Chapter 7
Case Study School 2

Introduction

Case Study School 2 provided seven teacher respondents, a student focus group discussion and documentation. The Principal of this school also shared an anonymous evaluation report that was particularly beneficial in placing current practices into the context of this research.

Teacher Surveys

Teacher 2A - *Never evaluated and critical of school practices*

Teacher 2A was a 51-55 year old permanent part time female classroom teacher who had been teaching for 31-35 years, 6-10 years of those at this school. She had completed some leadership institute training, but this was not reflected in her current position in the school.

Evaluation

This teacher had never been evaluated. Whilst she noted having acted as an evaluator, there was no additional information to expand on this.

Despite never having been the subject of evaluation, Teacher 2A had very negative opinions, strongly agreeing with propositions that evaluation reinforced power relationships, fulfilled only bureaucratic school functions, and failed to positively affect student outcomes. She also strongly felt that evaluation was owned by the administration not teachers, was closed to staff input, and failed to support school objectives. Her emotional responses were anger, defensiveness, resentfulness, fear, and bewilderment.

Teacher 2A failed to identify any positives in evaluation. She felt that it reinforced the hierarchy, and failed to benefit either teacher professionalism or student learning. In the absence of personal experience, this teacher may be relying on second hand reports from her peers who have undergone, and failed to achieve any benefit from, evaluation.

Professional Development Motivation & Selection

This teacher reported a high level of professional development participation with 10 days each of both personally initiated and school sponsored professional development, possibly associated with the reported leadership training. She enthusiastically welcomed professional development as a refreshing part of modern practice but also admitted that it was a good break

from class, and that professional development was something done to, rather than for, her. She set her own objectives based on personal consideration of her needs, and these were submitted to the professional development officer for approval. Teacher 2A strongly denied that the school or faculty developed professional development objectives, and that these were reconciled for efficiency and economy. Whilst she accepted advice from her supervisor and the professional development officer, this teacher primarily waited for interesting options to arise, and then sought activities that were likely to be fun. Nonetheless, she also strongly denied seeking easy options that would avoid maximum classes, and meet her contractual requirements with the least amount of effort.

Professional Development Outcomes

Teacher 2A's pedagogy had improved in the areas of classroom management and instructional techniques, and personal communication skills. These were not reported in any way. Furthermore, this teacher strongly felt that professional development was something that occurred in isolation, and that evaluation documentation listed activities alone. Her supervisor did not discuss professional development outcomes, and neither the professional development officer, nor the school, followed up to determine the impact of professional development on teacher practices and student learning. Interestingly, whilst Teacher 2A saw professional development as failing to contribute to organisational change, she still accepted that it made her feel a life long learner as part of an educational community.

School Professional Development Practices

This teacher strongly disagreed that professional development in her school was a token gesture. However, this was the only positive point she was able to make about professional development. It was inefficient and unresponsive, was not a key input to the evaluation helping professional enhancement, and lacked the mix of learning that would enable a teacher to feel like a developing professional engaging positively with change.

The types of professional development included visiting speakers and workshops, and attendance at external training. However, professional development lacked both internal mentoring and reflection opportunities, as well as the broad range of activities necessary for teachers' individual development. Whole school events were boring fanfares that lacked stimulation and direction, and took teachers away from the real business of teaching for the purposes of hierarchical self- promotion.

School & Individual Perceptions & Aspirations

Teacher 2A felt that her school very actively encouraged her to adopt new initiatives in the classroom, regularly analysed good teaching and supported dialogue between teachers. However, the school was also clique-ridden, and lacked a truly collaborative culture where failure could be shared. The school did not support, or reward, teachers for their worth regardless of seniority, had not mobilized this teacher as an effective agent of change, and failed to encourage teachers to demonstrate their worth in various ways.

Whilst this teacher might have appeared negative about her school, she retained a very positive personal identity and aspirations. Teacher 2A set high personal expectations, and asserted strongly that she was pupil centred, collaborative, and open to new teaching approaches and change. She very much sought to increase collegial interaction to the level where failures, as well as success, could be shared. Teacher 2A wanted formative evaluation of her teaching to be separated from institutional appraisal, and for the professional development system to be more responsive to her teaching needs.

Comments on Teacher 2A

Teacher 2A appeared to be marginalised by change and the absence of any mechanism to reinforce and recognise her good work as a classroom teacher. She seemed to be turning outside of the school for her own professional needs, and possibly was seeking satisfaction from that as against some of the developments within the school. If the changes in question were curriculum reforms underway in Tasmania at the time, then Teacher 2A may not have wholly appreciated the process, and felt that the training associated with reform was more directed to superficialities than actual classroom teaching. If this marginalisation had occurred, then as a middle aged part time female, Teacher 2A may also have felt somewhat isolated and this could be a source of her concerns regarding evaluation, as well as some of her professional development responses. In the case of the latter, her slightly contradictory responses may have resulted from identifying management shortfalls whilst trying to respond to their direction in her school professional development activities. Meanwhile, outside of school, she was serving her own professional needs through other learning.

Despite the negative responses to school issues, the strong personal identity and aspirations responses of Teacher 2A might make her a supporter of reflective professional evaluation. However, her suspicion of the school and its current evaluation practices suggest that the introduction of a new professional evaluation process would have to take place outside of the

existing hierarchical structure. An additional problem could also arise if the self-perceptions were inaccurate. In this case, open and objective reflection could reveal delusions about Teacher 2A's true capabilities, and she might not wish to engage them at this stage of her career.

Teacher 2B - *Not evaluated and don't use my time for PD*

Teacher 2B was a 36-40 year old permanent part-time female classroom teacher who had been teaching for 15-20 years, 4-5 years of those at this school. She had undertaken no post-graduate learning.

<u>Evaluation</u>

This teacher had never been evaluated and had no knowledge of the procedures in her school. Nonetheless, she expressed her personal responses as a combination of confidence and apathy, with enthusiasm strongly denied. Teacher 2B considered that evaluation was beneficial for the school and students, and for the enhancement of teachers' professionalism and pedagogy. It also acted as a conduit for communication and helped teachers plan their future. At the same time, she felt that the process reinforced the hierarchy and gender imbalances, and failed to make her feel more a part of the organisation. Teacher 2B's responses to evaluation were a more predictable apprehension based on a lack of experience. She managed to acknowledge the positives whilst admitting she was not keen to experience evaluation.

<u>Professional Development Motivation & Selection</u>

Teacher 2B had undertaken two days each of school and self initiated professional development. Whilst she felt ownership of professional development, and welcomed it as an opportunity to enhance her skills as a part of modern teaching practice, she saw it neither as invigorating nor renewing for her outlook. This teacher admitted that she had no real opinions on professional development, but undertook it because it was expected of her. It also provided a welcome break from class.

Professional development objectives laid down by the school formed the basis for faculty and individual objectives. Teacher 2B was unable to answer if her professional development objectives were reported back up the system for economy and consistency within the organisation, or if each teacher submitted their objectives for approval by the professional development officer. Both propositions were marked with a question mark. The strongest motivation for teacher 2B's professional development selections was to avoid use of her time.

Whilst she strongly denied looking for the maximum classes to avoid, this teacher made her selections from the interesting options that arose each year, and sought activities that appeared the least strenuous and most enjoyable.

Professional Development Outcomes

Teacher 2B's professional development covered most areas of professional knowledge, classroom management and instructional techniques, and assessment. These were reported through short notes on the school's professional development form alone. This teacher agreed that professional development did not occur in isolation and was an obvious contributor to change. As an individual, it made her feel a life long learner within an educational community. However, there was no validation of the impact of professional development on her teaching or student learning. Neither the professional development officer, nor her supervisor, followed up after her learning, and the space on the evaluation form was merely somewhere to list activities.

School Professional Development Practices

Professional development in Teacher 2B's school definitely was not viewed as a token gesture, but clearly directed at enhancing pedagogy. It was responsive and dynamic, and consisted of an appropriate mix of training that met individual teacher needs. Consequently, this teacher felt that she was constantly developing and enhancing her practice. Professional development activities were of all forms, and included internal mentoring based on staff specialties, as well as professional reflection. This very positive perception of school professional development contrasted with negative views of whole school events, which were regularly conducted and considered a major force for change in the school. Teacher 2B strongly felt that whole school events took her away from the real work of teaching to participate in fanfare events, that promoted the hierarchy and provided opportunities for consultants to be paid for boring her.

