to institutional ethnography as a form of inquiry.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

“daily life evinces a ‘slippery’ elusory quality that evinces a not insignificant degree of resistance to the technologies of power, largely because its very presence is often not registered by the panoptic sweep of bureaucratic surveillance, indexing and control. The everyday remains an inchoate and heterodox mix of fluid, multiple and symbolically-dense practices and ways of feeling and knowing” (Gardiner, 2013, p. 199).

This study comprised two major analytic components: the dialogic analysis of the struggle between dominant discourses (Bakhtin, 1981a) of compliance and accountability and the subversive discourses related to new imaginings of how best to meet the needs of student learners surrounding teacher learning (See Ch 4); and the tracing of the social relations that supported transformative learning through an approach inspired by institutional ethnography (D. E. Smith, 2005)(See Ch 6). The two-fold analysis has revealed moments when the ‘slippery’ and ‘elusive’ conditions that surround teachers’ work can coalesce in spaces of resistance or possibility that might be called ‘everyday utopias’ (Gardiner, 2013), as described in Chapter 1 (see p. 23). What I have learned from this study I believe makes: (i) a theoretical contribution to understandings of teacher professional learning that has the potential to transform teaching work (Comber, 2006) and; (ii) a methodological contribution to the mode of inquiry known as institutional ethnography.

In this chapter I will outline how tracing the social relationships of experiences that teachers believe really helped them to learn about their work and the linking of these to teachers’ selected evidence contributes to a particular view of the professional teacher. This professional teacher is able to critically reflect on their practice and make judicious use of available learning opportunities to facilitate their own learning and transform their teaching work. They are able to demonstrate authentic (Newmann, 1996) evidence of transformed teaching work. The tracing of each teacher’s learning experiences is achieved by staying close to the teacher’s account through the dialogic analysis. This analysis enabled the production of the ‘informant specific maps’ (ISM),
which in turn supported the search for patterns across individual’s experiences. Attention is drawn to the possibly unintended consequences of the ‘boss’ texts (Griffith & Smith, 2014), of professional standards and a national curriculum, to shape 21st century learning for teachers. The necessity for the existence of ‘spaces of possibility’ or ‘everyday utopias’ in which transformative learning can continue to take place is one such unintended consequence. Finally, I suggest some implications, particularly in relation to the processes surrounding accreditation of teachers’ work against teacher professional standards, and some possibilities for further research.

**Linking learning to evidence**

Beginning from what previous research had identified as professional learning experiences believed to have the capacity for transforming teachers’ practices (Kennedy, 2005) and particularly where such learning is embedded in teachers’ work and lives (Opfer & Pedder, 2011) allowed me to identify a small sample of schools in which these kinds of experiences had been offered. Teachers within a number of these schools volunteered to participate in the study knowing that they would be required to talk about how they learned about their work but also to select and demonstrate evidence of how such learning had influenced their teaching work. It is this requirement for teacher selected and demonstrated evidence of learning that offers a unique perspective by comparison with other studies examining teacher professional learning.

Rather than collecting teachers’ perceptions about their learning through questionnaires or interviews the teachers in my study determined what learning they would speak about in relation to their teaching work. They also selected the form of evidence they would demonstrate that such learning had enabled them to grow or renew, what I have defined as ‘transform’, the practices that comprise their teaching work. In allowing teachers to select the evidence, I remained mindful of recent Australian studies that have highlighted the need for a broader consideration of what constitutes evidence of teacher professional learning (Doecke et al., 2008; Mayer et al., 2005). In the final step teachers reflected on the ‘fit’, as they were able to justify it, between the learning they had spoken about and their demonstrated evidence. My
study contributes to theoretical knowledge of the connection between teacher learning and transformed work or practice by demonstrating that teachers are able to provide rich and meaningful evidence that their teaching work has been transformed through certain complexes of professional learning activity. The intention of the study was not to compare evidence from one participant to another, nor to compare evidence to a pre-conceived standard. The evidence demonstrated was reflected upon by each participant in a dialogic interaction with me in order that the teacher might be the final arbiter of its veracity as an indicator of the learning they had spoken about. This process of critical reflection was, as commented on by several participants, a valued professional learning experience in itself. This reflective process resulted in teacher identification of the next step they would take in their professional learning.

