Developing a professional learning approach to build the capacity of school-leaders to lead quality student and teacher learning

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Student Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.
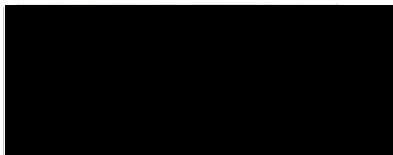
Joanne Maree Osler

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Dedication

To Meg and Sophie, my daughters, who have been my inspiration to strive for quality in education. Thank you for being 'opposites' and reminding me how unique and special each learner is.

Abstract

This thesis explores the development of Leaders of Learning as they build their capacity to lead quality student and teacher learning in their schools. The study examines an approach to professional learning designed to effectively support school-based leaders to conceptualise an approach to school improvement focused on understanding and promoting quality learning. The thesis explores the impact that maintaining a focus on quality learning has, on the way Leaders of Learning think about their leadership of student and teacher learning.

The research is based on a grounded theory approach. As a participant-observer, the researcher worked as a professional learning facilitator in the schools in which participating Leaders of Learning were employed. Over a three-year period, the data captures observable changes in the way these Leaders of Learning approached their teaching and leadership practice. The study reflects the personalised nature of their learning experiences as they make sense of quality learning, and consider the implications for their leadership of learning. The diversity of learning contexts of each Leader of Learning is highlighted in the study and includes variations in classrooms, professional learning settings, teacher meetings, online conversations and coaching sessions.

This study outlines four major themes (quality student learning; quality teaching; quality professional learning; and, building leadership capacity). These four themes emerged from the extensive data sets and illustrate the importance of creating a professional learning approach that builds the capacity of Leaders of Learning to understand and address the challenges associated with building quality learning in their contexts. The research takes these themes and conceptualizes a framework that illustrates a process of development that informs the development of knowledge and practice of Leaders of Learning.

Acknowledgements

This study was made possible by the Leaders of Learning who willingly became involved in this research. Fifteen leaders from Catholic Primary Schools within the Diocese of Sale, opened their schools and classrooms and worked with me to explore new ways to promote quality learning in their contexts. I thank them for their readiness to take risks and explore new possibilities in leading student and teacher learning, sharing their experiences and learning with me and remaining a part of the study until its conclusion.

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I would also like to thank Dr. Kathy Smith for agreeing to share supervision later in my journey. Your wealth of knowledge of learning and teaching and your ability to re-frame my work in new and meaningful ways helped me to see the 'bigger picture.' Thanks Kath for being a wonderful supervisor.

To my family, Andrew, Meg, Sophie, Mum and Dad, my greatest supporters, who are always proud of me no matter what, and who know how to remind me to keep things real. Their love and ongoing support made this journey possible and I can't thank them enough for their patience and understanding. I can finally say… "there is no more to write."

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Background

This thesis explores the development of Leaders of Learning as they build their capacity to lead student learning, professional learning and the building of quality pedagogy in their schools. As a participant-observer (Labaree, 2002) in this research, my professional role was to establish an approach to working with schools that supported the participating school leaders to make sense of the existing structures and practices in their schools in order to improve learning and teaching. I was in a position to shape my role over time as I considered and responded to my ongoing work with these school leaders. In working with these school leaders it became evident that there was a strong need to explore and make sense of quality learning in order to better understand the existing challenges that were hindering the improvement of student learning. As became apparent, their limited experiences in 'breaking open' quality learning meant that current approaches to learning were not well understood and this prompted an inconsistent and often passive approach to learning in classrooms.

In my participant role as a leader of their professional learning, I was focused on becoming more informed about approaches to professional learning that would effectively support these school-based leaders to successfully confront, make sense of, and reconcile the inconsistencies between personal learning and practice. My aim was to encourage these participant leaders to redefine their roles as Leaders of Learning as they established an approach to their leadership that reflected a serious and relentless focus on understanding and building quality student and teacher learning, while remaining focused on enacting a shared vision for quality learning across their schools. I was interested in exploring a professional learning approach that focused on making sense of the nature of quality learning and the impact this would have had on the way these leaders thought about and refined their leadership of student and teacher learning – which then became the major intent of this thesis.

It seems reasonable to assert that if schools are to improve the nature of learning then they require leaders that know about quality learning, have established practice that builds the capacity of their student and teacher learners to learn effectively and, have the confidence to challenge practice that promotes passive learning. Successful Leaders of Learning could be characterised as continually reflecting on the effectiveness of their practice and so are self-

directed (Smith, 2017) to understand their context as a learning environment. Such leaders would therefore build the capacity of others to work collaboratively to make sense of the challenges that exist and create practice that responds to such ongoing challenges. Thus, a major assumption underpinning the development project I came to lead with these schools was that Leaders of Learning have a crucial role in redefining learning and establishing a shared vision that supports ongoing improvement in student learning. Thus, it could be argued that effective leadership of learning would be reflected in a leader's ability to remain focused on building quality learning and communicating practice that promotes quality learning in their school's context.

Themes of the research

This research explores a number of themes that are important to the building of a professional learning approach that builds the capacity of Leaders of Learning to lead the building of quality learning within their schools. These themes will be explored within the Literature review and shape the data and discussion chapters. The role of a Leader of Learning is based on understanding more about the relationship between the nature of quality student learning, quality teaching and approaches to professional learning. It is particularly important that Leaders of Learning understand that to effectively build teacher and leader capacity to achieve ongoing improvement in student learning, professional learning must remain both personally meaningful and contextually relevant. The research themes are outlined below.

Quality student learning

Understanding the nature of quality student learning is central to the work of Leaders of Learning as they establish an approach to improve learning in their schools. The features of quality learning when identified and understood define the nature and intent of that learning. Murphy (1996) suggested that 'in current theories of learning, the responsibility for learning rests with students and teachers. Students are expected to engage in dialogue with each other, and with teachers to validate their own understandings rather than merely accept transmitted views' (p. 33). Moving beyond 'transmission' has been an ongoing theme in the literature (e.g., Claxton, 2002; Hattie, 2009; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Costa & Kallick, 2000) and is similar to that which Mitchell & Mitchell (1996) have referred to as the shift in roles of students and teachers to one of sharing intellectual control, i.e., where teachers build the capacity of learners to engage in more effective thinking strategies. Developing students' 'thinking strategies' links to the notion of '21st century' skills which are perceived as

necessary new competencies for success in the modern world (Dede, 2010; Rotherham & Willington, 2010; Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). This change in learning intent is evident in contemporary learning frameworks which consistently reflect a significant shift from more traditional approaches to learning (based on transmissive teaching) to that of learners becoming more metacognitive (Flavell, 1979). Metacognition is closely linked to arguments about 'active learning' which similarly requires learners to be metacognitive and to initiate strategies to improve understanding, monitor their approach to learning and control different cognitive processes (Loughran, 2010). In essence, quality student learning then focuses on what the learner does, how and why and is a direct response to superficial or passive learning.

Quality teaching

Quality teaching requires a strategic approach that explicitly teaches students the behaviours and actions of effective learners; students need to understand how to learn successfully within a classroom context. (i.e., how to engage in deep learning and go beyond the superficial). Teachers and leaders that recognise they have an important role in designing practice in response to the need to build the capacity of their learners to learn effectively are likely to have a greater awareness and understanding of their personal pedagogy. Therefore, quality learning becomes a lens through which to view and think about practice (Costa & Kallick, 2005; Hattie & Yates, 2014; Lucas, Claxton & Spencer, 2013, Baird & Northfield, 1992; Loughran, Mitchell & Mitchell, 2002) for, as Loughran (2010) stated 'recognising and responding to students' behaviours is … essential because these behaviours are equally important in shaping the nature of the teaching and learning environment' (p. 4). However, accounting for practice that supports quality learning can be challenging. Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard (2006) noted that teacher accounts of their practice 'are usually personalised, contextualised and shaped by their personal experiences … as a consequence, most attempts to describe what happens in classrooms founder in the shallows of impression and superficial recollection' (p. 32). Therefore, how teachers account for students' learning behaviours can influence (if not determine) how they consider their role in shaping students' approaches to learning. As teachers learn to reflect on, analyse and communicate important features of their practice, and the impact these have on student learning, they allow their teacher knowledge to be accessed, challenged, framed and re-framed (Schön, 1983; 1987).

Quality professional learning

Ongoing teacher professional learning is essential for supporting teachers and leaders in exploring quality learning and considering the implications for teaching practice. Quality professional learning provides teachers and leaders with experiences to explore and understand their learning and teaching contexts and in so doing, compare and contrast to the characteristics and the limitations of traditional professional development (PD) methods and approaches. Fullan (2008) asserted that deep learning happens when it is embedded in the culture of the school, 'If people are not learning in the specific context in which the work is being done, they are learning superficially' (p. 89). Traditional PD approaches often involve a focus on expecting to increase teacher knowledge by providing teachers and school leaders with the latest theories and examples of practice drawn from the work of 'others'. The view that improvement in practice involves presenting teachers with the knowledge required to produce identified strategies and learning tasks can be interpreted as disregarding – or setting aside - the existing knowledge and experiences of teachers (Osterman & Kottkamp,1993). Teachers and leaders need to be in a position where they can explore learning and teaching and work from the authority of 'their' experience (Munby & Russell, 1994). In so doing, they are able to reflect on and refine practice and take responsibility for designing practice in response to building the capacity of their learners to be metacognitive and affect their approach to learning (Mitchell, Mitchell & Lumb, 2009; Hord, Roussin & Sommers, 2010; Clemans, 2008; Zepeda, 2008; Loughran, 2010).

Building leadership capacity

Effective change leadership requires clarity about the impact new ways of working might have on learners. Fullan (2003) was of the opinion that education needs 'leaders who can create a fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and the teaching profession itself' (p. 92). Quality leaders understand the personalised nature of the challenges that impact learning and teaching and in response design strategies that address these within their contexts.

Muhammad (2009) asserted that 'in order to influence student learning at the classroom level, the school leaders must begin by demanding that the organisation as a whole focus on student learning' (p. 86). A collective focus on understanding and improving quality learning is a powerful vision that has the potential to transform the way teachers and leaders think about

and design strategies for change. Davies (2006) stated that 'strategic leadership therefore defines and translates the vision and moral purpose into action' (p. 20).

Effective leaders model an approach to professional learning and a personal pedagogy that reflects the nature of quality learning and quality teaching. They lead by example and in so doing, build credibility as a Leader of Learning as well as build personal understandings of what that involves.

As noted earlier, each of these themes is intimately tied to all aspects of both the program of development in which the Leaders of Learning were involved, and the research of the program which has led to this thesis. These themes play an important role as foundations on which the program was based and on the inquiry into the influence of that program on the nature of the teaching and learning of Leaders of Learning, teachers and students in the participating schools.

Layout of the thesis

This thesis comprises eleven chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction and outlines why this research came about, the importance of building the capacity of Leaders of Learning to lead quality learning in schools, the main research themes, and the overall layout of the thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews a range of research literature in order to better understand more about the relationship between the nature of quality student learning, quality teaching and approaches to professional learning that effectively build leaders' capacity to achieve fundamental school-based change that is both personally meaningful and contextually relevant.

Chapter 3 presents the method used in this research, the data collection process, techniques used to analyse data and the themes which emerged during the study. Through a grounded theory approach the research explores the development of Leaders of Learning in the contexts in which they work.

Chapter 4 explores data related to how Leaders of Learning developed personalised visions of quality learning which framed their work in their schools. The chapter focuses on the way visions of learning evolved for these leaders.

Chapter 5 explores data related to the challenges Leaders of Learning faced as they defined and explored and made sense of the relationship between learning and teaching.

Chapter 6 examines data related to how Leaders of Learning developed new ways to lead professional learning in their schools as their understandings of effective professional learning evolved.

Chapter 7 considers the data in relation to how Leaders of Learning developed a reflective approach to their teaching and leadership practice and how they promoted reflection within their schools.

Chapter 8 discusses the insights gained from the data. It brings together and reviews the individual themes presented and explored in each of the data chapters as a coherent whole. The chapter reflects on the notion of building effective Leaders of Learning from a pedagogical perspective, as their capacity to lead learning and teaching in their schools is realised. The chapter is organised around an elaboration of a process of change as explicated through the data.

Chapter 9 offers the insights derived of the development program in supporting a whole-school approach to leading pedagogical leadership. The chapter is organised in such a way as to describe the challenges Leaders of Learning faced as they attempted to improve student learning and explains the process used to understand and respond to these challenges.

Chapter 10 identifies the range of insights that emerged from this research about the thinking, practice and professional learning of Leaders of Learning and discusses the implications these findings have for system and school leadership, particularly in relation to the development of effective school-based Leaders of Learning.

Chapter 11 concludes the thesis and offers an overview of the findings and does so by reiterating the research questions and how they were answered. The chapter also offers the researcher's personal reflections about what it meant to be a leader of the Leaders of Learning involved in this research.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews a range of research literature pertaining to the relationship between the nature of quality student learning, quality teacher learning, pedagogy that focuses on building quality learning, and approaches to professional learning that effectively builds a leaders' capacity to achieve fundamental school-based change –which is both personally meaningful and contextually relevant.

Understanding the notion of 'quality' and how it relates to student and teacher learning, teaching, leadership and school improvement is central to this thesis. However, quality can seem somewhat elusive as Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland and Palmer (2009) noted:

> *Quality is often a moving target – what counts as high quality in one*
> *context or at a particular moment in time may seem quite inadequate*
> *at another time and place – and identifying the signs of quality can be*
> *challenging, especially in an enterprise as complex and context-*
> *specific as teaching and learning. (p. 5)*

Quality is therefore subjective and relies on building personal understandings of what it means to individuals in the contexts in which they work. How teachers come to understand quality learning shapes the way they approach teaching, professional learning and leadership. When quality learning becomes an ongoing focus for school improvement and new thinking about learning is shared, it becomes a powerful lens through which to understand, challenge and refine existing practice. This chapter aims to identify important features of quality learning and consider the implications of that learning with respect to understanding teachers' practice, pedagogy, professional learning and leadership practice.

Understanding the nature of quality learning

It could well be argued that quality learning implies that particular features need to be present to ensure effectiveness in the learning process. The characteristics that become associated with these features and how each is interpreted, defines the nature and intent of that learning. Developing fundamental features of quality learning engenders a capacity to shift thinking, for example, from a more traditional view of learning centred on the knowledge and skills

identified as the content within curriculum frameworks, to identifying learner attributes described at the heart of more contemporary views. In essence, striving for quality learning is about building the capacity of learners to engage with content in ways that lead to richer understandings and application of associated knowledge. Niemi (2002) asserted that

> *In modern learning psychology many concepts, such as authentic learning, self-directed learning, self-regulated learning, independent learning, autonomous learning, problem-solving and active learning, have the same purpose, even though they originate from somewhat different theoretical frameworks. The common feature is a learner's active impact on learning and a learner's involvement in the learning process. (p. 764)*

There is much in the literature about approaches to learning that support the active participation of learners' in the learning process (see for example, Baird & Northfield, 1992; Claxton, 2002; Lucas, Claxton, Spencer 2013; Niemi, 2002; Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). Current research on contemporary learning frameworks consistently describe one significant feature that explains the difference between modern views of learning with more traditional interpretations - a learner's capacity to be metacognitive (Flavell, 1979; Hacker, et al., 1998). Metacognition allows learners to control their cognitive processes while also taking greater responsibility for managing the many factors influencing their approach to learning.

Quality learning involves engaging in different cognitive processes

> *… that which has come to be known in the literature as the surface approach to learning is linked to the intention to memorise or rote learn while a deep approach is commonly linked to the intention of developing understanding and creating meaning for the individual learner. (Loughran, 2010, p. 28)*

Learners that are metacognitive initiate strategies to improve understanding and have 'the ability to monitor and control one's own processes of thinking' (Loughran, 2010, p. 29). For teachers to purposefully support metacognition, such things as sharing intellectual control (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1996) come to the fore and simultaneously challenge more traditional approaches to teaching by demanding teachers build the capacity of learners to engage in effective thinking strategies, and more importantly, independently direct their cognitive

processes (Offir, Lev & Bezalel, 2008; Chin & Brown, 2000; Watkins, 1983; Biggs, 1988; Schmeck, 1981).

Metacognitive behaviour reflects learners' awareness of different thinking skills and their ability to monitor the level of effectiveness of those skills. Lucas et al., (2013) suggested that learning involves surface to deep thinking and the 'accumulation of knowledge and skill that takes place' (p. 11) as learning that happens at the surface moves to a deeper level of learning. That deeper level of learning involves moving 'below the surface' where thinking processes change and lead to richer understanding.

Lucas et al., (2013) described deeper learning as thinking processes that support the learner to understand the intention of the knowledge, how they can engage with and also consider their position in regard to that knowledge:

> *Students are also learning who makes "knowledge" and who has a*
> *right to speculate and create. They are learning the rules of*
> *engagement in debate or discussion. They are learning that mistakes*
> *are interesting, informative and inevitable or, alternatively, avoidable*
> *signals of ignorance and stupidity … They are learning to think of*
> *themselves as the masters and explorers of learning. (Lucas et al.,*
> *2013, p. 11)*

Murphy (1996) noted that 'in current theories of learning, the responsibility for learning rests with students and teachers. Students are expected to engage in dialogue with each other, and with teachers to validate their own understandings rather than merely accept transmitted views' (p. 33); similar views have been expressed by other researchers in the field, (see for example, Claxton, 2002; Hattie, 2009; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Costa & Kallick, 2000). Metacognitive learners have the knowledge, skills, strategies and tools to take their thinking from a surface level to a deeper level where richer understanding is the intended goal. Doing so involves such things as analysing, processing, organising and storing knowledge in more complex and meaningful ways. Loughran (2010) stated that:

> *In learning, processing matters because it is one way in which a*
> *learner can begin to impose a structure on the material. Processing*
> *can help a learner begin to organise information in ways that make*
> *sense so that it can be recalled and used appropriately when needed.*
> *(p. 79)*

Niemi (2002) had a similar view and suggested that:

> *... active learning strategies emphasise constructivistic qualities in knowledge processing. These are independent inquiry, and structuring and restructuring of knowledge. In active learning, the processing of knowledge also requires a problem-solving orientation, a critical approach and an evaluation of knowledge. (p. 764)*

Knowing how to think deeply also involves building the capacity of learners to think in diverse ways. Currently, researchers have been reinforcing the significance of building '21st century' skills, which include, but are not limited to: creativity; critical thinking; and, problem-solving, as important competencies for success in the modern world (Dede, 2010; Rotherham & Willington, 2010; Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). These skills place new demands on learners as they are encouraged to move away from more traditional and passive approaches to school learning to more active and creative approaches. Learners need knowledge of these forms of thinking, as well as an understanding of how such thinking impacts learning, and the strategies and tools that enable them to independently engage in these cognitive skills (Pellegrino, 2017).

Becoming metacognitive and learning how to think effectively and monitor the level of understanding throughout the learning process, goes to the heart of distinguishing between learning that is active rather than passive. Metacognitive skills are also crucial for learners to manage the many layers of the learning process and make informed decisions that positively affect their approach (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995; Niemi, 2002).

Quality learning involves learners managing and monitoring the learning process

Managing and monitoring the learning process involves understanding the context and the expectations of the learner. Learners need to think about the challenges that negatively impact on learning as well as the decisions, resources, tools and strategies that will affect learning in more positive ways. Lucas et al. (2013) stated that 'learning has many layers, and it generally proceeds on several of them simultaneously' (p. 10). Learners that engage in quality learning are aware of these different layers and know how to attend to the associated demands. Quality learning could then be described as the need for learners to be decision-makers, managers of process, monitors of performance and understanding, as well as controllers of their own thinking processes. Despite the fact that any definition of quality learning runs the risk of becoming prescriptive, the way in which quality learning is described by individual teachers'

matters because it opens up possibilities for learning and can provide new perspectives on a process that can too often simply be taken for granted. Understanding the nature of quality learning then is critical to thinking about teaching practice if Leaders of Learning and teachers are to build an approach to learning that promotes and supports active learning and challenges passive behaviours. The learning context needs to value and promote metacognitive behaviour and the individual and varying contributions of its learners.

Building the skills of effective communication and collaboration provide a context for learners to test their thinking on others. Learners need to access, organise and then communicate their thinking, seek and respond to peer and teacher feedback, while considering the ideas of others. Learning environments that promote quality learning in this way acknowledge the learners as key decision-makers in the learning process. (Seidel et al., 2009) Learners are aware of the choices available to them, the effectiveness of the decisions they make and the sort of decisions that will lead to improved understanding and performance. Motivation to learn increases as learners take greater responsibility for their learning, where decision-making is a key element in feeling empowered in the learning context (Dickinson, 1995; Siedel et al., 2009).

Shared intellectual control between learners and teachers changes the nature of the conversations in the learning context. Discussions about thinking processes and strategies for monitoring and managing learning become common practice and encourage learners to identify the possibilities. These learning conversations are interwoven with the content focus, leading to more powerful learning. Through PEEL (Project for Enhancing Effective Learning, Baird & Northfield, 1992) this motivation to learn and sense of empowerment was described as building a personal orientation to learning:

> *Students progressively build a personal orientation to learning. This*
> *orientation emphasises understanding meaning – the meaning of the*
> *content and the meaning of the learning task. Along with*
> *understanding of the content is an understanding of the process –*
> *knowing about the nature and process of learning, and being aware*
> *and in control of the learning task. (p. 4)*

Teaching for quality learning requires a conscious focus on building the capacity of learners to understand how to affect their own learning process. This practice requires teachers to be metacognitive in the way they approach practice and to consider the complexities in

supporting learners to take greater responsibility for learning within the context in which they work. Becoming pedagogically aware requires teachers to know how their approach to teaching influences the way their students approach learning.

Pedagogy that focuses on building quality learning

Pollard (2010) asserted that 'pedagogy is the practice of teaching framed and informed by a shared and structured body of knowledge' (p. 5). What teachers know and believe is possible, in terms of student learning, is reflected in their actions and the way they work in different contexts. Loughran (2010) was of the view that 'pedagogy is concerned with the relationship between learning and teaching. Understanding this interplay between teaching and learning and learning and teaching is an important shift in focus from teaching alone because it really matters that the two exist together' (p. 36). In a similar vein, Lucas et al. (2013) described a desired shift in understandings of pedagogy by stating

> *Where once it meant little more than the way 'instruction' is*
> *undertaken in the classroom by the teacher, we see it having a much*
> *wider sense to include not just the implied didactic element but also*
> *the roles learners have in being active participants in the process. (p.*
> *127)*

Practice that focuses only on teaching the knowledge, skills and concepts within the curriculum content, is different to the practice that builds the capacity of learners to monitor and manage their thinking processes and their approach to learning in order to engage effectively with the curriculum content (Niemi, 2002; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Lucas, et al., 2013). Teaching for quality learning relies on understanding this difference and the role teachers have in building learner awareness of how they can influence learning in effective ways.

Quality teaching involves building quality learning

Understanding how the term 'quality' relates to teaching relies on identifying the features of quality learning and building these deliberately through practice. As noted above, quality learning involves more than the learning of curriculum content, it is about establishing a more comprehensive view of the 'what' of learning in conjunction with the 'how' and 'why' if students are to genuinely engage in quality learning. Therefore, approaches to building quality learning must involve continually exploring ways to enhance learner awareness of the ways in which they can influence their own learning; the 'focus is unceasingly on students

and their successful learning' (Hord, Roussin & Sommers, 2010, p. 27). Quality teaching needs to involve more than simply providing opportunities for learners to engage in and use active learning skills. Learners need to be supported to independently build personal understandings of how they engage as effective learners. However, there is always the danger that strategies to promote active learning can become little more than practical tasks. Teaching for quality learning requires a strategic approach that explicitly teaches students the behaviours and actions of effective learners; students need to understand how to learn successfully within a classroom context (Costa & Kallick, 2005; Hattie & Yates, 2014; Lucas, Claxton & Spencer, 2013, Baird & Northfield, 1992; Loughran, Mitchell & Mitchell, 2002).

Quality learning as a lens to plan, reflect on, evaluate and refine practice, establishes and reinforces the relationship between learning and teaching. A focus on building quality learning prompts thinking about practice and involves observing student learning and making explicit to students, the actions and decisions necessary to build learner awareness of how they are establishing their role in the learning process. Loughran (2010) stated that, 'recognising and responding to students' behaviours is also essential because these behaviours are equally important in shaping the nature of the teaching and learning environment' (p. 4).

Teacher beliefs about learning and what they think students are capable of in relation to taking control of their learning, greatly influences what teachers look for and understand learning to be in their teaching contexts, as well as how they reflect on the nature of learning during their planning for teaching. Focusing on the nature of quality learning, changes the role of the learner, requiring teachers to reconsider their role in light of this new positioning. When learners become key contributors, they determine more about the approach to learning and rely less on teachers to direct and control their learning. Grabinger and Dunlap (1995) suggested that learning in this way 'requires a shift in the traditional roles of students and instructors. Students become investigators, seekers and problem solvers. Teachers become facilitators and guides, rather than presenters of knowledge' (p. 19).

By considering the features of quality learning, thinking about practice is initiated and directed in new ways. For example, thinking about teaching first, risks defaulting to familiar teaching behaviours, i.e., behaviours connected to the teaching of curriculum content rather than behaviours focused on building the capacity of learners to learn effectively. Not surprisingly then, it is important that quality learning drives understandings and approaches

to practice, for as Britzman (2012) noted, starting with teaching, it is not so much that practice makes perfect, rather that practice makes practice.

Understanding quality teaching requires making sense of existing practice

The challenge for schools is to support teachers to become more aware of their pedagogy and the specific teacher actions that provide ongoing opportunities for students to approach their learning in active ways and take greater responsibility for shaping their approach to learning. Raising this awareness requires leaders and teachers to first make sense of their current practice, to understand the decisions they make and the impact particular actions have on student learning. It is not difficult to see that teachers can be unaware of how they might be promoting passive learning behaviours in their students (Baird & Mitchell, 1987; Saljo, 1979), so without making these known, familiar and accepted patterns of teaching can simply become the default: 'unfortunately changing teacher practice is difficult, because it involves changing long established habits' (Wiliam, 2010, p. 5). Further to this, it has been stated that:

> *the difficulty is that in the bustling world of teaching it is not always easy to really see our own practice, much less see it from other perspectives. Therefore, sometimes we need to be challenged and confronted by our own teaching-just like students need to be challenged and confronted by their learning. (Loughran, 2010, p. 146)*

Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard (2006) were of the view that teacher accounts of their practice 'are usually personalised, contextualised and shaped by their personal experiences … as a consequence, most attempts to describe what happens in classrooms founder in the shallows of impression and superficial recollection' (p. 32). Therefore, how teachers account for students' learning behaviours can influence (if not determine) how they consider their role in shaping students' approaches to learning. Perhaps in teaching, it is too easy to lay blame with the students and perceive their actions as something independent of teaching rather than to see teaching as a driver of learning behaviours.

Thus, supporting teachers to build awareness of the influence teaching has on the learning behaviours students display, is central to teachers becoming more pedagogically aware. Wiliam (2016) suggested that teacher change is dependent on teachers understanding the relationship between learning and teaching, so much so that 'as long as teachers are reflecting on the relationship between what they did as teachers and what their students learned as a result' (p. 178), pedagogical development will occur.

Teacher knowledge

What teachers need to know and how this is useful in the way they shape their practice is key to improving pedagogy. If system and school-leaders decide 'what' teachers need to know and fail to involve them in the decision-making or fail to acknowledge their critical role as learners in ongoing professional development, then teachers too can easily become passive participants in school improvement; paradoxically reinforcing passive learning as an acceptable approach. Establishing a vision for collective learning is a shared responsibility that acknowledges existing understandings and practices, establishes new expectations and ways of working and celebrates ongoing learning by capturing new thinking and reshaping the collective vision.

> *The staff creates the vision and, subsequently the environment where all students will reach their potential. The vision is kept visible and is revisited often to ensure, its currency and authenticity. (Hord, et al., 2010, p. 27)*

Capturing quality learning as a collective vision challenges teachers to consider what they know, how they currently contribute to the vision and what they need to know or explore to take their thinking to a deeper level. As teachers focus on communicating how their knowledge of quality learning translates into practice, they make greater sense of their pedagogy. Pollard (2010) asserted that:

> *One of the challenges for pedagogical discourse is to distinguish between what is known in a scientific sense of being explicit, cumulative and generalizable, and what are the irreducibly intuitive and creative elements of teaching. (p. 5)*

Building pedagogical awareness relies on teachers building a reflective approach to their practice in order to make sense of their tacit knowledge and determine avenues for future exploration and development (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Their ability to reflect on, analyse and communicate critical components of their practice allows their knowledge to be accessed, challenged, framed and re-framed (Schön, 1983; 1987) through a process of ongoing reflection and evaluation. Once exposed, teachers can explore ways to shape practice to address their current challenges in building quality student learning and find approaches that better reflect their new ways of thinking.

Across a range of projects with teachers, Mitchell and Mitchell (1996) came to see that 'the tacit forms of knowledge have become more explicit as teachers have found the confidence and strategies to communicate their understandings' (p. iii). Guerriero (2017) was also of this view noting that 'a first step towards a research-based knowledge base is to support teachers in making their existing practices and their underlying knowledge explicit' (p. 55).

Although expert teachers may be more likely to incorporate the ideas of quality learning within their practice, it does not guarantee that they are aware of how they do this or that they can communicate their practice effectively to others.

> *... we all need to acknowledge this paradox of teaching – that the more expert a teacher becomes, the more his/her expertise is manifested in sensitivity to contexts and situations, in imaginative judgements in-the-moment sourced from tacit knowledge. The importance of these forms of expertise is often underestimated. Indeed, they often become so embedded, instinctive and taken-for-granted that they are barely recognised. (Pollard, 2010, p. 5)*

An aspect of expertise is enmeshed in the fact that effective teachers should know why they are effective. In order to understand the influence particular teaching strategies, procedures and actions have on learners, teachers need a language to think and talk about quality learning and their practice as well as a process to capture and communicate student change. Reflecting on and evaluating teaching encourages teachers to consider and develop different teaching responses. They do this 'in the moment' and become competent at 'juggling' multiple ideas around learning and teaching at any one time, and can react to these instantly. In so doing, they learn to manage information more effectively where they are constantly making sense of their practice through a process of reflection, evaluation, framing and re-framing (Hattie & Yates, 2014, Loughran, 2010), and as a consequence, building knowledge of teaching.

It can be valuable for teachers to approach their work as an ongoing exploration and analyses of current educational practices. Ongoing professional conversations that expose the underlying features of practice support teachers to move beyond the solely technical components of teaching. Such dialogue enables teachers to identify: the expectations of learners; the pedagogical reasoning underpinning teaching strategies; and, new ways to understand student change. This is the space where teachers can build richer understandings of the nature of pedagogy and awareness of their personal pedagogical understandings. By

making sense of their underlying philosophies, teachers can share their knowledge of practice in ways that make that knowledge explicit and shift the conversation from the technical to generating and framing personal theories about practice.

From dependency to empowerment

Schools often adopt 'new teaching approaches' that have been developed by external experts neatly packaged into teaching recipes for teachers to follow. It could well be argued that such adoption is based on an assumption that teachers can (will) accept the teaching approaches of others without making connections to their personal understandings, beliefs and experiences, and thus simply change their existing patterns of teaching and adopt the 'new pedagogy'. As stated earlier, the nature of pedagogy is more complex than implementing a suite of new teaching strategies and practical activities. Sustaining change in practice requires thoughtful consideration and is often a response to identified challenges and targeted outcomes.

> *... we cannot afford to have teachers' dependent on politicians and bureaucrats for identifying problems and priorities and then prescribing the solutions. I have always been impressed by what teachers have been able to achieve when given opportunities and support to bring about improvements and respond to challenges at the school level. (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1996, p. iii)*

School improvement then relies on teachers building understandings of how they can change their own pedagogy. Pedagogy is influenced by the way teachers' knowledge, beliefs, previous experiences, personal perceptions of their role and the professional and the external expectations placed on them, come together in action. Interestingly, as teachers become more pedagogically aware they tend to understand what is important to them and what drives their thinking about practice (Brookfield, 1995). Teachers often evaluate and challenge what they know when they engage in opportunities that foster a reconsideration of their existing position against new ideas. They contribute to the collective knowledge and ideas within the school and ensure risk-taking and classroom exploration is a regular expectation of teacher learning.

A reliance on practice designed by external experts can limit the way teachers make sense of their teaching, their focus can be drawn to learning how to teach a new strategy rather than considering ways to create strategies that respond to the learners in their classrooms. If teaching is considered within a creative space, then teachers build an understanding that they

are responsible for observing and responding to learning in ways which not only meet the expectations of the curriculum, but the rights of learners to come to understand how they can influence and manage their own learning. Therefore, teachers must be knowledgeable when it comes to curriculum, but they also need to go further to understand the way learners come to understand and take responsibility for their own learning. Quality learning then becomes another aspect of their knowledge of teaching and supporting learners to be metacognitive draws attention to how knowledge translates into learner actions (Pollard, 2010). As a consequence, approaches to teacher learning that focus on the building of quality learning and quality teaching can provide opportunities for teachers to build greater pedagogical awareness.

Quality professional learning that leads to greater pedagogical awareness

The literature in this section of the chapter explores the characteristics of approaches to professional learning that lead to teachers building richer understandings of quality learning and establishing greater pedagogical awareness, while also exposing the limitations of traditional professional development. Clearly, in light of the nature of this thesis there is a shared concern about quality learning between both teachers and Leaders of Learning, those responsible for establishing an approach to school improvement which maintains continual focus on building both quality student and teacher learning. For both teachers and Leaders of Learning, quality professional learning becomes critical.

> *In recent times there has been a differentiation between professional*
> *development, traditionally characterised as doing things 'to' teachers*
> *and that of professional learning, which acknowledges the importance*
> *of working with teachers. (Loughran, 2010, p. 3)*

Traditional approaches to teacher Professional Development (PD) have been described in many ways but in recent times there has been a blurring of name and meaning as Professional Learning has, in some instances, been substituted for PD. Even a brief glance at the literature illustrates the perceived (or hoped for) distinction between Professional Development and Professional Learning (see for example, Smith, 2017). As is made clear through the debate about the difference between Professional Development and Professional Learning simply replacing one term with another does not change the nature of the approach to teacher learning; it is the fundamental assumptions, philosophy and practice that define the nature of the experience. The intention of this section of the chapter is to draw attention to the

differences in approaches to teacher learning and describe the impact particular characteristics can have on teacher learning.

Quality professional learning focuses on understanding the learning and teaching context

One of the distinctions between professional learning approaches and professional development strategies is the positioning of opportunities for teacher learning in the everyday work of teachers and educational leaders. More traditional PD approaches are normally placed 'outside of the classroom', disconnected from the learning and teaching contexts in which teachers and Leaders of Learning engage with their respective learners. PD opportunities of this nature often tend to promote ideas developed and supported by external experts and are usually organised by school leadership and rarely involve individual teacher input (Cole, 2012).