School & Individual Perceptions & Aspirations

Teacher 2B rated her school positively as an organisation that encouraged initiatives and dialogue, and modelled and acknowledged good teaching regardless of seniority. Teachers were mobilized to support change and felt sufficiently collaborative as to share failure as well as success. However, the school did not appreciate the positive aspects of older teaching styles, and did not encourage parental feedback on teaching standards.

As an individual Teacher 2B felt that she was strongly reflective, and found worthwhile being with students whom she worked to understand. She set high expectations for herself and was

always trying new approaches, which she openly discussed with her colleagues. However, this teacher strongly denied trying to embrace every change in attempt to enhance education, and did not want greater opportunities to discuss and feel part of changes. Nonetheless, in her aspirations, Teacher 2B noted a wish to better understand changes that she was asked to implement, and that her practice was developing along with such change. She also sought more time to work collegially with her colleagues, and for the professional development system to be more responsive to her individual needs. Whilst this teacher also hoped to be less isolated, and for the good things in her teaching to be explicitly acknowledged, she did not wish to more openly discuss her classroom teaching with colleagues or be free to acknowledge mistakes and seek assistance to resolve them. Finally, Teacher 2B did not wish the formative evaluation of her teaching to be separated from evaluation of her as an institutional member.

Comments on Teacher 2B

Teacher 2B's acknowledgement of the benefits of evaluation whilst feeling apprehensive of the process, appears to be a professional response by a teacher who has not experienced evaluation. Her reactions are probably the result of dialogue with colleagues, who had been appraised for whatever purpose. In acknowledging that she selected professional development purely on the basis of ease, enjoyment, and avoiding use of her own time, as well as seeing whole school events in a negative light, Teacher 2B raises doubts about her strong claim to be reflective practitioner. Her responses certainly do not suggest any independent professional behaviour aimed at enhancing pedagogy. If the school professional development events achieve little, then this teacher could have rectified this through her own learning. However, such a remedy would involve personal time and may not be fun. The same constraints may well explain the absence of any postgraduate learning. The results suggests that Teacher 2B may be a compliant worker rather than a latent professional.

Teacher 2C - *Not evaluated and not fully committed*

Teacher 2C was a 31-35 year old contract part time male classroom teacher who had an Honours degree and had been teaching 4-5 years, of which 1-3 years had been at this school.

Evaluation

This teacher had no experience of evaluation, or knowledge of the procedures at his school, although he did state that he had been evaluated for teaching practice. This probably referred back to reasonably recent teacher training experiences, because he was unable to identify any of the procedural elements of evaluation in his school. Teacher 2C's emotional response to

evaluation was a reasonably healthy balance of defensiveness, concern, and suspicion, matched up against confidence, optimism and enthusiasm. Notably, he strongly denied feelings of apathy, ambivalence, and anger, which suggest that he remained open to encouragement towards evaluation as a general process. Teacher 2C saw evaluation as benefiting the school and students, very much enhancing pedagogy, and a valuable communication tool. Notably Teacher 2C was unable to answer if evaluation would benefit him, which strongly suggests that he did not see evaluation as something owned by him as a professional.

Professional Development Motivation & Selection

Teacher 2C had undertaken only one day each of school/department sponsored and self initiated professional development, perhaps related to his relatively short time at this school. He welcomed professional development as an invigorating and renewing element of modern teaching practice, but also admitted that it was a good chance to get a break from class. He set his professional development objectives based on perceptions of his own needs. However, they were under the guidance of laid down school objectives, and were also submitted to the school to ensure consistency and economy. Teacher 2C based his professional development selections exclusively on what interesting options came up each year.

Professional Development Outcomes

This teacher's professional development activities enhanced his subject knowledge, classroom management, and personal communication skills. The only method of validating the outcome was through a verbal report to the professional development officer or faculty. The remainder of the questions on professional development outcomes were left blank. However, two entries on these pages suggest that they were not overlooked. This could imply that Teacher 2C was unable to answer the questions on the validation of professional development because he had not experienced it, or seen any process in action, after his two professional development days.

Teacher 2C considered professional development in his school to be efficient, responsive to individual teacher's needs, and clearly directed to enhancing the quality of pedagogy and learning. However, he did not feel that it had a mix of training suitable for his pedagogical, personal, and organisational needs, and it did not make him feel like a life long learner continually enhancing his practice. Professional development was neither well managed, nor dynamic. It was not connected clearly to the evaluation system and responsive to identified pedagogical shortfalls.

Given that he had participated in only one school/department sponsored professional development day, it may be that this teacher felt he had insufficient experience to comment appropriately on whole school professional development. This question was also unanswered.

School & Individual Perceptions & Aspirations

The question on school perceptions was also not answered. As an individual, Teacher 2C felt that being with the students was worthwhile, and he concentrated on covering prescribed material. Whilst he did not doubt the value of educational changes he was asked to implement, this teacher sought greater opportunities to discuss and feel part of such changes. Teacher 2C did not set very high expectations of himself, was not reflective, did not always try new teaching approaches, and did not openly discuss his classroom with his colleagues.

Teacher 2C answered positively to all of the individual aspiration propositions. He wanted to feel less isolated and more collegial, to be free to acknowledge both his failures and successes openly, and to better understand and engage with change. He also wished the formative evaluation of his teaching to be separated from institutional evaluation, and for the professional development system to be more responsive to his individual needs.

Comments on Teacher 2C

Even in the absence of direct experience in his school, Teacher 2C perceived both the ownership and benefits of evaluation as external to him. The significance of this perception is that not only does it make evaluation seem something done to him, but, in the absence of perceived ownership, Teacher 2C is unlikely to engage in evaluative practices as an independent professional.

As a teacher with about four years experience, it could be expected that Teacher 2C would be moving beyond new teacher insecurities to develop the characteristics of his own practice. However, he appeared to be not doing so, demonstrating no reflective behaviours or sharing his classroom experiences openly with his colleagues, and not trying new teaching approaches. Furthermore, his relatively low professional development participation rate, and very limited selection motivations, suggest that this teacher was not actively working towards remediation or enhancement of his practice, despite acknowledging that the school professional development system was not meeting his needs. Teacher 2C should be moving into highly productive and positive professional years of teaching practice. However, his responses suggest

either passivity or a lack of self-confidence that was not being addressed, and thus perhaps limiting Teacher 2C from achieving his potential.

Teacher 2D - *Never evaluated and seeking true collaboration*

Teacher 2D was a 46-50 year old permanent full time female department head. She had been teaching for 11-15 years of which 6-10 years had been at this school. She had completed no post- graduate learning.

<u>Evaluation</u>

This teacher had never been evaluated and demonstrated no knowledge of evaluation procedures in her current school. Whilst other teachers who had not been evaluated chose to indicate their emotional responses and opinions on the evaluation process, she indicated *Unable to answer* in all cases, reflecting her lack of exposure to evaluation.

<u>Professional Development Motivation & Selection</u>

Teacher 2D had participated in three days of school sponsored professional development alone in the past year. She considered strongly that professional development was a part of modern teaching practice, and she undertook it enthusiastically as an invigorating opportunity to renew her outlook and ideas. Teacher 2D strongly denied that professional development was merely an award requirement or an opportunity to get a break from classes.

In the absence of consultation with her supervisor, this teacher set her own professional development objectives, based on her own needs within the laid down school learning goals. Her objectives were then submitted to the professional development officer for approval and reconciliation within the organisation for consistency and economy. Teacher 2D made her professional development selections based exclusively on what interesting opportunities arose each year. She specifically disagreed strongly with seeking to miss the maximum number of classes.

<u>Professional Development Outcomes</u>

Professional development improved this teacher's subject knowledge, classroom techniques, and personal communication skills. These were reported both verbally to the professional development officer or faculty, and through a short note on the school's professional development form. The school made no effort to determine the impact of her professional development on her teaching practice, or on student learning and outcomes. Neither her

supervisor, nor the school's professional development officer checked that the learning activity had met her needs, and there was no connection with evaluation. Despite this, Teacher 2D felt very strongly that professional development made her a life long learner within an educational community.