Working from the standpoint of teachers as the 'knowers' (D. E. Smith, 1990, 2005, 2006) of their own work allowed teachers to demonstrate that they can work dialogically to reflect on the relationship between their teaching work and the learning needs of their students, use the knowledge gained from such reflection to determine what it is they want and need to learn more about, make use of complexes of professional learning activity that have the potential to transform teaching work, learn something about their teaching work, demonstrate evidence that their learning has transformed their practice, and critically reflect on such evidence. There is no evidence from this study to support that either guidance from the professional standards or the Australian Curriculum were critical to this process. It is important to note though, that the mentor who was instrumental to the learning of three of the teachers in this study may not have been available to them if the process of accreditation against professional standards was not mandatory for beginning teachers.

**Staying close**

Smith has always maintained that institutional ethnography is “a sociology, not just a methodology” and that as a methodology of inquiry, “the emphasis is always on research as discovery” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 2). As such, institutional ethnography does not have an accompanying set of standard methods. Nevertheless, institutional
ethnographers have sought over the last decade, to employ a range of systematic and trustworthy methods to uncover how the actual doings of people were being governed. Some use systematic coding procedures to identify major themes from interview data and even computer-assisted qualitative analysis to store and retrieve large chunks of text (DeVault & McCoy, 2005). The reporting of such analysis usually takes the form of small samples of a participant’s response taken from the interview transcription in isolation from the interviewers question and from the general flow of the interview. The speech sample serves as an illustration of the researcher’s interpretation. This method of analysis and reporting places some restrictions on the reader’s ability to interact dialogically with the text of the research in order to verify the researcher’s interpretation. It is this process of ‘editing’ or ‘truncating’ transcripts that Walby (2007) draws attention to as indicating the lack of reflexivity of some institutional ethnographers in regard to the effect they have on the ‘production’ of the subject. Working with the ideas of Bakhtin (1984), Frank (2005) would describe this as a tendency to portray our subject as fixed and finished rather than constantly in the process of becoming.

The dialogic, or Bakhtinian analysis, of the interview data I have attempted in this research contributes to methods that might be used in association with an institutional ethnography. Importantly, to me, it has allowed me to ‘produce’ the ‘subjects’ of my research as individuals involved in a process of continuous professional learning about their work, and learning about the relationship between their professional learning and work. In short, as individuals always in the process of becoming not as “something totally quantified, measured and defined to the last detail”, “hopelessly predetermined” or “finished off” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 58). The dialogic analysis responds to the assertion that “the account of language that institutional ethnography needs is one that recognizes it both as an activity and as coordinating those dimensions of activity that are ordinarily described as consciousness or subjectivity” (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 80). This form of analysis allows the reader to simultaneously follow the ‘development’ of the subject through their dialogic interaction with the researcher, and to dialogically interact with the analytical text that is produced, in a form of meta-analysis for the purpose of ensuring trustworthiness of the research analysis. The production of an
analytical text that traces the temporal unfolding of the interaction and includes the researchers questions and responses allows the reader to understand that “It’s never instances, it’s always processes and coordination. It’s all these little hooks. To make sense of it, you have to understand not just the speech of the moment but what it’s hooked into” (DeVault & McCoy, 2005, p. 40). Working with Bakhtin’s distinction between speech genres and texts that are written (Bakhtin, 1986), the dialogic analysis allows an institutional ethnographer to trace the ways in which language is coordinating people’s actions “on interindividual territory anchored in a shared, experiential world” as well as those “anchored in texts” (D. E. Smith, 2006, p. 95).