More traditional PD opportunities are often designed to be standalone sessions where key messages about practice are passed onto participants who are then expected to implement the 'new routines and practices' in their classrooms. This approach reinforces a 'one size fits all' mindset where presenting the same information to a group of teachers is intended to achieve consistency in teaching practice across the participants - a recognised and desired outcome of school improvement. The desire of such PD is that 'information can be packaged and presented to a group of teachers in one hit, with little follow-up support' (Aubusson, Ewing & Hoban, 2009, p. 9).

Aubusson, et al., (2009) stated that 'traditional development has been criticised because it often lacks any systematic support in a school setting to sustain teacher learning after the presentation of the workshop or in-service' (p. 9). Such approaches to teacher learning usually rely on more didactic teaching strategies to present particular knowledge to teachers and rarely model pedagogy that promotes quality learning. With a greater emphasis on providing teachers with the strategies and practical ideas that have been designed to replace current practice, such PD opportunities rarely acknowledge or explore the complex nature of pedagogy, in particular the reflective process involved in changing established teaching behaviours. Loughran (2010) was of the view that 'teaching requires technical proficiency. However, moving beyond the technical is crucial for the development of pedagogical expertise' (p. 212). Traditional approaches to PD can be characterized as those which reduce teaching to a technical undertaking where teachers are exposed to someone else's view of

'best practice' and then expected to adopt the new strategies by simply implementing these in their classrooms.

Professional Learning approaches focus on the context in which learning and teaching happens. As teachers engage with their learners they seek to better understand the learning and teaching environment. Ongoing professional learning becomes part of the pedagogy of teachers as they seek to make sense of their 'practice in action' and consider the impact their teaching has on student learning. Fullan (2008) asserted that deep learning happens when it is embedded in the culture of the school: 'If people are not learning in the specific context in which the work is being done, they are learning superficially' (p. 89). A focus on personal practice provides an authentic purpose to engage in Professional Learning, and supports teachers to make connections between the role of Professional Learning and the continual refinement of practice. Wiliam (2016) noted that teacher change:

> *... requires changing habits, which requires a different approach to teacher professional development that is needed to give teachers new knowledge. Professional development must be job embedded, practice focused, and continued, over a substantial period of time. (p. 241)*

It could well be argued that Professional Learning approaches are designed to encourage teachers to analyse, reflect on and refine their practice in response to a personal desire to improve learning for their students (Mitchell, Mitchell & Lumb, 2009; Hord, Roussin & Sommers, 2010; Berry, Blaise, Clemans, Loughran, Mitchell, Parr, Riley & Robb, 2008; Zepeda, 2008; Loughran, 2010).

Defining the features of quality student learning can provide a lens to think differently about practice. As teachers explore what quality student learning really means for their learners and their teaching, they may begin to recognize a similar shift toward quality learning in their Professional Learning needs. Genuine Professional Learning then (not Professional Development relabelled as Professional Learning) can create opportunities for teachers to explore, model and build understandings of the thoughts, actions and behaviours of active learners. These understandings are based on their observations of their students and their experiences as learners, and simultaneously build awareness of the strategies that promote such learning. Teachers are in a privileged position to generate new knowledge about quality learning and quality teaching by making sense of their personal experiences (Baird, Mitchell & Northfield, 1987). Guerriero (2017) noted that:

When planning specific interventions towards a better governance of teacher knowledge, empowering teacher educators and teachers themselves to take charge of teachers' knowledge base seems to be critical. (p. 67)

Traditional PD approaches often involve a focus on expecting to increase teacher knowledge by providing teachers and school leaders with the latest theories and examples of practice drawn from the work of 'others'. The view that improvement in practice involves presenting teachers with the knowledge required to produce identified strategies and learning tasks, can be interpreted as disregarding – or setting aside - the existing knowledge and experiences of teachers. Osterman & Kottkamp (1993) drew attention to such practices when they stated that PD:

Consists primarily of transmission of knowledge. In this process, knowledge is the province of experts, and learners have access to it through the instructor. The instructor's role is to convey that information in a clear and concise manner; the learner's role is to absorb it. (p. 10)

PD approaches of that form (noted above) can create teacher and leader dependency as the creation of effective practice becomes the work, or the responsibility, of others – those others largely outside of the 'dailyness' of teaching (Loughran & Northfield, 1996). The danger in so doing is that others (non-teachers) predetermine the reasons or theory behind why teachers and students need to change and the reasons for changes in practice are not necessarily explicit or clear; 'the link between theory and practice is implicit, and the learning process begins and ends with theory' (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993, p. 13).

There is a need for a shift in approaches to teacher learning whereby Professional Learning might focus on exploring the nature of quality in theory and in practice. Establishing strong connections between learning and teaching can encourage teachers to be cognisant of both during their conversations and reflections on practice. A reflective approach to practice can build an ongoing dialogue for teachers to have with themselves, and others, that might support them to understand, communicate, challenge and frame what they know about effective teaching practice and consider how and why they have developed such knowledge.

Reflective practice is viewed as a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact

> *of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for*
> *professional growth and development. (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993,*
> *p. 2)*

When teachers create personal action plans that reflect their current thinking and demonstrate how they can take responsibility for their own Professional Learning, they invoke a reflective stance. By exploring components of quality learning and designing practice that promotes these in an ongoing way, teachers begin to explore the nature of 'quality' in both theory and practice. The knowledge derived of such examination may more effectively position them to become responsible for leading change in their schools, personalising practice to address the challenges and needs within their own contexts (Cole, 2012).

It has been suggested that teacher action plans can promote the role of teachers in the generation of new knowledge about learning and teaching and begin to illustrate their role in contributing to the collective capacity to improve learning and teaching. Through regular dialogue teachers share, challenge and evaluate new knowledge as it arises from classroom exploration. Together teachers support new ways of thinking and design practice in response to their learning in the school. Guerriero (2017) stated that 'new knowledge emerges from research or is shared through professional communities, and this knowledge needs to be accessed, processed and evaluated, and transformed into knowledge for practice' (p. 30). Working through such a process can therefore effectively position professional knowledge as a driver of contextually relevant practice. Professional knowledge influences and refines a school's vision for, and ultimate practice in, learning.

Building the collective capacity to improve learning and teaching

There is much in the literature around the notion of school communities learning together to improve student learning. Common terms used to describe the learning capacity of schools to explore a shared focus include: Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998); Professional Learning Cultures (Kennedy, 2002); and, Professional Learning Communities (Stoll, et al., 2006). Understanding the nature of these approaches and the common characteristics that build the collective capacity to shape ongoing school improvement is the key to creating effective approaches to teacher learning. Cole (2012) stated that:

> *Even when teachers' experience of professional learning has been*
> *profound and the new knowledge they have acquired would greatly*
> *benefit their own practice and that of other teachers in their school,*

> *unless there is a positive professional learning culture within the*
> *school the transference of this learning maybe very low. (p. 6)*

DuFour, Dufour, Eaker & Many (2010) noted that 'professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators' (p. 11). Therefore, the new thinking that emerges from teachers making greater sense of their current context can obviously inform their practice and encourage further exploration. In so doing, the Professional Learning Community evolves as the approach to professional learning develops. This continuous job-embedded learning is 'an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research' (DuFour, et al., 2010, p. 11).

Ongoing learning within Professional Learning Communities or Communities of Practice establishes a rich learning culture, especially so if it is continually supported by leadership that values the exploration of practice and holds the belief that teachers can independently shape their practice in ways which result in improved student learning. Leaders can provide the structure and processes that continually bring teachers together to understand their current challenges to learning, decide possible directions and share their insights into building quality learning and quality practice. Richardson (1998) explained such processes as embedded in collaborative staff development models that 'assume that reflection and change are on-going processes of assessing beliefs, goals, and results. They are designed to help develop and support a change orientation' (p. 6); and that is what school leadership needs to foster and embrace in supporting meaningful change.

By supporting processes that create a shared vision for driving ongoing improvement, there is the potential to foster a collective 'buy in' as change becomes positioned as something that is positive and productive. At the same time, a common purpose for teacher professional learning and a reason for teachers and leaders to share their knowledge and experiences becomes clear. Leadership then is fundamentally about building the capacity of others to provide quality learning and teaching within specific contexts. Leaders also must engage and develop as effective learners; creating 'the conditions and capacity for continuous improvement to become built-in' (Fullan, 2006, p. 91).

Leadership that focuses on building quality student and teacher learning

When school leadership establishes a culture of ongoing improvement there is a greater likelihood that quality learning will be the focus and the work of leaders and teachers.

Leaders can shape and lead change by providing opportunities for teachers to understand and address the real challenges that hinder the building of effective learning. Wiliam (2016) captured the notion of meaningful school improvement when he stated that 'the essence of effective leadership is stopping people from doing good things to give them time to do even better things' (p. 180). Through capacity building, strategic thinking and a focus on understanding and communicating student and teacher change, leaders may be able to increase a school's potential to engage in ongoing improvement as a well as manage and attend to the inevitable tensions, issues and concerns associated with the change process itself. As Fullan (2003) described it, 'leaders who can create a fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and the teaching profession itself' (p. 92).

Building capacity

The literature suggests that a focus on capacity building of teachers and school leaders is a key feature of successful leadership (Davies, 2006; Fullan, 2006, 2003, 2007; Lambert, 1998). Fullan (2006) described capacity building as 'any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar' (p. 9).

Effective leaders have been described as having a clear intention to make quality learning the focus for ongoing school improvement, and to support the way teachers and leaders work together to achieve that aim. In so doing, they can create enough 'positive pressure … that does motivate' (Fullan, 2006, p. 9). Pressure does not need to be viewed with negative overtones, pressure can be experienced as a positive if it is:

> *… an energized environment [in which one is] caught up in the excitement and stimulation of an idea of a movement. It is this wave of energy and purpose that engages and pulls others into the work of leadership. (Lambert, 1998, p. 50)*

Leading ongoing school improvement that builds quality learning and quality teaching relies on leaders having the capacity to expose and address the challenges that hinder quality learning. It involves creating opportunities for teachers to work differently in order to create a new vision for learning and practice. The value of such an approach was aptly captured by Coles & Southworth (2005) who noted that effective leaders focus on 'helping everyone tackle the complexities of learning, achieve their goals and sustain learning over time' (p. 51).

> *School improvement also relies on building the capacity of teachers to understand, explore and create practice that promotes effective student learning. Quality learning demands, of all learners, the ability to take responsibility for shaping their learning ... 'strategic capability deals with enhanced levels of knowledge and understanding, which allow individuals to adapt to change, and build new ways of working' ... capacity building is clearly a major factor not only for leaders, but also for teachers and students; capacity building can help to transform learning by supporting changes in the way individuals work. Such changes matter because some, don't have the capacity to deal with and work through the challenges improvement efforts bring. Others have the motivation, skill, resources, resilience and conditions to more readily engage in and sustain the continuous learning necessary for improvement. (Coles & Southworth, 2005, p. 51)*

Lambert (1998) stated that 'the school must build its own leadership capacity if it is to stay afloat, assume internal responsibility for reform and maintain a momentum for self-renewal' (p. 3). Leaders need to understand the personalised nature of the challenges that impact learning and teaching and in so doing support responses designed to address such situations within their context for 'if improvement is to occur, most of it will be generated by the teacher's own efforts to improve' (p. 239), and that is more likely when leaders build that capacity in their colleagues.

As the Leaders of Learning in the study came to recognize, there is a need to lead by example, to develop and model pedagogy that promotes quality learning. The Leaders of Learning in this study are leaders of both student and teacher learning and are in the unique position of leading change through building their own knowledge and practice. As leaders they had to build their capacity to engage in conversations and share their personal understandings of quality learning and quality teaching. That required a shift in thinking toward being more strategic rather than simply reactive to situations.

Strategic thinking

Strategy has been described as 'linking a number of ideas or concepts. The first is that it involves a series of actions either consciously taken or reacted to, so that it shapes the

direction of the organisation' (Davies, 2006, p. 15). When leadership creates a strategic approach, connections are made across goals and the learning vision within the school. As Davies (2006) noted, strategic leadership 'involves taking a view of broader core issues and themes for developments in the school, rather than the detail of day-to-day imperatives' (p. 15), in so doing, 'strategic leadership … defines and translates the vision and moral purpose into action' (p. 20).

As is the case in this study, leaders often adopt strategies recognised for supporting particular focus areas in need of development and change. For example, in Australia, professional learning team meetings have been adopted as a strategy to improve a school's approach to professional learning. However, simply implementing professional learning teams as a strategy does not guarantee improved teacher learning. As the discussion in this chapter illustrates, success relies on, but is not limited to, establishing a clear vision, increasing teacher involvement and ownership in the direction and structure of the approach, promoting classroom observation and exploration and gathering evidence of student learning. Therefore, strategic leadership involves considering and planning for a range of processes, structures and expectations to promote a different way of working. Collectively these changes can then support the realisation of a new shared vision for teacher learning.

Strategic thinking requires leaders to create a bigger picture of learning. 'In order to influence student learning at the classroom level, the school leaders must begin by demanding that the organisation as a whole focus on student learning' (Muhammad, 2009, p. 86). A collective focus on understanding and improving quality learning is a powerful vision that has the potential to transform the way teachers and leaders think about and design strategies for change (Danielson, 2002; Lucas, et al., 2013).

Quality learning as a continual focus for change requires leaders to build deeper understandings of what is required and what it means. Thoughtful and deliberate approaches to leadership fosters strategies, processes and structures that can collectively build a school's vision; 'without strategy, vision has no momentum. Without vision, strategy leads to a mundane place' (MacBeath & Myers, 1999, p. 6).

A focus on leader, teacher and student change

As the arguments in this section of the chapter suggest, effective change leadership requires clarity about the impact new ways of working will have on the learners involved. Leaders need to understand and articulate the new expectations and examples of the types of actions

and behaviours that emerge that successfully build the collective vision. They need to feel empowered in discovering and establishing new possibilities in the way they work throughout the change process, 'the desired outcomes of such models are not pre-specified behaviours and skills' (Richardson, 1998, p. 6). Gathering and documenting examples of the changes in thinking, behaviours and actions within the process can lead to powerful evidence of meaningful change.

There is little doubt that effective ongoing school improvement processes rely on change happening at leader, teacher and student levels. Building and communicating understandings of what that might look like at each level begins with the creation of a school vision and continues throughout a process of ongoing reflection and experimentation. An important measure of success:

> *… is the degree to which teachers take responsibility for their actions, to assume ownership of their practices, and are able to articulate these actions and their justifications to another person. (Richardson, 1998, p. 6)*

This idea also extends to leaders who also need to take responsibility for shaping their approach to leadership in ways which promote quality learning and quality teaching. By modelling the pedagogy that builds quality learning through their leadership of teacher learning, leaders build credibility as a Leader of Learning as well as building personal understandings of what is involved in so doing.

When leaders consider teachers as learners and articulate the new actions, behaviours and ways of thinking that emerge from the change process, improvement in learning itself is evidence that further encourages leaders to consider how visions and long term change can begin to 'play out' in the 'day to day' business of schools.

Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that the notion of quality demands visionary thinking and setting high expectations for all learners. Building quality learning is central to ongoing school improvement and is a powerful lens through which to view pedagogy, professional learning and leadership. Quality learning requires learners to be metacognitive where they build the capacity to manage and monitor their learning processes and the learner role can be redefined when teachers build new partnerships and share intellectual control with their students.

Quality teaching is the response of teachers and leaders to building quality learning across their schools. Through ongoing reflection and experimentation, they become more pedagogically aware and can build richer understandings of how to design practice that builds the characteristics of quality learning. Through ongoing professional learning, teachers and leaders are able to address the challenges that can often limit or hinder school improvement.

When leadership builds the capacity of all learners to realise the vision and create a strategic approach to quality learning, change is realized. Striving for quality brings with it a myriad of new possibilities and challenges that need to be recognised and understood in an ongoing process of collaboration, exploration and reflection. The following chapters in this thesis examine how that was developed and enacted with teachers and Leaders of Learning across the schools involved in this study.

Chapter 3
Method

Introduction

This chapter discusses the method used in this research and is divided into three sections. The first section describes the characteristics of the grounded theory approach used to shape the research and outlines the aims of the study. The second section explains the research design and the process used in data collection and the final section explains the techniques used to analyse the data and the themes which have emerged during the study.

Grounded theory

Robson (2002, p. 3) described 'real life' research as that which 'involves people in 'real life' situations; to draw attention to some of the 'issues and complexities involved'. In the research reported in this thesis, the 'real life' people and settings are participant Leaders of Learning that work in school settings. The conversations and actions of these Leaders of Learning, drawn from their efforts to create new ways of building quality learning in their schools, have been the basis of the data sets used to better understand the nature of the situation and the learning about leading learning of the participants.

As has been well recognized across the literature, 'grounded theory study seeks to generate a theory which relates to the particular situation forming the focus of the study' (Robson, 2002, p. 190). In this study, the theory that emerges from the data seeks to identify and explain the ways the participating Leaders of Learning came to understand the changes in their thinking about quality learning and their capacity to explore and communicate their ideas. The impact these changes had on their teaching and the professional learning practices within their school are also identified and explained. In so doing, a complex investigation into the thinking and practices of Leaders of Learning was initiated to examine in detail the nature of teachers' professional learning and the nature of educational change at the classroom and school level.

Within the world of qualitative research, grounded theory is viewed as a research method that offers strategies for handling data analysis and inquiry. Corbin & Strauss (1990) suggested that grounded theory offered a good way of understanding the complexity of data often associated with qualitative research, allowing researchers to strategically examine data and develop theories that appeared to emerge as a consequence (Glaser, 1967).

A typical feature of a grounded theory includes 'flexible methodological strategies …
[designed to support the inquiry in relation to] collecting and, in particular, analysing data'
(Charmaz, 2003, p. 441) in order to facilitate theory generation. In this research, the nature of
quality learning was not conceptualised as a static phenomenom, but rather as potentially
changing in response to ongoing experiences. As a consequence, the research required a
method which was flexible in design; collecting data relevant to unfolding events. Analysis
needed to continually interrogate data across the life of the project and find ways to feed
findings back into the research process, informing strategic action and ongoing observations.

This chapter will make clear how the research approach evolved throughout the study and
how such data collection, analysis and theory development followed coding 'constructed
directly from the collected data … and that it acknowledges my dual involvement as a teacher
[professional development leader] … and a researcher' (Danielowich, 2014, p. 268).

Aims of the research

This study is embedded in a teacher professional learning approach that was designed to
explore the ways in which Leaders of Learning build their capacity to develop and lead the
work of others in pursuing quality learning. As such, the research examined how a 'model'
for professional learning might be developed and articulated as a consequence of supporting
the learning of Leaders of Learning. The theory that frames this model emerged as a
consequence of researching the professional learning, in particular interrogating the approach,
influences and impact, over time.

Three major research questions directed and shaped the nature and practice of the research.
Those questions are:

- What influences the way Leaders of Learning approach their leadership of student and
  teacher learning?
- What impact does focusing on building quality learning have on the professional
  learning of Leaders of Learning?
- How do Leaders of Learning remain focused on enacting their vision for quality
  learning?

Analysis of data associated with these questions frames a proposed model for professional
practice.

Research design and data collection

Participant –observer

Throughout this research project I was working with selected schools as their professional learning facilitator thus my research position was that of participant-observer. A participant-observer 'seeks to become some kind of member of the observed group' (Robson, 2002, p. 214), to develop an understanding of the situation from the inside which, as (Labaree, 2002) noted, provides the researcher with greater access and deeper understanding of the situation. However, 'insiderness' is not as simple and straightforward as just being a part of the situation, it also carries an expectation that there will be ethical and methodological dilemmas to be faced and appropriately managed. That was certainly the case in this study as my role in the project was as a professional learning facilitator, as such, within each of the participant groups I was to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities stemming from the coaching sessions, professional learning workshops and group conversations at the heart of the approach. Insidereness was important to gain the rich data and understandings at the heart of the study, but it also always carried a strong sense of the multiple roles and complex decisions associated with being involved on two levels (Jorgensen, 1989).

The professional learning took place in participants' schools and included a range of settings and associated data sets.

Identification of research participants and research settings

The data sets for this project are based on primary schools of varying size, geographical location, leadership structure and roles of Leaders of Learning within the school, each of which could be considered as case schools (N=6). Within these schools, I was working with Leaders of Learning who were at different levels of leadership (Principals, Deputy Principals, Leaders of Teaching and Learning or Year Level Leaders.)

In recruiting Leaders of Learning to be involved in the project, I chose fifteen Leaders of Learning (see Table 3.1 for participant biographies) each of whom had particular responsibility for improving student learning within their school setting. Collectively this group could potentially provide different perspectives about building quality learning and the change process within their school. Data capture was designed to occur through the normal parameters of their roles; the research was not intended as an 'added-extra' to their existing work. Pseudonyms were allocated to all participants and all processes within the research

were organised within the expectations of the Monash University Ethics protocols (Ethics approval, 2010001674, November 2010).

Leader of Learning (pseudonym)	Brief biography
Ken	Ken is an experienced Principal of a rural primary school. He is focusing on building an effective learning culture where the teachers, students and parents have shared understandings of effective learning.
Allan	Allan has been a Principal for the last five years. His school is a medium-sized, semi-rural primary school, situated an hour from Melbourne. Allan is currently establishing a leadership structure that focuses on building effective learning across all levels of the school.
Jenny	Jenny is both a classroom teacher and the teaching and learning leader at a semi-rural primary school. For the last three years, Jenny has been exploring her classroom practice with a particular focus on promoting student collaboration and reflection. Her leadership role is centred on building an action learning approach across the school.
Robyn	Robyn is an experienced classroom teacher who is relatively new to leadership. She has recently moved to a semi-rural primary school and is leading her Prep. level team where they are exploring more effective learning at this level.
Natalie	Natalie is a classroom teacher new to the profession. She is currently teaching at a medium-sized, semi-rural primary school. Natalie is the co-learning leader of her Prep team. They are exploring more effective learning at this level.
James	James is an experienced Principal of a large metropolitan primary school. His focus has been to establish an effective professional learning team approach to improve learning across his school.

Debra	Debra is a Deputy Principal of a large metropolitan primary school. Her role is to support the learning of teachers through a professional learning team approach. Debra is a full-time professional learning leader within the school.
Laura	Laura is an experienced classroom teacher in a large metropolitan primary school. She is currently exploring learning in her classroom, focusing on building her students into more effective thinkers. Laura is new to a teaching and learning leader role within her school where she supports the professional learning team structure.
Leah	Leah is an experienced Principal working in a small semi-rural primary school. Her focus is on building students as independent learners through a collaborative approach to professional learning.
Lisa	Lisa is a both a Deputy Principal and classroom teacher, working in a small semi-rural primary school. Her leadership role focuses on developing a whole-school approach to building students as independent learners.
Tina	Tina has been teaching for seven years. She is currently working in a small semi-rural primary school as a classroom teacher and Religious Education learning leader. She is working on an action learning project with Lisa that explores ways to build independent and collaborative learners.
Rob	Rob is an experienced primary Principal. His school is located in a large country town where he is focused on building a collaborative approach to professional learning in the school.
Karen	Karen is an experienced primary teacher new to leadership. She is a classroom teacher of a senior level and is the learning leader of the senior team. Karen has been exploring ways to build her students' reflective skills.

Layla	Layla is an experienced primary classroom teacher working in a large primary school located in a country town. She has recently become a learning level leader and is working closely with Karen.
Heather	Heather is an experienced primary classroom teacher working in a large metropolitan primary school. She has recently become a Leader of Learning in her school where she leads a team of teachers.

Table 3.1: Leaders of Learning **-**participant biographies.

Data collection

The data collection process was designed to explore the views, practices and perspectives of participating Leaders of Learning in an attempt to gain insights about the ways in which they understood teacher and student learning and how their thinking changed over time as they participated in the professional learning approach (see Table 3.3 for an overview of data collection approaches). To access data from participants in an ongoing manner and across different school contexts, a range of flexible data collection methods were required. The research collected qualitative data through three primary sources: semi-structured interviews; unstructured interviews; and, supplementary observations.

Semi-structured interviews:

1:1 coaching conversations
Group conversations

Unstructured interviews:

Online conversations
Leader of Learning reflections

Supplementary observations:

Classroom observations
Professional learning workshops
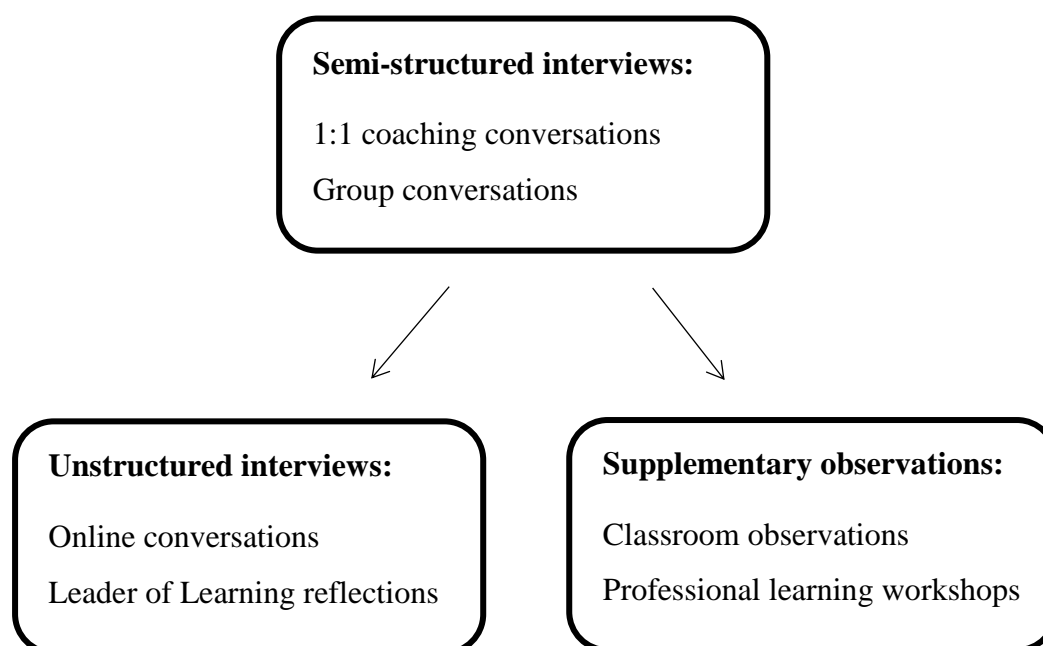
Figure 3.1: Relationship between researcher and Leader of Learning participant interactions and generation of data collection

In the early stages of the research, semi-structured interviews were the dominant form of data collection. Through that data, ideas, possibilities and reactions to events were able to be captured and in so doing, created opportunities for Leaders of Learning to make choices about how they might communicate their learning which was then captured through ongoing unstructured interviews and supplementary observations (see Figure 3.1).

Semi-structured interviews

> *[semi-structured interviews] … are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers. (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 330)*

The Leader of Learning participants were interviewed separately during their 1:1 coaching and group conversations in order to capture their ongoing learning. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed based around elements (see full description that follows) which allowed conversations to flexibly respond to ideas and opportunities as they emerged and which also deepened the discussion and/or allowed the conversation to follow particular directions, depending on the elements triggered in their thinking. These conversations with Leaders of Learning were conducted at least twice per term and in some cases up to six times per term, depending on the professional learning needs of participants at the time.

Robson (2002) defined semi-structured interviews as those which 'have pre-determined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems appropriate' (p. 270). In this study, the semi-structured interview protocol provided flexibility to respond to the conversation as it happened. The protocol used during the 1:1 coaching conversations and group conversations incorporated four key elements: questions; artefacts; coaching tools; and, the identification of future actions. Each of these is outlined next.

Element 1 – Questions: To prompt and support the discussions, two types of questions were used: questions that were previously determined prior to the sessions (see Table 3.2) and questions that were formed within the sessions to respond to emerging ideas and issues.

Examples of predetermined questions used in conversations
• What changes do you hope to see in your school in relation to learning?
• What are your understandings of quality learning?
• What are your understandings of a school learning theme?
• Do you think the learning theme captures your vision for building quality learning in the school? How?
• What impact has your action learning focus had in your classroom?
• What does professional learning look like in your school?
• How has your role in leading professional learning changed? What do you think has brought about this change?
• What has changed in your approach to your leadership/teaching?
• How do you know professional learning is having a positive impact on current practices?
• How would you like to improve professional learning in your school?
• When do you think teachers focus on their professional learning? Where do they think professional learning happens?
• What evidence can you show to demonstrate student or teacher change?
• What changes have you made to the way you work?

Table 3.2: Examples of predetermined questions used during the 1:1 coaching conversations and group conversations

Element 2 – Artefacts: The Leaders of Learning involved in the study used leadership, teaching and student learning artefacts to support their views about, and explanation of quality learning. Artefacts were used not only to identify current thinking but also later to identify changes in their thinking (see for example, Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 reflects the key characteristics of the artefacts. They were typically visual in nature, incorporated the ideas discussed during previous conversations and emerged from the work of the Leaders of Learning. The artefacts were sometimes developed and used within a 1:1 coaching conversation or group conversation or later used to encourage Leaders of Learning to reflect on their learning. Artefacts were also gathered during classroom observations and professional learning workshops and used to generate further conversations (see Appendix 1 for further examples of artefacts).

Figure 3.2: An artefact from a classroom of a Leader of Learning, brought to a 1:1 coaching conversation to discuss aspects of quality learning, changes to teaching practice and student reactions to this particular learning focus.

Element 3 - Coaching Tools: Coaching tools were used to support Leaders of Learning to explore their understandings of quality learning in relation to a particular focus. The coaching tools were of two forms: frameworks or models used to present Leaders of Learning with new ideas for consideration; and, tools to encourage these leaders to identify and organise their current thinking (see Figure 3.3 for an example of an organising tool designed to promote conversations around revisiting the big picture Leaders of Learning were attempting to create in their schools). Initially the selection and use of the coaching tools was determined by the researcher but as leaders became familiar with them they chose to develop and use them independently (see Appendix 2 for further examples of coaching tools).
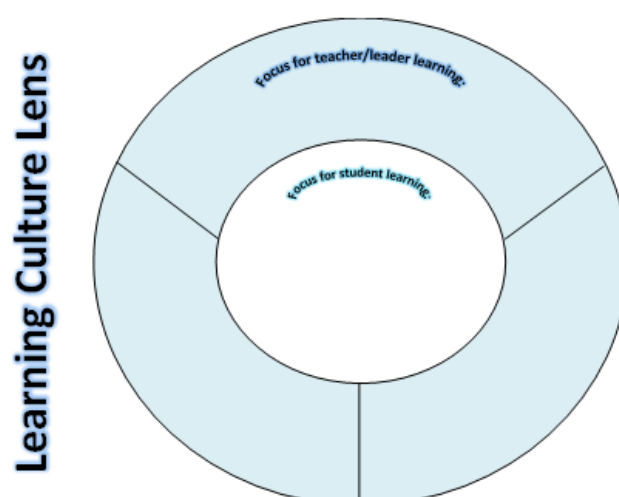
Figure 3.3: A tool used to support Leaders of Learning to identify key considerations for building teacher and student learning.

Element 4 - Actions: An important intention of the 1:1 coaching conversations and group conversations was to identify future actions that Leaders of Learning might explore in their practice. Leaders often reflected on and discussed these ideas further during online conversations. Some of these actions became the focus for classroom observations or were raised in discussions during professional learning workshops.

Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews have been described as 'non-standardized, open-ended and in-depth … lengthy, intimate conversations' (Robson, 2002, p. 278). The unstructured interview approach emerged from the semi-structured interviews when selected Leaders of Learning wanted to follow-up scheduled face to face conversations in an ongoing way. Two types of unstructured interviews became regular data sets: online conversations; and, leader reflections.

Supplementary observations

Supplementary observations were used to capture firsthand the way Leaders of Learning put their new thinking about learning into action. How leaders engaged with students and teachers, provided another perspective on the professional learning of Leaders of Learning.

	1:1 coaching sessions:
	Selected Leaders of Learning individually engaged in a coaching session that focused on exploring the way they thought about learning. The duration of these sessions ranged between 30-60 minutes. Each coaching session was organised during previous meetings. Leaders of Learning were encouraged to personalise these interactions by selecting specific artefacts and reflections they wanted to use to highlight changes in the way they thought about learning. Leaders also identified possible actions to be explored which were then followed up at the next coaching session.
Semi structured interviews	**Group conversations:**
	Leaders of Learning, in some instances, worked with other leaders not involved in the research aspect of the project. Conversations focused on the collaborative practices of the group, identifying only the role, actions and thinking of selected leaders as they engaged within the group context and was another aspect of data collection.
	Online conversations:
	Some Leaders of Learning chose to engage in online conversations (emails) between 1:1 coaching sessions and group conversations. They decided on the frequency and content of those conversations. The ongoing nature of those conversations provided a further data set.
Unstructured interviews	**Written reflections:**
	Leaders of Learning were encouraged to reflect on different aspects of their work and capture the impact this had on their learning through written reflections. The chosen focus of their reflections and how they organised this information provided another valuable data set.
	Classroom Visits:
	Classroom visits emerged from the 1:1 coaching sessions, group and online conversations. Leaders of Learning decided on the purpose and structure of the classroom visit and all visits were followed up with a conversation (captured by audio recording or field notes).
Supplementary observations	**Professional learning workshops:**
	The learning of Leaders of Learning was supported by structured professional learning workshops. These were developed in collaboration with leaders to target components of learning they were building in their school. During the professional learning workshops the comments, use of artefacts and actions were captured and documented. Leaders of Learning used coaching tools within the workshops to record their personal thinking. There was always a follow up conversation at the conclusion of the workshops to discuss and document their thinking as well as any future actions.

Table 3.3: Overview of data collection methods

In this research, supplementary observations took the form of classroom observations and observations of Leaders of Learning in professional learning workshops. Both data sets were

designed to observe Leaders of Learning enacting the ideas identified within the semi-structured interview process. Comprehensive field notes were taken by the researcher, for both classroom observations and professional learning workshops.

Interviews were either audio-taped and later transcribed or captured through a combination of field notes and photos taken during classroom observations. Leaders of Learning shared artefacts they thought represented their learning and these artefacts helped them to communicate changes in how they worked. Copies of those artefacts were taken and stored for later analysis. Table 3.3 provides an overview of data collection methods.

Challenges during data collection

There were a number of challenges during the data collection phase. The first was the time needed to travel to schools to engage in the face to face conversations that were initially the main source of data. Although selected Leaders of Learning engaged in 2-6 sessions per term, it became necessary to explore new data methods to keep the conversations going between these visits. It became necessary to ensure that most methods were used with each selected Leader of Learning to maximise the opportunities for them to share their thinking.

Initially Leaders of Learning were uncertain about the coaching process and for many this was a new professional learning strategy. In the beginning, they allowed the researcher to completely lead the conversation, responding to questions as asked. As leaders became more comfortable with the process they began to decide on the artefacts and stories they wanted to share. This shift from engaging in the conversations with the researcher to focusing the conversations on their development, was common amongst these leaders. Evidence of this shift was captured in a variety of ways during data collection.