School Professional Development Practices

Teacher 2D was very positive about professional development in her school, seeing it as efficient and responsive, and well managed and dynamic. It clearly was directed to enhancing pedagogy and teaching quality, and was responsive to the various needs of individual teachers. The activities were lectures and workshops, and attendance at conferences and courses outside the school. There were opportunities for reflection on teaching, although mentoring did not occur. Despite this, Teacher 2D denied that her school's professional development consisted of a broad range of activities based on each teacher's learning needs.

Whole school professional development was conducted infrequently and lacked stimulation and direction. It was perceived as made up of boring fanfare events that generated few concrete outcomes whilst taking Teacher 2D away from the real business of teaching. However, such events were not seen as opportunities for hierarchical self-promotion.

School & Individual Perceptions & Aspirations

Teacher 2D viewed her school as encouraging teachers to demonstrate their worth in different ways, and it mobilised teachers as agents of change by supporting the adoption of new teaching strategies based on the analysis of good practice. Cross-grade and cross-curricular dialogue was encouraged, and the positive aspects of older teaching styles were respected. However, this teacher did not consider that her school modelled and rewarded good teaching regardless of seniority, and the culture was not sufficiently collaborative for teachers to share failures as well as successes. The school also did not encourage parental feedback on teaching standards.

Teacher 2D had a very positive image of herself as an individual teacher. Not only did she strongly assert regular self-reflection, but she also claimed to be very strongly motivated to understand her students and openly discuss classroom teaching with her colleagues. This teacher felt that being with children was worthwhile, and set high expectations of herself as she constantly tried new approaches. Teacher 2D did not doubt the validity of educational change, but she did not embrace all aspects of change and sought opportunities to discuss and feel more part of change.

This teacher strongly desired to feel less isolated and to have more opportunity to work collegially and openly with her fellow teachers to improve her teaching practice. The other aspirations were also all positive. Teacher 2D sought to better understand changes and incorporate them into her teaching, to share failures with her colleagues as well as have her good teaching acknowledged, and to seek assistance to rectify problems in her teaching. This teacher also wanted formative evaluation of her pedagogy to be separated from institutional assessments of her, and for the professional development system to be more responsive to her classroom needs.

Comments on Teacher 2D

Teacher 2D generally appeared a self-confident and committed teacher with a positive outlook on her practice, and a reasonably objective perspective on the good aspects and weaknesses of her school. She appears to have achieved her leadership position without evaluation, possibly reflecting the benefits of waiting. Professional development did not appear to be fulfilling its promise for this teacher who failed to find whole school events useful, made her selections only on the basis of what interesting opportunities arose, and had not initiated any of her own learning. With no follow up of her learning, the benefits of any activities cannot be judged, or further learning needs considered. Once again, this teacher did not appear to have taken any independent professional steps to rectify shortfalls in the current professional development system, despite having felt that there were insufficient activities to meet teachers' individual needs. Perhaps the most positive comment that can be made about Teacher 2D is that her strong wish to overcome isolation and work openly and collegially with her fellows provides fertile ground for her involvement in reflective professional evaluation practices.

Teacher 2E - *Never evaluated and isolated*

Teacher 2E was a 36-40 year old permanent full time classroom teacher who had been teaching for 11-15 years, 6-10 of them in this school. She had completed no post-graduate learning.

Evaluation

This teacher had never been evaluated and demonstrated no knowledge of evaluation procedures in her current school.

Professional Development Motivation & Selection

Teacher 2E had completed only one day of school/department sponsored professional development in the past year. She strongly welcomed professional development as an invigorating and renewing element of modern practise, but also admitted that it was a good chance to get a break from class. She also strongly disagreed that professional development was something done to, not by, her.

This teacher primarily based her objectives on her own needs. These were submitted for review and approval by the professional development officer, but not reported up the system to ensure both economy and consistency. She also strongly disagreed that the school or faculty derived professional development goals. Teacher 2E primarily based her professional development selections on a review of her annual training requirements, the amount of relief money available, and what interesting options arose. However, she also admitted to seeking something that was likely to be fun. Nonetheless, she strongly denied seeking the least strenuous options or those ensuring maximum loss of class time.

Professional Development Outcomes

Teacher 2E's professional development in the past year most significantly improved her knowledge of her subject area, as well as assessment and instructional techniques. Since this was one day only, the event must have been highly successful! However, the school was unlikely to know as this teacher provided no report, and her supervisor, the professional development officer, and the school made no efforts to follow up the impact of her learning on her pedagogy or student outcomes. Consequently, Teacher 2E felt that professional development occurred in isolation, and that she was not a lifelong learner advancing positive educational change within an educational community.

School Professional Development Practices

This teacher's responses to professional development practices in her school were slightly contradictory. She strongly felt that they made her feel like an ongoing learner constantly developing her practice, and that the system was responsive to individual teacher's needs. However, a few questions later, she noted that professional development in her school was inefficient and unresponsive. Certainly the professional development was not connected to evaluation to identify pedagogical shortfalls, and it lacked the appropriate mix of training to meet the pedagogical, personal, and organisational needs of the individual. This point was reiterated strongly in the question about school professional development activities, which

consisted of lectures and workshops, and attendance at external courses and seminars. Notably Teacher 2E expressed strong negative responses to internal mentoring, and opportunities for reflection on teaching.

Whole school professional development was firmly condemned as being made up of boring fanfare events that promoted the interests of the hierarchy, and achieved little other than enrichment of consultants. Teacher 2E primarily saw them as distracting her from the real business of teaching.

School & Individual Perceptions & Aspirations

Teacher 2E saw her school as free of cliques, and very supportive of the adoption of new initiatives in the classroom. However, these were the only positives. The school failed to encourage dialogue, or to establish a truly collaborative culture where teachers could share failure as well as success. She was neither encouraged to demonstrate her worth in different ways, nor actively mobilized as an agent of change. The school failed to analyse or model good teaching practice, and it did not appreciate the positive aspects of older teaching styles. Parental feedback on teaching standards was not encouraged.

Contrary to the negative opinions about the school, Teacher 2E very much perceived herself as a student oriented, open and collegial, and self-motivated teacher, who was open to change and always trying new approaches. She aspired to be less isolated in the classroom, and for the formative evaluation of her teaching to be separate from organisational assessments. However, her strongest aspirations were to be more openly collegial, for the good things in her teaching to be acknowledged and the mistakes to be admitted openly, and to better understand and feel part of positive educational changes. She also very much wanted the professional development system to be more responsive to her classroom needs.

Comments on Teacher 2E

Although the many negative responses in the professional development section of the survey might indicate disillusionment, the very positive teacher self image, and seeking of improvements in both professional development and evaluation practices, suggest that Teacher 2E may have been isolated. Such isolation had possibly developed from the absence of an effective evaluation process and the failure of the professional development system to intimately engage her pedagogical development needs. Consequently, Teacher 2E appears to have decided that the system is not there to support her and relied on her personal resources.

Such self-reliant, and perhaps individual reflective behaviours, would not show up in professional development records which would have no means of measuring them, because of lack of measured time or funds expenditure. Conversely, the absence of individual professional development activity could also suggest withdrawal behaviours. There is no evidence to suggest the level of Teacher 2E's cooperative interaction with colleagues, but her negative views on the school's collaborative culture, and a desire for greater interaction, suggests that isolation and some disaffection is more likely. If Teacher 2E was isolated, the school was certainly not exploiting, or helping her to further develop, her potential. Meanwhile, there was no evidence that this experienced mid-career teacher was doing anything to help herself.

Teacher 2F - *Never evaluated as a teacher and insecure*

Teacher 2F was a 26-30 year old contract male full time teacher who was in a Year Group Coordinator leadership position. He had been teaching for 6-10 years, with only 1-3 years at this school. He had completed no post-graduate learning.

Evaluation

This teacher responded that he had never been evaluated as a teacher. However, he claimed experience of evaluation, and having been an evaluator in other career situations.