The way in which I have constructed ‘maps’ of the social relations governing each teacher’s doings in relation to their professional learning represents the second methodological contribution of this study. The dialogic analysis made apparent the extent of variation in teachers’ learning about their work and it also revealed the uneven influence of extralocally produced governing texts on both the locally produced texts and the ‘doings’ of individual teachers. As such, it was difficult to imagine that taking ‘schooling’ in general, or even each school context as the institutional focus would allow for the production of a single map to represent the social relations governing teachers’ learning. Rather, I have taken each individual teacher informant as the focus in order to prepare informant specific maps (ISM). These ISM allow the variation in both the teacher’s learning experiences and the social relations that supported such experiences to be made apparent. Each ISM was then compared to the account of ruling relations given by the informant-identified ‘professional learning architect’ (PLA) in each local context. As with the dialogic analysis of the interview transcripts, this approach to the maps reflects my desire to ‘stay close’ to the participants as individuals and to re-present, in a succinct way, the uniqueness of each of their complex learning experiences and how it was coordinated. From these unique maps, we can however, begin to observe some broad patterns in relation to the coordination of teacher professional learning both within a given context and from one context to another. The presence of one or more PLA in each context is one such commonality. The pedagogical orientation of the school as an institution where learning for teachers and students is closely aligned and supported through a network of
relationships that allow for differentiation in order to meet a variety of learning needs is another important commonality.

‘Boss’ texts and teacher learning in the 21st century

This study sought to find out something about the ways in which the ‘boss’ texts (Griffith & Smith, 2014, p. 12) of education, such as professional standards and curriculum documents, acted to shape or have ongoing potential to shape the learning and work of teachers. Teachers in this study demonstrated that when they were focused on their work in close relationship to the learning needs of their students they did not require a set of professional standards to guide their professional learning. What did guide teachers’ learning however, was more likely to be an aspect of their work that they had ‘problemetised’ in the sense that they were willing to make ‘unfamiliar’ that which is usually taken for granted (Heller, 1984). This resulted in a focus for their learning that was quite specific and that focus often extended over a number of years, albeit as an evolving concept.

The early career or ‘graduate’ (AITSL, 2012d) teachers, obliged to engage with the standards and accreditation, commented on the extensive demands, in terms of time and energy, required to meet the requirements of accreditation against the standards. For Chris, accreditation against the standards was achieved with the assistance of a mentor but essentially he was working to gather evidence about his teaching work as an individual in isolation from his fellow practitioners. The standards are also intended to serve as a guide for teachers’ continuing professional learning in order that they might be individually accredited at higher levels. For Chris however, his ‘best’ learning and the rich evidence he produced in association with that learning, was achieved in professional learning relationships with other teachers and his mentor. Chris also drew attention to the difficulties he was experiencing in meeting the maintenance of accreditation requirement that half of the hours spent on professional learning must come from accredited providers and how for him, this contradicted his sense of learner-centred pedagogy. By way of contrast, Nicole’s evidence for the purpose of this study was concise and limited in its focus. It’s production seemed to have been influenced by a
‘behaviour heavy’ and ‘reductive’ (Bloomfield, 2006; Connell, 2009; Ryan & Bourke, 2013) list of descriptions related to ‘know students...’ (AITSL, 2012d). It appeared more like evidence of learning about how to prepare and present ‘evidence’ in accordance with the requirements of accreditation against a particular dot point of the professional standards. Even though her experience of the accreditation process was made positive and useful by the engagement with her mentor, in combination with her knowledge of the “KPI way” of the corporate world it may be that working with the standards restricted her appreciation of what might serve as evidence of transformed teaching work. The other three, standards-accredited teachers showed no signs that the standards and its approach to evidence had affected their selection for the purposes of this study. It may be that the ‘double dose’ of neoliberal accountability in Nicole’s work experience in the corporate world prior to coming to teaching has narrowed her view of what might be considered as evidence of her professional learning.

The beginning teachers in this study were fortunate to have worked with a mentor whose role it was to activate the governing texts associated with standards and accreditation. In doing so the mentor mitigated, for these teachers, the sense of evidence for ‘no one’, as written by Lewis Carroll regarding Alice’s trial in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, and assisted them, through a dialogic interaction, to produce evidence that met the needs of the texts, as he had activated them, in ways that made the connection to their current practice more meaningful. The perception of evidence for no one may contribute to the ‘standardising’ rather than ‘differentiating’ effects on teacher learning in that such evidence becomes generic in content and form. As such, the process of evidence production for the purposes of accreditation against standards would fail to focus on teachers as individuals with individual learning needs. The accreditation process in its current form directs all teachers to produce evidence they have all learned about items from the same standards list and that the learning of each of these items was not only significant to an individual teacher but was equally significant to all teachers. It would be very difficult for an individual teacher to concentrate on deep and extended learning with a particular focus and still meet the current evidence requirements for maintenance of accreditation against the standards. A requirement for teachers to set professional learning goals against a plethora of externally determined
priorities, as presented in the standards (AITSL, 2012c), and to produce evidence of learning aligned with these goals in five-yearly cycles (AITSL, 2012e) may mitigate against learning that is focused on the real needs of students and that is sufficiently ‘deep’ to ensure transformation of the teacher’s work.