During the data collection period, some leaders took extended leave which reduced the period of time data was collected. One Leader of Learning (Principal) changed schools and continued their learning journey within the new setting. Other Leaders of Learning began the process at different times due to a change in roles. These leaders worked closely with other Leaders of Learning who were already involved from commencement, i.e., when schools first opted into the research. This usually resulted in a reduced period for data collection in a particular phase.

Data analysis

The techniques used to analyse the data are commensurate with the approach and intentions of grounded theory. These techniques align with qualitative approaches described by Miles and Huberman (1994) and comprise three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction; data display; and, conclusion drawing/verification. For ease of explanation, the techniques used in this research have been divided into phases which identify the 'flows of activity' and demonstrate the nature of data analysis.

Phase 1

This phase began early in the research during the initial semi-structured interviews and is where data reduction is most apparent (term 1 – term 3, Year 1). During the conversations, conclusions were being drawn from the ideas being presented and this thinking influenced the direction of the conversations. At the conclusion of the interactions with selected Leaders of Learning, time was scheduled to reflect on field notes and organise the key ideas that surfaced into short statements and key words. Further notes were made as the ideas emerging from the conversations were processed more deeply. Part of this note-taking included recording future questions and possible ideas for leader actions that would shape the next conversation. This process condensed the initial large data sets into ideas to be pursued in more individual detail through follow-up activities.

Thus, the data analysis became reiterative, feeding back into the research. In the first instance, the semi-structured interview process became more refined and focused and also led to the incorporation of visual artefacts. The visual artefacts supported Leaders of Learning to communicate their developing practices and highlighted that which had become important to them. Leader thinking was also recorded in conjunction with these images, along with my interpretations and analysis. This process was carried out over three school terms (3 x 10 weeks) and involved a large number of interviews (N = 75).

Phase 2

Towards the middle of the data collection phase, which began in term 4, Year 1 and continued through until the end of term 1, Year 3, analysis became deeper and more focused as patterns in the key ideas began to take shape and become more consistent. As these patterns emerged, I began to direct and explore avenues for further data to consolidate or challenge the themes and/or identify new big ideas from the participants' perspectives. It was

during this phase that numerical coding became important in order to classify the ideas (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5) and to record them in order to more effectively organise and manage the data sets.

Phase 3

I began phase 3 of the process between term 2, Year 3 and term 4, Year 3. During this phase the big ideas formed into common themes that encompassed the key understandings from the data (see Table 3.6).

Theme 1: Leaders of Learning develop a vision of quality learning

This theme explores the language and ideas Leaders of Learning used to identify the challenges students face in their learning. As leaders considered what their students were not doing well in their approach to learning, they began to reflect on the impact current teaching had on student learning. During this process, Leaders of Learning recognised that different staff members within their school were not on the 'same page' in their understandings of what quality learning and quality practice might look like. Through the use of pre-developed models, Leaders of Learning were exposed to new ways of thinking about learning.

As Leaders of Learning began to build a vision of quality learning they started to see how examples of current practice were promoting a more passive approach to learning. The more Leaders of Learning explored quality learning, the more they began to see the notion of learners as encompassing all learners within the school community, particularly students, teachers and leaders. The language they used to define quality learning developed as they refined the way they named and framed the learning they wanted to build.

Theme 2: Leaders of Learning explore the relationship between learning and teaching

This theme explores the challenges Leaders of Learning experienced when defining the difference and relationship between teaching and learning. As Leaders of Learning explored this difference and came to see teaching and learning as a partnership rather than a singular process, they created learning frameworks that were personalised to their context. These frameworks supported teachers to name the components of quality learning they wanted to build with their students.

As Leaders of Learning explored their ideas of quality learning, they began to refine practice in response to the change in their thinking about learning and practice. This process appeared to be a catalyst for reflection on practice which shifted the focus of their personal professional learning.

Theme 3: Leaders of Learning lead professional learning in new ways

As Leaders of Learning experienced success in exploring their own action plans, they wanted to share their learning and this approach with others. These experiences led them to evaluate the current professional learning practices in the school which steered them to see a need to build the connections between: teaching and leadership contexts where teachers and leaders work; and, ongoing professional learning. As Leaders of Learning made greater sense of their approach to professional learning, they created similar opportunities for teachers in their schools.

Theme 4: Leaders of Learning model a reflective approach to leadership and teaching practice

This theme explores the development of Leaders of Learning as they led others in the building of a more reflective approach to learning across the school. They continually refined and shared their personal action plans which not only focused on improving student learning, but also included leading and building teacher learning. Leader reflections highlighted how they learnt to identify and name the challenges other teachers faced in their learning and they used these to challenge and shape their own leadership. Leaders of Learning began to build and refine these two lenses in terms of their own leadership (i.e., a focus on building student and teacher learning).

Formulating the themes: An approach to coding

The approach used to develop raw data into codes is graphically illustrated in figure 3.4. The ways in which that coding was conceptualized and developed through coding and sub-coding is illustrated in tables 3.4 and 3.5. An example of data coding also follows (see figure 3.5) which offers one way of demonstrating how data was categorized and coded using organising statements.

	Phase 1 Term 1 – 3: Year 1 (3 x 10 weeks)	**Phase 2** Term 4: Year 1 - Term 1: Year 3	**Phase 3** Term 2: Year 3 – Term 4: Year 3
Duration of phases			
Data collection methods	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews Unstructured interviews Supplementary observations	Semi-structured interviews Unstructured interviews Supplementary observations
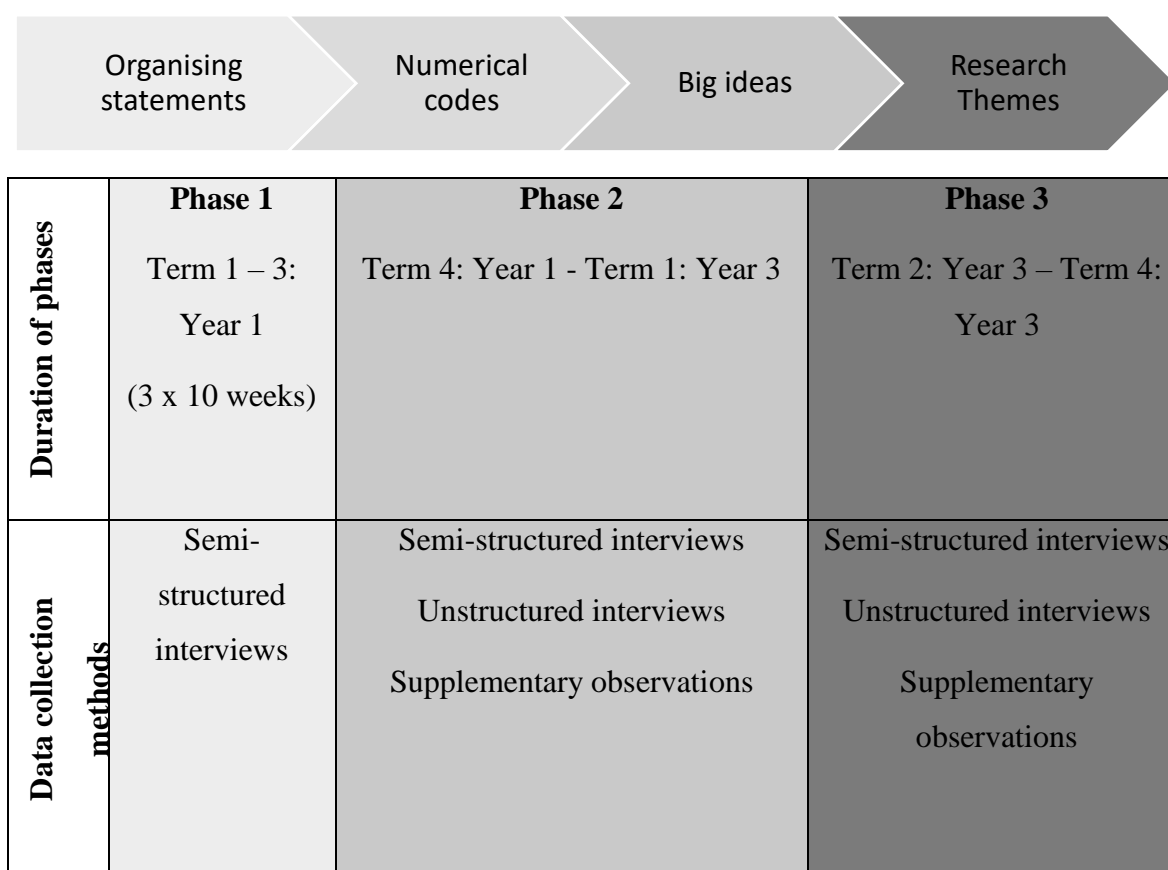
Figure 3.4: Graphic representation of approach to developing research themes from the data

Figure 3.4 illustrates the process of creating organising statements to classify data during phase 1. These statements evolved through the analysis of the field notes and artefacts and towards the end of phase 1 and during phase 2, numerical coding was used to categorise big ideas and related themes. During phase 3 these big ideas and themes were gradually refined and later formed the research themes.

Example of one coded set of data

Figure 3.5 illustrates the data analysis process using an example of field notes taken during a 1:1 coaching conversation in phase 1. Organising statements have been recorded on the example and highlight how these were used to analyse and then organise the data into a more manageable and meaningful form. These statements were collated under key headings which formed the initial big ideas. The original field notes and artefacts were used to highlight Leader of Learning thinking within the data chapters. The big ideas that emerged from this phase led to the identification of common themes during phase 2. These big ideas and themes

were refined throughout this phase and later formed the research themes and data chapters. (Refer to Tables 3.4 - 3.6)
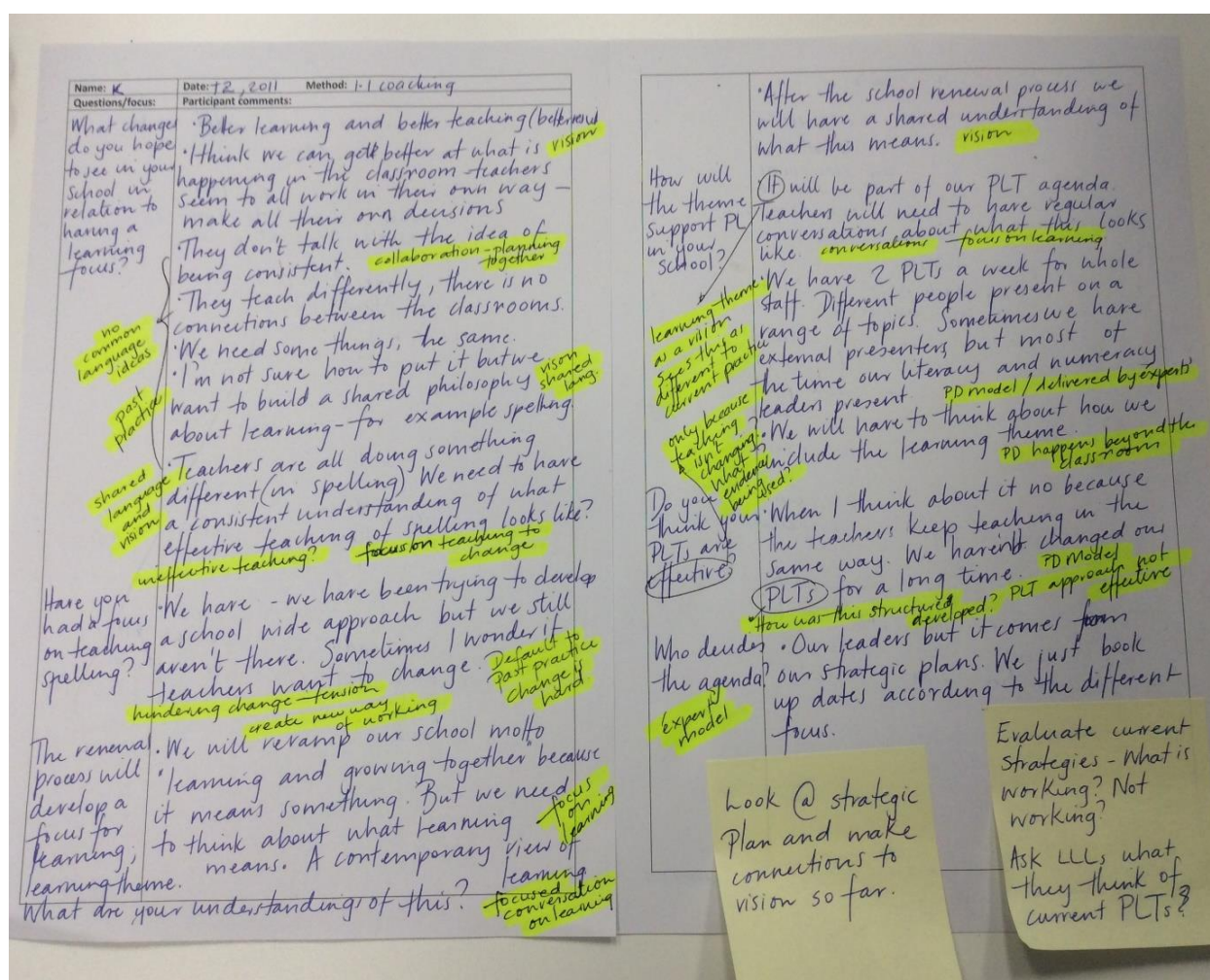
Figure 3.5: Photo illustrating the analysis of data using organising statements

Table 3.4 shows how the organising statements were collated into initial big ideas and related themes. These were given numerical codes to support the classification of data during phase 2 of the process.

Organising statements	Numerical coding of early big ideas & themes
• Build a common language • Using introduced language • Consistent language around strategies/structure/tools	**1. Language and conversations** 1.1 Teachers and students need opportunities to learn a language that helps them build understandings of learning

	1.2 Engaging in rich conversations about learning need to be supported and built over time
- Defining learning - Learning is defined by teaching strategies - Learning seen as another content area - Actions of an effective learner - Focus on thinking processes of the learner - See school learning theme as a vision for learning - Develop learning models/frameworks	**2. Focus on learning** 2.1 Leaders begin to see connections between effective student learning and effective teaching 2.2 Conversations about learning are not common place 2.3 Naming and framing learning keeps it on the agenda 2.4 A focus on understanding the behaviours of effective learners supports both student and teacher learning 2.5 School learning themes support leaders to build a vision of quality learning
- Getting on the same page - Professional Learning Teams meetings hinder collaborative learning - Identifying common goals for professional learning - Collaborative practices	**3. Collaboration & working together** 3.1 Collaboration is seen as the end product rather than a process for collective learning 3.2 Professional learning is not seen as a collective responsibility
- Realisation that conversations are focusing on teaching rather than learning - Introduction of new teaching strategies to explore a learning focus - Effective/ineffective teaching	**4. Teaching** 4.1 Planning for teaching is more common than planning for learning 4.2 Teaching and learning is seen as a singular process 4.3 Existing practice is promoting passive learning 4.4 Leaders think about learning before planning their teaching
- Identify their journey as a learner - Identify a past practice - Default to past practices - Need to create/refine vision. - Identify and deal with tensions - Identify teacher behaviours that are hindering change - Connections between school learning theme and practice - Evidence of change - Use evidence to describe change	**5. Change** 5.1 Leaders default back to past practices 5.2 Leaders learn to recognise the default to existing practice 5.3 Leaders address the tensions associated with change 5.4 Leaders use evidence to show change in their teaching/leadership

• Visual models support teacher thinking • Create personalised tools to support learning • Use introduced tools with others • Frameworks/tools show change in thinking	**6. Use of tools/models/frameworks** 6.1 Leaders need tools/models/frameworks to challenge current thinking 6.2 Leaders use tools/models/frameworks to challenge the thinking of others 6.3 Leaders seek to create their own models/frameworks
• Reflecting on action learning process. • Practices reinforce a PD model • PD happens beyond the classroom • PLT approaches are disconnected to building quality professional learning. • PD is done by experts/ external educators.	**7. Professional learning practices** 7.1 Leaders develop strategies to focus professional learning within the classroom 7.2 Effective professional learning focuses on challenging and understanding current practices 7.3 School learning themes provide the focus for both student and teacher learning 7.4 Leaders begin to share their journey as a learner 7.5 Leaders refine their professional learning approach 7.6 Current professional learning approach is promoting passive learning
• Lead through classroom change • Use personal experiences of action learning to support others • Understandings of leadership • Supporting staff to make connections • Strategies to build capacity • Risk-taking	**8. Leadership** 8.1 Effective leadership evolves from the exploration of classroom practice 8.2 Leaders promote reflective practice 8.3 Risk-taking is important to leaders staying focused on learning 8.4 Leaders lead the building of classroom practice

Table 3.4: Showing organising statements and numerical coding of the initial big ideas and themes.

In phase 2 the big ideas were further refined and are shown in table 3.5. The common themes that continued to arise and new themes that emerged from this phase, are also included within table 3.5.

Big Ideas	**Common Themes**
Understanding and building quality learning	• Focusing on identifying the characteristics of quality learning can impact on both student and teacher learning • Risk-taking is central to building quality learning

	• Building the learner rather than building learning supports Leaders of Learning to see how learning and content is connected • Teachers and students need opportunities to learn a language that helps them build understandings of quality learning • Leaders of Learning identify examples of effective and ineffective learning • Engaging in rich conversations about learning need to be supported and built over time • Conversations about learning are not common practice • Naming and framing learning keeps it on the agenda • Leaders of Learning need tools/frameworks/models about learning to challenge their thinking • School learning themes support teacher-leaders to build a vision for learning • Leaders of Learning seek to develop their own frameworks to communicate their vision for learning
The relationship between learning and teaching	• Leaders of Learning begin to see connections between effective student learning and effective teacher learning • Teaching and learning is seen as a singular process • Planning for teaching is more common than planning for learning • Teaching practice can promote passive or active learning • Leaders of learning need to build a stronger focus on learning to influence the way they think about teaching • Action plans support leaders to focus on both learning and teaching
Understanding pedagogy	• Effective leadership evolves from the exploration of classroom practice • Awareness of pedagogy arises from the exploration of practice • Leaders began to talk more about pedagogy • Leaders developed understandings of how they could refine their own practice • Leaders became empowered to develop their own practice • Leaders of Learning can articulate the impact their teaching has on learning
Quality teacher learning	• Current Professional Learning Team (PLT) practices reinforce a traditional PD model • Leaders of Learning begin to look for learning tools/frameworks that will challenge current thinking • Leaders of Learning need introduced strategies to focus professional learning in the classroom • Change in learning requires new ways of working

	• Teacher-leaders begin to focus on and deal with the tensions associated with change • Leaders of learning develop strategies to focus professional learning on classroom exploration • Effective professional learning focuses on challenging and understanding current practices • School learning themes provide the focus for both student and teacher learning
Building collaborative capacity	• Collaboration is seen as the end product rather than a process for collective learning • Professional learning is not seen as a collective responsibility • Teacher-leaders create new learning forums to provide greater opportunities for collaboration
Reflective practice	• During the change process, it is common to default back to past practices • Leaders of Learning become more effective at realising they are defaulting to past practices • Leaders of Learning can identify the strategies that have shaped their thinking about learning • Leaders of Learning naturally begin to share their journey as a teacher learner • Leaders of Learning develop two lenses to their leadership; leader through classroom practice and leader of professional learning • Leaders of Learning naturally begin to use evidence to describe change in their thinking • Leaders of Learning learn to strategically build reflective practices across the school • Leaders of Learning become more aware of their personal pedagogy

Table 3.5: Shows the big ideas and common themes that emerged during phase 3

Table 3.6 shows further refinement of the big ideas and themes which became the focus for data chapters and the research themes.

Big Ideas	**Research Themes**
Leaders of Learning develop a vision of quality learning	1. Conversations about learning are not common practice 2. Leaders of Learning need to develop a language that supports them to engage in learning conversations, reflect on current practices, and articulate a vision for learning 3. Leaders of Learning need models to structure and challenge current thinking about learning and change

	4. Articulating a school learning theme helps to build new visions for both student and teacher learning
	5. Leaders of Learning seek to develop their own frameworks to communicate their vision for learning
Leaders of Learning explore the relationship between learning and teaching	1. Tools/frameworks can support Leaders of Learning to build connections between learning and teaching
	2. Leaders of Learning develop action plans to explore their ideas about learning and teaching
	3. Leaders of Learning build a reflective approach to exploring learning and teaching
	4. Leaders of Learning develop new strategies that focus their professional learning on exploring learning within their classrooms
Leaders of Learning lead professional learning in new ways	1. Leaders of Learning begin to recognize and (eventually) challenge current professional learning practices
	2. Leaders of Learning restructure professional learning opportunities in their schools
	3. Leaders of Learning create professional learning forums to support classroom exploration
Leaders of Learning model a reflective approach to leadership and teaching practice	1. Leaders of Learning develop a reflective approach to their leadership of learning
	2. Leaders of Learning consider the role reflection has had on their leadership of learning
	3. Leaders of Learning promote reflection within their schools

Table 3.6: The refinement of the big ideas and common themes into final research themes

Chapter overview

This chapter was designed to illustrate the way in which the research was organised and conducted. In essence, the research program aimed to develop deep understandings of leaders' learning about leading learning (students' and teachers') by tracking their development during an extended professional learning project. The data collection methods were particular to the professional learning activities and genuinely reflect the participants' approaches to capturing, portraying and articulating their learning as leaders.

The next four chapters investigate the themes briefly outlined above. Each theme is fully examined by exploring the findings and carefully drawing on those findings to build a model of professional learning over time. The chapters each contribute to the building of big ideas which reflect the ways Leaders of Learning stay focused on exploring quality learning in their schools. The order of the chapters is specifically organised to show how these leaders built their capacity and the capacity of others to pursue notions and practices for quality learning.

The following chapters convey the learning that emerged through reflection, discussion and review as evident in the interviews, meetings and documented in the field notes and through artefacts. This information 'maps the terrain' and captures participants' thinking and perceptions through those episodes.

Chapter 4

Leaders of Learning develop a vision of quality learning

Introduction

This chapter will explore the data in relation to how Leaders of Learning developed visions of quality learning. The chapter is organised in two parts: the first briefly explores the literature in relation to creating a vision of learning in schools and the second includes an analysis of the data - which has been organised into five themes. Each theme is examined separately. As a coherent whole, together, the themes focus on the way visions of learning evolved for these participant leaders. The themes (structured as statements) include:

1.   Conversations about learning are not common practice.

2.   Leaders of Learning need to develop a language that supports them to engage in learning conversations, reflect on current practices, and articulate a vision of learning.

3.   Leaders of Learning need tools to structure and challenge their current thinking about learning and change.

4.   Articulating a school learning theme helps to build new visions for both student and teacher learning.

5   Leaders of Learning seek to develop their own frameworks to communicate their vision for learning.

Visions of learning: A brief literature overview

There is much agreement in the literature around the role a vision plays in the school improvement process. As Senge (1990) stated 'if one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it's the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create' (p. 9). Senge reinforces the idea that a vision involves creating a picture of the future and that, in so doing, it has the potential to change the culture of an organisation (in this instance, a school) by shaping the way leaders and teachers think about different aspects of their work.

The process of creating a vision is complex. It involves not only a picture of the final destination but provides insights into the process necessary to assist in reaching the destination. Davies (2006) suggested that a vision needs to be futuristic and should provide

insights into what it might look like for the individuals involved 'a vision is where you want to be in the future, what your school will look like, how it will feel to be there, what aspirations it will have and by what values it will operate' (p. 28). The process of capturing an effective vision can be seen as creating a context in which teachers and leaders might work together to achieve shared goals. Davies (2006) describes such a situation as 'a sense of meaning and purpose for individuals within the school and something to which they can commit' (p. 28). Nanus (1992) suggested that within their shared context, a school could be a place in which teachers and leaders could work to foster commitment and excellence and provide a pathway between current practice and that which might be possible, 'a realistic, credible, attractive future' (p. 8). Later, DuFour DuFour & Eaker (2008) simply stated such a situation as creating 'a clear agenda for action' (p. 144).

It could be argued that nurturing a commitment to work towards the realisation of a vision requires those involved to make connections between their own personal vision of what is possible and the vision of the organisation. This then leads to the building of a shared vision 'a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision' (Senge, 1990, p. 206). Fostering commitment is one of the benefits of a clear, shared vision that has the ability to energise and motivate people so that they can connect their individual work to the organisational goals (DuFour et al, 2008). What is critical to nurturing such commitment is the notion of working together.

Through collaboration and a sense of team, a shared vision can continue to grow as those involved within the organisation engage in ongoing learning together. Hord, Roussin & Sommers (2010) highlighted such thinking, stating that 'the vision is kept visible and revisited often to ensure its currency and authenticity. (p.27). Fullan (1993) was certainly of that view, noting that a 'shared vision, which is essential for success must evolve through the dynamic interaction of organisational members and leaders' (p. 28). Senge (1990) attributed such a process of establishing a shared vision as 'unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment and enrolment rather than compliance' (p. 9).

The idea of 'unearthing' implies that schools need to work in ways that empower those involved to explore and discover new possibilities through which students and teachers can learn. Teachers themselves must then create personal visions of what is possible in building quality student learning in order to meaningfully contribute to the building of a collective organisational vision. Stoll & Seashore Louis (2007) suggested that in order to build quality student learning schools 'must foster a culture in which learning by all is valued, encouraged,

and supported.' Teachers are 'guided by supportive leadership and a shared vision, these school communities are committed and hold themselves accountable for student learning. These leaders identify and solve problems amid a culture that invites risk, which requires continual refocusing. (p.22)'

Hord & Sommers (2008) reinforced that notion and suggested that schools should remember that a vision is under constant construction 'as we talk and learn together, the vision gets clearer' (p. 31). As Fullan (1993) suggested 'vision emerges from, more than precedes action' (p. 28).

The research described in this thesis explores the thinking and actions of Leaders of Learning as they developed deeper understandings of quality learning. It demonstrates that visions of learning are not a necessary starting point for Leaders of Learning to engage in the exploration of quality learning. Visions can be nurtured and continually refined within the work of Leaders of Learning and teachers, as they seek clarity about what quality learning looks like in their context, or, as Fullan (2007) suggested 'a shared vision or ownership … is more of an *outcome* of a quality change process than it is a *precondition* for success' (p. 41). Through ongoing reflection and dialogue, leaders and teachers can talk their way to new understandings about learning 'one needs a good deal of reflective experience before one can form a plausible vision' (Fullan, 1993, p. 28).

Fullan (1993) was of the view that 'working on vision means examining and re-examining, and making explicit to ourselves why we came into teaching' (p. 13). As a vision evolves, new strategies and possibilities emerge that provide the motivation for some to continue to explore what is possible. Such a process also generates tensions as new ideas and ways of working challenge individuals to move from their comfort zone. Ultimately, the successful realisation of a vision relies on those who 'need no persuading that the effort has to be made worthwhile in terms of learning gains and changed practices.' (Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007, p.49).

As the preceding paragraphs suggest, Leaders of Learning need to contribute to the building of new and shared visions which make sense of complex ideas about learning and teaching. They need to create opportunities to communicate their thinking in ways that can support others to make sense of those complex ideas. Dufour, DuFour, Eaker & Thomas (2010) reinforced such thinking when they suggested that schools should:

> *... develop a brief teachable point of view that captures the vision of*
> *your school in a message that is simple, direct and jargon free.*
> *Providing regular opportunities for leaders of learning and teachers*
> *to continually frame and then share their understandings with others*
> *is critical to the vision becoming transparent and shared ... [in*
> *establishing a vision there is a need to] ... practise presenting the*
> *vision until articulating it becomes second nature. (p. 52)*

The next section of this chapter explores the experiences of Leaders of Learning when supported to explore ideas of quality learning and experiment with ways to frame and communicate it to others.

Analysis of the data

This section of the chapter explores the data in relation to five emergent themes. The themes are organised as five statements:

1.   Conversations about learning are not common practice.

2.   Leaders of Learning need to develop a language that supports them to engage in learning conversations, reflect on current practices, and articulate a vision of learning.

3.   Leaders of Learning need tools to structure and challenge their current thinking about learning and change.

4.   Articulating a school learning theme helps to build new visions for both student and teacher learning.

5.   Leaders of Learning seek to develop their own frameworks to communicate their vision for learning.

Collectively the themes explore the changes in the thinking and actions of the Leaders of Learning as they were supported and challenged to explore and communicate their understandings of quality learning. Over time these leaders became more efficient at articulating a vision for learning that presented new ways of thinking about and building learning.

1) *Conversations about learning are not common practice*

This theme examines professional learning conversations and illustrates the initial lack of focus on learning - in fact the focus appears to be limited to the nature of teaching. In so

doing, the data illustrates the type of conversations Leaders of Learning were typically familiar with in their work as well as their thinking around what learning conversations might look like for them personally. The following was data recorded during semi-structured interviews conducted during phase one of the data collection, when the Leaders of Learning were asked about the learning conversations they had in their schools.

> *I realised that we were filling up our staff meeting agenda with administrative things that were just not important. It took us [such] a long time to work through that we often ran out of time. We never really talked about learning. (Allan, P, P1, CC)* (Name of research participant, leadership position, phase data was collected, data collection method)
>
> *We never talk about learning, we talk about curriculum and how we might teach it. (Karen, T, P1, GC)*
>
> *We don't really take the time to think about what learning is, we take it for granted, that we all think the same thing. It's sort of just assumed that we are talking about the same thing. (Jenny, T, P1, GC)*
>
> *I don't think I learnt anything about learning in our PLTs (See Appendix 4) until we started to talk about our learning theme. I just didn't know we weren't having conversations about learning. I never really thought about it. (Debra, DP, P1, GC)*
>
> *What would conversations about learning look like? (Tina, T, P1, GC)*

These comments show that these Leaders of Learning often assumed that their professional conversations incorporated ideas about learning. When asked to consider what that might look like, these leaders found it difficult to describe how their conversations could be different. They were then asked to define learning in their own way. The following comments were collected during semi-structured interviews in phase one of the research and capture their thinking around this.

> *Is learning just what the students get out of the activities? (Debra, DP, P1, CC)*
>
> *Maybe student data. I think our staff would see learning as data. (Robyn, T, P1, GC)*

> *I couldn't really tell you what was in the curriculum domains;*
> *thinking, personal learning … I don't feel confident to lead a*
> *conversation about learning with my staff. (Allan, P, P1, CC)*

These comments (above) highlight that when these Leaders of Learning were asked to define learning they were challenged by the need to use a language to assist them in communicating their ideas; a language that was missing at that time. With limited opportunities to engage in conversations about learning, these leaders were not regularly focusing on building their ideas about quality learning or developing a language to support their communication of those ideas.

These Leaders of Learning were encouraged to engage in conversations about learning with their teachers and to focus on strategies that supported them in developing a consistent language. As the following sections illustrate, when given strategic opportunities to think about learning in new ways, they began to talk differently.

Each of the remaining themes explores the influence that the 'introduced strategies' had on the way these Leaders of Learning thought and talked about learning and ultimately how they created new visions of learning in their schools.

2) ***Leaders of Learning need to develop a language that supports them to engage in learning conversations, reflect on current practices, and articulate a vision of learning***

This theme explores how Leaders of Learning began to build a consistent language to support their conversations about learning. To identify a common language, they were encouraged to implement a strategy that would help to create a learning theme for their school. The process involved staff engaging in conversations about learning which were designed to identify key ideas about quality learning that could be used to improve the way students approached their learning. The process encouraged teachers to prioritise and select what they believed might best build effective learners. Those ideas were then shaped into a 'catchy theme' that captured their view of quality learning and became the school learning theme. The following comments highlight what Leaders of Learning thought about establishing a learning theme in their school.

> *The learning theme is a shared vision it captures it in a nutshell. The*
> *theme will help teachers to use the same language and build a shared*
> *understanding of the change the school wants. The theme and the*

process connects all of the staff as well as the students and parents. I

can see the potential to connect all aspects of school life. (Debra, DP,

P1, CC)

Once we named our learning theme; Building a community of deeper

thinkers and connected learners, I then started to think about what we

needed to do next ... Our learning theme was chosen because we felt

taking thinking deeper and making learning more connected was

something we needed to do better. I can see how important it was to

take the time to decide on a theme because initially we didn't agree on

the words, some staff felt the theme didn't reflect what they felt was

important to build. The conversation that followed helped to clarify

our thinking and decide on the words that we really wanted to include,

but more importantly we had shared ownership of the theme. (Allan,

P, P1, CC)

The learning themes developed were unique to each school. Examples include building: a
community of deeper thinkers and connected learners; learners as thinkers; and, independent
learners. By developing learning themes, Leaders of Learning were establishing a starting
point for exploring some new ideas about quality learning. The following comments by Leah
are indicative of that situation.

Each teacher took a different approach to building the theme which

allowed for ownership yet the connectedness of the theme allowed for

shared learning, rich conversation and personalised learning across

the school ... As part of this process teachers identified the need to

take students from dependence to independence and to embrace

teaching practices that allowed for decision-making and collaborative

learning. The focus has shifted from content, facts and topics to the

learning process and the importance of having a language to talk and

think about learning ... Our theme of creating independent learners

has been the focus for all of our learning and has been the catalyst for

ensuring that there is a common understanding by teachers as to what

we were trying to achieve. (Leah, P, P2, CC)

The learning themes developed, provided a different vision for learning for participants; a
vision that was shaped by working together with their teachers in a process of development

and articulation. During the process a common language emerged as teachers and Leaders of Learning talked their way to understanding through shared ideas about effective learning. The learning theme was therefore created when staff collectively agreed to the particular attributes they wanted to 'build in their learners'- those attributes were then turned into a 'catchy' theme or caption that reflected the shared ideas about learning.

The following comments capture how Leaders of Learning thought about the process of establishing a learning theme for their school.

> *Building a community of deeper thinkers and connected learners: It took us ages to get to our theme. Some staff were really particular about the language. I think there are three really important messages in our theme: the working together as a community, making connections in learning and with each other; and, thinking more deeply. There is a lot to do but the process has helped us see this is important and that we aren't there yet. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *Building learners as thinkers: We think that our learning can't happen without thinking, so we want to focus on building our students as thinkers. (Rob, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *Building independent learners: It wasn't until we started to talk about student learning and what our challenges were that everyone became excited, the mood in the room just changed. I think they felt that we were actually going to focus on improving the way the students approach learning. We realise now that our students are very dependent on us [and so] we need to empower them to take more responsibility for their learning. The tricky part is where to start. (Leah, P, P1, GC)*
>
> *Learning and growing together: We made a great discovery in revamping our school motto and prayer; we have given it a new meaning. Learning and growing together, was something we took for granted and we didn't really understand the history. We realised we didn't want to lose it and by re-visiting it we have a motto which is relevant today and moving forward ... The motto rolls off the tongue and has given us a greater sense of a shared vision and doing this together. (Ken, P, P1, CC)*

Building powerful learning: I can't wait to see what happens with our theme. Just trying to work out what powerful learning means will be interesting. (James, P, P1, GC)

I think about our learning theme constantly. I am trying to connect all of our conversations so it helps to direct our thinking. (Allan, P, P2, GC)

I think the learning theme is such a different idea, yet it makes so much sense to name the learning you want. (Debra, DP, P2, CC)

I love our theme everyone was getting excited about what we were going to do. (Lisa, DP/T, P1, CC)

These comments highlight how the process of establishing a school learning theme provided an opportunity to talk about learning in new ways. These Leaders of Learning consistently acknowledged that learning in their schools needed to be developed further and that the learning themes began to capture the essence of what it meant to begin to move in that direction. These leaders used the language of their learning themes to reflect on and better communicate what learning might mean for their schools.