Whilst Teacher 2F indicated that he was unable to answer most questions, he claimed to be aware of the input in his school being a teaching portfolio that assessed student learning, record maintenance, communication with families, contribution to the school and professional community, and professional development. The evaluation process strongly benefited all members of the school, enhanced teaching practices, and made him feel more a part of the organisation. This teacher denied that evaluation reinforced the hierarchy, but he also did not see evaluation as benefiting individual pedagogy.

Professional Development Motivation & Selection

Teacher 2F had completed five days of self-initiated professional development over the past year. He welcomed it with enthusiasm as an invigorating element of modern practice, but also admitted that he undertook professional development without seriously considering the matter. Nonetheless, he did not see it as a break from class, or just an award imposition. He set his individual objectives without supervisor support, but these were submitted for review and approval by the professional development officer. Neither the school, nor the faculty, set professional development objectives, and there was no reconciliation process for economy and

consistency. Teacher 2F based his professional development selections on what interesting options came up each year, finding something that was fun, and meeting the requirement with the least effort.

Professional Development Outcomes

Professional development in the past year had enhanced this teacher's pedagogy in the areas of professional knowledge, reporting, instructional techniques, and personal communication skills. These were reported on a short note on the school's professional development form. The impact of Teacher 2F's learning on his pedagogy and student outcomes was not followed up by his supervisor, the professional development officer, or the school. Despite this fact, Teacher 2F still felt that professional development contributed to organisational change, and it made him feel a continuing learner within an educational community.

School Professional Development Practices

Teacher 2F marked a disagree response on all of the propositions on school professional development, making it difficult to gauge his real opinion. Consequently, he saw professional development as both inefficient and efficient. It was well managed and dynamic rather than a token gesture, and yet also lacking the mix of training to satisfy his personal, pedagogical, and organisational needs. Being a lifelong learner constantly enhancing professional practice was also denied, contrary to the final response in the previous section.

School professional development involved all forms, including internal mentoring based on specialties, and opportunities for reflection. Whilst it was held regularly and a major factor for change, whole school professional development was neither stimulating, nor well directed. They were boring fanfares that achieved little other than enriching consultants and providing opportunities for the hierarchy to promote itself. It also took this teacher away from the more important task of teaching. These responses suggest that the real attitude in the previous section were in fact negative, although this cannot be assumed completely.

School & Individual Perceptions & Aspirations

Teacher 2F saw his school as encouraging teachers to demonstrate their worth in different ways, and as actively mobilising him as an agent of change by adopting new initiatives in the classroom. It appreciated the positive aspects of older teaching styles, and modelled and rewarded good teaching regardless of seniority. However, the culture was not sufficiently

collaborative that Teacher 2F could share his mistakes. The school also failed to analyse good teaching, and parental feedback on teaching standards was not encouraged.

As an individual, Teacher 2F felt he was reflective, and always tried new teaching approaches. He enjoyed the students and tried to understand them rather than just load them with content. However, this teacher admitted to not setting very high expectations of himself, and that he did not openly discuss his classroom with colleagues. He did not readily embrace change, and was not enthusiastic to discuss or feel part of change. This was reflected in his aspirations as well, where he expressed a strong desire to better understand change, as well as have the good parts of his teaching acknowledged explicitly. Teacher 2F also sought greater collegiality with his fellow teachers and the opportunity to share and learn from errors, for the formative evaluation of his teaching to be separate from institutional assessment, and for the professional development system to be more responsive to his classroom needs. However, this teacher did not wish to feel less isolated in the classroom.

Comment on Teacher 2F

In the absence of evaluation experience in this school, Teacher 2F may again have been passing on responses gleaned from colleagues who had experienced the process in this school. This meant that he identified benefits in organisational terms, but not in the sense of individual pedagogy. His final comment on the survey was illuminating: 'Staff feedback generally low with the exception of the annual teaching appointment video.'

Under present conditions, if this teacher does not have high personal expectations of his pedagogy, is reluctant to openly discuss his classroom with his colleagues, and feels that there is not a true collaborative culture in the school, then he probably welcomes classroom isolation as protection. Whilst his self initiated professional development might indicate a level of professionalism, the motivation for selections make it unlikely that they would be beneficial to his teaching. Teacher 2F's response to whole school professional development suggests that it also would achieve little benefit. The final impression from this survey was of a teacher who could do better given some proper support. Unfortunately, the means of motivating this teacher towards best practice appeared absent under present conditions.

Teacher 2G - *Evaluated and resentful*

Teacher 2G was a 46-50 year old permanent full time male classroom teacher whose 4-5 years of teaching experience had all been at this school. He had completed no post-graduate learning.

Frequency & Purpose of Evaluation

This teacher had experienced evaluation in other career situations, and had been evaluated for a leadership position in this school prior to this year. He had received no specific professional development on the evaluation process, and so did not have a strong knowledge of the role of evaluation in his school.

Inputs to Evaluation

Teacher 2G answered in the negative to the listed input gathering methods suggested, as well as the evaluation elements list modified from Danielson (1996). This suggests that he was unable to identify how the information for the evaluation in question was gathered and that he had not been an active participant in the collection process.

Management of Evaluation

This teacher responded strongly in the negative to all of the propositions about evaluation in his current school. He totally lacked trust and confidence, denied that inputs were accurately reflected and reconciled, and saw redress procedures as unclear and ambiguous. Personality intruded, and issues about his teaching or school procedures were glossed over. Questions about the evaluator being trained, or as competent a teacher, were merely answered with a question mark.

Evaluation in this school judged employees rather than professionals in a bureaucratic procedure that was owned exclusively by the administration, and had no effect on student outcomes or teaching effectiveness. It was not closed to staff input, had not been validated for effectiveness or equity, and failed to support school objectives. However, Teacher 2G strongly denied that evaluation in this school was a tool to reinforce power relationships and enforce compliance. He also strongly agreed that it affected his teaching practice in positive ways.

Teacher 2G saw the evaluation process as benefiting the school alone, through the reinforcement of hierarchy and gender imbalances. It failed to act as a channel for communication, career planning, or organisational reinforcement. Teaching practices were not improved, and neither he nor the students gained any benefit from evaluation.

Individual Responses to Evaluation

Teacher 2G marked unable to answer on all of the proposed emotional responses. His actions following the evaluation were to keep a low profile, complain to his peers, and remember the negatives. He did not change his teaching style to satisfy his supervisor, and tended to avoid promotion opportunities. He neither set goals for the next reporting period, nor discussed his training needs with the professional development officer. However, this teacher did reflect on his practice and work harder to get a better report next time.

Professional Development Motivation & Selection

Teacher 2G missed the centre two pages of the survey. Because other questions were filled out completely, this was probably unintentional, and may been the consequence of agitation due to his very negative responses in the evaluation section. His professional development responses were limited to outcomes and school practices only. Teacher 2G's professional development participation was two school/department-sponsored days only.

Professional Development Outcomes

Teacher 2G continued his very negative responses into the professional development area, denying any form of reporting on activities, or validation of the impact of his learning on teaching and student outcomes. Professional development thus neither contributed to organisational change, nor made him feel a lifelong learning member of an educational community.

School Professional Development Practices

School professional development activities were made up of lectures and seminars, and attendance at external courses or conferences. There was not a broad range of activities based on each teacher's learning needs, and internal mentoring and opportunities for reflection on teaching were both absent. Whole school professional development was a complete failure in this teacher's eyes. He saw it as lacking direction or interest, and nothing other than the removal of teachers from classes to watch hierarchical figures promote themselves in boring, fanfare events that achieved few concrete outcomes.

School & Individual Perceptions & Aspirations

Teacher 2G's primary perception of his school was of a system of conflicting cliques. It lacked a collaborative culture and failed to encourage either dialogue or the adoption of initiatives in the classroom. Teachers were not encouraged to demonstrate their worth in different ways or to

act as agents of change, and good teaching practice was neither analysed nor modelled. Parental feedback on teaching standards was not encouraged.

Despite the negatives about the school, Teacher 2G maintained a positive personal image. He felt that being with students was very worthwhile, and he tried hard to understand them rather than just load them with content. This teacher felt he was reflective and set high personal expectations, constantly tried new teaching approaches, and freely discussed his classroom practices with colleagues. Whilst he always tried to embrace change, he had occasional doubts, but was, nonetheless, open and ready to discuss and feel more a part of changes.