It has been argued that the standards give teachers a ‘common language’ (Clinton, Pinchas, et al., 2014) with which to talk about their practice and their professional learning. The ‘common language’ of the standards, formulated, as it is, externally to the contextualised ‘doings’ of teachers’ daily work (D. E. Smith, 2005) is however, just one of many that might be used to describe teachers’ work and learning. From a dialogic perspective that views meaning as open and contested, constructed in the space between two speakers or between reader and text the very notion of a ‘common language’, or ‘unitary language’ is problematic (Bakhtin, 1981a; D. E. Smith, 2005; Voloshinov, 1973). Thus, while teachers may share certain features of a ‘professional’ language, meaning making remains a dialogic process. Without drifting too far into an analysis of how such a ‘unitary language’ arises, for the purposes of transformative teacher learning it is important to keep in mind the connection between the political development of such ‘common’ or ‘one-dimensional’ language through narrow definitions of the ‘concept’, in this case teachers’ work, that ensure arrival at a ‘false-concreteness’ that is self-validating (Marcuse, 1991, pp. 85-95). In the case of professional standards the narrow definition of the concept ‘teachers’ work’, upon which the standards are formulated, has been previously discussed (See p. 17). When the usefulness of standards are assessed through mechanisms that presuppose a shared understanding amongst teachers of the meaning of the standards statements then they risk becoming self-validating because any alternative mode of thought has already been excluded. As has been shown by research that consulted teachers through providing them with the opportunity to make an extended response (Mayer et al., 2005; Savage et al., 2014), what teachers valued was the process with which they engaged in order to arrive at a shared understanding of the meaning of any given standard. Opportunities to take the centralizing discourse of the standards, which Bakhtin (1981a) would argue is necessary for a cohesive society, and ‘translate’ them into locally appropriate and dialogically constructed understandings of ‘teachers’ contextualised work’ seems to be
an important component of the professional learning that might be supported by the standards.

At the time of this study, few schools had fully engaged with the impending implementation for all teachers of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2012d; BOSTES, 2015b) or the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012e). We have seen in the case of *K-6 Campus* (p.169), that when standards, interpreted by one person or even a small team acting unilaterally, are allowed to ‘govern’ the generation of local texts that coordinate professional learning it can result in a pedagogy for teacher learning that is narrow in content focus, didactic in its delivery and generative of additional accountability practices. Thus, it is clear that the standards themselves and processes associated with accreditation against standards can play out in multiple and possibly unintended ways depending on how these texts are activated in the local context. In certain forms, accreditation processes have the potential to distract teachers from their real work, defined in its fullest sense (Comber, 2006; D. E. Smith, 2005), and their professional learning about such work.

In relation to the use of the standards to guide professional learning for accreditation at higher levels of accomplishment, I draw on the examples of *Suburban Sydney High School* (p. 182) and *PBL School* (p. 200) to make some comments about what has been termed “leadership as pedagogy and pedagogy as leadership” (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 19). In the case of these two schools, leadership is not about surveillance, a criticism that has been leveled at the indicators of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2012c) particularly those for leadership as provided in the higher levels (Bloomfield, 2006; Ryan & Bourke, 2013). It’s about a well-developed pedagogy of learning that is for students and teachers working and learning together. It’s purposefully focused on the learning needs of the students within the context of each school’s particular setting. In the cases of *Suburban Sydney High School* and *PBL High School* teachers are supported, including through adequate time allowance, to pursue their learning needs in alignment with the learning needs of their students. The ‘professional learning architects’ (PLA), especially the principals but also the teacher
PLA, have a clear vision of how all the individuated, differentiated, inquiry-based, externally provided bits of professional learning for the teachers within the school fit into the overall plan of providing learning experiences that meet the needs of the students. The PLA knows her/his teacher learners, because she/he takes the time to have ‘learning’ conversations with each teacher, in the way we expect the classroom teacher to know their student learners, and ensures that they have opportunities to learn along a continuum. This continuum provides for development of ‘technical’ skills as well as for considerations of ‘knowledge’. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to professional learning in these schools and thus, no ‘teaching to the middle’. A differentiated approach to teacher learning ensures that the ‘quality’ teachers, those who have demonstrated the capacity to transform their practice to better meet the learning needs of their students, continue to grow and renew their practice in different ways but nevertheless simultaneously, with those teachers who might be considered as less critical of their practice in certain areas. The ‘quality’ teachers act as role models, mentors and some times teachers for other teachers but are not limited to surveillance and supervision of their colleagues. These two schools are “saturated in pedagogies” (Wrigley et al., 2012, p. 98). The contrast is stark between these two schools and K-6 Campus during the period of leadership in which the ‘boss’ text of professional standards influenced the production of local texts designed to regulate the forms of professional learning available to teachers and the accountability structures related to ‘hours spent’ rather than the previous, and later reinstated, focus on transformative learning.