Once a school learning theme was created, Leaders of Learning initiated conversations about the implications of the theme in relation to teaching. It was through those focused conversations that they began to communicate possible directions.

We felt our theme of Building Independent Learners wasn't enough. We wanted our students to work collaboratively as well, so we changed our learning theme to Creating Independent and Collaborative Learners. (Leah, P, P2, CC)

Our theme began as Building Powerful Learning through inquiry learning but we felt it was more strategy focused. So we now have Building Powerful Learning as our theme. (James, P, P2, CC)

We realised that our learning theme 'learning and growing together' didn't really help us to define the learning that we wanted to develop in the school. After more conversations we came up with a learning theme that is clearer; building independent learners. At our last staff meeting we started to list the important skills that will lead to independent learning. (Ken, P, P2, CC)

> *After a learning walk, we [the walking team] realised that staff appear*
> *to have a better understanding of the 'deeper thinkers' part of our*
> *theme and seem more confused about what the 'connected learners'*
> *part means. We need to look at this further. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*

What emerges from these comments is that these Leaders of Learning conveyed messages of shared ownership when they talked about their learning themes. As they reflected on their themes it was evident that some were still considering whether or not they had captured what they really wanted for their learners - and some refined their themes to capture new thinking. Their comments also highlight that the learning conversations reinforce the shared language developed during the process of creating their learning themes.

Once schools had a learning theme in place, the Leaders of Learning began to focus on ways to collectively explore their theme. They became more reflective about how their teacher interactions and professional learning opportunities reflected the messages conveyed in their themes.

> *I think we can get better at what is happening in the classroom,*
> *teachers seem to all be working in their own way ... they teach*
> *differently, there is no connections between the classrooms ... I'm not*
> *sure how to put it but we want to build a shared philosophy about*
> *learning, like spelling. Teachers are all doing something different. We*
> *need to have a consistent understanding of what effective teaching of*
> *spelling looks like. (Ken, P, P1, CC)*
>
> *I realised that even though our staff get along well there is really no*
> *collaboration in relation to teaching and learning or the way they*
> *plan. I can see that the 'building of community' part of our learning*
> *theme is more about building a team approach to learning and*
> *planning in our school. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *I wasn't aware of this in the beginning but looking back I could see we*
> *needed to change from being about managing to being about learning.*
> *I also realised that we were working as individuals rather than as a*
> *team, we needed to build a culture of collaboration ... staff get along*
> *well, but there are no conversations that challenge, it is just not the*
> *done thing. They don't react well to being challenged ... I also noticed*
> *that we focus on 'coverage' rather than learning, we talk about what*

> *we need to cover rather than how can we improve the learning.*
> *(James, P, P2, CC)*

The quotations (above) highlight that the learning theme provided a new way for participants to think about what was happening in their school. Once Leaders of Learning named the behaviours that were not conducive to building their learning theme they were then in a position to do something to change them. The following comments provide an example of how these leaders recognized and responded to the perceived professional learning practices in their schools and the need to engage in rich conversations about their learning theme.

> *I knew we needed to build the conversations and teamwork. So we*
> *focused on developing our Professional Learning Teams (PLT's – see*
> *Appendix 4). They were happening after school, but not everyone*
> *attended and I think they saw them as just another meeting. So I*
> *moved them to during the school day and changed the structure, so*
> *the focus was on learning. We also introduced Learning Level*
> *Leaders to develop the conversations. We created discomfort or a*
> *healthy tension and gradually we noticed things change. (James, P,*
> *P2, GC)*
>
> *We need to empower people to share their knowledge and give them*
> *forums where they can do this ... We need to build the ability of people*
> *to have professional conversations ... We need to build a culture*
> *where people feel they can question and be questioned not to see that*
> *as a personal attack but where we can encourage others to go deeper*
> *with their ideas and support the professional learning of others ...*
> *Staff need to be able to reflect honestly on their classroom practice, to*
> *be able to look objectively at what they are teaching and why. (Debra,*
> *DP, P2, GC)*

As Leaders of Learning focused more on their teachers' behaviours they started to refer to them as learners and began to make greater connections between their students as learners and their teachers as learners. As a consequence, they began to change the nature of the professional learning opportunities to learning with and from each other, rather than encouraging their teachers to be passive participants in the professional learning process.

I have to think about my staff in the same way they think about the students. We all need to improve learning … Developing our learning theme is not meant to be more work for the school or for you. It is about working differently and working smarter so we can improve student learning. (Allan, P, P2, CC)

I see now that we are all learners together. The staffroom is now a place for learning to happen. I have a role in making sure that learning happens. (James, P, P2, GC)

I don't have my own classroom so I have made the staffroom my classroom. I have put up displays to remind them of the learning that we are doing … The teachers are my learners now. (Debra, DP, P2, GC)

Change has to be about supporting the learning in the classroom. I can make sure we find the time to keep coming back to what we decide is important and ensure we take small steps and accept where everyone is at. I know that it has to be about taking people with you and managing the distractions so they can stay focused on the learning … We are leading our own change, we need to decide what we want and how we want to do it. We now have a shared vision and we'll do things together ... We need to break it up into manageable parts. (Ken, P, P2, CC)

We need to do it with you, not to you. We have to engage in the learning together, it's about doing with, not to. (Rob, P, P2, CC)

As these Leaders of Learning became more conscious of the fact that they were leading change, they began to develop a greater awareness of how their staff were managing change themselves. They began to look for indicators of success as well as being conscious of the tensions and challenges inherent in the change process.

Sometimes I'm really excited by the change I see happening in the school, but then I get a bit flat thinking about what we still need to do. I have learnt that I have to keep my foot on the pedal, if I stop then we will stop moving forward … We didn't do much to build our learning theme in term 1. We stopped reminding staff that this was important. I

think they thought we had done it and ticked it off the list as finished. We found it much harder to get going in term 2. (Allan, P, P2, CC)

The teachers who are starting to be more reflective are able to have the conversations about learning in their classrooms. What is working, what is not ... and they are having more aha moments. They are starting to question their practice and therefore try out new ideas ... they also share their new insights with others. They are excited about their teaching and this comes across to their parents, students and colleagues, we just want everyone to catch the bug. (Debra, DP, P2, GC)

Staff are making comments that they 'get it', in our meetings they are commenting on what they now understand better. It really helps when you give them the time to reflect and use questions to make them think about how they feel. (Allan, P, P2, CC)

Our new expectations seem to be creating discomfort for some teachers finding this more challenging. I think this discomfort is an important part of the process and I would rather call it creating a healthy tension. (James, P, P2, CC)

Out of the whole staff we are only looking at a couple of teachers who I would say still feel some discomfort with the way we are heading, and even then I have noticed them more involved in conversations. (James, P, P2, CC)

What is evident in these reflections is that Leaders of Learning were focused on identifying changes that were happening in their schools. They illustrate a common view that their approach is different to that which they had normally engaged in and they clearly experienced both successes and tensions associated with the process.

What is also evident is that these leaders talked about change in ways which suggest they were recognizing it as an ongoing process; something that would evolve over time. In supporting the change process, Leaders of Learning were introduced to a range of frameworks designed to provide new ways of thinking about learning.

3) ***Leaders of learning need tools to structure and challenge their current thinking about learning and change***

This theme explores how the use of introduced models, frameworks and tools challenged Leaders of Learning to conceptualise quality learning in different ways which reflect a vision of learning and support the process of change.

Leaders of Learning were introduced to a model that would support them to build a picture of change (see figure 4.1). The 'model' acts as a visual prompt to remind schools of their vision and what they are working towards. The model has three parts: the overarching goal or vision for learning which incorporates the school learning theme; the key structures or processes that will support the school to explore the learning theme (called through-lines); and, the third is the technical or more organisational considerations necessary for the organisation of the change process.
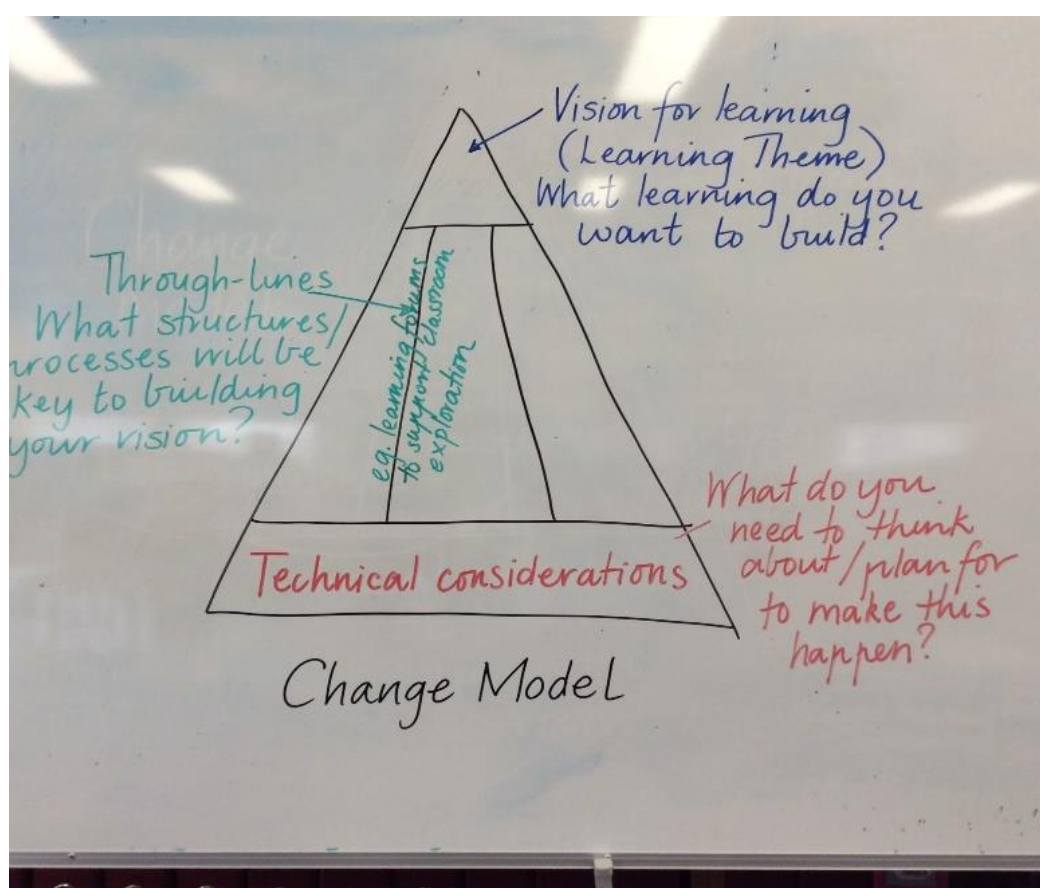
Figure 4.1: Vision of change model introduced to participants

The model (figure 4.1) is a representation of complex ideas designed to support an approach to school improvement as developed through this research project. The model is flexible and was designed to capture thinking as it evolved and to foster change in ways that supported

participating schools as they documented and communicated their learning journey. The model was created during the conversations with Leaders of Learning and was 'owned' by participants. It was structured in a way that offered sufficient detail as required by the particular schools. The following comments highlight how the change model supported Leaders of Learning to think about change.

> *The change model made it clear what we were working towards. The top of the triangle is the most important part and even though there is a lot to think about, I have direction for my thinking. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *If you had given me a template already drawn I would have tried to fill the template, building the plan as we go has focused on capturing our thinking … The model has given us something that is tangible and real to bring about change. It is a simple, yet a deep way of making change connected. It links the change we want in literacy and numeracy because it isn't subject related. (Rob, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *I have never done a plan like this before. This really helps me to see what I need to work on in the school. (Leah, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *Once I saw the model, I realised we had never had anything at the top of the triangle. (Rob, P, P2, CC)*

The comments (above) highlight the fact that using models to represent a change process or an organisational vision was not a familiar approach for these Leaders of Learning. Their comments reflect the idea that the model supported them in developing their understandings of change and how they communicated those views, and the process of change, within their schools. For some Leaders of Learning the change model became an important part of the way they engaged in conversations about change.
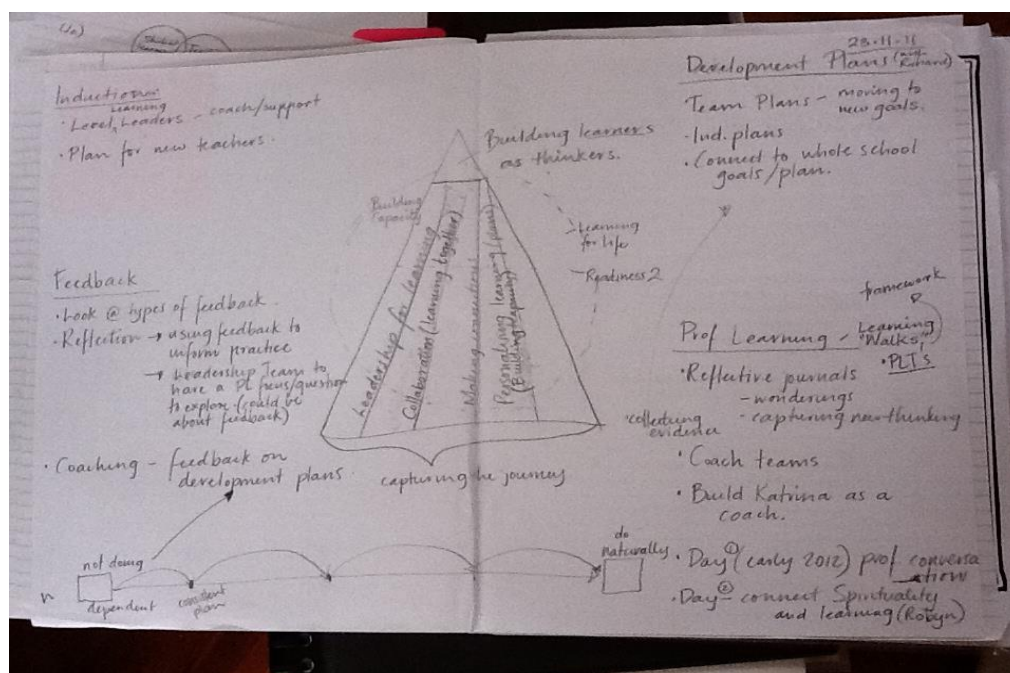
Figure 4.2: Capturing Rob's perception of learning through the change model.

Figure 4.2 was developed during a particular conversation with Rob. As figure 4.2 illustrates, for Rob, the change model was at the centre and around the outside supporting drawings and diagrams were important to illustrate or flesh out specific concepts. The through-lines in figure 4.2 include: leadership for learning; collaboration (learning together); making connections; and, personalising learning (building capacity). The learning theme at the top of the triangle is *Building learners as thinkers*. Rob stated that, 'I don't usually draw pictures I'm so used to typing up my ideas. I feel out of my comfort zone already … The model is really clear and includes all of the directions we need to go. I can now draw this with staff and share the story at the same time'.

At a later stage, Rob created a change model to capture the thinking of a Primary Principal group as they explored how to develop as a professional learning community. The Principal group decided on their learning theme and the key structures or processes (through-lines) that best supported their chosen direction (see Figure 4.3). The learning theme at the top of the triangle is *Building our collective capacity to lead learning*. The through-lines are: sharing and learning from and with each other; cultivating learning innovation and building; and, fostering our understanding of deep learning.

Figure 4.3: Change model used to represent change for the Principal group

Figure 4.4 shows one of the first change models developed in schools. This particular school named their learning theme *Building a community of deeper thinkers and connected learners* and then identified possible through-lines to support this change. These included: leadership to lead the theme/change; forums for developing professional conversations; building staff knowledge of thinking/learning; understanding the change process; shared ownership; feedback; and, exploring individual development plans.

Figure 4.4 is quite a 'busy' change model which the leadership team decided to build over four phases. At a later stage, the school decided to evaluate what they had achieved and modified their change model to reflect new priorities (see Figure 4.5). The new through-lines included were: building a sense of team; understanding learning (linking to numeracy and literacy); building reflective practice; and, re-defining our roles in building learning.
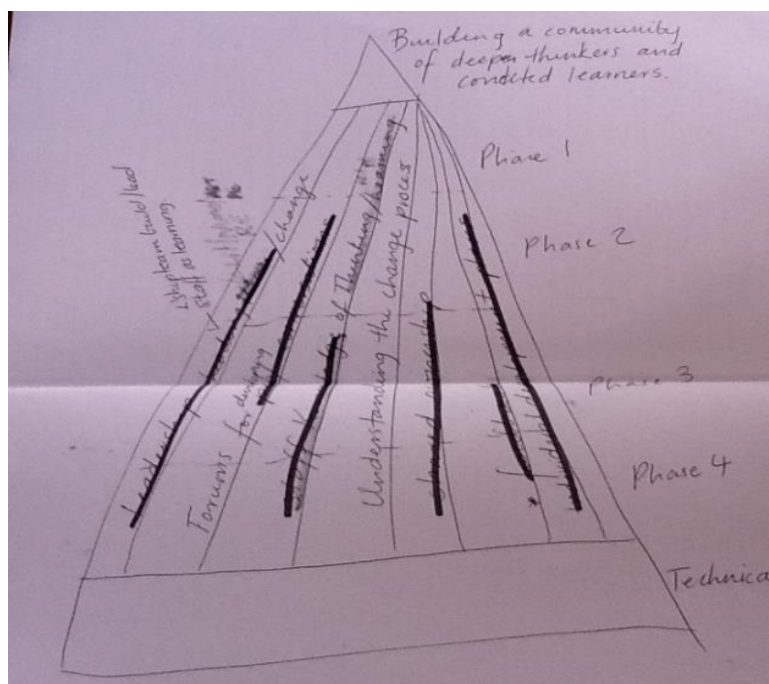
Figure 4.4: Original change model of a participating school
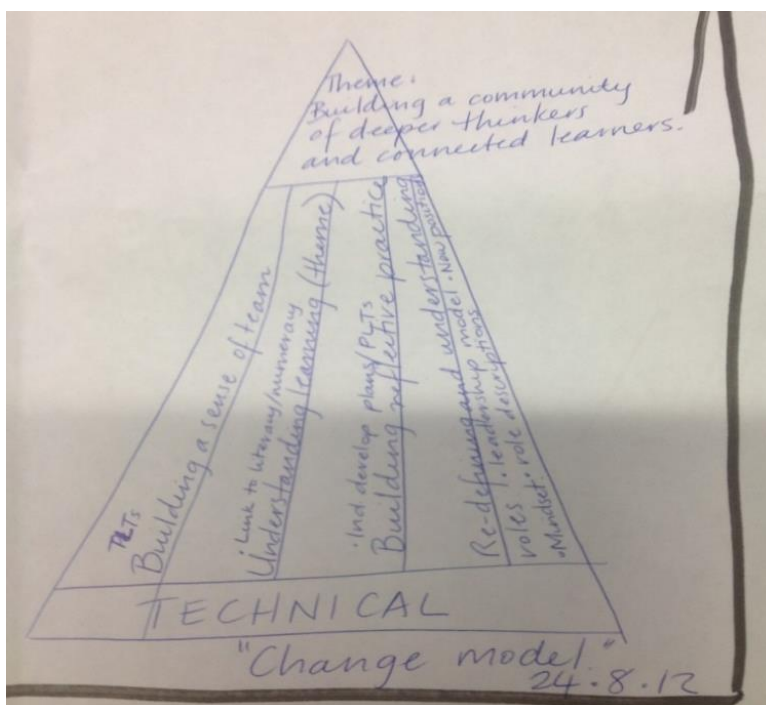
Figure 4.5: Modified change model developed by the same school involved in figure 4.4

Constructing change models supported these Leaders of Learning to engage in conversations about change. The models identify the common language developed in schools and, as the data below illustrates, supported these leaders in communicating key ideas about learning and change with their colleagues.

> *Once we identified that developing our LLLs (Level Learning Leaders) was key to staff development and the building of our learning theme, it was easy to stay focused on this and identify a comprehensive action plan. (Ken, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *The change model reminds us of what we are working towards. The through lines have become our long-term goals and have made writing our ASIP (Annual School Improvement Plan – See Appendix 4) much easier. (Rob, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *I keep getting an image of the change model in my head when I talk to staff and it prompts me to remind them to connect ideas about teaching and learning to both literacy and numeracy. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *Every term I now make it very clear to staff what our goals are. I try and make sure everything we do is connected to these goals … The leadership team are now using the terms and ideas in the model all of the time. We are getting better at connecting it back. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*

The change model also supported Leaders of Learning to consider how they were using their professional learning and meeting times. It encouraged them to think about the technical aspects of change (bottom of the change model) and how that was playing out in their schools. The following data highlight how these Leaders of Learning began to focus more on learning and the structures and processes identified as their through-lines rather than the technical aspects.

> *I found that we were filling up our staff meeting agenda with things that were just not that important. It took us so long to work through them that we often ran out of time. We never really talked about learning … Staff had trouble understanding the purpose of PLTs [Professional learning teams – see Appendix 4]; they couldn't see how they were about teaching and learning. Now I can see why, they*

> *get caught up in administration, like excursions or organising school*
> *sports … We used to have a staff meeting every week, now I have cut*
> *those down to 3 or 4 a term so we can have more learning meetings to*
> *support the work that is happening in our professional learning team*
> *meetings. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *We moved our professional learning team meetings to the middle of*
> *the day and used the support of a learning leader to ensure the*
> *meeting didn't default back to admin. (James, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *Our school is moving to implementing more of a professional learning*
> *focus in staff meetings. We are shifting to learning in blocks of time*
> *during the day and our focus for meetings needs to be on professional*
> *dialogue and learning as opposed to organisational issues. (Debra,*
> *DP, P2, GC)*
>
> *Our conversations have changed. They used to be about the technical*
> *part of the triangle, now we focus more on learning. (Jenny, T, P2,*
> *GC)*

What is evident in these comments is that Leaders of Learning were engaging in different conversations. They had become conscious of working and talking differently as they began to incorporate ideas about learning. The first three themes in this chapter focused on ways Leaders of Learning built a shared language of learning and engaged in conversations about learning. To further support these conversations Leaders of Learning were also introduced to the notion of effective and ineffective learning to support their thinking around quality learning. Other terms used to compare effective and ineffective learning included; active/passive, good/poor, and contemporary/traditional. Framing learning in this way encouraged Leaders of Learning to think differently about the actions and behaviours of their students. The following comments highlight how this supported the thinking of Leaders of Learning.

> *Learning about Good Learning Behaviours also makes me look for*
> *Poor Learning Behaviours. I look at my students and think about what*
> *their behaviours are. I think it is easier to focus on each behaviour*
> *rather than tell students just to be good learners overall. (Lisa, DP,*
> *P2, CC)*

When learners are passive it means I am doing more thinking and more work. Learners that are active are doing more for themselves.' (Karen, T, P2, CC)

When I think about blue circle I automatically think about the good learning behaviours that need to go in there. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 capture conversations about the difference between traditional and contemporary learning. Each list also contains examples of teaching practice that are likely to build each type of learning approach. This is what Debra, a Leader of Learning thought about the conversation around the difference between contemporary and traditional learners shown in figure 4.6.

When we looked closely at the behaviours of traditional and then contemporary learners it was much easier to see how the learners are different. It also helped to think about your teaching and whether you value traditional or contemporary learning. I can see that my teaching can fit into both so I will be more aware of how I am encouraging my students to be contemporary. (Debra, DP, P2, CC)
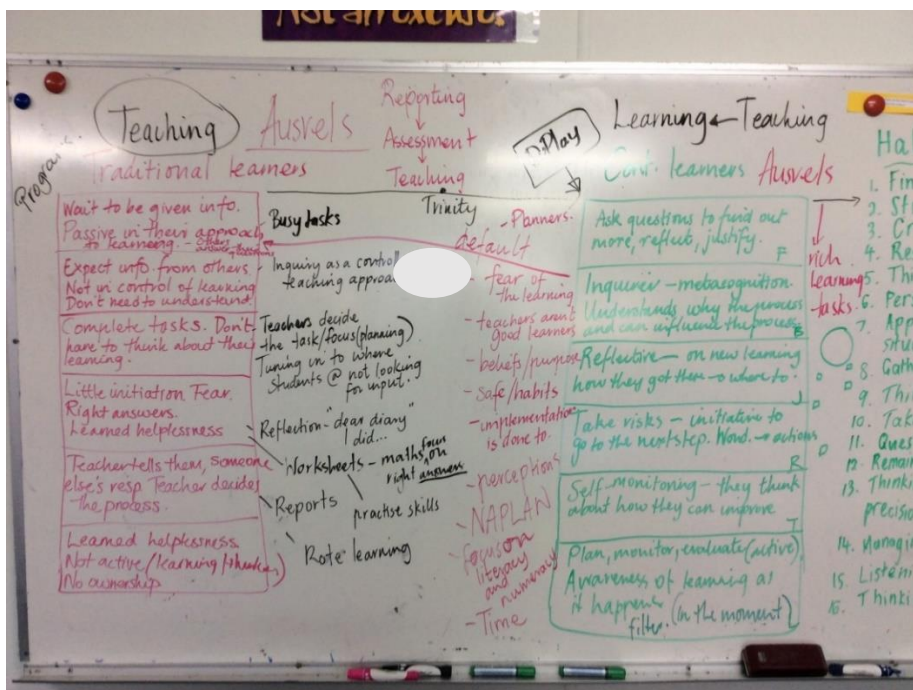
Figure 4.6 reflects the conversation about contemporary and traditional learners

Figure 4.7 reflects a conversation to frame the difference between contemporary and traditional learning

Figure 4.7 also shows a conversation with Leaders of Learning that captures the difference between traditional and contemporary learning. The following comment shows what Rob, a Leader of Learning thought about the conversation.

> *This conversation made it really clear; where we are and where we*
> *need to go. (Rob, P, P2, GC)*

Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show examples of a coaching tool; Learning Culture Lens. The tool was developed to help Leaders of Learning identify key considerations for building teacher and student learning. The centre of the tool captures Leader of Learning thinking about key ways to improve student learning and the outer circle identifies ways to shape teacher learning. The following comments show how this coaching tool supported the thinking of Leaders of Learning.

> *It's all about learning. What we want for our students we also want*
> *for our teachers. I will have to think about what this will look like for*
> *our Tuesday and Thursday meetings. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*

The tool connects what we want to change in student learning with professional learning. This really changes how I think about professional learning we just don't go deep enough. (Allan, P, P2, GC)

This is so different to what we were thinking about professional learning. Next term we have so much to do so we can keep focusing on student learning. (Jenny, T, P2, GC)
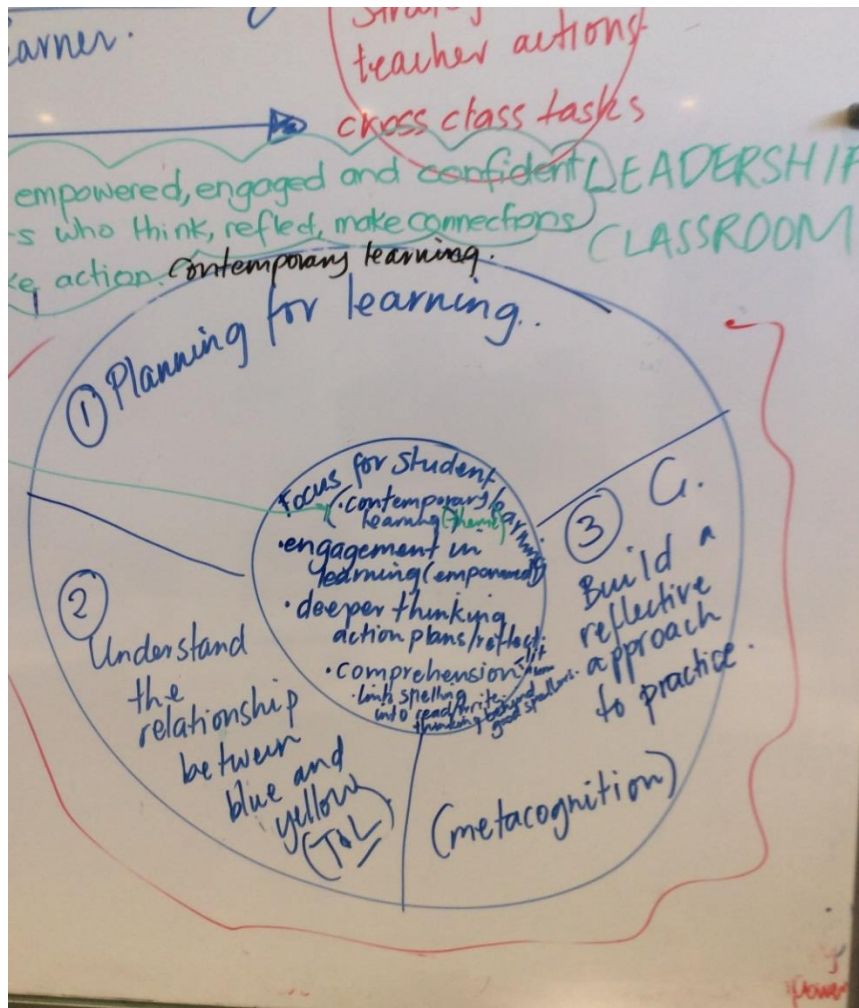
Figure 4.8 shows a Learning Culture Lens tool used to identify key considerations for building student and teacher learning
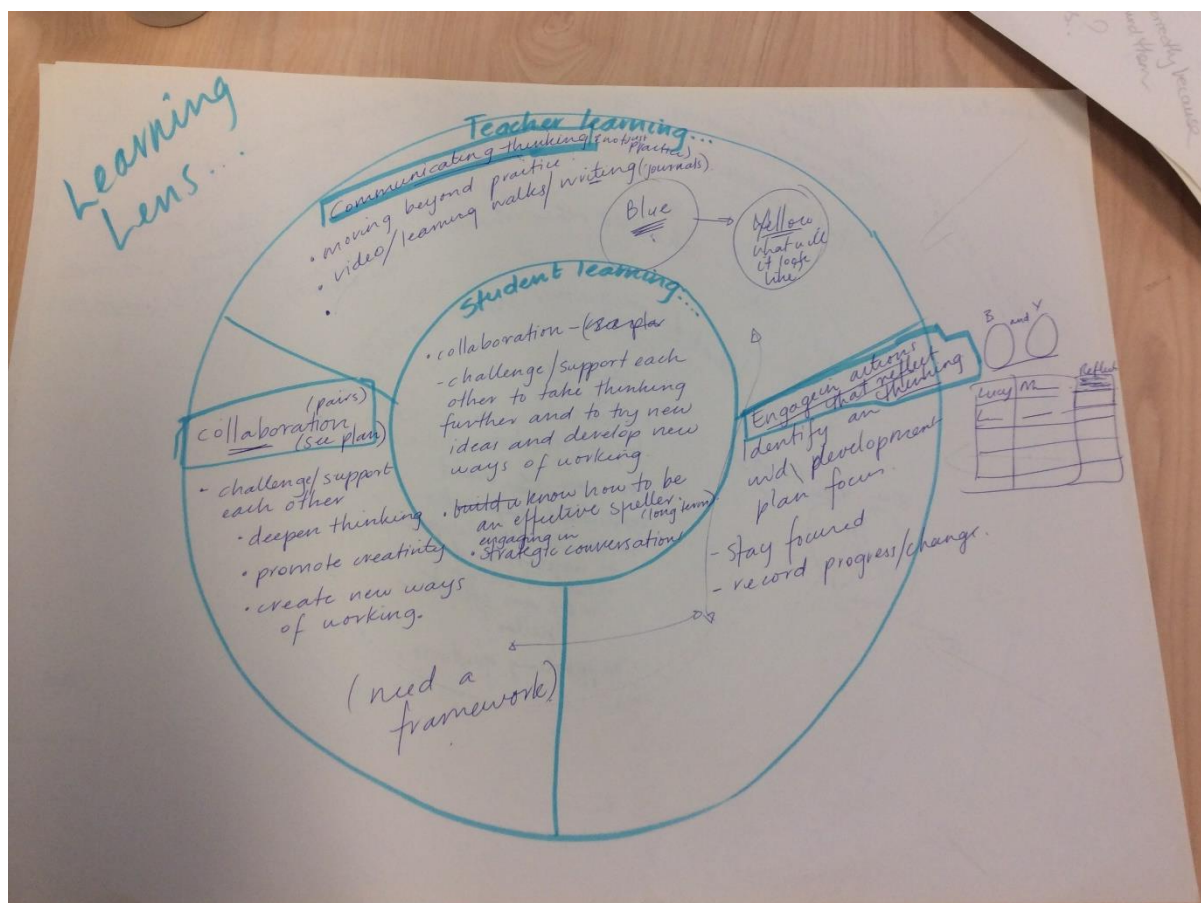
Figure 4.9: shows an example of a Learning Culture Lens tool used to support thinking about student and teacher learning

This theme explored the impact using introduced models, frameworks and tools had on the thinking of Leaders of Learning as they considered quality student and teacher learning, as well as their approach to change. The following theme explores the thinking of Leaders of Learning as they began to frame quality learning in personalised ways in their schools.

4) *Articulating a school learning theme helps to build new visions for both student and teacher learning*

This theme focuses attention on how school learning themes supported Leaders of Learning in providing a sense of purpose and direction for professional learning in their schools. As the data (below) makes clear, Leaders of Learning began to recognize and value the ways in which learning themes influenced their shared understandings.

> *The learning theme is a shared vision; it captures it in a nutshell. The*
> *theme will help teachers to use the same language and build a shared*
> *understanding of the change the school wants. The theme and the*

process connect all of the staff as well as the students and parents. I can see the potential to connect all aspects of school life. (Debra, DP, P2, CC)

It wasn't until we had a learning theme that I felt the excitement from staff. They seemed quite negative about the process and felt this was going to be just another thing to do. Our learning theme was something that they felt would take us further as a school. It has certainly been the beginning of an amazing learning journey for our school.