Teacher 2G's aspirations were strongly directed to feel less isolated in the classroom, for the good things in his teaching to be explicitly acknowledged, and to understand changes better, so as to improve his teaching along with such change. He also strongly wished for the professional development system to be more responsive to his classroom needs. Whilst he agreed with formative evaluation of his teaching being separated from institutional assessment, that this was not a strong desire probably reflects suspicion from his previous bad experiences. However, an agree response at all in this case would appear a positive thing for the future. Thereafter, Teacher 2G also sought greater opportunities to openly discuss his pedagogy with colleagues, and to be free to share mistakes as well as successes.

Comments on Teacher 2G

Quite clearly Teacher 2G's responses were dominated by a negative evaluation experience directed at securing a leadership position. This perceived failure had effectively poisoned his attitudes to his school, and its evaluation and professional development processes. He appears to retain confidence and interest in both his current and future teaching, but his perception of the school as a series of cliques and lacking in dialogue suggests that he will remain both isolated and withdrawn for some time.

The most significant point for the study of evaluation is that Teacher 2G was unable to nominate any of the inputs or mandated elements of his evaluation. This raises two possibilities. He may have misinterpreted the application for a leadership position and the subsequent interview as an evaluation, or else the procedures in this school are opaque to at least some of the subjects of evaluation. If it does represent an evaluation event, then what was probably an old style appraisal process has not clearly left Teacher 2G with any understanding of why he was overlooked for promotion, and what he could do to improve himself. In the

absence of rational and objective consideration of his duties and pedagogy, and clear indications of means for improving on his current standards, this teacher appears to have been left with nothing other than an emotional response to what he perceived as a subjective process. The absence of any systematic validation procedures for his professional development also sends the message that it is not really seen as relevant to the development of pedagogy.

Ultimately, Teacher 2G must have felt isolated and demoralised. The school was certainly not deriving the maximum benefit from his capabilities, and these negatives could not but undermine his pedagogy in the long term. These negatives also would need to be overcome before Teacher 2G could be encouraged into a process of reflective professional evaluation.

Discussion of Teacher Surveys

Teacher surveys suggested that there was no process of evaluating teacher practice in this school with only one of the seven respondents having experienced it in any form. What evaluation occurred seems once again directed towards selection for advancement, although its application would appear to be piecemeal in that neither the department head (Teacher 2D), nor the year group coordinator (Teacher 2F), had experienced evaluation as part of their selection process, whilst Teacher 2G saw it as part of his failed attempt at promotion. What slightly confuses the issue was Teacher 2F's claim to have knowledge of the evaluation processes in his school, including the inputs. This was contradicted by Teacher 2G who more recently had been through some form of evaluation, the elements of which were not transparent. It is possible that the latter had been so damaged as to be unable to respond accurately to questions on the survey, but one would expect him to be able to at least list the areas on which he was evaluated.

Of interest is the attitude of teachers such as 2A, and 2B to some extent, who manifested hostility to something they have not undertaken, and the parameters of which are at best poorly defined and hardly disseminated within their school. The vehemence of Teacher 2A in particular suggests that the environment for evaluation in Australia is in fact not a *tabula rasa* as suggested by Kleinhenz, Ingvarson, and Chadbourne (2002). Conversely, it may be inherently hostile with teachers reacting prejudicially to the word *evaluation* rather than to any manifestation or experience of it in their teaching experience. This may be sourced in such teachers' suspicion of outside intrusion into their teaching, or may flow on from others having experienced inadequate and poorly defined appraisal systems, such as Teacher 2G. This particularly highlights the difficulties with maintaining evaluation processes for promotion. There will always be losers in the promotion stakes, but this leaves them angry at the

evaluation and thus unlikely to draw any positives from the activity. Rather than affirming or developing the teacher's practice, such evaluations become equated with failure. It is not surprising that Teachers 2A and 2B do not wish to participate in evaluation.

Teachers 2C and 2F, both relatively young but experienced males, did not conform to the pattern of the older females, suggesting that evaluation as an aid to advancement is more likely to appeal to ambitious males, providing it delivers expected outcomes. The significant differences in attitudes and established prejudices raises the possibility that it may not be appropriate to devise and implement any single broad system of evaluation in schools. Rather, any new system may need to attract the younger teachers who are more willing to experiment and take risks, providing that schools establish the environment for such experimentation to occur, and that these young teachers derive something from the process rather than seeing it as a hollow exercise. A danger that remains is that teachers such as 2A would just as likely be threatened by the introduction of any structure of evaluation among younger newer teachers as they would be facing such a procedure themselves.

Most teachers in this school felt positively towards professional development and accepted it as key part of teaching practice. However, the teacher surveys raised serious doubts about the effectiveness of the time expended on professional development, particularly whole school events, and the management efficiencies within the organisation. The continuation of the current form of whole school professional development events, despite widespread feelings that they were boring and ineffectual, or only opportunities for self-aggrandizement, appears sourced in the inability of the extant professional development procedures to validate outcomes and thus set objectives that meet the classroom needs of teachers. If the school as a primary professional development sponsor under current arrangements does not model effective training management, it is not surprising that teachers make their selections based on interesting and fun options, rather than a more appropriate review of their own personal training requirements. Furthermore, with the majority of respondents seeing professional development as limited in scope and not directed to their needs, and with few opportunities for internal mentoring or reflection, teachers clearly feel that working together as professionals is a lesser priority than established activities, such as lectures, workshops, and conferences. This is despite research clearly illustrating that intimate interaction about classroom teaching is the most valued form of professional development. Even if such interactions occur in reality, the exception of it from the professional development structure devalues it as compared to the other accepted forms. Existing professional development structures may be incapable of

attributing credit to activities where teachers work together, but there is no title, delivery agency, or expenditure of funds.

The negative response to whole school professional development probably also was sourced in the differences between the teachers themselves in this survey group. If stage theory is applied, then clearly there are significant variations in the needs and perspectives of Teachers 2A (an older woman with many years experience), 2F (an established younger male), and 2G (an older male reasonably new in a second career). Ages aside, any system which attempted to meet the needs of the marginalised, the middling, and the disaffected without considering the particular conditions and needs of each, cannot hope to succeed and improve the performance and well being of all. In the absence of a non-threatening and truly diagnostic evaluation process, there is no way at present in this school, and probably most others, to tell the difference.

The issue with professional development was not only the school's management of its training requirement, but also the position and attitude of the individual teachers. Only one of the respondents (Teacher 2E) indicated any review of individual training needs in personal professional development selection. The primary determinant was the presence of interesting options with fun coming second. Such a clearly reactive view, waiting to see what comes up and then choosing the most interesting, does not seem indicative of professional self motivated, reflective, and thus self-modifying teachers. Rather, it suggests the teachers at this school were passive consumers. Furthermore, although the school can be criticised for not validating professional development outcomes and its translation into classroom practice, the teachers' passive attitudes, and flippant reasons for selections, make them equally culpable. Professional development thus appears to be neither professional nor developing for most of these teachers, but simply something that is done as part of the job. If this is the case, it does not augur well for the development of mutually supportive self-evaluative and training mechanisms Indeed, the demands of the former would be unlikely to fit in the interesting and fun categories, but appear to be too much work. Teacher 2B, avoiding the use of personal time, and Teacher 2F, aiming at minimal effort, certainly would avoid the commitment, and their teaching might be that most requiring improvement.

Attitudes to the school were inconsistent, ranging from Teachers 2A, 2E, and 2G, who saw it as lacking a collaborative and open culture, through to Teacher 2B, who saw it more positively, and Teacher 2C, who didn't really seem to care. Obviously, neither evaluation nor professional development were helping mould this staff into a vibrant educational team. However, the

majority remained positively motivated to better integrate evaluation and professional development into their practice and reduce isolation. One can thus suggest that they would be open to new ways of doing both, but currently remained unable or unwilling to help themselves.