Teaching work as an ‘everyday utopia’

Really knowing that they had learned something about their work began for each of the teachers in this study as a response to the learning needs of the students in front of them at a particular time in a particular learning environment. None of the teachers ascribed their learning experience to either the professional standards or the impending implementation of the Australian Curriculum. In each case, the learning experience that had transformed their teaching work and for which they were able to provide evidence had occurred in another ‘space of possibility’ (Connell, 2013a; Cooper,
2013; Gardiner, 2013; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). For the teachers who had recently been involved in the accreditation process, this space occurred between, alongside or after their work on accreditation against the standards. For those teachers not required to be accredited against the standards the ‘space’ had no intersection with the standards. The ‘space’ however, existed because of the local social relationships that coordinated each teacher’s ‘actual doings’ (D. E. Smith, 2005). Griffith and Smith (2014) assert that bringing these ‘spaces’ or ‘gaps’ into view is precisely the work of institutional ethnography at “the front line” (pp. 339-340) of, in this case, teachers’ work.

These ‘spaces of possibility’ for transformative professional learning are signifiers of the maneuverability (D. E. Smith, 2005) that still existed during this time preceding mandatory accreditation of all teachers. Half of the teachers in this study were compelled to engage with what they identified as the time-and-energy-consuming documentation of ‘evidence’ for the purposes of accreditation against standards. Still, all teachers in the study were able to turn their energy to engaging with their teaching work as if they were creating a work of art-alive to the imaginative, sensual and affective possibilities (Gardiner, 2013, pp. 146-147) of interactions with their students. This is apparent in the learning teachers spoke about, in the evidence of learning they were able to demonstrate and in the way in which their learning was coordinated at a local level. The spaces in which this work happened are characteristic of ‘everyday utopias’ in their containment of both “exercises of domination”, in terms of hegemonic accountability practices such as those related to accreditation against standards, and activities that represent “‘utopic’ resistances to it” (Gardiner, 2006, p. 27). They represent moments in which reflection has brought teachers insight into the utopian possibilities of how they might transform their everyday teaching work to better meet the needs of their students. The everyday utopias created by these teachers are not the heterotopias of Foucault (see discussion in Chapter 1, p. 24) in that they do not represent alternative, self-contained forms of schooling separate from the mainstream. Rather, they exist within the dominant practices of schooling “in a state of ‘metastable equilibrium’ and are prone to constant changes” (Gardiner, 2013, p. 210). These changes arise as changes occur in the learning needs of teachers and their students, in the knowledge that develops out of a dialectical interaction between specialized
knowledge and knowledge of the everyday, and in the social relationships that support the development of knowledge. In that sense, they represent transient moments in which a combination of conditions coalesce in such a way as to allow teachers the ‘space’ in which to critique and transform their practice.

These spaces for transformative professional learning existed at a time when teacher professional learning was still only partially governed by the ‘boss’ texts of *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2012d) and the *Australian Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012e). It remains to be seen how mandatory accreditation and the maintenance of accreditation against the standards for all teachers will affect the prevalence and viability of such spaces.