The leadership team encouraged the staff to think about what the learning theme would look like in practice. We captured in a visual way [see Figure 4.10] the things which will prompt us to start exploring the theme … The more we started to share what this could look like I realised we could include some new expectations of our teachers and students … The way I want staff to work professionally is reflected in the brainstorm poster … I think there is a greater emphasis on students being more responsible for their learning. (Rob, P, P2, CC)

Figure 4.10: A brainstorm tool showing what the learning theme (Building Learners as Thinkers) might look like in practice as used by Rob (see quote above)

The data (above) highlight the way Leaders of Learning came to see their school learning theme as a new vision for learning and the exploration of the theme was also a vision for the associated teacher learning. Figure 4.10 in particular, demonstrates how Rob used the school learning theme to brainstorm some possibilities for all learners.

Initially, Leaders of Learning found that exploring the learning theme was seen by some teachers as 'another thing they had to address'. If this was the case, then teachers were unable to make the connections between the theme and their existing approach to learning and teaching. Once Leaders of Learning became aware of that situation they became more focused on what they needed to consider with their staff as the following data demonstrates.

> *I didn't realise that staff would think that learning was a new subject, until a staff member brought it to my attention. A number of teachers see our learning theme as just another thing to teach. I was really surprised that they weren't making any connections to the curriculum. (Rob, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *When we first started to look at changing our culture and we looked at feedback I just kept thinking this is another thing being put on us, just another thing we had to do. It didn't sound very exciting. The following week we talked about our culture again but this time we talked about ways we wanted to change our students. I started to get excited. Looking at dependency to empowerment was exactly what we needed and I know everyone was feeling much happier about what all this culture stuff was. (Lisa, DP/T, P2, CC)*
>
> *Developing our learning theme is not meant to be more work for the school or for you. It is about working differently and working smarter so we can improve student learning. (Allan, P, P2, GC)*
>
> *At the beginning it was hard to see that this won't take more time or work, but you really think about what needs to stay and what needs to go. (Rob, P, P2,CC)*
>
> *Some teachers asked why we need a new subject called learning when we haven't got enough time to teach all of the subjects we already have. (Karen, P, P2, GC)*

You get better at deciding what the priorities in the school are and

you get more confident focusing on learning rather than content.

(Leah, P, P2, GC)

The quotes (above) provide examples of the observations Leaders of Learning made as they reflected on the process of exploring their learning themes. They began to focus more on the behaviours and actions of their teachers before and during the change process and that in turn helped to shape how they worked with their colleagues.

We really didn't have a common focus. Staff had their own beliefs and

did their own thing. I feel the focus wasn't on their learning. (James,

P, P2, CC)

To facilitate change you need to build staff to be positive about

change. I want them to understand that learning happens all of the

time and it needs to be about the classroom … (Ken, P, P2, CC)

It took me a while to realise that teachers at this school had built

strong feelings of uncertainty and fear about change and leadership.

They were very protective of one another, for me this meant I had to

focus on building up trust and confidence with them, in relation to my

leadership. I had to allow them the time to express their feelings about

the past, the present and even the future in relation to their roles and

mine. Initially it had to be about building open communication and

providing the opportunities to express their feelings. It wasn't until I

started to think about their reluctance to lead or take ownership of

new ways of working that I could start to do something to change it.

(Allan, P, P2, CC)

For us we were talking change in terms of literacy and numeracy, it

was disconnected. We had pigeonholed the change which made it

hard to work our way through. We were dealing with learning as

isolated items. For example we wanted to improve Literacy, so we

asked what does this mean for Spelling, we were looking at what to

teach, not why aren't students applying the strategies? (Rob, P, P2,

CC)

As the data illustrate, the school learning themes opened up new possibilities for the school, but it meant that Leaders of Learning began to recognize a need to reflect and consider what

that means for their school and the way they work with it. Leaders discovered they were grappling with new ideas at the same time as introducing these to their staff. Leaders of Learning began to realise that they needed time to process the ideas themselves before they had conversations with their teachers.

> *I started to achieve real clarity about where the school needed to go.*
> *We clarified our sense of purpose and looked for evidence of what we*
> *were really doing. We needed to make connections between different*
> *things we were trying to do and I found that we were in this constant*
> *process of evaluating and building a picture of what was happening.*
> *At times there were too many images and you can't take it all in, I had*
> *to sit back and look at the images carefully … When the ideas are new*
> *to me I need time to reflect on them and work out how I will share*
> *them with staff … I like the way our school is building over time it*
> *gives me the chance to understand how it is going to work. It seems*
> *like it needs to happen in stages. (James, P, P2, CC)*

In order for the Leaders of Learning to make greater sense of what the learning theme meant in practice, they were encouraged to create a framework that helped them to identify key ideas to be explored. Initially the scope for exploring the theme was too broad and they had difficulty 'pulling it together' or 'finding a common focus' to shape the professional learning opportunities. The learning themes gave them a big picture to work towards and some direction, but were also limited by the existing understandings of both the Leaders of Learning and their teachers. To support their teachers, Leaders of Learning created frameworks that identified examples of learner behaviours or actions that they considered critical to realising the learning theme. The final theme in this chapter explores that issue.

5) ***Leaders of Learning seek to develop their own frameworks to communicate their vision for learning***

The final theme in this chapter explores how the learning frameworks (described above) supported Leaders of Learning to communicate their vision for learning. As the data has made clear throughout this chapter, the ways in which Leaders of Learning came to: recognize and 'name' their practice; develop and communicate shared understandings of change and their models of change; and, the nature of the ways in which they were able to respond to the contextual demands of their given situation, illustrated professional learning

outcomes that shaped the way they viewed their learning with their colleagues. As they articulated their learning, they did so with the notion of a learning framework as a central vision for, and mirror into, the change process. However, they did not see the framework as a predetermined 'model' that needed to be rigidly adhered to or something that was fixed and unchangeable.

> *I'm really excited about developing a learning framework, I'm not*
> *sure what it will look like. (Karen, T, P2, GC)*
> *This framework will help teachers to find a focus for their*
> *development plans. (Layla, T, P2, GC)*
> *I think the framework will give us a focus for our PLT conversations.*
> *It is a hard to plan for meetings because everyone is focusing on*
> *something different and I'm not sure how to have conversations where*
> *we can all join in. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*
> *I can't wait to see what the framework will look like. I have never*
> *done anything like this before. (Jenny, T, P2, CC)*

Table 4.1 offers an example of the first draft of a learning framework and identifies key ideas about the school learning theme; *Building learners as thinkers.* The framework (see Table 4.1) incorporated 'students can' statements that were designed to remind teachers of the actions that they could expect students to display as effective learners.

After completing the first draft of their learning frameworks (see Table 4.1 as an example), Leaders of Learning reflected on the process which illustrated for them the importance of the process and the outcome in terms of their own learning community and professional learning outcomes.

> *This is so different to anything I have done before. (Tina, T, P2, GC)*
> *This makes so much sense; I think this is really going to help our*
> *teachers decide on what their action plans will be. (Karen, T, P2, GC)*
> *The 'student can' statements get easier to write. I'm getting a picture*
> *of what this will look like in my classroom. I have so much to do.*
> *(Lisa, DP, P2, GC)*
> *This framework is showing us how much we don't do. We really don't*
> *build learners, we teach content. (Laura, T, P2, GC)*

Teachers have been struggling with what the learning theme could mean in their classroom. I can see our PLT conversations are going to be more focused from now on … This is really exciting! I can't wait to show staff. (Layla, T, P2, GC)

BUILDING THE LEARNER	BUILDING THE THINKER
Students understand what makes them a good learner: • Students can communicate the behaviours that make them a good learner • Students can put good learning behaviours into action, and can identify when they are doing them • Students can identify good learning behaviour in others *Students have a bank of strategies and they know how to apply them:* • Students can name the strategies they can use in different curriculum areas • Students can engage in conversations about deciding which strategies they might use • Students can reflect on the effectiveness of the strategies they chose and consider other strategies they could have used *Students understand the purpose for the learning and their role in it:* • Students can articulate the purpose of any task • Students can articulate how the task builds their learning *Students can reflect on their performance in relation to the success criteria:* • Students can articulate the criteria that will determine their success.	*Students reflect naturally throughout the learning process:* • Students can use questions as prompts to reflect • Students know they have the time and space to reflect at anytime • Students can articulate how reflection builds learning *Students seek and act on feedback to make their learning more effective:* • Students can articulate the role feedback plays in their learning • Students know and use tools that support them in giving and receiving feedback • Students can explain how they have, or can, act on feedback (reflective/planning) *Students know why and how to take their learning deeper:* • Students can explain the difference between surface and deep thinking • Students can explain how they move from surface to deep thinking • Students can communicate how thinking tools organise and challenge their thinking • Students can select and justify tools to take their thinking deeper

Table 4.1: The first draft of a learning framework, developed to support the exploration of the theme *Building learners as thinkers*

The comments (above) reflect how the process of creating a learning framework and working with their teachers influenced their views about classroom practice and approaches to professional learning. In particular, the actions of effective learners and the implications of these in practice.
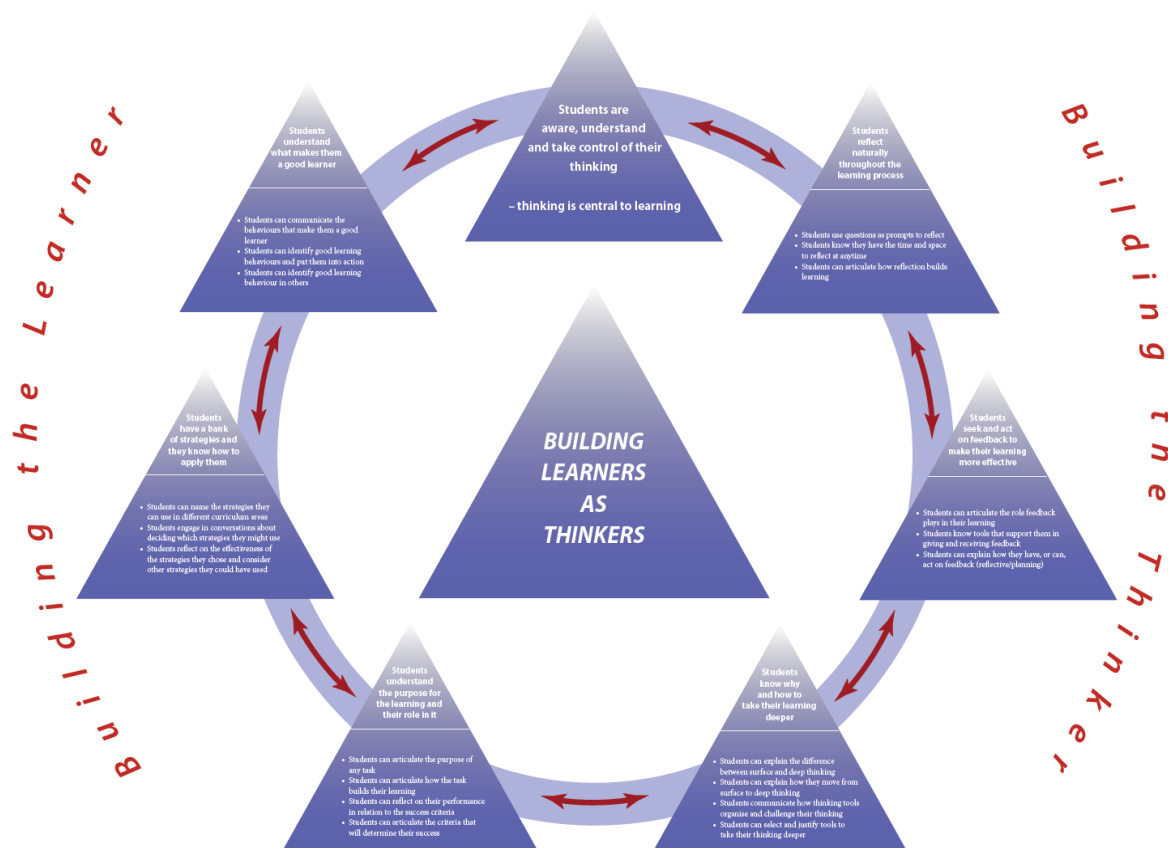
Figure 4.11: The visual representation of learning theme framework (The descriptions of learning are presented in Table 4.1)

After the draft was completed, Leaders of Learning created a visual representation of the learning framework, (see for example, Figure 4.11). They developed a more visual artefact to highlight the connections between the different components of the framework in relation to the school learning theme, and to illustrate a range of possibilities to explore and build quality learning. Figure 4.11 highlights the personalised nature of the framework for that particular school, but this example also influenced the way the other Leaders of Learning approached the task in their own schools.

Figure 4.12 illustrates how a Leader of Learning created a visual representation of learning which summarises the key ideas of a more comprehensive framework shown in table 4.2.
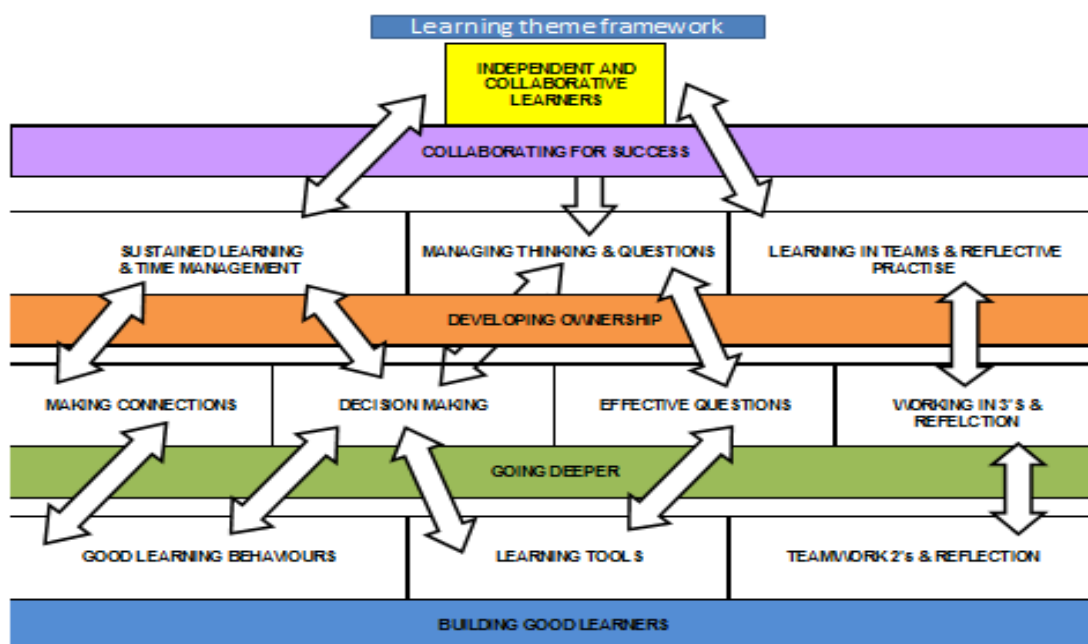
Figure 4.12: Visual representation of a learning framework showing an overview of the year

The learning framework shown in Figure 4.12 was created prior to the development of a more detailed learning framework (Tables 4.2 & 4.3). Tables 4.2 and 4.3 outline the 'learner can' statements that were introduced as a way of supporting teachers to build different components of learning. Leaders of Learning planned to shift their teachers' focus from thinking about teaching first to considering how they will build components of quality learning together with aspects of the curriculum, before they plan their teaching. The school learning theme for this school was *Building independent and collaborative learners.*

The learning frameworks developed into a form that presented student learning as a series of 'students or learners can' statements designed to capture the behaviours or actions to demonstrate how students could engage in learning more effectively. The statements were not designed to be checklists or as a definitive list of the behaviours and actions students should display. The learning framework provided a sample of what might be possible if students were encouraged to build understandings of quality learning, and through the exploration of learning in their classrooms, teachers would continue to refine and expand the statements.

INDEPENDENT & COLLABORATIVE LEARNERS - TERM ONE

Good learning behaviours (GLBs) (Refer to Appendix 3 for examples of GLBs)	**Learning tools**	**Teamwork 2's (pairs)**	**Reflection on personal learning & partner work**
Learners can: • Contribute to the class list of GLB's. • Decide which GLB's they will need to use in a task • Use prompts around the classroom environment to decide on the GLB's to use in a lesson • Articulate the GLB's they used during the learning task	*Learners can:* • Articulate the name and purpose of learning tools • Use prompts around the classroom to remind them of the name, visual nature and purpose of a bank of learning tools. • Communicate the tools they have in their individual (class) toolbox • Use learning tools in ways that allow them to personalise their learning	*Learners can:* • Articulate the GLB's that help them work as a team. • Communicate the ways they will contribute to the team task • Evaluate and share their contribution to the team • Identify and share the GLB's in others	*Learners can:* • Reflect on and share how the GLB's supported their learning. • Reflect on and share how the GLB's supported their team task. • Reflect on and share how effectively they have used a learning tool
BUILDING GOOD LEARNERS			

Table 4.2: Term 1 of the Learning framework

INDEPENDENT & COLLABORATIVE LEARNERS TERM TWO

Making connections	**Decision Making**	**Effective questions**	**Teamwork 3's (3 students)**	**Reflection on learning & group work**
Learners can: • Articulate the connections they make between ideas, tasks, lessons, topics and curriculum areas • Use learning tools to show connections between ideas, tasks, lessons, topics and curriculum areas • Engage in conversations and tasks that encourage them to access and organise prior knowledge	*Learners can:* • Articulate the decisions they can make in working through a task. • Identify the decisions they made during a task • Explain whether decisions are made individually, as a team or by the teacher. • Engage in opportunities to evaluate their decision making	*Learners can:* • Ask questions that use a range of question beginnings • Use learning tools that prompt them to ask a range of questions • Articulate and share the difference between a surface and deep question • Pose and explore a variety of questions related to a topic/focus	*Learners can:* • Articulate the GLB's that help them work as a team. • Communicate the ways they will contribute to the team task • Evaluate and share their contribution to the team • Identify and share the GLB's in others	*Learners can:* • Reflect on and share how the GLB's supported their learning. • Reflect on and share how the GLB's supported their team task. • Reflect on and share how effectively they have used a learning tool • Reflect on and share the connections they are making in their learning • Reflect on and share the effectiveness of the decisions they make during their learning • Use questions to prompt their reflections on learning
GOING DEEPER				

Table 4.3: Term 2 of the Learning framework

Leaders of Learning need to manage the ongoing development of their learning frameworks in ways that could promote the 'buy-in' of their teachers and the refinement of the statements. At the same time, Leaders of Learning were very conscious of the challenges associated with this process.

> *I think the framework was really challenging. Teachers kept saying where do we start? … How do we help teachers to use this framework? The dot points about student learning are so different to what they are used to. I think some teachers will be really challenged by this. (Layla, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *Teachers keep asking for practical examples. They need to know what this will look like. (Jenny, T, P2, CC)*
>
> *The framework is really different to what we use now in our planning. I think teachers will need some ideas to get started. We have been doing 'habits of the mind' for a while and not everyone is implementing that in their classrooms. Teachers might see this [learning framework] in the same way. (Laura, T, P2, GC)*

As they led the development of these learning frameworks, Leaders of Learning noticed that their teachers focused more on how it applied to their teaching and less on what the framework could mean for their students. Some Leaders of Learning acknowledged that the framework could be challenging for their teachers, which reinforced the view that professional learning conversations were needed to support teacher thinking around quality student learning. In one particular school, the Leaders of Learning were organising their 'students can' statements into themes in order to create different sections in their learning framework. As they discussed each theme they began to talk about possible teaching strategies that might provide teachers with a starting point for building such student actions, "I know this is a learning framework but I think it would be really helpful to develop another column that looks at examples of teaching strategies or we could write down some dot points that would help teachers think about the learning behaviours when they are teaching" (Karen).

BUILDING THE LEARNER:

- Explicitly teach how the good learning behaviours support learning – BUILD THIS SLOWLY!

- Children need usual prompts to refer to, which remind them of good learning behaviours

- Teachers need to have regular conversations with the children to reinforce/remind/model/ prompting to have children identify the good learning behaviours themselves

- As you take learning deeper, identify with the children new learning behaviours we can use

- Make sure good learning behaviours are not content specific – e.g., Re-read the text – not just good in literacy, but can apply in maths, inquiry, etc.

- Students need to see/be shown evidence of good learning behaviours. This could be through conversation, questioning, pictures showing children visual examples

- We need to be <u>very clear</u> in our own mind what the <u>learning focus</u> is and what the relevance is for the kids

- Activities need to be more than just fun! It needs to be purposeful for <u>every task</u> we plan and complete

- How do the tasks we are doing <u>support the learning?</u> - It's not just about the task, it's about how they are presented and their purpose

- We need to articulate to the children what the purpose of the task is, so they actually know

- Planning for a common bank of strategies

- What are the strategies we are teaching?

- Make the strategies visual/prompts they can refer to within tasks

- Develop strategies under curriculum areas rather than levels as a school. Plan for them and compile a school based list

(continued on next page)

BUILDING THE THINKER:

- Teach children questions for reflection

- Visual prompts of questions

- When given a task, children make a list of questions to ask themselves before, during and after the task. This can be a good place to begin as it is structured. Make list together before task. Which ones are specific to the task/which can be used on any task?

- A lot of reflection is oral – doesn't have to be a great big thing

- Reflection audit

- Teach the children the *tools* for feedback which are <u>valuable</u> – deeper than "I've liked what you have done". You need more "I've liked what you have done because you have used connectives and adjectives to make your sentences more interesting"

- Teach children how to give and receive all types of feedback – positive, negative, constructive

- Teach children the difference between surface and deep thinking and what tools can we use for deep thinking

- Have visual model prompts to help explain the concept of surface to deep thinking

- Model different ways of showing surface to deep thinking

       Top → Bottom ocean

       Fat → Skinny questions

       Surface

       ↓   cheap/expensive

       Deep

- Teach the tools for surface → deep thinking

Table 4.4: A section on teaching strategies included in a learning framework

As a consequence of Karen's comment, the Leaders of Learning in her school decided to include a section on teaching strategies to add to the school's learning framework (original framework is shown in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.11), which led to the development of Table 4.4. The teaching strategies were designed to support the exploration of the school learning theme *Building learners as thinkers.*

The ideas presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.4 show that these Leaders of Learning identified differences between learning and teaching and captured ideas that they envisaged could support teachers to explore those differences. The strength of the example (i.e., Table 4.4) is that these leaders were able to articulate the difference between learning and teaching as well as consider teaching practices that deliberately built effective learning actions and behaviours of students. That was a considerable professional learning outcome and an example of how they had come to recognise and lead meaningful learning in their schools.

Chapter overview

This chapter illustrated the professional learning of the Leaders of Learning through the process of creating a vision to enhance a school's ability to explore and improve student learning. The possibilities for a vision evolved as these Leaders of Learning and the teachers with whom they worked, engaged in opportunities that challenged them to think differently about learning. As the chapter makes clear, a number of themes emerged that demonstrate that which needs to be recognized and responded to in developing a collective vision of effective learning, these included:

- Conversations about learning are not common practice.
- Leaders of Learning need to develop a language that supports them to engage in learning conversations, reflect on current practices and articulate a vision of learning.
- Leaders of Learning need tools to structure and challenge their thinking about the way they work.
- Articulating a School learning theme helps to build new visions for both student and teacher learning.
- Leaders of Learning seek to develop their own frameworks to communicate their vision for learning.

The data show that building a language to talk and think about learning is central to communicating visions of quality student learning and it is through focused professional learning conversations that the development and use of such language is fostered.

The following chapter explores how Leaders of Learning learnt to articulate important differences between learning and teaching. These differences were important in shaping the ways in which their professional learning and the process of change further enhanced the development of quality learning with their colleagues and students.

Chapter 5

Leaders of Learning explore the relationship between learning and teaching

Introduction

This chapter will explore the data in relation to the challenges Leaders of Learning face as they define and explore the relationship between learning and teaching. This chapter is organised in two sections: the first section briefly explores the literature in relation to the connection between learning and teaching and the second section includes an analysis of the data – which has been organised into four themes. Each theme is examined separately. As a coherent whole, together the themes focus on the way participant leaders explore and make sense of the relationship between learning and teaching. These themes (structured as statements) include:

1. Tools/frameworks can support Leaders of Learning to build connections between learning and teaching.
2. Leaders of Learning develop action plans to explore their ideas about learning and teaching.
3. Leaders of Learning build a reflective approach to exploring learning and teaching.
4. Leaders of Learning develop new strategies that focus their professional learning on exploring learning within their classrooms.

The relationship between learning and teaching

This section will explore the literature with a particular focus on the relationship between learning and teaching and how leaders and teachers build their understandings of effective pedagogy as they explore this relationship. Loughran (2010) describes the relationship between teaching and learning as 'complex and interwoven.' (p. 1) How teachers think about and explore this complicated relationship shapes their pedagogy; 'thinking about pedagogy as the relationship between teaching and learning is important because it fundamentally changes what we look at and why when considering notions of quality practice' (Loughran, 2010, p. 36).

Quality teaching requires teachers to develop new insights into learning and the role of the learner in this process. Seeing learning and teaching as two lenses provides different

perspectives on a constantly interlinked partnership. Murphy (1996) describes pedagogy as the 'interactions between teachers, students and the learning environment and the learning tasks' (p. 35). This view suggests that pedagogy is the process whereby teachers explore the interactions between different aspects of learning and teaching and create new roles and expectations for themselves and their students.

Shulman (1987) reinforced this thinking when he suggested that:

> *… teaching involves the exchange of ideas. The idea is grasped, probed, and comprehended by a teacher, who then must turn it about in his or her mind, seeing many sides of it. Then the idea is shaped and tailored until it can in turn be grasped by students. This grasping, however, is not a passive act. Just as the teacher's comprehension requires a vigorous interaction with the ideas, so students will be expected to encounter ideas actively as well. (p. 13)*

Loughran (2010) describes the process reflected in the preceding statement as ongoing professional learning, an important component of effective pedagogy; 'pedagogy involves two aspects of learning. The first is associated with what and how students are learning; the second is about the teacher as a learner-learning about teaching and building expertise' (Loughran 2010, p. 37).

Teacher beliefs about learning and what they believe students are capable of in relation to taking responsibility for their learning shapes the context where teaching is developed. Murphy (1996) was of the view that 'in current theories of learning, the responsibility for learning rests with students and teachers. Students are expected to engage in dialogue with each other, and with teachers, and to validate their own understandings rather than merely accept transmitted views' (p. 33). Murphy presents a view of learning and the role of the learner that creates a specific context for teaching; students should have the responsibility to build their approach to learning. How teachers react to and build these ideas about learning depends on the understandings they have around what this might look like in practice.

Hattie (2009) was also of the view that students have a role in building their own learning. He suggested that students and teachers contribute different elements to the learning and teaching relationship. For the child these contributions include: 'prior knowledge of learning; expectations; degree of openness to experiences; emerging beliefs about the value and worth to them from investing in learning; engagement and the ability to build a sense of self' (p.

31). Claxton (2002) had a similar view and described the contribution students make to learning, as learning power: 'Learning power is about how to develop students as learners-how to increase their portable learning power' (p. 15). The four aspects described by Claxton include: resilience; resourcefulness; reflectiveness; and, reciprocity (p. 17). Costa and Kallick (2000) described these contributions to learning as building a learning disposition or habits of the mind, 'We came to call these dispositions habits of the mind, indicating that the behaviours require a discipline of the mind that is practiced so it becomes a habitual way of working toward more thoughtful, intelligent action' (p. xiii).

Through PEEL (Project for Enhancing Effective Learning- see Appendix 4), Baird & Northfield (1992) outlined how teachers explored ways for students to 'feel more willing and able to manage their own learning' (p. 3). Through this project, PEEL teachers developed understandings of the learning process and explored 'how students may manipulate this process in pursuit of more desirable outcomes' (p. 4). Baird & Northfield (1992) identified a list of good learning behaviours (GLBs) that students displayed as they made changes to their approach to learning (p. 63). The idea of students displaying good learning behaviours (GLBs – refer to Appendix 3) as they developed understandings of how they could improve their approach to learning was also reinforced by Loughran, Mitchell & Mitchell (2002); 'PEEL teachers took the notion of poor learning tendencies and turned these into practical ways of developing students' metacognitive skills by developing a list of good learning behaviours that they could develop with their students to enhance control over their own learning' (p. 7). Hence, these teachers deliberately set out to change the nature of learning within their classrooms. Loughran et al. (2002) suggested that teachers 'have gained much professional satisfaction in knowing that they have developed meaningful ways of enhancing their students' metacognitive skills, which helps facilitate the change from passive to more active learners' (p. 7).

Hattie (2009) was of the view that teachers contribute to student learning in a range of ways which include: quality teaching, teaching expectations, teacher conceptions of teaching and learning, and teacher clarity (p. 34). Claxton (2010) suggested that 'helping students learn more or better does not necessarily help them become better learners. But if you help students to become better learners their achievement rises' (p. 15). Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that if teachers focus on building understandings of how they can contribute to the building of quality learning they can then create the space to explore new possibilities in practice.

What is reflected in the preceding paragraphs is that learning has been framed in ways which identify particular language and ideas about learning that highlight the active role students should have in their learning. This creates a challenge for teachers based around how to build understandings of what this shift in responsibility means in practice. Loughran (2010) reinforced this idea by stating that 'a difficult aspect of teaching is being able to create ways of working that build the capacity and motivation of students to take responsibility for learning' (p. 213).

Quality teaching then requires a strategic approach that explicitly teaches students the behaviours and actions of effective learners; students need to learn how to learn successfully within a classroom context (i.e., how to engage in deep learning and go beyond the superficial). Therefore, teachers can influence the type and nature of the learning in classrooms. Through their actions and messages students respond with an approach to learning that reflects the learning intentions of the teacher. Claxton, Chambers, Powell & Lucas (2011) explain that teacher behaviours shape the way students view and approach learning, 'by the way they [teachers] express themselves, teachers can create a potent linguistic milieu that teaches young people what kinds of learning are valued 'round here', what their role is with respect to knowledge, and what aspects of learning are worth paying attention to' (p. 68).

Costa & Kallick (2005) share Claxton's view that teachers influence the way students perceive learning, 'teachers mediate students' self-directedness through designing instruction lessons, units and activities; by creating classroom conditions for self-directed learning; by engaging and enhancing reflective dialogue; and by serving as a model for students to emulate' (p. 99). Steele (2009) reinforced this notion when stating that 'we cannot make students learn. But we can create circumstances in which learning is more likely' (p. 131).

Loughran (2010) was of the view that 'in some cases, we subconsciously direct and control classrooms in ways that encourage students to be passive and dependent learners' (p. 213). Encouraging students to contribute to their own learning requires a conscious and deliberate approach to teaching that makes the what and how of learning explicit and part of the ongoing dialogue in the classroom. If teachers know they can influence the way students approach their learning they can deliberately influence the perceptions students develop of what effective learning means. Knowing what we want students to look like as learners provides direction for teachers as they reflect on, and respond to, what is happening in their classrooms.

Loughran (2010) stated that 'recognising and responding to students' behaviours is also essential because these behaviours are equally important in shaping the nature of the teaching and learning environment' (p. 4).

The next section of this chapter captures the experiences of Leaders of Learning as they explored the relationship between learning and teaching.

Section 2: Analysis of the data

This section explores the data in relation to the four themes of:

1. Tools/frameworks can support Leaders of Learning to build connections between learning and teaching.
2. Leaders of Learning develop action plans to explore their ideas about learning and teaching.
3. Leaders of Learning build a reflective approach to exploring learning and teaching.
4. Leaders of Learning develop new strategies that focus their professional learning on exploring learning within their classrooms.

Collectively these four themes explore the changes in the thinking and actions of Leaders of Learning as they were supported and challenged to discover and communicate their understandings of the relationship between learning and teaching. Over time these leaders became more efficient at articulating the difference between learning and teaching. They developed new ways to explore this relationship and communicate the impact that focusing on learning had on teaching.

1. Tools/frameworks can support Leaders of Learning to build connections between learning and teaching

This theme examines the way Leaders of Learning think about and communicate their ideas of learning in relation to their teaching. This theme also explores how the introduction of tools or frameworks can support and challenge the way Leaders of Learning think about the relationship between learning and teaching. The following data was derived from the semi-structured interviews; coaching conversations and group conversations, conducted in phase 1 of the research. The framework (refer to Figure 5.1) was used to challenge the thinking of Leaders of Learning as they considered learning from the students' perspective.

Figure 5.1: Coaching tool used to support Leaders of Learning to reflect on practice

We talk about learning only in relation to what we teach. The first two dot points [Engaging with content, facts and topics and Building and using skills, strategies and tools] reinforce this … I'm wondering what the difference is between strategies and tools and would the students know. (Rob, P, P1, CC)

I think we spend most of our time planning the content. It's safer to talk about in our planning meetings. (James, P, P1, GC)

The first dot point is a given [Engaging with content, facts and topics] it's just what we do. It is usually the main focus. (James, P, P1, GC)

I don't think I could explain the learning process … I'm wondering what I could be doing differently with my students. (Tina, P1, CC)

If teachers can't explain the learning process, then we can't help our students to understand what the learning process means. (Lisa, DP, P1, GC)

The third and fourth dot-points [Understanding the learning process and Understanding and controlling thinking] really make you think about what you do in the classroom. We just don't talk about that at school. (Rob, P, P1, CC)

> *There is so much more to learning than I realised, I have never really talked about thinking with my students. (Allan, P, P1, GC)*
>
> *I think we do the first two dot points really well [Engaging with content, facts and topics and Building and using skills, strategies and tools], they are just accepted as what teachers do, the other ones we don't do well [Understanding the learning process and Understanding and controlling thinking]. (James, P, P1, GC)*
>
> *How do you build a language to talk about learning, I don't think I even know…What would that look like? … The model at first makes me feel inadequate; there is so much I'm not doing. Then I think about what I am doing and what I need to learn more about. It's like we have to learn how to talk about learning. (Allan, P, P1, GC)*
>
> *We don't really take the time to think about what learning is, we take it for granted that we all think the same thing. It's sort of just assumed that we are talking about the same thing. (Jenny, T, P1, GC)*

The comments (above) show that when Leaders of Learning were presented with new frameworks about learning, they began to reflect on their current understandings of learning. Leaders of Learning were asked to consider what these ideas might mean for their own teaching or the teaching within the school. The following comments were collected during semi-structured interviews in phase one of the research and captures their thinking around this.