Negative terms seemed to come more readily to describing the teachers in this school. Words such as isolated, marginalised, and resentful were more prominent than the collaboration seeking Teacher 2D. However, even she did not feel that the culture of her school was sufficiently collaborative. Consequently, this school appears one where the absence of positive reinforcement and development of pedagogy, through reflective evaluation and fully integrated and validated professional development, undermines true collegiality. The passivity of the respondents is self-defeating, as teachers see no way to revitalise and energize their teaching. The way ahead is to take professional control, but, at present, the teachers in School 2 appear unaware of it as an option.

Student Focus Group Discussion

<u>Have you ever conducted an evaluation of a teacher?</u>

The only teaching evaluation experienced by students of School 2 was of student teachers during their practicum, and, based on other school responses, this probably occurred at the end (Appendix 6). One student mentioned current teachers at the school doing something similar, but this was 'Only about the units we're actually doing at the time, not the teachers themselves.'

<u>Have you been in a classroom where a more senior person comes in to watch?</u>

The only experience of teacher observation was when senior staff entered in response to teacher difficulties. However, the presence of the other teacher only temporarily altered the environment.

- A teacher was accused of having bad methods and teaching and accusing another student and laying it hard on him and so another teacher came in to watch the lessons for a while she was teaching…It went back to the way they were before.
- Yeah, we've had that done because our class is quite naughty, like muck around and stuff with the teachers who aren't so strict on us. And we had like the year coordinator come in and watch us, and we

were all you know quiet and so on. And when he left it's all back to normal, everyone's mucking around and so on.

- We've had our home room teacher come in and watch us while we're having language lessons…and everything went back to normal after they left.

Obviously the observation modified the immediate symptoms but failed to address the cause of the classroom difficulties. The students felt that it may have provided some relief to the teacher in question. Unfortunately, the professional pressure of having a senior teacher come in to support them when they are not coping or "failing" in the classroom would counteract any possible benefit. Students felt that such observation did not give any realistic indication of teacher performance, focussing mostly on class behaviour rather than actual teaching. Student 11 even appeared to lose respect for a teacher so observed: 'I reckon the teacher should just step it up a bit and be more strict, than getting another teacher to help her.'

<u>What do you consider are the characteristics of a good teacher?</u>
Students in School 2 saw a good teacher as one who maintained control, was interested, and was relevant. Such a teacher:

- you can get along with but is also strict so you can keep everyone behaving
- can keep the class controlled.
- you learn something off that involves amusement at the same time, like makes it enjoyable so we actually want to be there.
- sort of like refers to things our age that we'd be interested in instead of sort of like…old stuff.

However, good teaching figured beyond these initial responses, with students expecting teachers to actively engage in their learning and support understanding. A good teacher was seen as one who:

- will listen to you and go back and either tell the class to keep going if they understand and give you one on one, or go back and explain it again in more simpler terms
- listens to you because the whole point of school and that is to learn stuff and if you don't get it, a concept, then they should go back and explain it.

Students did not feel that there was general agreement about who were good teachers because of other factors that influenced their perceptions, such as whether classmates wanted to learn, or their response to a particular learning area.

- some people might think a teacher's good because they're a bludge. But other people might think that a good teacher's good because you learn something off them.

- some people might think the teacher is better because they enjoy the subject more, not necessarily the teacher's way of teaching

- Depends on the subjects. Like if you want to pursue them in the future you want to listen. But for me say like French or something, you just wanna have fun because you really dislike the subject.

As in other schools, illustrations of teaching students disliked tended to be easier for the focus group to identify. The primary areas of concern were fairness, being boring, and failing to adequately recognise the capabilities and needs of different students. A disliked teacher:

- He'll punish the whole class instead of taking issues up with one particular person.

- is strict and also they're teaching things with big words or saying something that doesn't make any sense and keep on going so you don't know what they're talking about. Or if you ask questions and they don't really answer it well. That can get so annoying.

- Someone who's really boring…even say if they make good points and stuff, if it's boring no one's going to take it in

- if you're sitting there and kind of it's really boring and you're not listening to any of it. And you're sort of distracted by other things really easily, so you're not gonna learn much from it.

- doesn't listen to what your points of view are and what you're trying to say

- used to draw on the board and then like the slower kids who didn't get it so much would say "I don't get that!" and he'd just say "Just do it and you'll get it!" Like he didn't explain it further, didn't give them the time they needed.

Students in School 2 communicated their satisfaction with teachers whom they perceived as good overall or adjusted their teaching in response to student needs:

- Once I was able to tell a teacher they were really good because they didn't rush ahead, like as in a Maths class. And they slowed down for the people who needed to have more time on the topic instead of like ploughing ahead and just forgetting about the people.

- We had this teacher. And he was a legend so I told him he was a legend.

- Our class is like, we criticise another teacher that we've had and compare him to the one that we like and say how much better he is compared to that teacher.

Those complimented were naturally grateful although some closed ranks as adults and teachers by cautioning students not to criticise other staff members. However, this was not always the case:

> Yes, I told one teacher about another teacher that nobody likes and she goes "Oh, that's not nice, she's one of my friends". I then told another teacher and she goes "I know, she's horrible isn't she?"

Whether by choice or accident, teachers also intimated their opinions about whom they thought amongst their colleagues were better: 'I dunno, just sort of their attitudes towards some of the teachers. Like what I think are the not so good teachers just like small comments and stuff that are made.'

<u>What is the response of the school, other teachers, and parents?</u>

Negative reactions to teaching in the classroom were communicated in a number of different ways and the teacher response appears to have been critical in relationships with both classes and individuals. Approaching senior staff was one option, but there was not guarantee of success: 'In some of the situations it changed. Some of it, it didn't because it was quite a few cases.' Student 5, who suggested writing a letter but had never done so, approached a teacher with his learning problems and experienced a positive outcome: 'I told one teacher that I wasn't learning form her so she went over it with me.' Student 7's approach was more blunt: 'I just

put up my hand and she said, "Yes what?", and I said "Pipe down, don't get it! Go over it again." She goes Why not?", and I says "Coz you're an idiot!"'

The teacher then went "schizo" and off Student 7 went with a red card. Nevertheless, victory was his, as the general consensus was that 'She's a very not popular teacher for a lot of people so the rest of the class agreed'. A less confrontational approach but quite threatening was to raise questions or issues to which the teacher could not, or would not, respond:

> Like I know for our class a couple of us will just keep nagging the teacher
>
> to ask a certain question and if she can't answer it just keep on nagging so
>
> they won't do it and they're just stubborn.

What appeared as student bullying or picking on the teacher was in fact a way to communicate dissatisfaction with teaching by those who felt weak in a structure where power rests with the adults both by age and institutional position. Student 2 in this school expressed it very well:

> If you have trouble with a teacher and you can't express an idea because
>
> you're in that sort of a classroom, I find that you try and find someone else
>
> who's got the same opinion as you. And if lots of people believe the same
>
> thing like they don't understand what the teacher's saying…and if a lot of
>
> people don't understand then the teacher's gotta try and change.

The term *that sort of a classroom* is significant. It is not all classrooms, but rather ones where students feel they are prevented from participating in the learning experience and where control is a higher agenda than understanding. As children and institutional subjects, they seek out the like-minded and collectively express their opinions, and, in the absence of a logical and discursive outlet students demonstrate that the teacher is wanting. The establishment of the collective response is not based just on teacher like or dislike because of personality, but is the result of consensus: 'most of your friends, all the rest of the class will hold the same opinion.' They even went so far as to provide the teacher with sufficient chances: 'it'll be like ongoing, not for just one or two days; it'll be for nearly all the lessons.'

If a senior teacher is called in to observe at a time when disruption appeared the only way to convey dissatisfaction then, in the absence of the background of the problem and an understanding of the learning dynamic of that particular classroom, what is imposed is not an opportunity to resolve a learning issue, but further control and threat. What students learn is not cognitive, but rather a social lesson of power. This, as has been pointed out by Darling-

Hammond (1997), was appropriate for the early industrial revolution, which sought to control workers, but one must doubt the utility of ignoring students and superimposing of power and control in an educative environment where shared understanding is meant to be the guiding principle for learning. That the students had learned the really important lesson was evidenced by Student 7's comment that 'Because it's a democratic society, majority rules.' That may be what the students are taught, but the contrary seems to be the case in school.