Moving forward productively on teacher professional learning and its capacity to transform teaching work hinges on the future influence of these ‘boss’ texts within a school’s local context. If ‘professional learning architects’ within schools focus their efforts on developing a pedagogical approach that supports the learning of students and teachers in a mutually beneficial arrangement then professional learning opportunities for teachers can be contextualised and focused on their learning needs in relation to the learning of their students. Such an approach would require the professional standards to be activated within schools in a way that prevented them becoming an obligation enforced by political and economic forces, that is, “routinised... everydayness” (Lefebvre & Regulier, 1999, p. 8), stifling the sort of creativity demonstrated by teachers in this study that produced spaces for transformative learning. This form of pedagogy would also require the flexibility for teachers to set goals for their professional learning that responded to their context rather than just ‘covering’ standards. It would require flexibility to provide for an extended focus over time, possibly longer than five years, on learning goals that were closely related in content and therefore, not capable of being ‘backward mapped’ (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) to many of the standards in a given five-year period. Transformative professional learning is vulnerable to negative impacts of an inflexible accreditation process in that increasing the demands on teachers’ time and energy through implementation of a restrictive system of maintenance of accreditation
against standards may decrease the capacity of schools and teachers to create the ‘everyday utopias’ in which transformative professional learning has been occurring.

**Future research**

Of ongoing interest will be the influence that ‘boss’ texts, such as professional standards, accreditation frameworks and national curriculum, have on the locally produced texts that govern the coordination of teachers’ work and their professional learning. As Smith points out it is “a recognition of just how texts and textual systems coordinate at a distance and across time” that allow us to understand beyond people’s local doings “into the organization of powers generated in the ruling relations” (2005, p. 181). What will be the regulatory hierarchy of texts, or ‘intertextual hierarchy’ as Smith calls it (2006, p66)? How will the ‘official’ texts be activated and what effect will they have on the production of local texts? Critical evaluation of the influence of these texts over time should inform policy evolution in such a way as to improve, rather than inhibit learning outcomes for teachers and their students.

Analysis of the link between transformative learning and demonstrated evidence of such learning across a greater variety of teachers’ experiences might be used to flesh out our imagining of how teacher professional learning is supported. Providing teachers with opportunities to critically reflect on their learning through ‘authentic’ (Newmann, 1996) evidence they select, including consultation with their students as the ‘consequential stakeholders’ (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009, p. 70), in order to demonstrate the impact of such learning acknowledges the ‘professional’. It also aligns with commonly held aspirations for learning in the 21st century, particularly as they pertain to the understanding that “what is relevant is subject to ongoing change”, is “about promoting human potential to solve problems, be productive, creative, think deeply about issues and care for others” (Hill, 2010), and is both “deep” and “future-focused” (Fullan & Langworthy, 2013).
Finally

My research project has reached a point whereby this thesis documents the progress I have made thus far and describes something of the learning process that has transformed my work as a researcher and as a facilitator of teacher professional learning opportunities. As a researcher, I have developed a far greater understanding of how my actions in every moment of the research activity affect what can be claimed as knowledge, albeit partial and incomplete. In producing this study, I have had the opportunity to work and learn with teachers whose creativity and imagination is inspired by their dedication to the learning of their students. Their professionalism is evident in their ‘doings’ as they commit energy and imagination to creating ‘everyday utopias’ in the daily conduct of their teaching work. I’m left however, with the overwhelming sense that the dialogic process of learning with teachers about their work is, for me, very far from “finished off” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 58).
References


Poole, B. (2003). From phenomenology to dialogue: Max Scheler's phenomenological tradition and Mikhail Bakhtin's development from 'Toward a philosophy of the act' to his study of Dostoevsky. In M. Gardiner (Ed.), Mikhail Bakhtin (Vol. II). London: Sage

QSRLS. (2001). Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study submitted to Education Queensland by the School of Education, University of Queensland. Retrieved from Brisbane:


Wennas-Brante, E. (2013). 'I don't know what it is to be able to read': how students with dyslexia experience their reading impairment. *Support for learning, 28*(2), 79-86.