> *With the model I am able to see the importance of understanding why I am teaching what I am. Each point gives you more to think about in your teaching. (Jenny, T, P1, GC)*
>
> *The model makes me feel better about changing my teaching. I sometimes feel guilty that I'm not teaching in a traditional way that I feel it's still an expectation on teachers. The model gives me the confidence to keep going and believe in what I am changing in my teaching. (Lisa, DP, P1, GC)*
>
> *Building a language is all about oral language and students talking about what they are doing. I need to do more of that. (Karen, T, P1, GC)*

> *I am keen to learn more about the learning process. I think this will*
>
> *make a big difference to my teaching. (Jenny, T, P1, GC)*

The comments (above) illustrate how Leaders of Learning used the framework (Figure 5.1) as an audit tool in relation to their teaching, or a consideration for future professional learning in their schools. The responses highlight that the framework challenged these leaders to make sense of the ideas presented and consider them in relation to current teaching practices. The more opportunities Leaders of Learning have to engage in conversations about learning the more they consider how this is different to teaching.
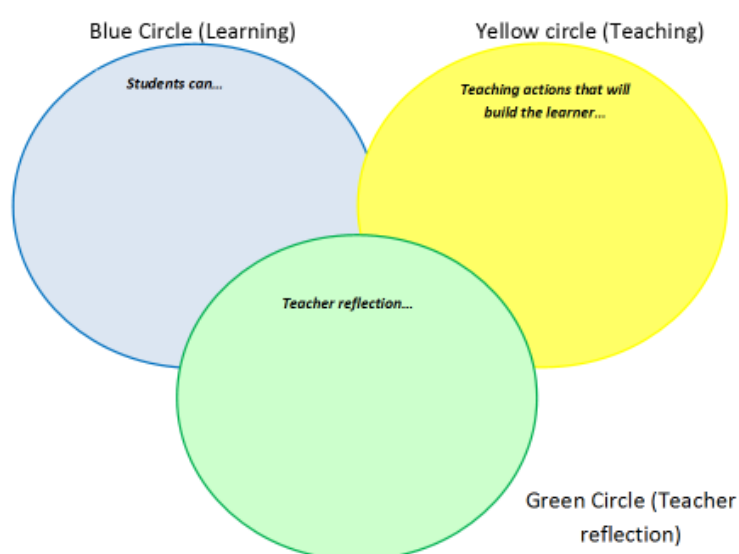
Figure 5.2: Coaching tool used to identify ideas about learning and teaching

During these conversations Leaders of Learning were asked to identify whether they were talking about learning or teaching. A coaching tool was used to support Leaders of Learning to identify whether possible actions were either learning actions or teaching actions (refer to Figure 5.2). As Figure 5.2 illustrates, the blue circle represents the learning focus and encourages leaders and teachers to identify actions that will be developed by the learners. The yellow circle encourages leaders and teachers to consider the teaching actions that will build the actions identified within the blue circle. The green circle encourages reflection. Leaders of Learning were asked to reflect on the process of using the blue and yellow circles to identify learning and teaching actions. The following was data recorded during coaching and group conversations in phase one of the research.

> *In our PLTs we spend a lot more time in the yellow circle than the*
> *blue circle. (Karen, T, P1, GC)*
>
> *I think I find the yellow circle much easier … there is more to talk*
> *about. (Jenny, T, P1, GC)*
>
> *The blue and yellow tool is great for my parent helpers. I get them to*
> *focus on the yellow, but the blue or the learning is really clear.*
> *(Katrina, P1, T, CC)*
>
> *I get it, wow such a simple model but it really explains what we need*
> *to do better if we are going to build powerful learning in our school.*
> *(Debra, DP, P1, GC)*
>
> *The tool is clever when you mix blue and yellow you get green. So*
> *the green circle is where they come together…. The blue circle I still*
> *have to think about, but I'm ok with the yellow. (Robyn, T, P1, GC)*

The comments (above) highlight how Leaders of Learning began to use the colours within the tool to determine the focus for their conversations. When asked to consider the difference between learning and teaching, these leaders found it difficult to communicate their thinking around this. The following comments were collected during group conversations in phase one of the research.

> *I see the blue as the learner and the yellow as the teacher, but where*
> *do activities or tasks go? Are they teaching or learning? (Robyn, T,*
> *P1, GC)*
>
> *If yellow is teaching and the teacher develops the activities, then what*
> *is the learning? Is it doing the tasks? (Layla, T, P1, GC)*
>
> *What is the difference again? I think I'm ok with yellow, but blue is*
> *harder. (Jenny, T, P1, GC)*
>
> *Each time I look at the model I understand it more. The blue circle*
> *makes more sense to me now. (Allan, P, P2, CC)*

The comments (above) highlight the limited opportunities Leaders of Learning have to explore and communicate the difference and relationship between learning and teaching. Some leaders asked for clarity around the focus of the coloured circles as they grappled with how learning and teaching were different. When asked to consider how the blue circle was 'playing out' in their classrooms, leaders could give examples of how learning was

developing within their contexts. The following comments were data collected from coaching conversations during phase two of the research.

> *We are talking so much more about learning that we can see the students using the learning language. We expect them to use the language and we keep reminding them of what the words mean. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*
>
> *Have to tell you about the wonderful learning conversations happening in my class. My kids are so engaged in their learning and using common language around their learning. A few comments I've heard today ... "What learning style are you? If you're visual like me, crossing off each question as I go helps me keep track ... I need help with my writing. Sometimes I get stuck for ideas, does anyone have any ideas for which strategies I could use? ... I'm not sure what you mean by that. Can you clarify it for me?" (Robyn, T, P2, CC)*
>
> *The simple idea of introducing the students to the language of learning and being open and clear about the purpose of the learning tasks presented has made a big difference in their ability to 'problem solve' and develop strategies for learning rather than just remembering the content. Knowing that they have resources at their disposal to use which include their prior knowledge and previous tasks has helped to develop their ownership of learning and personalise it in a way that still achieves the focus, but makes sense. (Karen, T, P2, CC)*

The coaching tool used by Karen to identify the learning focus and teaching actions is shown in Figure 5.3. (The comments recorded in the teacher reflection section are those which appear in the comments above. They highlight that the ideas Leaders of Learning identified in their learning (blue) circle were actions that their learners needed to engage in. Each learner behaviour or action required students to think and talk about their approach to learning. This included using a learning language, engaging in conversations about strategies and identifying the purpose of tasks. The yellow circle identified particular teaching strategies that would support students to build their awareness of and develop the actions and behaviours listed in the blue circle. For example, (*'identify a learning language and display in the classroom'* is a response to the learner goal *'students using a language to talk about*

learning.') As these leaders began to think about learning first and then consider how they would respond through their practice they developed action plans to explore their ideas further. Refer to Figure 5.4 for an example of an action plan.

Students can...

- Use a language to talk about learning
- Initiate conversations about strategies they might use
- Identify the purpose of tasks
- Use past tasks and resources to support them in their learning
- Talk about their prior knowledge
- Reflect on what helped them be a good learner

Teaching actions that will build the learner...

- Identify a learning language and display in the classroom
- Discuss the purpose of every task with students
- Make a list of possible strategies for each task. Make a list of general strategies
- Give students time to talk about what they know
- Opportunities to reflect

Teacher reflection...

The simple idea of introducing the students to the language of learning and being open and clear about the purpose of the learning tasks presented has made a big difference in their ability to 'problem solve' and develop strategies for learning rather than just remembering the content. Knowing that they have resources at their disposal to use which include their prior knowledge and previous tasks has helped to develop their ownership of learning and personalise it in a way that still achieves the focus, but makes sense.

Figure 5.3: Coaching tool used to identify a learning focus, teaching actions and teacher reflection of a participant

Each of the remaining themes explores the journey of Leaders of Learning as they begin to consider learning and teaching separately and explore their relationship.

2. *Leaders of Learning develop action plans to focus their thinking about learning and teaching*

This theme explores how Leaders of Learning created action plans to consider learning and teaching independently and then explore the connections between them as they come together within the learning context. To encourage leaders to consider both the learning and the teaching, an action plan (coaching tool) was used to support their thinking and conversations (refer to Figure 5.4).

Action Learning Plan

FOCUS: What do you want to build in student learning?

More time and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning so they can monitor ways in which they can improve.

School learning theme
Building Learners as Thinkers

Classroom actions: What might you try with your students?

Explore a variety of reflection strategies and varying times during a lesson (before, during and after)

Explore reflection of different aspects of learning eg tools used, content covered, time use, planning,

Use different formats for reflection – oral, group, individual, teacher scribe, whole class, written.

Professional learning actions: What will you explore yourself to support you with this focus?

What are some different ways to reflect on learning?

I will reflect on my teaching more by being specific in the focus for each lesson. I will do this using some of the tools I am going to ask my students to use.

I will read Jo's book and think about how those stories may translate into my classroom.

Evidence of change: What evidence might you collect to show change?

I will collect and display the student reflections. I will be looking for evidence of the way they think about learning.

I will be seeing that students are focusing on the way they learn and the resources they use rather than just always what they have learnt.

Reflection: What has changed in the way you think about your focus?

I have discovered that when students are given opportunities to reflect on their learning, it becomes easier for the teacher to see ways in which we can support future learning. Asking students to think about their learning with a focus can then lead to developing resources which can be used for future learning, students can then begin to monitor their learning with the support of these resources. Simply asking students to identify what was easy or difficult in a particular task helps them and me think of ways that this could be improved next time a similar task is done. I have also realised that it is important to give a focus to the reflection as this then gives a focus for the future direction of teaching and learning eg reflecting on how you used your time, what resources did you use. From this discovery, I need to now look at identifying/creating with students structures or frameworks they can use so that reflections can become even more useful and although students are self-monitoring they will have a focus and be supported through this framework.

Figure 5.4: An example of an action plan developed by a Leader of Learning and has been transcribed below.

The aim of the action plan is to support Leaders of Learning to identify a focus that will assist them to explore their learning theme and is divided into six sections. Each section has limited space for leader comment and is intended to capture key thinking in relation to each idea. Each section will be explained and will include the comments made by Karen, a teacher,

during a combination of semi-structured interviews (coaching conversations) and un-structured interviews (Written reflections), in phase two of the research.

School learning theme: In this section Leaders of Learning recorded their school learning theme to remind them of the connection between their personal action plan and the collective exploration of the school's learning vision. The learning theme for Karen's school was *Building learners as thinkers.*

Focus (What do you want to build in student learning?): This section is learning focused (blue circle) and encourages Leaders of Learning to identify how they want to build student learning. Leaders of Learning were encouraged to revisit the ideas presented in their learning framework (explained in chapter 4) or learner behaviours and actions identified in their team conversations. (Refer to Table 4.1 and Table 4.4) The following comment identifies the learning focus from Karen's action plan.

> *Creating more time and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning so they can monitor ways in which they can improve. (Karen, T, P2, CC/WR)*

Classroom actions (What might you try with your students?): This section focuses on teaching (yellow circle) and encouraged Leaders of Learning to consider how they might build the learning from the previous section through their teaching. Leaders were encouraged to list a range of strategies they believe will directly build the student learning focus. During the conversation Leaders of Learning were encouraged to consider strategies different to those they currently use in their practice to promote different responses in the students. The following comments illustrate how Karen decided to enact her action plan.

> *Explore a variety of reflection strategies and varying times during a lesson (before, during and after) … Explore reflection of different aspects of learning e.g., tools used, content covered, time use, planning … Use different formats for reflection – oral, group, individual, teacher scribe, whole class, written. (Karen, T, P2, CC/WR)*

Professional learning actions (What will you explore yourself to support you with this focus?): This section encouraged Leaders of Learning to consider the professional learning actions they might need to engage in to be successful with their focus. This supported leaders to identify their existing teacher knowledge as well as consider what they

need to build further. The following comments identify the actions Karen felt she needed to take to support the implementation of her action plan.

> *What are some different ways to reflect on learning? ... I will reflect on my teaching more by being specific in the focus for each lesson. I will do this using some of the tools I am going to ask my students to use ... I will read a book [Whose learning is it?] And think about how those stories may translate into my classroom. (Karen, T, P2, CC/WR)*

The comments (above) include a question as one of the actions. With further prompting during the conversation, Karen explained that she intended to research different ways to engage students in self-reflection in the classroom.

Evidence of change (What evidence might you collect to show change?): This section encouraged Leaders of Learning to consider possible indicators of success. Leaders were asked to collect artefacts that demonstrate student change. The following comments illustrate Karen's thinking around collecting evidence that showed a change in the way her students thought about learning.

> *I will collect and display the student reflections. I will be looking for evidence of the way they think about learning ... I will be seeing that students are focusing on the way they learn and the resources they use rather than just always what they have learnt. (Karen, T, P2, CC/WR)*

Reflection (What has changed in the way you think about your focus?): This section focused on leader reflection. After Leaders of Learning implemented their action plans they were encouraged to reflect on their thinking and how it may have changed throughout the process. The following comments highlight Karen's thinking as she reflected on the process of implementing her action plan.

> *I have discovered that when students are given opportunities to reflect on their learning, it becomes easier for the teacher to see ways in which we can support future learning. Asking students to think about their learning with a focus can then lead to developing resources which can be used for future learning; students can then begin to monitor their learning with the support of these resources. Simply asking students to identify what was easy or difficult in a particular task helps them and me think of ways that this could be improved next*

> *time a similar task is done. I have also realised that it is important to give a focus to the reflection as this then gives a focus for the future direction of teaching and learning e.g., reflecting on how you used your time, what resources did you use. From this discovery, I need to now look at identifying/creating with students' structures or frameworks they can use so that reflections can become even more useful and although students are self-monitoring they will have a focus and be supported through this framework. (Karen, T, P2, CC/WR)*

The comments (above) show that Karen was able to articulate her thinking around: the process of implementing her action plan; the impact of her teaching actions on student learning; and, possible refinements to her practice. What is also highlighted within these comments is the use of a language which supports Karen as she communicates her thinking around different aspects of learning. As Karen observes her students as they explore new strategies to help them build a greater awareness of effective learning, she makes connections between their learning and her teaching actions. The relationship between learning and teaching is continually reinforced as Karen links the improvement of student actions to her teaching actions.

School learning theme:	**Examples of action learning plan foci:**
Building independent and collaborative learners	*Students can decide which good learning behaviours they will need to use in a task. (Tina, T, P2, CC)* *Students can reflect on and share how the good learning behaviours supported their learning. (Lisa, DP/T, P2, CC)*
Building learners and thinkers.	*Creating more time and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning so they can monitor ways in which they can improve. (Karen, T, P2, CC)* *Students can articulate the purpose of the task. (Layla, T, P2, CC)*
Building a community of connected learners and deeper thinkers.	*Using success criteria to take student thinking about tasks deeper. (Jenny, T, P2, CC)* *Using good learning behaviours during learning time to build learning independence. (Robyn, T, P2, CC)* *Students can articulate what good learning behaviours are required in team work activities. (Natalie, T, P2, CC)*

Table 5.1: Examples of action plan foci of Leaders of Learning

The action plan tool supported Leaders of Learning to explore their school learning theme and the ideas presented in their learning framework within their own teaching contexts. As these leaders considered what their learning focus meant for their practice, they made connections between learning and teaching. Teachers at the same school explored their learning themes in different ways which led to richer and more purposeful professional learning conversations.

Table 5.1 illustrates the focus for initial action plans of Leaders of Learning working within the same context. The focus for these action plans emerged from coaching conversations during phase 2 of the research.

The action plans provided a new way of thinking about, and exploring, practice. The following comments highlight how Leaders of Learning communicated their ideas about the action learning plans. They were recorded during semi-structured and unstructured interviews during phase 2 of the research.

> *Thanks for being so well prepared and ready to participate so fully in the one-on-one conversation. I enjoy the opportunity to meet with you all one-on-one so thank you for your thoughts and ability to switch into gear so early in the term. Attached are everyone's projects. Please network as much as you can with people who are doing similar projects. (Debra, DP, P2, OC)*
>
> *On reflection of our action plans this year, they were about taking our thinking deeper about teaching and learning. We have had the 1:1 conversations to help take us further. (James, P, P2, GC)*
>
> *We had our Whole School Theme about 'Deeper Thinkers and Connected Learners' and our action plans have come from the school supporting the teachers to explore this theme in their own personalised way. (Allan, P, P2, GC)*
>
> *The purpose of tonight's PLT is to explore: What the indicators are that our development plans have been a success, what the challenges are in building our plans and how we can make this process more effective. At present it is building the process. (Jenny, T, P2, GC)*
>
> *Because we have spent so much time talking about the action learning plans I found our learning walk around the school was really focused. I knew exactly what I was looking for in each classroom. I can even*

> *chat to teachers about their plans at any time because I know what*
>
> *their focus is. (Leah, P, P2, GC)*
>
> *I am amazed at the language that teachers are using across the*
>
> *school, it is so different. The action plans have really helped us to*
>
> *build a language about our learning theme. I think we need to capture*
>
> *this new language somehow. (Allan, P, P2, GC)*
>
> *I can see that the action learning plans will help our teachers open up*
>
> *their classrooms to share their practice. We are planning a series of*
>
> *learning walks to support this happening. (James, P, P2, CC)*
>
> *I have collected 5 action learning plans and have observed lots*
>
> *happening in prep and Y 5/6 and have had a couple of conversations.*
>
> *Just by walking through the grades I have noticed the language the*
>
> *teachers are using with the kids - it's great. (Jenny, T, P2, CC)*
>
> *I think the key will be implementing a structure that sustains,*
>
> *encourages and holds teachers accountable to reflective practice ...*
>
> *(Karen, T, P2, CC)*

The comments (above) highlight that the action learning plans became an important part of the professional learning approach in their schools. Leaders of Learning could communicate the impact the action learning plans were having on the way the teachers engaged in professional learning. The comments also show that the action learning plans provided a process to continue to build a language to support leaders and teachers to talk about learning as well as provide a focus for learning walks and learning observations.

These Leaders of Learning could reflect on and articulate the benefits that using action learning plans had on the professional learning of their teachers. The next theme explores how participants built a reflective approach to their practice throughout the implementation of their action learning plans.

3. *Leaders of Learning build a reflective approach to exploring learning and teaching.*

This theme explores how Leaders of Learning developed a more reflective approach to their practice as they explored learning and teaching through the development of the action learning plans. The plans supported Leaders of Learning to think about and record ways of exploring their practice that was different to their current approach. As the process evolved, leaders sought feedback as they reflected on their learning, and used online conversations to

support their thinking about their action plans. The following comments highlight the reflective nature of their online conversations as leaders shared the progress of their action learning plans. The data was collected during phase 2 of the research.

> *I'm glad I can just email you my reflection I just thought I would give you a bit of feedback regarding progress!!! I thought quite a lot about what I was doing and decided that it was actually the learning that I wanted the children to be able to articulate more so than the purpose so I started thinking about how I could see if the kids could do this, if they in fact knew all the things that they are learning … It was really good. I have additional actions and I really hope that this will actually improve the kids' view of their school day and their ability to recognise what they are in fact learning at school. I will keep going and email you any updates. (Layla, T, P2, OC)*
>
> *Thank you for your continued encouragement - gives me the boost I need to keep going and knowing I 'm on the right track - small steps though … when can we meet next? (Lisa, DP, P2, OC)*
>
> *I am not sure when you are coming back to visit but just making sure I am on the right track with what you asked me to think about. I am thinking about our term goals and how far we think we can go with these, I have a couple of ideas which seem like small progressions but am pretty sure that's what works for us at this stage. I was also thinking about the top ten things that helped the change begin - not sure if that one is right … Can we book another time to meet and talk about this? (Jenny, T, P2, OC)*

The comments (above) highlight that Leaders of Learning needed support as they implemented their action plans. The plans encouraged a different approach to professional learning where leaders were encouraged to think about what was happening in their classrooms and explore actions to change student learning behaviours. These Leaders of Learning felt they needed to seek clarity or approval that they were on the 'right track.' At the same time, they also identified actions they had implemented and reflected on their level of success.

The following comments were collected from an online conversation with Jenny as she reflected on her professional learning journey. The comments were collected during unstructured interviews during phase two of the research.

> *My journey as a teacher is reflected in the blue and yellow model and the action plan by the simple fact that learning and teaching are two very different things. Taking the time to develop and deepen my understanding of the learning process has had an enormous impact on the way I think about teaching ...In the past I was so focused on the teaching aspect, the 'what' that often I just assumed that if I was teaching the students would be learning. I knew of course that students were learning things as we focused on the end product and these always showed good knowledge of content covered. The way this end product was reached was very teacher driven, prescribed and offered little scope for individuality from the learner ... I think the action plan gives us the confidence to try new things because it encourages us to ask questions continuously. Gone are the days where you pull out a task from two years ago and present it again, we still might make use of this past work but be reflective about how; Was that the right task for that focus? Did the task deepen the learning? How can we alter the task to meet the needs of these students? ... The model is very good at de-mystifying the idea of reflective practice which I had heard about and read about. In seeing myself as a learner and asking and answering questions about learning, I realised that perhaps I was on my way to using reflective practice without even knowing it! (Jenny, T, P2, OC)*

The comments (above) capture a change in the way Jenny thinks about her role as a teacher. They clearly show the impact her action plan focus has had on the way she thinks about learning and teaching. Jenny identified how the coaching tools supported her to consider the differences between learning and teaching and the impact they have on each other. Jenny refined her practice and adjusted her role as a teacher. Jenny has come to realise that she has experienced reflective practice and her reflective approach is highlighted in the comments above.

Once Leaders of Learning had developed their action plans they were more focused on observing quality learning within their classrooms. The following comments, from one leader (Robyn) were captured during online conversations and show the reflective nature of these observations.

> *This learning observation is not actually related to my goal (I haven't been in the classroom enough to implement anything to do with that), but it was one of those wonderful moments that make you cheer out loud. Teacher A was taking Writer's Workshop and the group were going to write something based on the Possum Magic performance we had seen the day before. They brainstormed some words they might need to write that were related to the show and then set about having a go at writing something. The children requiring more support used the sentence starter 'I liked the ...' ... They had been going for a couple of minutes when I watched a particularly low student get up and get a piece of scrap paper. He went up to the board and started copying down one of the words. I asked him why he was doing that and he stated that, "When I keep looking up and down I forget where I was up to so I'm writing it on here so I can put it next to my book to copy ... I know this event doesn't seem that impressive but considering that this child can barely write his own name independently and his mum carries his bag in for him every day, his awareness of his own learning needs was fantastic and I was so proud! ... As for my plan, I have not really had a chance to implement anything properly as I've spent so much time out of the classroom or assessing for reports. Hopefully after next week I will be able to have a better go at it!*
> *(Robyn, T, P2, OC)*

The comments (above) show that the process of developing and implementing an action plan encouraged Robyn to reflect, and then comment on, learning within her classroom. Although the observation wasn't directly related to the focus of her action plan, it is an example of how leaders came to notice and then respond to student learning actions.

As Leaders of Learning became more confident in sharing the progress of their action plans, the frequency of the online conversations increased. The following comments from Layla

show how the focus of her action plan changed as she listened to the comments of her students. These comments were collected during phase two of the research.

> *I have had a go at putting some things into place in order to build the capacity for the children to be able to articulate the purpose of the task - I discovered they can't do this very well. They can tell me exactly what they are doing and give a reason for it but this is a pretty surface reason. I discovered that I think partly because they don't have the language to describe what they are doing and partly because it is a totally new type of thinking for them. They are used to just doing and not really thinking about why they are doing.*
>
> *Not really sure where to go from here ... probably need to teach them how to think about and articulate exactly what and why they are doing something and make this thinking obvious to them - they do it on some level they just don't realise it. I am finding this challenging at the moment as I have had so many days out of my class and can't seem to get a really good crack at it ... Today was the first opportunity I had to have a go at something (which incidentally wasn't what I had spent a lot of time planning in my head, it was just something random that came to me on the spur of the moment). This in a nutshell was how it went down.*
>
> *11th June: First day back with children. Gave the children the religion task which they had to read and follow instructions to complete. I stopped the children after 10 minutes and called them to the front. I asked them what the purpose of the task was: They said to practise looking up bible references I then asked them "What are you learning?" They came up with the following answers: finding references, reading and re reading, knowing the bible stories better, looking the stories up, comprehension, managing time, staying on task, concentrating, co-operating, following instructions, listening, thinking while we are listening, getting a partner.*
>
> *I was really surprised at how much they knew, it was great. Hopefully with more opportunities for expressing what they are learning it will be a language they will become really familiar with. There were*

others I could have prompted them to give me but just left it at the list
they came up with. I am going to add in 'What was the teaching in this
task?' Which would have been such a tiny part of the session - how to
look up the bible reference. Everything else was using prior
knowledge. I asked the kids if they would have ever thought they were
learning so much by doing such a simple little task. They said not. We
then talked about the learning and how this can then be applied to
goals - for example if they had trouble finding a partner then that is
something they need to work on if they are to improve their learning. I
ended by saying to the kids, "so when you go home tonight and
someone asks you what you learnt today you will have this big long
list of things to tell them". (Layla, T, P2, OC)

The comments (above) highlight the way Layla listened to her students and then considered possible actions for her teaching. Layla demonstrates that if teachers take the time to explore the thinking of their students it can influence the way they teach. These comments also highlight the language that Layla is using to describe learning with her students. Learning and teaching are closely connected within the conversations Layla has with her class, yet she is conscious of identifying the difference.

Capturing leader comments from online conversations emphasise the ongoing nature of professional learning which is central to reflective practice. The following comments draw attention to the way Karen's focus of her action plan evolved as her understandings of questioning developed through her observations, conversations and reflection. These comments were collected from Karen, during phase two of the research.

(Email 1) Our school learning theme is Building learners as thinkers
and we are currently using the 'inquiry model' across the school. I
realised that my students don't ask good questions and this is
important if they are going to do inquiry learning, so my focus is
helping students understand how questions support their learning and
understand the difference between surface and deep questions …
(Email 2) I need to start with what the students already know about
questions and that will help me to understand what I need to do to
improve them. I will then discuss different types of questions and help
students come up with a purpose for each type. We will probably

practice using different types of questions in different activities. I then want to look at the difference between surface and deep questions …

(Email 3) We are getting further into our questioning and they are working on the understanding of surface/deep questions - the kids seem to like cheap and expensive!! So we are going with that at the moment with reference to the other language as well. Some are finding pulling the questions apart challenging - they just want to give an answer - but we are having some great discussions about the types of questions they have asked …

(Email 4) In terms of my class, your definitions of probing questions and clarifying questions were very helpful and we are just about to sink our teeth into some finding out. The kids pulled apart their questions the other day and came up with the discovery - "You have to answer some cheap questions to get to the answer of the deep.” We talked about it in terms of saving - "finding out the cheap answers helped you save up to answer the expensive one." Hopefully this will help give them some direction for their research - we will see how we go - there are lots of skills to be taught and revised in that respect as well. We are going gently but I can really see benefits across all levels in my classroom …

(Email 5) We have had some really interesting research going on in here about the questions the students came up with. Definitely on a much wider scope than the last time we did the topic as I think I was too frightened to let them ask some of these questions but they have done really well. Of course we still need more practise but I can definitely see that the kids are thinking!! (Karen, T, P2, OC)

The comments (above) illustrate that Leaders of Learning need ongoing opportunities in order to continually refine their understandings of quality learning. Karen's insights illustrate how her students built new understandings of effective questioning and the role questions have in learning. Karen describes her teaching as a series of conversations she has with her students that focus on building understandings of aspects of quality learning. Karen has a deliberate and patient approach to building questioning skills which emphasises the need for her students to help shape the learning agenda and establish their own understandings. What

is also apparent is the way Karen and her students work on building understandings of quality learning together. There is a partnership developing between teacher and students which emphasises the relationship between learning and teaching.

The introduction of the action plans encouraged Leaders of Learning to look more closely at their practice. They reflected on both the learning and their teaching as they explored the impact one has on the other. The nature of the conversations with Leaders of Learning changed as they chose to share their thinking online. Although these conversations focused mainly on the implementation of their action plans, leader reflections also showed realisations about their journey towards establishing reflective practice, changes in the way they think about teaching and observations of learning beyond the action plan focus.

The following theme explores how Leaders of Learning realised that their action plans were an important part of their ongoing professional learning and how they developed other strategies to continue to explore learning within their classrooms.

4. *Leaders of Learning develop new strategies that focus their professional learning on exploring learning within their classrooms*

The final theme in this chapter focuses attention on the actions of Leaders of Learning after their experiences with the action plans. The following comments reflect an awareness that the action plan process has been a part of their approach to professional learning.

> *My professional learning has been huge, even what we did last year is not what we want to be doing this year. Our focus keeps developing as we explore different teaching ideas in our classroom. The ongoing conversations have really helped me to change my thinking about my practice, I know now that I constantly think about student learning, then I think about my teaching. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*
>
> *Thanks for those great ideas during our coaching session! I always come out with something new to try and love that there are others buzzing with the excitement of learning ... I have found the structure of the coaching meetings very useful and the coaching proforma… makes it very easy to focus on manageable goals for me as a teacher and the kids' learning. (Layla, T, P2, OC)*
>
> *Being reflective about my practice allows me to understand my own thinking about pedagogy. The action plans have made me be reflective*

> *in my classroom when I am with my students. The action plans have*
> *allowed me to focus on professional learning every day. (Jenny, T, P2,*
> *OC)*

The comments (above) show that Leaders of Learning identified the action plan process as an opportunity to think about teaching as it relates to the building of quality student learning. The comments also highlight that these leaders have identified ways to reflect on and refine their practice as they consider ways to improve student learning. Leaders of Learning came to see this process as professional learning and not another thing they had to attend to in their teaching.

As Leaders of Learning shifted the context of their professional learning to their classrooms they developed strategies to help them to continue to focus on understanding quality learning. The following artefact (shown in Table 5.2) shows a planning document developed by a teacher, Karen. The document highlights how Karen incorporated the focus of her action plan; *Creating more time and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning so they can monitor ways in which they can improve* with the outcomes from the curriculum and identified teaching strategies which would bring these two areas together. The action plan focus is evident within the section; *'Learners as Thinkers.'* (School learning theme). The following comment highlights Karen's thinking about this.

> *To make sure I keep working on my action plan focus [Creating more*
> *time and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning so they*
> *can monitor ways in which to improve] I now bring it into my normal*
> *classroom planning. Working on my action plan should be a part of*
> *what I normally do in the classroom. (Karen, T, P2, WR)*

	Oral Language	**Spelling**	**Writing**	**Reading**
AUSVELS (CURRICULUM)		Understand how ideas can be expanded and sharpened through careful choice of verbs, elaborated tenses and a range of adverb phrases. Understand the use of vocabulary to express greater precision of meaning, and know that words can have different meanings in different contexts.	Features of persuasive, narrative and report/factual writing Investigate how complex sentences can be used to elaborate, extend and explain ideas.	Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of a text (narrative, persuasive). *Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor, personification in narratives, poems etc.* Analyse the similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots. *Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts.*

	Oral Language	Spelling	Writing	Reading
Teaching Strategies	Comparing and contrasting language Using metaphors and similes Understanding idioms	Nouns as adjectives - China- Chinese danger-dangerous Word Origins Expensive Adjectives -gobbled instead of ate. Connectives to compare and contrast. 4 pics - 1 word	Narrative - create own myth/legend or retell using figurative language. Haiku Poetry Paragraphs to show setting change.	**ASIAN FOLK TALES** <u>Comprehension within the text</u> Reciprocal reading process. <u>Comprehension about the text</u> Compare and Contrast - characters, themes, countries. Inferring - character feelings, alternate endings. <u>Comprehension beyond the text</u> - Author Purpose - tricks authors use, figurative language, similes, metaphors.
Learners as Thinkers		Name strategies for solving difficult words. Identify resources a good speller uses.	Reflection of success criteria using class created criteria for features of persuasive and narrative.	Naming strategies they can use - (reciprocal reading clarifying, predicting, questioning summarising). Explain the difference between surface and deep questions/thinking in relation to text.

Table 5.2: Teacher planning document connecting action plan focus, curriculum and teaching strategies

Table 5.2 shows that Karen views her action plan focus; *Learners as Thinkers,* as a component of her day to day teaching and has considered how this connects with teaching the content of the curriculum. By considering each area individually, Karen captures her teacher knowledge in each area as well as the complex nature of building quality learning. The focus on building her learners as thinkers, captures how Karen wants to build the capacity of students to manage their learning more effectively and illustrates how she intends to

explicitly teach aspects of quality learning. This is an example of how the explicit teaching of the elements of quality learning can be connected to the explicit teaching of the curriculum.

Leaders of Learning developed different ways to continue to focus their professional learning on the exploration of their classroom practice. Figure 5.5 shows a page from a reflective journal developed by Lisa, a teacher and Deputy Principal. The reflection captures her thinking after engaging in a coaching conversation about student thinking. Lisa's notes incorporate her action plan focus; *Students can reflect on and share how the good learning behaviors supported their learning* and show how she has interwoven these into her understandings of English as a learning area. Figure 5.5 shows how Lisa is considering what her students should be thinking and doing as they engage in the writing process; *What am I trying to say? And What language will help me to say that?* Lisa's reflections illustrate how she talks her way to understanding. These comments identify existing practice and expectations of students, as well as consider new ways for them to think and work.

WHERE DOES SPELLING FIT?

1. Why do we write? Child model

   - **share ideas**- kids engaged with authentic outcomes to share their experiences

Writing because the teacher tells me does not give me a reason to share- this is a technical focus

   - **Sharing feelings-** why some kids excel at poetry- turns writing around for some kids
   - Clarify/organize/refine/challenge thinking
   - Convey thinking/a message, NOT for technical perfection

When writing:

I'm saying to myself:

   ➢ What am I trying to say?
   ➢ What language will help me to say that?
   ➢ What's the best way to write that?
   ➢ Can I write it better?
   ➢ Is this really covering what I'm thinking about?

> ➢ Do I understand what I'm writing about?

I want kids to:

1. WANT TO WRITE- UNDERSTAND WHY THEY WRITE
2. BUILD THE TECHNICAL COMPONENT OF THEIR WRITING THAT ENHANCES THEIR INTENTION

(bad spelling, long sentences, doesn't make sense, hard to read, poor choice of words, lack of understanding of paragraphs, tenses, not being clear about who or what I'm talking about (they…)

THESE ARE DONE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOAL

THE PROCESS

Usually students write something and <u>then </u>they think of how they can improve it at the end of the writing- often teachers make/control those corrections

Writing should focus more on the PROCESS rather than the PRODUCT

How you get there is just as important as the product itself

STUDENTS WRITE

While they are writing they

> ➢ EDIT
> ➢ MONITOR PERFORMANCE & UNDERSTANDING
> ➢ SEEK FEEDBACK
> ➢ CONTINUALLY REFINE THEIR WRITING UNTIL THEY BELIEVE IT MEETS CRITERIA / IS FINISHED

THEN …

SHARE- The end product is the message

What can they be doing WHILE they are writing?

- Partner support- FOCUS ON ONE ELEMENT OF WRITING TOGETHER AS A WAY OF IMPROVING THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS
  (sentence structure, spelling, use of adjectives, use of introduced punctuation e.g., EVERYONE must use an exclamation mark- HELP EACH OTHER TO DO THAT)

- Teacher/student conference
- Multiple attempts at one aspect of writing e.g. write an alternative beginning

Writing a list of characters from a book/ use of a tool should be valued as a piece of writing just as much as a narrative (formal genres) because **IT'S ABOUT THINKING**

WRITING IS THINKING

How much do adults write in a formal way?

We are valued as professionals and communicators of knowledge-

LOOK AT THEIR WRITING AS A PERSON

- ➢ Is it's only the technical bit that is stopping the writing?
- ➢ give them support to get their messages down- builds confidence
- ➢ The students are IN THE WRITING PROCESS!