Student 7's view again is particularly germane to the arguments in this study and illustrates the maturity and depth that can flow from students if they are engaged in an open and intelligent discourse about learning:

> I believe as we're going through adolescence we gain our own ideas and
> we get independence so we choose how to act towards teachers. As we're a
> kid we're more gullible and if they say we're doing a bad job then we are
> doing a bad job.

Students who are able to formulate views such as this deserve good teaching, not to have negative responses when they try to move out of the class of a teacher that they know by experience will not meet their needs. Student 7 was asked to remain in that particular class. One cannot only ask why that was the case, but also why clearly little has been done to improve the particular teacher's pedagogy. The more normal approach may be to avoid the problem as stated by Student 12:

> I tried to get out of a class once because I really wasn't understanding from
> the teacher and I'd asked them to help me but they didn't so I went to my
> year coordinator and they told me to just persevere for a while and yeah, I
> never got back to it.

Parental support in this school seemed to be less forthcoming in requesting changes or outright unsympathetic. Student 8's parent's major concern was to avoid parent-teacher meetings that focussed on behaviour rather than learning.

> It's just like that they think more of not the way they teach but if they keep
> carrying on about how people act in class or whatever…just more than
> whether they're learning or not.

Meanwhile Student 12's parents 'think it's funny that I have the same teacher that they had.' Sadly both this student and their parents agreed that the teacher in question was lacking.

<u>If a teacher made the effort…would you help?</u>

The students' initial response to evaluation in the focus group discussion was welcoming because they saw teachers as being able to:

- realise what the students want from them and like so feed back the other way.
- improve their mistakes or anything they've done wrong.
- [receive] positive feedback if they thought they were doing a bad job as well as if they needed to improve.

However, further in the discussion Student 5 noted that, whilst the ultimate beneficiaries are the students themselves, the teachers had to be genuine in their willingness to participate in the dialogue: 'If they were genuine, not just saying it just to shut you up. If they were genuine, you'd definitely try to help them because ultimately it's going to benefit you not them.' Student 7, who had indeed been so perceptive previously, became more negative, saying 'No, it's not our job to teach the teachers.' Not surprisingly, with his confrontations with the control system in the school, this student does not see the possibility of mutual cooperation in learning. Quite clearly efforts to introduce any reflective evaluation process that included student interaction would have to work against a reservoir of suspicion, and at times hostility. The only way for this to happen would be for teachers to transform themselves. However, the paradox is that such a transformation could only occur based on self-awareness, and the methods to foster such awareness are non-existent.

<u>Explain what you understand by the term 'professional development'?</u>

Whilst Student 8 was able to identify what professional development was broadly about, 'I think that's just like where they sort of re-educate the teachers to make sure they're keeping up with the syllabus and everything', there was not a lot of confidence in the outcomes. Students either openly denied that there were any improvements, suggested that things got worse, or else identified only the outcomes on teachers as they tried to catch up on supervisions and lost work: 'They're more stressed toward us after the four days or something they've been there. And we have to catch up all of our work.' The most cynical even saw it as an opportunity for teachers to have a holiday: 'professional development in Germany or somewhere so they get to have across the world trips…sounds like they can claim it on tax more than anything (laughter).'

Discussion on professional development became more complex with the interviewer trying to suggest that informing students and parents might be a useful means of establishing some form of accountability and relevance to the professional development process. Student 1 accepted the proposition stating 'because when they came back if they didn't deliver you'd know there is something wrong. Like if they didn't deliver on what they said they were going to do.' Student 5 felt the same, arguing that parents would 'want to know if these courses were actually doing anything to help the teachers.' Despite these positive answers, Student 7 again focussed on the key issue in arguing that the specific skill or learning enhancement would be useless if it was imposed into a negative environment:

> If they have bad writing and go away to fix their writing and they come
>
> back and yell the hell out of you, then that's not better. They might have
>
> good writing, but they're a worse teacher.

The latter stage of this particular focus group was both difficult and significant. It took some effort to convince students that their presence in the classroom as observers and consumers of teaching might entitle them to have some right to input into teacher development. They agreed with propositions that:

a.   Teachers were meant to be learning continually and getting better not worse at their jobs.

b.   Students were the observers of teaching on an ongoing basis.

c.   It would be better for some means of communicating student responses to teachers to help them understand what their students are observing.

Unfortunately, the final answers in the focus group demonstrated why the input of students does not occur:

- But, if sometimes you're scared to actually say anything to them in case they yell at you and you don't think it's your right to say it to them.

- You have a right. But some of the time you don't want to express that right because you're scared of what'll happen to you.

Fear and control are not meant to be part of modern teaching practice, yet that is what seems to drive students away from working in complete cooperation with their teachers. And the students know that this is not an ideal state of affairs: 'There's no way they should be angry

with you because all you're trying to do is help them.' In School 2 there was no evidence that the teachers were open to the sort of help from students that would enhance their joint learning. In fact, there appears to have been little to no dialogue of the type that would allow such a positive interaction to occur. In spite of the curricular reform rhetoric about shared and constructed learning based on understanding, the industrial revolution practices criticised by Darling-Hammond (1997) appear ingrained and unchanged.

Documentation

School 2 provided some appraisal documentation although this was not referred to in the Staff Handbook provided to teachers. The appraisal documentation was dated 1997, seven years previous to the case study, with no evidence of amendment. It noted that:

> The major purposes of Teacher Appraisal should be to sustain the process of teachers' professional growth, to build on their strengths, to remedy weaknesses, to motivate, to aid organisational effectiveness, to strengthen teaching skills and to help teachers adapt to the demands of new technologies, new course needs and a new clientele (the results of significant social change).

The objectives of the policy of teacher appraisal connected the process to award restructuring and micro-economic reform, including mention of Exemplary Class Teacher (ECT) selection based on reflection on teaching practice measured through appraisal.

The failure of the appraisal process in the school was clearly illustrated by the minimal participation amongst the respondents, some of whom had been in the school for the majority of time since the appraisal booklet was promulgated. As might be expected by a top-down imposed system, there was plenty of mention of expectations of the teacher with regard to the community, personal and professional development, the curriculum, and classroom management, but very little to do with the specifics of teaching. It was only within the classroom management section that there was any mention of the students, but even then there was no specific statement of helping students learn or develop an understanding of their world. Rather there were stipulations, which included that teachers should:

- use a variety of teaching methods
- develop and implement appropriate procedures for the management of student behaviour

- deploy available resources in such a way that is both creative and shows an appreciation of the limited resource pool of the school.

This appears to be good bureaucratic stuff, but it is unlikely to enthuse teachers to work for understanding in their students or adopt a serious ongoing reflective attitude to their work.

As with other systems, this appraisal included self-evaluation, observation, peer input, and an interview. Since Teacher 2G was unable to identify these, either he was ill informed or the means for gathering input were not revealed. The observation could be delegated, but the final interview was with the Principal, allocating the ultimate judgement and approval of the teacher to the school administration.

School 2 provided an example of such an Appraisal Report that referred to the teacher undertaking certain future activities in 2000, suggesting that it was conducted in 1999, and consequently five years old at the time of the case study in late 2004. Whilst School 2 may have specifically chosen to provide an older report to protect the confidentiality of current staff, the lack of a more recent example, and the evidence from teacher surveys, may indicate a process that had fallen into disuse. This Appraisal Report described the institutional participation of the teacher but made no reference to her teaching in other than the most general of terms. The description was divorced and generic and written from a superior's point of view, probably the Principal as the teacher occupied a leadership position. As well as making no reference to classroom learning, this Appraisal Report, and indeed the documentation made no mention of input from either students or parents. In omitting the students from the appraisal, this process appeared not to impinge on the classroom at all.

Professional development was the subject of a school policy that had been promulgated twelve months previously. This policy defined *professional learning* as 'processes and activities both formal and informal that enhance or extend aspects of the role for which a staff member is employed.' The rationale section noted that:

> Employees need to adapt to changing priorities in their professional and work roles. Professional learning…assists staff to play a valued part in implementing the priorities set out in the Strategic Plan. Individuals derive both personal and professional gains from professional learning.