Appendices
Appendix 1: Ethics Approval letter (University of Sydney)

RESEARCH INTEGRITY
Human Research Ethics Committee
Web: http://sydney.edu.au/ethics/
Email: hr.ethics@sydney.edu.au
Address for all correspondence:
Level 6, Jane French Russell Building - G02
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Ref: [MF/FP]
15 June 2012

A/Prof Debra Hayes
Faculty of Education and Social Work
A35.916
The University of Sydney
Email: deb.hayes@sydney.edu.au

Dear A/Prof Hayes,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 15 June 2012 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

I am pleased to inform you that with the matters now addressed your protocol entitled “21st Century learning: Not just for students, for teachers too!” has been approved.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Protocol No.: 14900
Approval Date: 15 June 2012
First Annual Report Due: 30 June 2013

Authorised Personnel:
A/Prof Debra Hayes
Dr Susan Groundwater-Smith
Ms Debra Talbot

Documents Approved:

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<td>Version 1</td>
<td>7 May 2012</td>
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<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>Version 1</td>
<td>7 May 2012</td>
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<td>Participant Invitation</td>
<td>Version 1</td>
<td>12 June 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Information Statement</td>
<td>Version 2</td>
<td>12 June 2012</td>
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HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Condition(s) of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.

Manager Human Ethics
Dr Margaret Fawcett
T: +61 2 9351 8176
E: margaret.fawcett@sydney.edu.au

Human Ethics Secretariat
Ms Karen Green
T: +61 2 9351 8177 E: karen.green@sydney.edu.au
Mr Patrick Engleman
T: +61 2 9351 8172 E: patrick.Engleman@sydney.edu.au
Mr Kevin Rehman
T: +61 2 9351 8173 E: kate.rehman@sydney.edu.au
All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

Any changes to the protocol including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC by submitting a Modification Form before the research project can proceed.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.

2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Margaret Faedo
Manager, Human Ethics
On behalf of the HREC

cc: Debra Talbot
dwf655@unil.sydney.edu.au

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Monday, 25 March 2013

Assoc Prof Debra Hayes
Cultural Diversity Training, Faculty of Education & Social Work
Email: deb.hayes@sydney.edu.au

Dear Debra,

Your request to modify the above project submitted on 25 February 2013 was considered by the Executive of the Human Research Ethics Committee at its meeting on 20 March 2013.

The Committee had no ethical objections to the modification/s and has approved the project to proceed.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2012/2187
Project Title: 21st century learning: Not just for students, for teachers too!

Approved Documents:

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Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Stephen Assinder
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
Appendix 2: Ethics Approval letter (DECNSW)

Ms Debra Talbot
14 Greendale St
GREENWICH NSW 2065

Dear Ms Talbot

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in New South Wales government schools entitled 21st century learning: Not just for students, for teachers too. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.**

This approval will remain valid until 30/06/2013.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Approval expires</th>
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<tr>
<td>Debra Maree Talbot</td>
<td>30/06/2013</td>
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I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in New South Wales government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school’s convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

Yours sincerely

Bill Tomlin
Acting Senior Manager
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation
2./ August 2012
Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form

21st century learning: Not just for students, for teachers too!

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is the study about?
You are invited to participate in a study which seeks to understand, from the teachers’ perspective, their experiences of teaching as work and how they learn about that work during a period of changes related to both teachers’ working conditions and the curriculum.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Debra Talbot and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Debra Hayes.

(3) What does the study involve?
- 2-3 audio-taped research conversations (semi-structured interviews) each of approximately one hour duration and related to your experiences of professional learning and your teaching work. The interviews will take place at your school at a time of mutual convenience. You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.
- The selection of evidence by you of how your professional learning has influenced your classroom practice. The form of this evidence will be negotiated between you and the researcher and may include lesson observation.
- The co-construction of a narrative to describe your experiences of professional learning based on the interview transcripts. A draft narrative will be written by the researcher and discussed with you at a follow-up interview. You and the researcher will work together to edit the narrative into its final form.

(4) How much time will the study take?
The total time for the study is estimated to be between three and five hours, depending on your level of involvement. The interviews will take 2-3 hours. The evidence component may take a further 1-2 hours depending on how you choose to address this part of the study.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?
Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney, your school or place of employment.

21st Century Learning: Not just for students, for teachers too!
Version 2 12 June 2012
(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

It is hoped that the process of talking about and reflecting on your experiences of professional learning and their relationship to your teaching work will enhance your understanding of yourself as a learner and further develop your critical capacity for choosing professional learning opportunities that are appropriate not only for your learning but also for the learning of your students.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

You are at liberty to discuss your involvement in this study.