PART OF THE WRITING PROCESS IS SPELLING- <u>PART OF A BIGGER CONTEXT</u>

The spelling of words to communicate message

Spelling should include:

- ✓ **Choosing of words –** which one best conveys the message
- ✓ Multiple attempts at words
- ✓ Problem-solving
    - o how might I spell this?
    - o Prompts (THRASS etc.)

Conversations about patterns/blends etc. (peers / teachers)

Figure 5.5: Example of a teacher reflective journal

Figure 5.5 highlights how the focus of Lisa's action plan influences the way she thinks about her teaching of writing. The journal became an important part of documenting her thinking while exploring ways to build her action plan focus. The following comment illustrates how Lisa developed the journal idea to support her professional learning.

> *Once I started exploring the idea of students using and understanding good learning behaviours I realised there was so much I had to learn. I wrote down what I was thinking about so I wouldn't forget. My reflections make sense to me they might not to anyone else though. I include both ideas of how to improve student learning and what I need to change in my teaching. I write notes up on everything. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)*

Lisa also developed other methods to make the focus of her professional learning visible within her classroom. Lisa developed artefacts to communicate her learning focus and to remind her students to think about their learning in different ways. Figures 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8 show the displays developed to remind students of the different types of conversations they could initiate to support their learning.

Figure 5.6: Classroom display - key ideas and questions to develop reflection conversations.
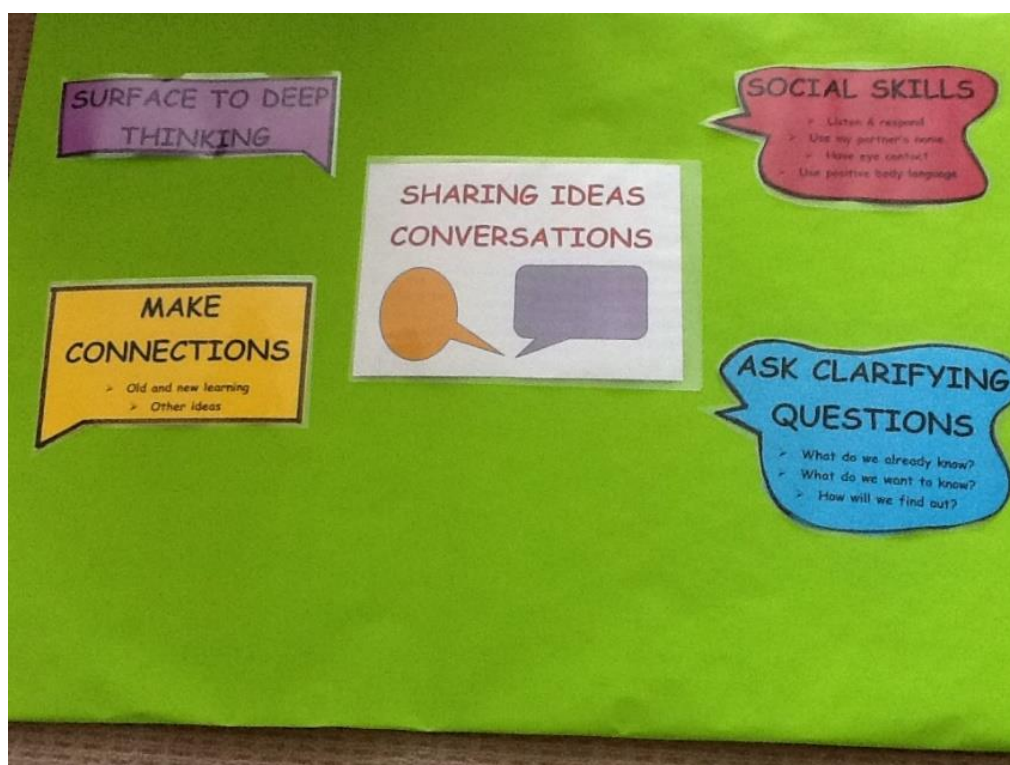
Figure 5.7: Photo of key strategies to support conversations where students share ideas.
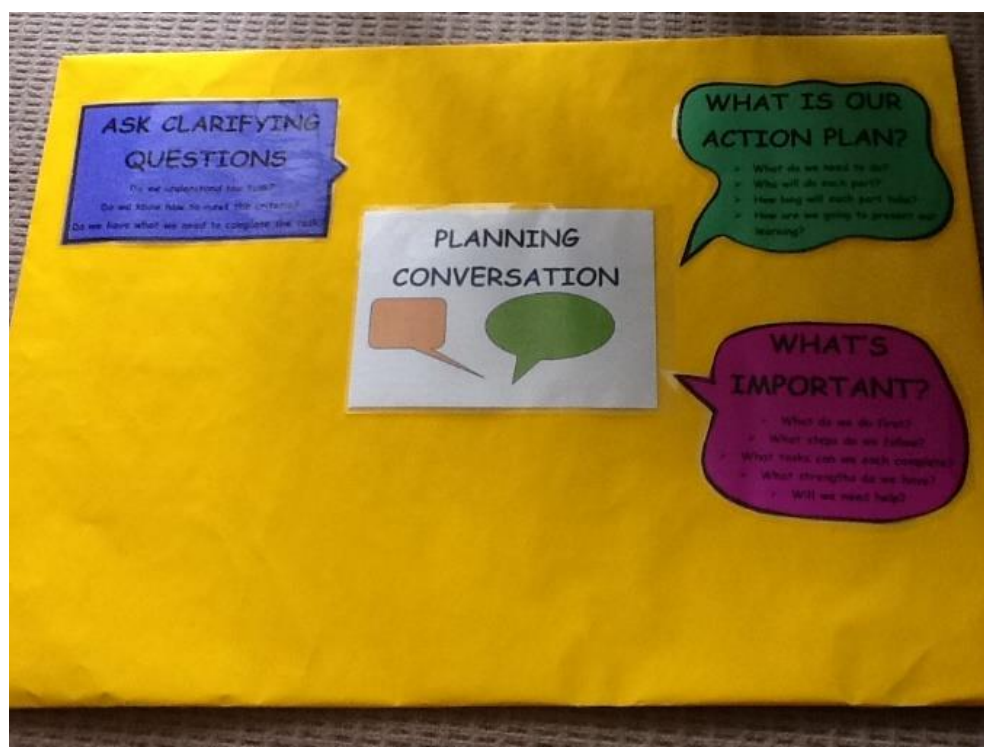
Figure

5.8: Photo of poster displaying key messages for students during planning conversations.

For Lisa, the classroom environment became an important resource to capture key ideas emerging from her action plan focus; *Students can reflect on and share how the good learning behaviors supported their learning.* The following comment reflects this idea.

> *I am creating posters for the students and for me to stay focused on the good learning behaviors. I can see the students actually referring to the displays during the lessons and they also remind me to keep having discussions with them. I would like to have a learning walk in my classroom so I can get feedback on how this is going. (Lisa, DP, P2, OC)*

The comment (above) highlights how Lisa's focus for her professional learning has become an ongoing focus for her teaching. Lisa initiated a learning walk in her classroom to receive feedback on her focus. Members of the walking team were invited to make observations of learning and then provide feedback on what they had noticed. Figure 5.9 shows a display that was a focus of the learning observations.
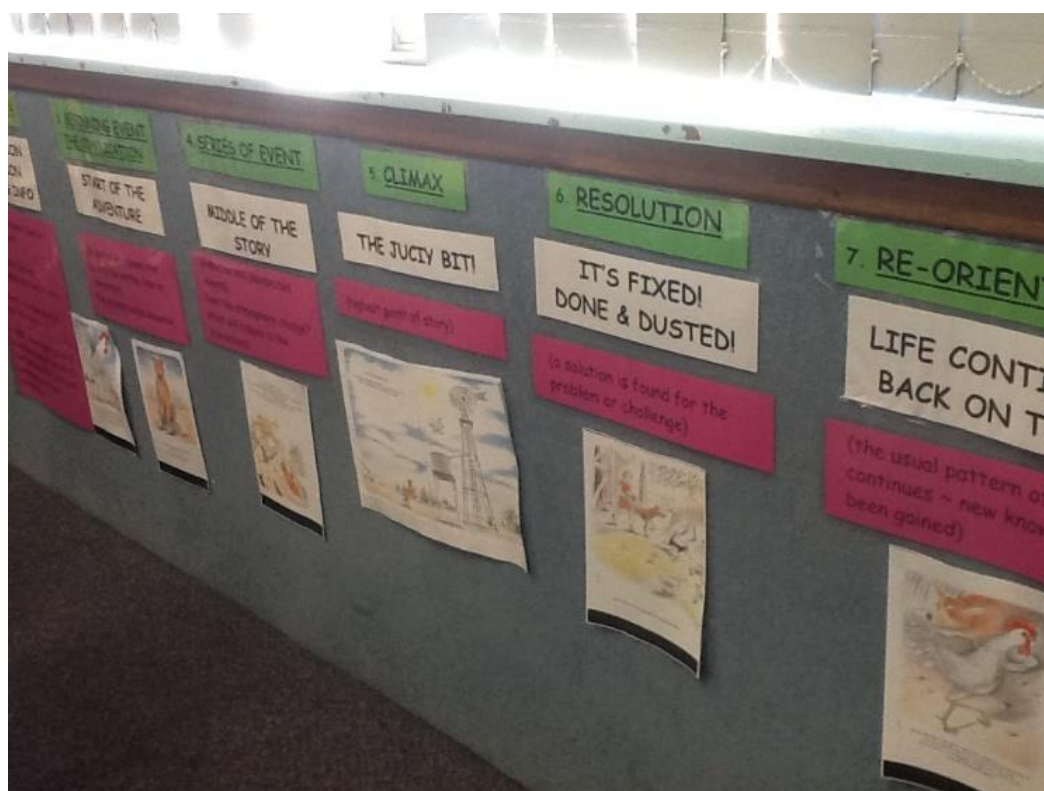
Figure 5.9: Classroom display that supports students to identify and reflect on the different components of a narrative.

During the learning walk students were asked to work on their narrative writing. The following summary (Figure 5.10) was given by the walking team. It was discussed during a conversation with Lisa after the learning walk.

Feedback from walking team:

Thanks Lisa for inviting us into your room and sharing classroom artefacts that highlight some of the teaching and learning that is happening in your room.

Area of focus:

Student learning through narrative writing

The Walking Team made a number of observations which can be summarised as follows:

- Some students engaged in conversations about the displays
- Some students initiated their use of the displays
- Some students were asking clarifying questions about the content within the displays
- Students were using the language of the displays throughout the lesson
- Some students could identify which part of the process they were currently working on
- Some students used the display to give feedback to each other

The Walking Team compiled a list of "wonderings" which we hope will stimulate further reflection and discussion as part of developing your action plan for your classroom:

- How is learning assessed? What role does the narrative process/display have in assessing student learning? How are you able to capture your students' ideas, thoughts and progress?
- How might you increase student voice in this process/display?

We would like to thank you again for the opportunity to observe your students learning and share and discuss your practice with you:

The Walking Team.

Figure 5.10: Walking team feedback

Seeking feedback became an important step in the way Leaders of Learning approached the exploration of their action plans. In this instance the learning walk strategy challenged Lisa to frame and communicate her action plan focus to inform the walking team of the area of feedback she wanted to receive.

Figure 5.7 (below) is an artefact developed by Karen while she explored ways to develop her students' reflective skills. The Content skills learning chart required students to consider each of the aspects of learning and discuss with other students during a self-assessment conversation. The content of these conversations provided Karen with valuable feedback on how her students were thinking and talking about their learning. Karen and her students named the chart 'content skills learning chart' to emphasise a focus on the knowledge and skills from the curriculum as well as actions and behaviours that impact on the process of learning.

Content Skills Learning Chart (CSL)

Content - facts you know and have learnt
1. Places that Gold was found in the Gold Rushes
2. Equipment used and types of mining
3. Life on the Goldfields
Skills - show your abilities
Profile
1. Headings with short answer
2. Coloured diagrams with labels
Diary
1. Writing in the first person
2. Using inferring for feelings

3. Correct spelling and punctuation
3D Model
1. Labels with detail and correct spelling
Learning - the learning behaviours
1. Checking and changing work to match the CSL
2. Time management plan
3. Extending to go beyond the minimum

Figure 5.11: A student reflection tool; Content skills learning chart. (CSL)

Figure 5.11 is a reflective tool that emerged from Karen's action plan focus; *Creating more time and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning so they can monitor ways in which they can improve.* The following comment reflects how Karen developed the learning chart as part of her action plan.

> *I introduced our next literacy/inquiry task today about writing a diary as someone on the gold fields.*
> *Thought I would let you know what we came up with for our Self-assessment chart. The kids came up with "CSL Chart" because they thought that was a cool name.*
> *It was amazing to actually have the conversation to fill in the chart. Once the kids actually realised what the meaning of the headings Content, Skills and Learning meant we came up with a really useful chart. Kids came up with inferring as a skill to use which really was unexpected! I have tried to stick to only a few but explained that these are the focus - not the minimum.*
> *I have left space for kids to personalise this with comments when they have conversations with each other. Some students will just respond to these and others may modify them or add new ones.*

> *It will be a great tool so hopefully the kids will find it useful - I have*
> *found the conversation useful already and they were excited about*
> *making it and getting into the task.*
> *I thought it might be useful to tease out some of these ideas and*
> *concepts and add extra information for those that need it.*

The introduction of the action plans supported Leaders of Learning to create new strategies to ensure their focus became transparent in their classrooms. The strategies varied with each leader, however a number of common themes emerged. These included: creating visual artefacts to act as reminders of quality learning, connecting the action plan focus to existing teacher planning processes and promoting and capturing student input into the learning agenda.

Chapter overview

This chapter illustrated the professional learning of Leaders of Learning through their exploration of the relationship between learning and teaching.

As the chapter makes clear, a number of themes emerged that make evident a process to build the capacity of school leaders to think about and respond to the complex ideas that emerge from the learning and teaching relationship, these included:

- Tools/frameworks can support Leaders of Learning to build connections between learning and teaching.
- Leaders of Learning develop action plans to explore their ideas about learning and teaching.
- Leaders of Learning build a reflective approach to exploring learning and teaching.
- Leaders of Learning develop new strategies that focus their professional learning on exploring learning within their classrooms.

The data shows that Leaders of Learning need planned and focused opportunities to consider learning in new ways and supported structures and processes that encourage them to explore new ways of thinking, working and teaching. As leaders explored the difference and relationship between learning and teaching they became more aware of their personal pedagogy and their role in shaping it.

The following chapter explores how Leaders of Learning learnt to lead the professional learning in their schools in ways that focused on building understandings of quality learning and quality teaching.

Chapter 6

Leaders of Learning lead professional learning in new ways

Introduction

This chapter explores the data in relation to "how Leaders of Learning developed new ways to lead professional learning in their schools". The chapter is organised in two parts, the first briefly explores the literature in relation to effective professional learning and the second includes an analysis of the data - which has been organised into three themes. Each theme is explored separately whilst together they offer a holistic focus on the way leading professional learning evolved for the research participants. The three themes (structured as statements) include:

1. Leaders of Learning begin to recognize and (eventually) challenge current professional learning practices.
2. Leaders of Learning restructure professional learning opportunities in their schools.
3. Leaders of Learning create professional learning forums to support classroom exploration.

Quality professional learning: A brief literature overview

This section considers the literature in relation to what quality professional learning looks like in schools, the impact it can have on teachers' practice and effective leadership of professional learning. Defining quality professional learning is just as much about identifying practices that are ineffective and understanding why they are ineffective as well as recognising that which has a positive impact on teacher learning. Zepeda (2008) noted that, 'providing learning opportunities for teachers and staff to grow – professionally and personally – is the fundamental goal of professional development' (p. 121). It seems reasonable to suggest that schools provide professional learning opportunities with the intention of developing their teachers and consequently ensuring more effective learning for students. The challenge in achieving that outcome though, lies in the way schools interpret, plan and lead professional learning to build the capacity of their teachers to improve student learning.

Traditional approaches, named differently in various contexts, include terms such as professional development, teacher in-service and professional learning. These approaches dominate teacher learning in schools and can actually reinforce a passive view of how teachers learn. Loughran (2010) stated 'that which used to be described as professional development is now often termed professional learning. However, the replacement of one term with another is not helpful because it undermines the difference in meaning that the language is supposed to imply' (p. 200).

> *In recent times there has been a differentiation between professional development, traditionally characterised as doing things 'to' teachers and that of professional learning, which acknowledges the importance of working 'with' teachers. (Loughran, et al. (2010), p.3)*

It is important to differentiate between professional development and professional learning not least because, as Smith (2017) illustrated in her extensive longitudinal study, it influences how teachers interpret their role in learning about practice. More so, how decision-makers view the role of teachers in professional learning can also influence the design of a professional learning program. Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban (2009) were of the view that:

> *One conception of teaching suggests that it is a 'craft', meaning that the knowledge base of teaching is fixed and has little to do with varying contexts. This conception implies that teaching is about the delivery of prescribed knowledge and, if teachers can learn enough knowledge about their practice, then it can be 'mastered'. If this is the case, then teachers can learn, about their practice 'bit by bit'. This can occur from brief after-school workshops providing different chunks of knowledge about teaching in 'classrooms'. (p. 7)*

This type of approach is more akin to professional development than professional learning and it tends to encourage teachers to be dependent on others to choose the content and context of the learning. Such professional development approaches simplify effective teaching to the learning of prescribed strategies, procedures and activities that others have determined important. A professional development approach can disempower teachers by 'disengag[ing] the teacher as an adult learner' (Zepeda, 2008, p. 142). On the other hand, Aubusson et al (2009) presented a perspective on teaching that requires different thinking around what constitutes quality in professional learning:

A different conception of teaching requires a different type of teacher
learning. When teaching is viewed as a profession, it implies that the
body of knowledge is not fixed, and that what teachers do in the
classrooms depends on a myriad of factors. This means that teaching
is more than the delivery of prescribed knowledge, using a range of
strategies, but is 'a dynamic relationship that changes with different
students and contexts. (Aubusson, et al., 2009, p. 165)

A (traditional) professional development approach that continually promotes the notion that others hold the knowledge to improving teachers' practice, reinforces decision-making about teachers' learning needs by school leadership when 'deciding' what teachers need to learn and how they will learn it. Zepeda (2008) argued that 'accountability has led to frenetic methods to find the magic bullet and often teachers and administrators are looking for answers to bigger-than-life questions related to school improvement, issues of diversity, and student achievement and performance on standardised tests' (p. 3). Zepeda suggested that 'it is common practice to train and offer professional development using pedagogical models and approaches such as 'sit and get' workshops dealing with the latest best practices' (p.142). Loughran (2010) was of a similar view stating that 'waves of change that regularly flow over the profession generally involve some form of up-skilling in relation to the new things that we are expected to do or to deliver' (p. 200).

Approaches to teacher learning that place the activities outside of the classroom and separate to the daily life of teachers, tend to promote the idea that such work is separate to and somewhat removed from their classrooms when in fact 'learning on the job, day after day, is the work' (Fullan, 2008, p. 86). Fullan (2008) asserted that deep learning happens when it is embedded in the culture of the school, 'If people are not learning in the specific context in which the work is being done, they are learning superficially' (p. 89).

An approach to ongoing professional learning that is embedded within teachers' work is the Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (PEEL, for a full description see Baird & Mitchell, 1986; Baird & Northfield, 1992). Mitchell, Mitchell & Lumb (2009) noted that 'a major difference between PEEL and other initiatives aimed at improving learning that, while saying sensible things, position teachers as receivers of other people's thinking … [while PEEL] positions teachers as generators of new knowledge and in control of their professional learning and development' (p. 257). Zepeda (2008) was similarly of the view that quality learning is embedded within teachers' daily work:

> *… effective professional development is learning at the site from the work teachers do. More importantly, however, effective professional development occurs in the company of others who support, encourage, and learn along in partnership. (Zepeda, 2010, p.2)*

Although the language of professional development and professional learning are sometimes confused in the literature, the important point to be reminded of is that 'new models of professional learning emphasise practices that are: sustained over time; aligned with the specifics of school and classroom contexts; underpinned by research and practice-based evidence; and, supported by professional learning communities and collaboration' (Mitchell, et al. 2009, p. 1). Hord, Roussin & Sommers, (2010) added to Mitchell et al's. (2009) ideas by identifying the importance of collaborative decision-making. They stated that teachers should be in a position to decide the focus for their learning so that 'decisions are made collectively about what they will learn and how they will learn it [and should] determine up-front how they will monitor their progress in learning and in transferring their learning to the classroom (p. 151). The notion of collaboration is an important aspect of quality professional learning as, 'it stimulates innovation and reflection that provide[s] stories of the possible, and it provides a safe environment to share experiences, problems, failures and successes' (Mitchell, et al., 2009, p. 255).

A contemporary (PLT) approach to professional learning therefore places the exploration of practice at the centre of teacher learning opportunities. Together teachers can build a shared language of effective learning and teaching about their context through their experiences of practice. Hord, et al., (2010) linked quality professional learning to quality teaching when they stated that, 'quality teaching is strengthened and increased through continuous professional learning' (p. 2). There is little doubt then that approaches to professional learning that place teachers in a position where they can influence what and how they learn and value their wisdom of teaching is key to understanding how to facilitate change and development in classroom practice; and that hints at the nature of teachers' professional knowledge.

> *… the knowledge that underpins practice has become a genuine focus for professional growth. Understanding better how professional knowledge shapes practice is important not just for teaching itself, but also in relation to its influence on student learning. (Berry, Blaise, Clemans, Loughran, Mitchell, Parr, Riley & Robb, 2008, p. 3)*

Teachers' knowledge bears a direct relation to student learning because what a teacher knows and is able to do links to 'making significant changes in how students learn – generating learning that is more informed, purposeful, independent, and metacognitive' (Mitchell, et al., 2009, p. 257). As teachers learn to look at their practice from different perspectives they reflect on, challenge or reinforce existing practices and then frame their new practices in ways which support their planning for learning and the communication of that practice. One of the key findings of research on professional learning from PEEL, is that teachers develop the knowledge of how to communicate their practice and their understandings of practice as they become better able to 'document and communicate sophisticated practice and understandings of practice' (Mitchell, et al., 2009, p. 248).

In the research reported in this thesis, a professional learning team approach (PLT- see Appendix 4) was positioned within contemporary understandings of professional learning so that the teacher was at the centre of the enterprise. That was important because:

> *… for any professional learning group to retain vitality, it needs a*
> *focus that sustains innovation by throwing up new challenges. A focus*
> *on how students learn does this better than any other focus we have*
> *seen. We have found that a vibrant PEEL group generates a sense of*
> *progress at both the individual teacher and group levels. (Mitchell, et*
> *al., p. 248)*

Thus, how expectations about the nature of professional learning through PLTs is communicated to others and developed over time matters. For example, Sather (2009) stated that: 'developing staff collaboration is an important tool for improving the instructional programs in schools by using professional learning teams to improve teacher knowledge and teaching skills' (p. x). Of course, many PLT approaches currently being used in schools may mouth Sather's rhetoric, but how it is interpreted, communicated and enacted is dependent on the knowledge and experience of the leaders involved. The nature of the interactions, the expectations of how teachers will work within the space and the building of shared ownership of the work and the team, are crucial and need to be developed over time. Transparency matters and so by building ongoing conversations around how PLTs work, teachers can build richer understandings of what it means to lead their own learning and support the learning of others, which could include:

> *Selecting a specific area of student need to investigate as a focus for*
> *changing practice, framing an inquiry question to guide the PLT's*
> *work and sharing personal practices and expertise through reflective*
> *dialogue, analysis of student work, and observing each other's*
> *classroom practices. (Sather, 2009, p. x)*

As the ideas above suggest, quality professional learning involves an ongoing dialogue. Leading that learning requires modelling of learning actions that overtime illustrate changes in the way teachers think about their learning. Leading professional learning is complex but successful learning happens when the learner is placed at the centre:

> *... school leaders need to remember that adults, like children, perform*
> *best in a learner-centred environment that connects the focus of their*
> *study to their prior knowledge - experiences, interests, and strengths.*
> *Teachers need to understand the purpose of learning and have the*
> *opportunity to practice, evaluate, and adapt their learning to their*
> *individual contexts. (Sather, 2009, p. 11)*

In a major study of leaders of professional learning, (Clemans, 2008) saw great value in a focus on supporting learners to explore new ideas and refine their practice:

> *... designing adult learning is creative and complex work. However,*
> *when it works well, there are important aspects that are central to*
> *such success. Quality adult learning: draws on strategies that engage*
> *the active participation of learners; builds on the intention for adult*
> *learners to consider new information and mould it until it shapes them*
> *and the context in which they will apply it; and, importantly leading*
> *adult learning shows direction and leadership and provides*
> *appropriate structure. (p. 188)*

Leadership of professional learning needs to be strategic, informed and continually evolving. Leaders create the environment that influences the quality of professional learning as reinforced by DuFour (2005) who noted that 'leaders also matter because they, along with others, shape a school or school system's structure and culture in ways that promote learning, [and] collaboration' (p. 157). It can well be argued that it is through the action of leaders that others might come to see that change is possible, 'profound change in schools, I believe, begins with profound change in leaders, which radiates out to others' (DuFour, 2005, p. 157).

Leaders of Learning therefore need to lead their own learning in ways which will also influence the learning of others. Their own learning experiences can influence the way they think about leading professional learning in their schools because, 'As a result of their professional learning, leaders alter what they think, say, and do in ways that are observable to others' (DuFour, 2005, p. 157).

Analysis of the data

This section of the chapter explores the data in relation to three emergent themes. The themes are organised into three statements.

1. Leaders of Learning begin to recognize and (eventually) challenge current professional learning practices.
2. Leaders of Learning restructure professional learning opportunities in their schools.
3. Leaders of Learning create professional learning forums to support classroom exploration.

Collectively the themes explore the changes in thinking of Leaders of Learning as they focused on leading the professional learning of teachers. Over time Leaders of Learning re-shaped the professional learning practices in their schools.

1) *Leaders of Learning begin to recognize and (eventually) challenge current professional learning practices*

This theme examines the way Leaders of Learning thought about the current approach to professional learning in their schools. As the data (below) makes clear, Leaders of Learning began to recognise challenges associated with their professional learning approach.

> *We used to focus on something like maths, then we would look at*
> *inquiry learning and then we might do assessment and then all learn*
> *how to do a guided reading. We were always looking for strategies*
> *that would fix the problems, like programs. (Jenny, CT, P2, CC)*
> *In the past the Principal just did the improvement plans and often the*
> *staff didn't really see them. Sometimes I had to look back to see if we*
> *were actually covering what we had put in the plan. Often I think*
> *school improvement plans are removed from how schools really work.*
> *You name all of these areas you want to improve and they seem so*
> *disconnected. This then forms the focus for our PLTs and it is all*

decided by the start of the year. [Professional learning team

meetings.] (Allan, P, P2, CC)

In our school different Leaders of Learning work on different sections

of the annual school improvement plan. Each section has its own

goals and strategies. We haven't had a shared focus before that helps

us connect the different areas. I think the plans are about the things

we have to do and are not really about how we could explore these

things together. (Jenny, CT, P2, CC)

We just go through the process to develop our annual school

improvement plan. We identify what we need to do, then we just tick

them off as we address them. To be honest we don't look at them

regularly either, we just know the broad areas we need to cover, like

maths or writing. (James, P, P2, CC)

The data (above) highlights the way Leaders of Learning have identified the connection between their strategic planning and the professional learning practices within their schools. The strategic plan identifies different focus areas or content to be covered in current professional learning forums. This approach focuses on the up-skilling of teachers in these identified areas for improvement and lacks a collaborative element to establishing a shared agenda for professional learning. Leaders of Learning recognized that the initial focus for professional learning was decided by leadership prior to starting a new year and limited flexibility to design learning opportunities that support teacher learning as it happens.

A 'list of topics' (as suggested in the quotes above) restricts the way teachers might explore and build the potential learning within these topics. Table 6.1 is a PLT (Professional Learning Team) meeting schedule and offers an example of how Leaders of Learning initially presented professional learning opportunities to their teachers.

Week	Monday	Wednesday
1	July 18 PLTs: Numeracy	July 20 Staff Meeting
2	July 25 No PLTs (Parent Teacher Interviews)	July 27 Staff Meeting
3	August 1 PLTs: Literacy (Running Records)	August 3 Leadership Meeting Level Planning Meeting
4	August 8 PLTs: Religious Education (Look at resources for new unit.)	August 10 Staff Meeting

5	August 15 PLTs: Discuss about Annual Review Meetings – (whole staff)	August 17 Staff Meeting
6	August 22 No PLTs: (School concert Practice)	August 24 Leadership Meeting Planning Meeting
7	August 29 No PLTs: (School concert)	August 31 Staff Meeting
8	September 5 No PLTs (School concert)	September 7 No meetings: (School concert)
9	September 12 PLTs: Literacy: (Guided reading)	September 14 Staff Meeting
10	September 19 PLTs: Speech PD (Whole staff)	September 21 Staff Meeting

Table 6.1: A PLT meeting schedule for a school term

The PLT meeting schedule (Table 6.1) illustrates the list of different topics for professional learning, identified within the school's strategic plan. The PLT meetings included within the schedule show no connection between topics; each week there is a new focus. The plan reflects the 'doing to' model of professional development that dictates to teachers how they will improve their practice. The following comment from a Leader of Learning reflects this view:

> *Once the ASIP [Annual school improvement plan - see appendix 4] is*
> *done I just make a list of what we need to cover in our PLTs. We*
> *develop a term overview for our PLTs based on these areas. (Debra,*
> *DP, P2, CC)*

The data (above and earlier in this section) identify PLTs as the main forum for professional learning. They are usually in the form of one off information sessions which largely focus on the technical and organisational components of teaching. Leaders of Learning were asked to describe how professional learning happens in their schools.

> *We have PLTs most weeks and school closures which are PD*
> *[professional development] days. Teachers can also go to PD outside*
> *of the school. (Jenny, CT, P2, CC)*
> *Our professional learning is our PLTs. We have them all year. We*
> *organise PD for teachers at school or they attend PD at other places.*
> *(Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*

> *Our PLTs are our main opportunity for professional learning. We sometimes do professional reading in our meetings, but teachers often don't read the set readings. (Debra, DP, P2, CC)*

The data (above) highlights that for these Leaders of Learning, PLT meetings are the main professional learning strategy and internal activities are a major component of these forums. The data also identifies that professional development offered by others is another source of professional learning and is not necessarily connected to the content of the PLT meetings. Leaders of Learning were asked to describe their PLT approach within their schools. It reinforces the idea that others are in a better position to decide what teachers need to know to improve their practice. The notion of 'best practice' or reliance on experts to improve student learning is reinforced through the following data.

> *Our PLTs happen every week where we come together to talk about whatever is on the agenda. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*
>
> *We have PLTs during the day. They cover lots of different topics. They are led by the level leaders within the school. (Debra, DP, P2, CC)*
>
> *Our staff just want to meet altogether, when we split up into teams they feel like they are missing out on what other teams are doing. Staff have been resisting the idea of having professional learning teams, they don't see there will be any benefit. They would rather just have time to work on their own planning or organise camps and excursions. (Jenny, CT, P2, CC)*
>
> *Teachers at our school take no responsibility for the PLTs, they expect the leader to prepare all of the materials for the meeting. (Debra, DP, P2, CC)*
>
> *Our PLTs and level planning meetings are more or less the same thing, we just spend time doing what we need to. (Layla, CT, P2, CC)*
>
> *We really don't have a clear purpose for our PLTs, we keep focusing on planning and administration. Teachers feel if they don't do the level or grade organisation in the PLTs they will have to find even more time to do this. (Karen, CT, P2, CC)*
>
> *Our PLT meetings are all decided for us. We have a term plan and it shows what we will be focusing on each week, the topic keeps*

> *changing so we don't get a chance to have a deeper discussion ... Staff*
> *don't really have input into the plan. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*
>
> *We have two PLTs a week for the whole staff. Different people present*
> *on a range of topics. Sometimes we have external presenters, but most*
> *of the time our literacy and numeracy leaders present. (Ken, P, P2,*
> *CC)*

These comments (above) highlight that teachers have minimal input or responsibility for the organisation or leadership of PLT meetings. The data suggests that PLT meetings for these Leaders of Learning are not connected to professional learning beyond the meeting time and that the meeting is an isolated opportunity for teachers to engage in professional learning around a pre-determined focus. The comments (below) show that Leaders of Learning are uncertain about their role as a leader of professional learning within these PLT forums.

> *I have to work really hard in each of the PLT meetings to redirect*
> *teachers back to learning, they keep getting side-tracked by planning.*
> *I know when I can't make a PLT meeting they just do classroom*
> *planning and they organise activities they can all do in their*
> *classrooms. (Debra, DP, P2, CC)*
>
> *When teachers are asked to try something new in their classrooms or*
> *bring some evidence from their classrooms they often make excuses*
> *that they don't have the time to do this. (Jenny, CT, P2, CC)*
>
> *I shorten our PLT meeting and give my team time to take the ideas*
> *back to their classrooms and plan how they might implement them. I*
> *then notice them leaving to go home a few minutes later. I find this*
> *frustrating, they say they don't have enough time to plan and then they*
> *don't use the time I give them. (Debra, CT, P2, CC)*
>
> *Teachers in our PLT don't like to be challenged, they want me to just*
> *tell them what they need to know. I know I make them feel*
> *uncomfortable when I challenge them to try something new in their*
> *classrooms. (Karen, CT, P2, CC)*

The data (above) shows that Leaders of Learning and the teachers with whom they work have varying expectations of PLT meetings. Leaders of Learning felt they needed to keep their teachers focused during the meetings and were unsure about how to influence the likelihood of that happening. The data also highlights that improvement in practice is reliant on Leaders

of Learning responsible for leading the meetings, to provide the practical activities and teaching strategies for teachers to try. A lack of ownership in the process of developing practice is a common theme in the data. The comments (below) highlight how Robyn (Leader of Learning) realised that the PLT meeting wasn't heading in the direction she wanted and didn't have the strategies to influence the direction she sought.

> *We had our PLT meeting this week and I was asking the team what they wanted to focus on in the coming weeks. They were strongly in agreement that spelling would be their focus. So I asked them to think about what they wanted to explore in spelling ... I was really surprised with what they said; they started talking about all of the things they already do in their classrooms to teach spelling, lots of activities, spelling lists ... They were really confident in what they were sharing, to me it felt like they were really happy with what they were doing. I then asked them what they felt they needed to know more about or what was still challenging them in their teaching. They said there wasn't really anything they just wanted to share what they were doing. I didn't know where to take the conversation, so I left it at that. (Robyn, CT, P2, OC)*

Robyn was asked to then consider what strategies she might use to change the outcome of the meeting or the nature of the conversation. On further reflection, the data (below) captures her thinking around this.