The guidelines to support this mention the responsibility of staff to engage in professional development, that *relevant* opportunities would be circulated to staff, and encourages staff to share their knowledge. The Staff Handbook had an extensive list of aims for professional development. The application form sought the reasons behind the learning, including 'If applicable – How does this fit into the context of your own overall Professional Learning Plan?' It also asked teachers how they thought they could share the professional development with others.

The policy document seems to leave little doubt that the superior role is allocated to the school by defining teachers as *employees*. There was no mention in this school policy paper of enhancements in student learning through the constant improvement of pedagogy. In the handbook, whilst the aims were stated, there was no further definition or encouragement of staff to view professional development as something that occurred daily as a reflective process. The application form mentioned fitting the professional development into a teacher's 'own Professional Learning Plan', but how this plan is derived was not defined. The surveys in this study referred to the selection of professional development based on teachers' own objectives, but if these were the professional learning plans referred to, it is unlikely that they were effective due to the number of surveyed teachers who based their choices on the interesting options that appeared, or sought activities that would be fun. Quite clearly the documentation did not suggest any follow up to determine the impact on teacher practice and student learning, and the students denied ever seeing the impact of professional development on teaching, let alone validation of the same.

School 2 Conclusions

Quite clearly the appraisal system in School 2 was failing in its stated purpose. That the supplied example was of a department head, and that Teacher 2G felt slighted in his attempt at promotion suggests that evaluation had been relegated to selecting, or perhaps selecting out, certain staff for promotion. The example appraisal recommended attendance at leadership courses and encouraged application for further promotional positions. This teacher obviously had succeeded. For most teachers the rare and unusual evaluation event would be threatening as it targets institutional conformity. Being an imposed system that fails to deal with the actual process of teaching, it belongs to Pusey's (1976) first dimension, and extends as far as the second, technical level, but fails to penetrate the classroom and thus actually influence teachers' work. Meanwhile the teachers themselves do not appear to have filled the void on their own. The end point is that no-one in this school appeared to be actually looking at the

intricate details and application of teaching and its relationship to student learning, with an aim to achieve enhancement of both teacher practice and student understanding.

Significantly, many of the teachers in this school sensed something was wrong, either in the relevance of professional development, or in feelings about school collegiality or modelling of best teaching practice. The fanfare whole school professional development events, or the lack of responsiveness of the professional development system, can be related back to a lack of proper understanding of teacher needs. Rather than a process of constant upgrading of practice, professional development in this school appeared to be an activity undertaken by *employees* who, unaware of the justification for their participation, sought enjoyable ways to meet the demand and spend their time. In the meantime, teaching practices did not appear to change, and suggestions of evaluation threaten exposure of teachers already insecure and isolated in their practice.

The strongest feeling that comes out of the focus group discussion is the complete absence of dialogue between some teachers and students. Teaching approaches that clearly fail appear to continue without consideration for those upon whom they are inflicted, and with complete disregard of their responses. In the absence of any formal mechanism for students to transmit their views, they have to resort to unofficial means of communication. Comments on good teaching are appreciated, but attempts to transmit concerns are lost as teachers close ranks to criticism. In the worst cases, classroom disobedience and disruption remains the only vehicle for democratic outpourings of concern about learning. The school response is to send in a heavier teacher to deal with the symptom, whilst failing to address the cause, which cannot be analysed in the absence of a mechanism to do so. Meanwhile, student cynicism increases as they feel condemned to continue with a teacher whom they know at the very least is retarding their learning, and who attends professional development that fails to generate change.

The students and teachers in School 2 appear to be divided by the realities of life in the school, rather than brought increasingly together by the act of teaching and learning. The agenda seems in some cases to be control rather than understanding, and the relative positions are of superior and subordinate in an industrial sense rather than academic collegiality. The students know what works best for them but are unable to communicate it. Meanwhile, the opening for student views is absent, because there is no means by which teachers can focus back on their pedagogy and its impact on student learning. Behaviour issues are seen as naughtiness rather than an attempt to communicate a learning difficulty. Teachers who might require support in

reasserting control are thus traumatised on two fronts: by the students who are dissatisfied, and by the administration that they must be rely upon at the expense of exposing their weakness. Within this milieu the fundamental issues of teaching and learning are lost.

As mentioned in the survey judgements, the introduction of a teacher evaluation or standards system into an environment such as School 2 would face significant difficulties. Rather than a *tabula rasa*, this current school situation is fraught with issues that actively engender suspicion, fear and confusion amongst teachers. Before anything positive could happen, teachers would need to feel empowered and secure that the evaluation was in their interest, and also would enhance the quality of school life.

The following judgements can be made from the results in this school matched against the design elements for effective evaluation in Chapter 2:

(1)   The purposes of evaluation were unclear. The documentation mentioned supporting teachers professional growth, but the actual application of the appraisal system appears to have been selection for promotion.

(2)   The actual versus stated purpose, and the rare application of evaluations meant that there was no impact of the process on teaching practices.

(3)   The sole subject of evaluation, Teacher 2G, clearly felt that his person had been judged rather than his work. His inability to identify inputs or means of redress means that he was left with this permanent impression.

(4)   The climate of trust and mutual equality for evaluation did not exist, not just for the damaged Teacher 2G, but also for other teachers in the school who had not experienced evaluation themselves. Manifestation of isolation characteristics by a number of teachers indicates that the evaluation system did not build mutual confidence and true collegiality.

(5)   The appraisal system in this school was purely summative, inherent in what appeared to be its selection purpose, despite mention of formative elements in the documentation.

(6)   The documentation reflected no consideration of the teachers as participants in the development of the evaluation process, clearly evident in the term *employees*. Furthermore, if teachers had been participants, there would have been better communication and understanding of evaluation requirements, which were clearly lacking.

(7)   The rare application of the appraisal, and no mention of school-wide quality assurance suggests again that evaluation was something applied only to employees by management, rather throughout the whole organisation.

(8)   The rare and inconsistent application of evaluation in this school meant that neither could issues of pedagogy or performance be addressed nor good performance be rewarded unless issues of promotion, or perhaps significant teaching failure, arose.

(9)   The evaluation in this process appears to have been an example of a deteriorated appraisal system (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson 2004, p.35). It had failed to be dynamic and adapt to changes in the educational environment, and thus appears to have been ignored unless required by bureaucratic process.

(10)   There was no evidence that the evaluation in this school generated reflection amongst teachers. Few knew anything of the process, and it generated fear and resentment rather than reflection on pedagogy. The students saw no evidence of reflective practices, were involved in evaluation only of student teachers, and were forced into informal processes to communicate their needs.

The following judgements can be made from the results in this school matched against the design elements for effective professional development in Chapter 3:

(1)   There appeared to be no mechanism for taking into account teacher stages in the professional development in this school. The overall negative responses to whole school professional development demonstrate that professional development managers were unaware of the real needs of teachers in this school.

(2)   Whilst opportunities for reflection on teaching were mentioned by some teachers, and this is to be welcomed, students were unable to perceive ongoing developments in pedagogy to indicate that professional development encouraged experimentation and

new approaches to teaching on a regular basis. The reflection opportunities may thus not be extending to classroom practices.

(3)   The widespread response of basing professional development on interesting and fun options rather than pedagogical need, indicates that professional development practices in this school have not generated an independent and reflective attitude amongst the teachers. The dominant attitude to professional development appears to be passive consumption, tinged with irritation in whole school events. Most significantly, where there are perceived shortfalls in the professional development system in the school, the teachers do not appear to be acting independently to meet their own needs.

(4)   Focus group discussion indicates that most professional development did not permeate to the classroom. Rather, student perceptions of this essential element of teaching practice were cynical.

(5)   There was no validation procedure for professional development in this school. Any verbal or written report thus appears to have been procedural, with no further investigation of the impact of teacher professional development on pedagogy or teaching practice. Teacher awareness of this may have generated attitudes to professional development that were less than serious and professional. Ultimately, this failure to validate may have transmitted an ongoing message in the school that professional development really did not matter. Teacher and parental attitudes merely voiced this fact.

(6)   In the absence of any school wide evaluation and quality enhancement process, and the failure to manage teacher learning outcomes, there was no evidence that professional development in this school was a continual and unified process directed to enhance student learning. Rather than an organic part of everyday school life, it appears to have been relegated by both teachers and students to something inconsequential that teachers do.