(9) What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, Debra Talbot will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Associate Professor Debra Hayes on 9351 6389 or deb.hayes@sydney.edu.au.

(10) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep.
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ..................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: 21st century learning: Not just for students, for teachers too!

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher(s).

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

21st century learning: Not just for students, for teachers too!

Version 1 7 May 2012
7. I consent to:
   - Audio-recording of interviews  YES ☐ NO ☐
   - Co-construction of my personal narrative YES ☐ NO ☐
   - Selection of evidence of my professional learning YES ☐ NO ☐
   - Receiving feedback YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option
Address: __________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
Email: ____________________________________________

...........................................................................

Signature

...........................................................................

Please PRINT name

...........................................................................

Date

21st century learning: Not just for students, for teachers too!
Version 1 7 May 2012
Appendix 4: Choosing evidence- notes for Lucy

In talking about the principles of Reggio Emilia, you said:

“So first of all it’s the image of the child. I learned, I can actually articulate the image of the child for me is that they bring great wealth of knowledge to the experience and to use those experiences to direct their learning.”

“I’m just going to brainstorm what their interests are… from the outset I didn’t want it to be flowery… I tried to come back and tune-in and listen to their interests and try to structure a curriculum that was meeting that but also accountable”

“they wanted- they asked to create a dance… They were coordinating the dance, they were showing signs of you know different leadership roles in the group, timetabling their practises outside and just those life-long skills, cooperative, social skills from where I came from before I wouldn’t have factored into programming. But what came out of me listening to them and then what we did was that kids who didn’t want to write I took photos, videos of the dance they then wrote about it. So I found other-by listening in, by responding to them but also being accountable to where I needed to go it was just a huge, a huge learning curve.”

“the learning was listening to the students.”

“they really pushed the fact that you can’t just take this from here and put it where you are [right]. What you’re seeing here are the principles of our philosophy and they were really big on um how can you apply these principles in your setting. “

“We had sixty year fives in one room yesterday and it was a tight fit but the activity was from a real-life experience on camp. They were engaged. The quality of work we got out of 50 minutes(.) [Mm] You’d be flat out getting that at the end of a 10 week [yes]. And I went home thinking this is what we/ and it was just a reminder. So I suppose that
learning/ that initial learning of stopping and listening, listening to where they’ve come from and not just saying that we’re listening but how, what does that look like?”

You might choose to demonstrate evidence of your learning associated with

1. listening to the students
2. formulating a project based on students’ interest
3. how you have adapted the principles of Reggio Emilia to suit your classroom context
Appendix 5: Reflective interview guide for Lucy

In the first conversation we had about your professional learning you spoke about your experiences related to Reggio Emilia and listening to the students. For the evidence of your learning you chose to invite me to observe a lesson with your Year 5 class related to National Reconciliation Week.

How well do you think the session I observed fitted with what you said you had learned?

• What worked well? What didn’t go so well?
• How did you decide on the subject and form of the evidence?
• Was there anything else you would have liked to be able to demonstrate?

1. Do you have any comments you would like to make about the processes/conversations we have shared in the course of this research?

2. If you had to identify 3 key features of professional learning that works for you what would you choose?
Appendix 6: Interview Guide – PL leader/facilitator

I wanted to talk with you because the participant interview is very open and dependent on what the *participant* wants to talk about and so there have been times when I have felt that we have not had a chance to discuss some of the details surrounding the rationale, the structures and support for the form of professional learning they have experienced. I’m hoping that you can fill in some of that detail.

Q1 Participants have spoken about their significant learning opportunity and have mentioned the involvement of significant others within the school in such learning. Could you talk about some of the factors that were important to the organization, initiation and sustainability of professional learning in recent times?

**Practice architectures**

“an individual person’s praxis is shaped and formed by ‘practice architectures’ that constitute mediating preconditions for practice:

(1) cultural–discursive preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘thinking’ and ‘saying’ that orient and justify practices;

(2) material–economic preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘doing’ of the practice; and

(3) social–political preconditions, which shape and give content to the ‘relatings’ involved in the practice.

These practice architectures are the densely interwoven patterns of saying, doing and relating that enable and constrain each new interaction, giving familiar practices their characteristic shapes.” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 466)