> *Now that I have had time to think about what happened I realise that I let the conversation go the way it did. I needed to lead the conversation just like I would do in the classroom with the students. I need to bring it back to learning. We didn't do any blue circle! It is so easy to revert back to just having conversations about teaching or yellow circle. I needed to ask them what their students would look like if they were effective spellers. What would they be doing if they were [effective spellers]? We didn't even look at that so now that I look back I can see that we just looked at all of the things we do in our teaching which might not even be helping the students to develop as effective spellers. (Robyn, CT, P2, OC)*

The comments (above) highlight that when Leaders of Learning made connections to their own professional learning journey they thought differently about how they might lead the professional learning of others. Robyn referred to the circles shown in Figure 6.1 and realised that the conversation was completely in the yellow circle (the teaching circle). Robyn hadn't considered the spelling focus from the blue circle (a learning perspective) or supported her teachers to identify the teacher knowledge that would be important to improving their approach to spelling.

The data also shows that PLT meetings are not considered forums for professional learning by these teachers. Their focus on what they currently did suggests an emphasis on planning or the sharing of activities or ideas for the teaching of content.
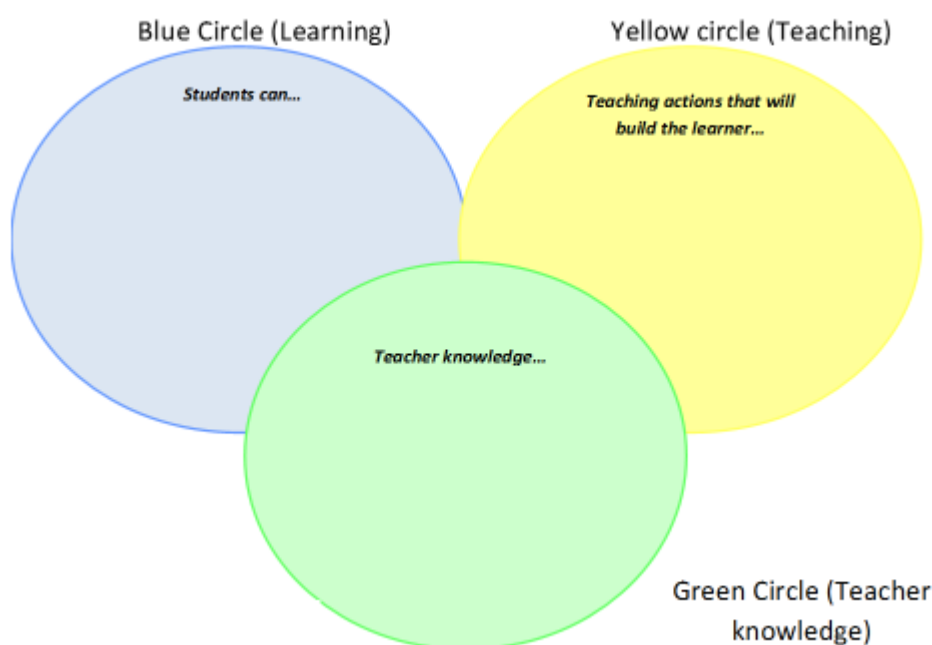
Figure 6.1: Coaching tool that promoted reflection of a PLT meeting.

Figure 6.1 shows the template of a coaching tool used to encourage Leaders of Learning to reflect on practice through different lenses. Each circle focuses the reflection in a different way. The blue circle focuses on learning; Leaders of Learning are encouraged to think about what the students will be able to do independently if the teaching is successful, this includes outcomes from the curriculum as well as identifying actions that empower students to actively engage with the curriculum. The yellow circle focuses on key ideas around teaching and how the teaching will provide opportunities for students to explore the learning identified within the blue circle. The intention is that building a picture of quality learning should influence the approach to teaching. The green circle is called teacher knowledge. In this circle

teachers identify the knowledge they will need to draw on in order to be successful in their blue and yellow circles. It also encourages Leaders of Learning to reflect on and identify what they may need to explore further.

Leaders of Learning were asked how the PLT meetings were established within their schools and what the goal was for these forums. The data (below) shows that Leaders of Learning were unclear about their PLT approach.

> *I never thought that a PLT was a team. I always thought PLTs were*
> *meetings which we have twice a week. They were developed to tell*
> *teachers what leadership wants them to do. (Layla, CT, P2, CC)*
> *I really don't know how they started but I haven't been shown how to*
> *run one effectively. We just followed the agenda. I get guest speakers*
> *in a lot of the time. (Jenny, CT, P2, CC)*
> *We did PLTs because everyone was doing them. I didn't have a very*
> *good understanding of how to do them. Now we're learning more*
> *about how they can support learning in our school. (Allan, P, P2,*
> *CC))*
> *We call anything a PLT, it doesn't matter what we are doing; maths,*
> *literacy or planning. There are no guidelines in our schools that*
> *clearly set out what they are and how they work. (Lisa, DP, P2, CC)*

The data (above) suggests that Leaders of Learning were expected to lead these meetings but were unsure of the purpose and the process to building these forums as opportunities for ongoing professional learning. Their comments highlight that when strategies are adopted with little understanding of why or how to develop them then they simply remain as an example of best practice and a list of activities. Leaders of Learning were asked to consider the impact that their PLT approach was having on their teachers' views of, and approach to, professional learning.

> *I know staff would rather do planning every week rather than have a*
> *PLT every second week. I think they see them as a waste of time and*
> *not an opportunity for professional learning. (Ken, P, P2, CC)*
> *I have come to realise that my staff don't really know how to plan or*
> *learn together, they would rather work on their own. I think this is the*
> *same in PLTs; they are not collaborative or very supportive of each*

other or the leaders. They keep telling me they don't need PLTs.

(Allan, P, P2, CC)

I think staff see PLTs as something that is separate to everything else.

They just do them because they have to which means they probably

don't see them as professional learning. (Jenny, CT, P2, CC)

Some teachers do not see learning as part of their role - they are there

to teach ... Professional learning meetings are held but are often

hijacked and the conversations usually stray back to safe topics like

the ordering of resources and what activities will be done. (Debra,

DP, P2, CC)

The comments (above) highlight the issues associated with PLT structures that are not focused on professional learning. As a consequence, PLTs can too easily be seen as meeting times not as genuine opportunities for professional learning in teams. Leaders of Learning identified challenges in relation to the professional learning approach in their schools. The following theme explores how the Leaders of Learning worked from their views of current practice to develop and restructure professional learning opportunities for their teachers.

2) *Leaders of Learning restructure professional learning opportunities in their schools*

This theme examines the ways in which Leaders of Learning developed new approaches to professional learning. The quotes and examples (below) show how these Leaders of Learning have incorporated more effective professional learning into the current structures within their schools.

Figure 6.2 shows a mind map by a Leader of Learning, Layla, which she developed with her team. To provide an ongoing direction for their PLT meetings, the team decided to explore the focus *'Students and teachers building the capacity for reflective thinking and making learning explicit.'* The team chose the focus in response to the idea of using their PLT meetings to explore their theme *'Building learners as thinkers.'*
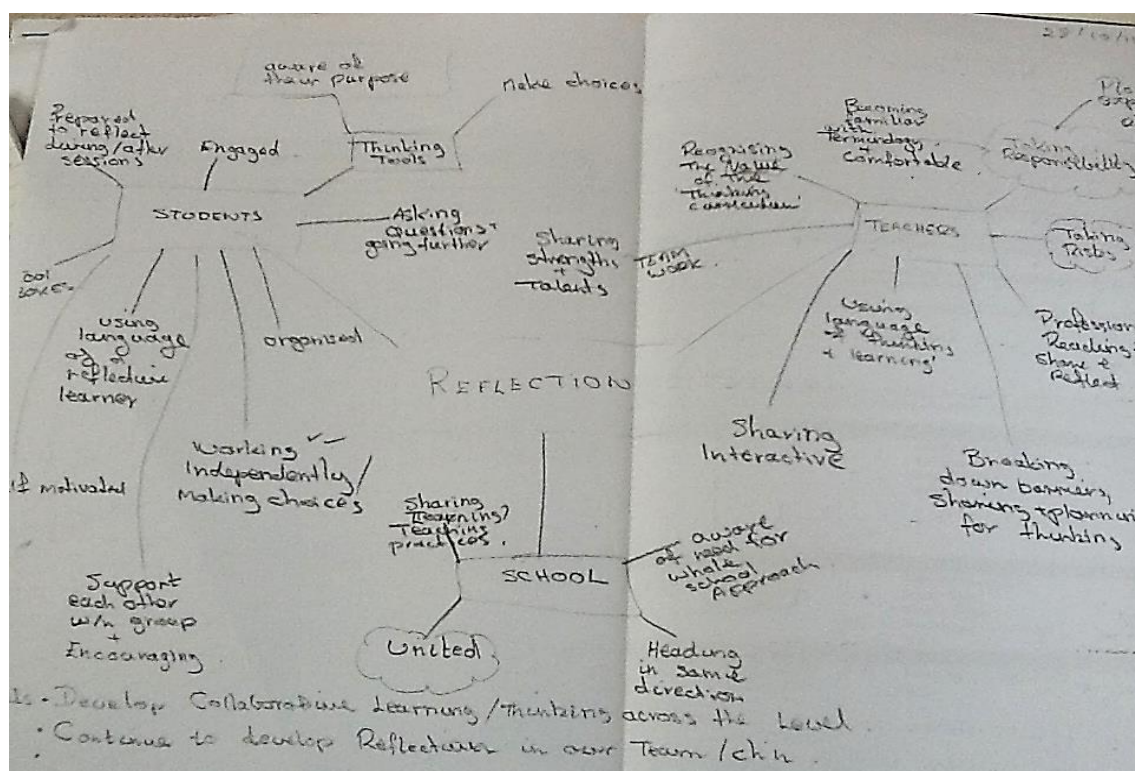
Figure 6.2: A mind map highlighting the ideas central to a team professional learning focus.

Figure 6.2 shows the key ideas the team chose to explore during their PLT meetings as well as providing a range of options for team members to explore individually. Each teacher chose an individual focus to explore within their classrooms. Layla's view of the approach adopted was that:

> *The mind map put us all on the same page. For the first time we have*
> *a focus that we can explore all term. The team were really excited that*
> *our PLTs are going to be driven by our focus. (Layla, CT, P2, CC)*

Once the team had identified possible areas to investigate further, teachers within each of the teams chose an area they would like to personally explore further. Figure 6.3 shows an individual action learning plan that was developed by Heather, a classroom teacher during a group conversation, within phase two of the research. Each section of the plan has been transcribed below.
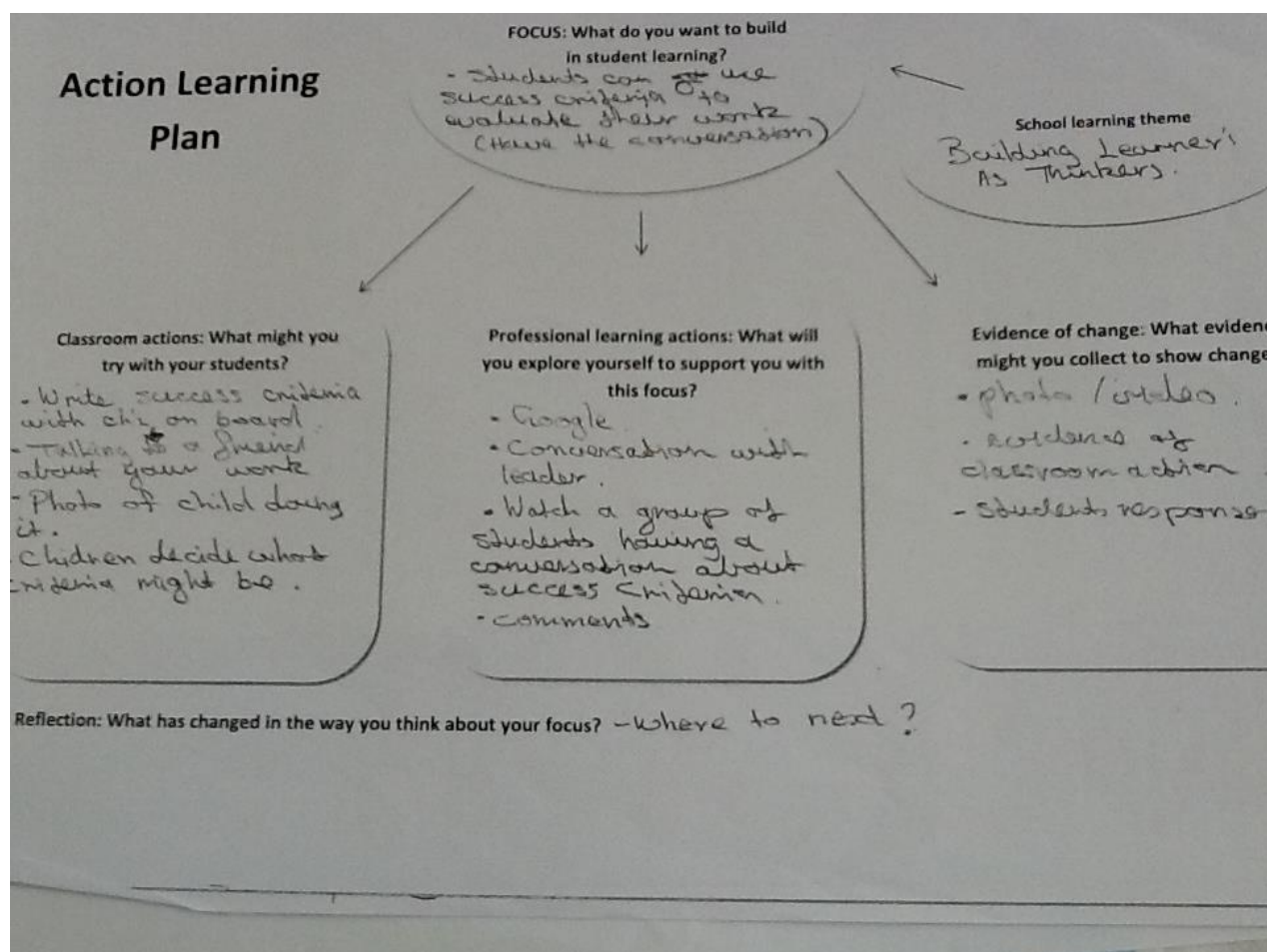
Figure 6.3: An individual teacher's action learning plan that was developed from a team focus about reflection.

School learning theme: 'Building learners as thinkers.'

Focus: 'Students can use success criteria to evaluate their work. (To have the conversation.)'

Classroom actions (What might you try with your students?): 'Write success criteria with children on board, talking to a friend about your work, photo of child doing it, Children decide what criteria might be.'

Professional learning actions (What will you explore yourself to support you with this focus?): 'Google, conversation with leader, watch a group of students having a conversation about success criteria, comments.'

Evidence of change (What evidence might you collect to show change?): *photo/video, evidence of classroom actions, students responses.'*

> *I have learnt that students needed to be more aware of more than just the purpose of the lesson, they needed to have criteria to help them*

understand what they would be doing if they were successful …
Helping students understand success criteria is tricky because they
need to think ahead to what the task or work will look like. The more I
did it with them, the more they used the examples we have used before
… I have also learnt through this process that reflection needs to
happen all of the time, not just at the end of a lesson, sometimes I was
stopping them a lot and asking them to reflect on the criteria and
where they were up to … Evaluation is also part of reflection and I
want the children to use the success criteria to help them reflect on
their learning. I started writing up the criteria for the children but my
goal next is for the children to decide what the criteria might be it
could be even different for different children … What is really exciting
is that other members are interested in what I am doing and finding
out. Other members of the team are now using success criteria in their
classrooms. (Heather, CT, P2, GC)
Now we are having conversations about success criteria. Everyone is
trying something new in their classrooms. We are learning from each
other and reminding each other to stay focused. That's not easy
because there is always so much to do and things get in the way.
(Layla, CT, P2, GC)

The comments (above) highlight the shift in approach to professional learning when teachers
are engaged in learning that is directly related to their classrooms. When Leaders of Learning
initiated a shift to a team focused approach to professional learning, each teacher could
choose how they would explore the shared focus.
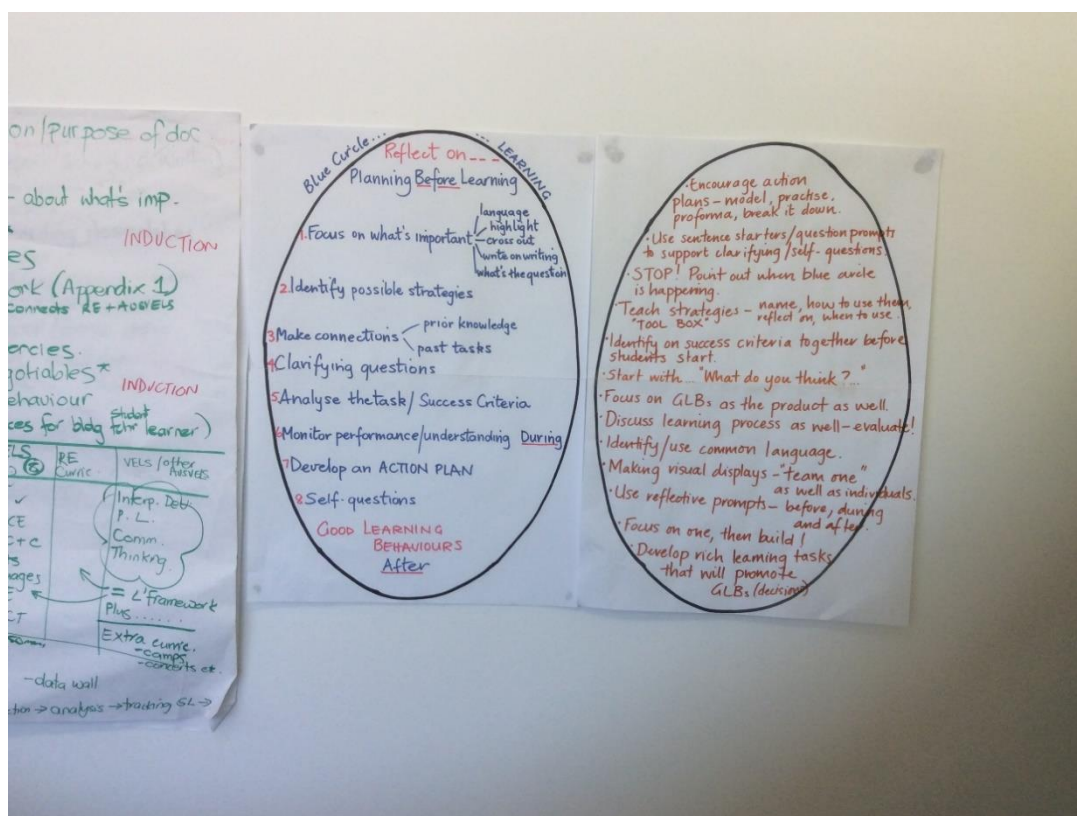
Figure 6.4: A coaching tool used to identify the learning and teaching focus for a PLT project

Figure 6.4 is an example of a shared PLT focus. The coaching tool used to identify the student learning focus (left circle) and possible ideas for the teaching are presented in the circle on the right. The adaption to the blue and yellow circle coaching tool maintains the focus on both learning and teaching. The comment (below) shows Karen's thinking as she led the team conversation.

> *We needed to focus on one area of effective learning, which we decided [would be] on reflection. Once we started brainstorming we realised there were lots of different ways students need to reflect. The plan is to take a different part each and explore it with our students. (Karen, CT, P2, GC)*

Karen's comment (above) highlights a more collaborative approach to professional learning. Each teacher was encouraged to explore a focus for improved student learning within their own classroom. As this section illustrates, the change in approach to professional learning was indicative of the beginning of a move to PLTs from just being a meeting to becoming a genuine professional learning team.

FOCUS: What do you want to build in student learning?

How can I help students monitor their own learning, particularly in Maths?

School learning theme

Building Learners as Thinkers

←

Classroom actions: What might you try with your students

- Clarify their understanding of learning, their role in the learning,/my role in the learning.
- Make sure there is a clear learning focus and links to this in my planning and share this with the students
- Ensure students have the language/vocab understanding that allows them to reflect on learning being taught.
- Provide opportunities to use structured feedback protocols for peers as well as opportunities for self-reflection.
- Make sure reflection is linked to future learning as well as what has already happened (goal setting)
- Be explicit in the purpose of the learning (learning focus), process we will use as well as evidence of learning (criteria)
- Experiment with opportunities for students to determine what they need to help with their learning eg resources, refresher of skills,
- Creating and Use criteria as the basis for feedback and reflection
- Define what feedback is and its purpose and when it can occur
- Continue use of action plans for independent tasks
- Use of formative assessments in planning to help focus the "teaching" where it is needed

Professional learning actions: What will you explore yourself to support you with this focus?

- Professional Reading about Formative feedback procedures

- Experiment with ways to present the focus and tasks for students to have an understanding of where they are up to

- Experiment with feedback protocols and reflect (students and me) on their usefulness and purpose

- Experiment with planning formats (mini project --How can i 'condense/organise' my program so that all components are included in all curriculum areas?)

Evidence of change: What evidence might you collect to show change?

- Students will be using the topic specific language as well as the language of learning in their reflections and feedback.

- Students (and teacher) will see clear links between the purpose of the learning and the tasks carried out.

- Students will be able to make decisions based on areas they need further work in their learning and recognise where they have succeeded.

- Students will be able to articulate the focus of the learning and how the processes/tasks help get them there.

Figure 6.5: An individual action plan developed to model the process of creating an action plan

Figure 6.5 offers an example of an individual action plan which Karen, a Leader of Learning, modelled to demonstrate the process of creating an action plan. The action plan was Karen's response to the team focus and her ideas about how she would explore this focus in her own classroom. The data was collected during a combination of semi-structured interview

(coaching conversations) and unstructured interviews (written reflections), during phase two of the research. The data (below) captures Karen's thinking around this process.

> *I realised that as I was developing my action plan and showing the team, it was going to be too complicated. They haven't done an individual learning plan before so I thought I would model it, but it's too big. So I am going to think about a different strategy. (Karen, CT, P2, CC)*

Karen's thinking (above) about the way she was approaching the leading of professional learning was a response to her teachers' perceived inexperience in engaging in an action learning approach. Karen drew on her personal experience of action learning to build teacher understanding of the process. The following comments (below) provide greater insight into her thinking around her approach.

> *We really haven't spent much time planning yet but we have been talking about some changes that we might need to make because of where the kids are at and how the space worked and didn't work this year ... I remember earlier in the year getting excited by your idea of a theme "Looking for Learning" and I think I will introduce this again to the team as they may see things a little differently. It is time for a bit more push than nudge and upping the ante in terms of the focus on learning rather than teaching. This will be the first part of our planning on Thursday - What do we want our kids doing, saying and thinking by the end of term 1 - being more realistic yet challenging. I think we can come up with some consistent goals and actions and all work on them together in our classrooms. From there we will plan more individually, I first need to show them how to explore learning in the classroom then we will worry about developing individual action plans - it's just blue circle/yellow circle really; isn't everything? I do feel the team has moved considering that one came with little confidence and no real desire at all to teach 5/6 and one had never really had 'learning' in their team. (Karen, CT, P2, OC)*

The comments (above) show that Karen is thinking about how to lead the professional learning of her team. She identified that she wanted teachers to think about learning

differently so that it impacted and reshaped their practice. The process is similar to the individual action plan process, but in this case Karen was encouraging her team to discuss these ideas together and to create a team action plan - Figure 6.6 illustrates the list of goals decided at the PLF (Professional learning forum – see Appendix 4).
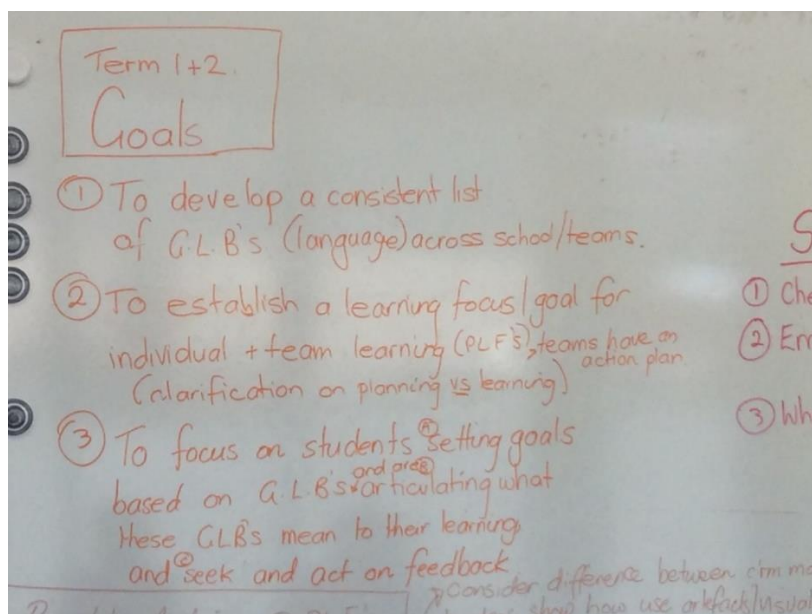
Figure 6.6: A list of shared goals developed by Karen's PLT
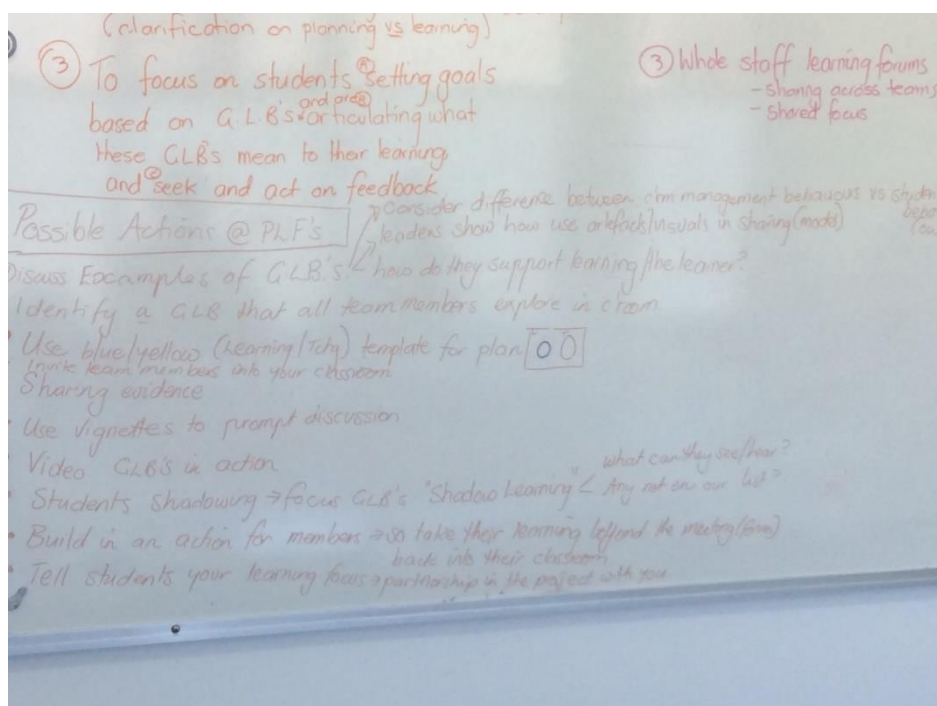
Figure 6.7: A list of possible actions to be explored during their professional learning forums

Figure 6.7 shows the possible actions the team decided on together. Their comments have been transcribed (below).

Possible Actions at PLFs (refer to Appendix 4):

- 'Discuss examples of GLBs (Good Learning Behaviours – refer to Appendix 3). Consider the difference between classroom management and student learning behaviours – how do they support learning/the learner?
- Use blue/yellow (learning teaching) template for plan
- Invite team members into our classroom
- Sharing evidence
- Use vignettes to prompt discussion
- Video GLBs in action
- Students shadowing – focus GLBs "shadow learning" – what can they see/hear? Any not on our list?
- Build in an action for members – so take their learning beyond the meeting (forum) back into your classroom
- Tell students your learning focus – 'partnership in the project with your students.'

Figure 6.7 highlights the idea that professional learning has become central to classroom practice. There are clear expectations that the conversations within the professional learning forums need to influence practice. There is now a focus on teachers generating their own knowledge of quality learning and quality practice. The meeting agenda is more focused on exploring learning and teaching and provides flexibility in what teachers choose to explore and the process they follow. The agenda has been developed and agreed to by all PLF members and reflects a shared language of professional learning and action learning.

The final part of the team action plan process was to decide ways the team could support each other with their learning. These ideas are shown in Figure 6.8 which highlights the focus on building the collaborative learning potential of the professional learning forums. The list reflects a collective decision-making process and communicates the way the team will work. Figure 6.8 also highlights the shift to the support of the whole staff, an important step in building as a professional learning community.

This theme explored the way Leaders of Learning restructured the professional learning opportunities for their teachers. These leaders identified the need for a shared focus for learning and explored strategies to reshape the work in professional learning forums to ongoing professional learning. Leaders of Learning established new expectations for

members of their PLFs as they encouraged their teachers to take responsibility for their own learning.
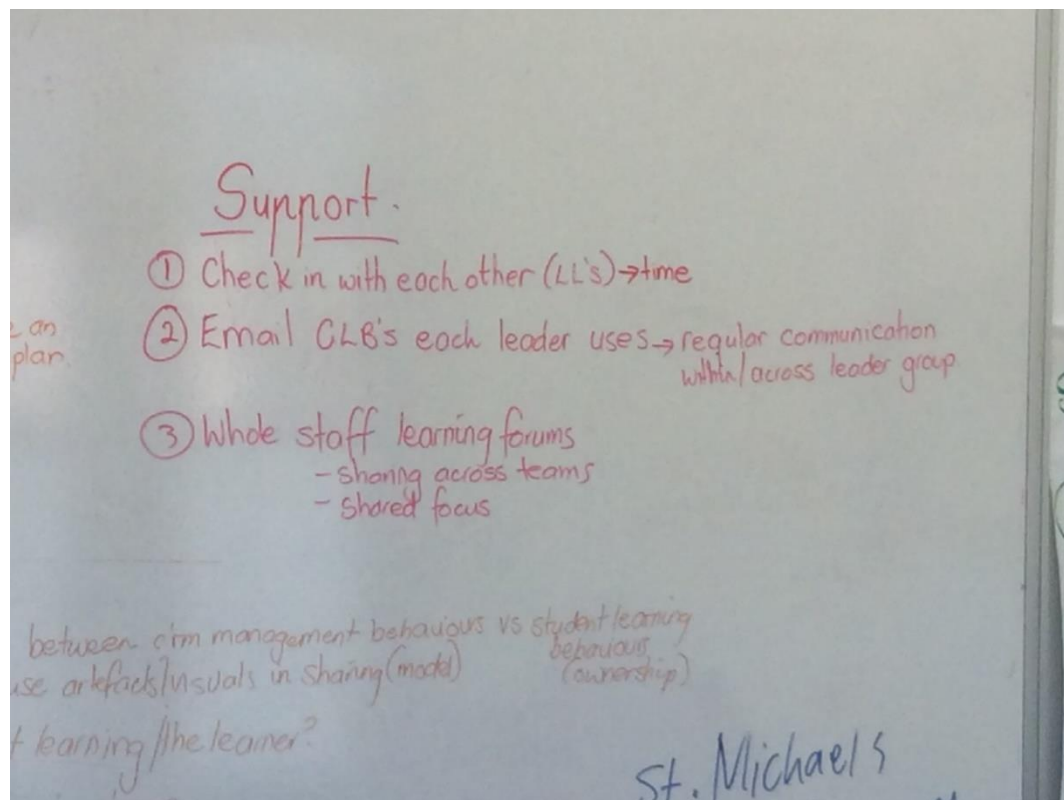
Figure 6.8: A list of ways team members can support each other with their focus

The final theme in this chapter explores how Leaders of Learning created professional learning forums to support classroom exploration and the ongoing professional learning of their teachers.

3) ***Leaders of Learning create professional learning forums to support classroom exploration***

The final theme focuses on the work of Leaders of Learning as they came to rethink the way they developed and led PLT meetings within their schools. The following comments show how these Leaders of Learning had changed the way they thought about, and talked about, PLTs.

> *We needed to call our PLTs something different. When we think of*
> *PLTs we think of meetings and admin and the old way we do them. So*
> *we changed the name to professional learning forums and I think the*
> *new title reminds us that they are all about our professional learning*
> *[through the use of] forums. Changing the title has meant having*

conversations as a staff. It is clear that we will be doing them
differently. (Karen, CT, P2, CC)

A constant challenge for our leadership team is how we provide
teachers enough time to work collaboratively and effectively together
on their work within classrooms. Now that we realise we need to be
focussed on developing professional learning conversations during
PLT meetings, we have used our learning theme as the central focus
for our PLT conversations. We have moved from what we do to how
we are doing it. The focus of planning and PLT conversations has
shifted from discussions about isolated activities to the skills and
strategies that we want to develop in our students allowing them to be
better learners. When we develop the 'learning power' of students
these skills are then applicable to a variety of different contexts.
Teachers are becoming more confident in supporting each other
sharing not only the challenges that occur within the classrooms but
the 'aha' moments as well … Until we looked at our past planning
and meeting schedule we didn't realise how much we had changed.
Our expectations of our students have increased and changed and so
have our expectations of our teachers. It is now so much more about
blue circle, we expect our students to be effective learners and we talk
about ways they can do this all of the time. (Debra, DP, P2, WR)

Having the whole school focus Building Learners as Thinkers and
then developing this in teams has meant that Professional Learning
Teams (PLT) have transformed from 'teaching teams' into 'learning
teams.' PLT meetings have moved away from planning and
administration to learning and teaching. Although this has taken some
time, this is shown in our agendas set for PLT meetings being based
on learning and teaching goals rather than selecting activities for
curriculum areas and discussing managerial items. Our PLTs are now
about our classroom practice. (Rob, P, P2, GC)

Once we started our maths action learning project our PLTs changed.
Our meeting agendas became more open as we stopped our PLTs
being just meetings about all sorts of things to being focused on
learning. The meetings gave teachers the time to share what they were

trying in the classroom. Because we had regular time to share I think

it made teachers attempt new teaching strategies. (Allan, P, P2, GC)

The comments (above) show how Leaders of Learning changed their thinking around their PLT process. Leaders of Learning wanted their PLT meetings to focus on exploring effective learning and the impact that viewing learning through that lens could have on teaching. The comments also illustrate that the Leaders of Learning were connecting professional learning to classroom exploration and the sharing of new practice.

Table 6.2 was developed by the same Leaders of Learning as the PLT plan shown in Table 6.1. Table 6.2 illustrates how the PLT plan highlights significant changes to the planning and content of the PLT meeting plan shown in Table 6.1. Table 6.2 shows that the focus for each of the PLT meetings has changed from exploring topics to providing time for teachers to share their work around their action plans. What is also evident in Table 6.2 is the inclusion of an evaluation of the PLTs and the individual action plan process from the previous term. The PLT schedule reflects an ongoing approach to professional learning and connects learning that comes from the exploration of the action plans with annual review meetings (ARMs). The comments (below) reflect the thinking associated with this change by the Leaders of Learning.

Our PLT plans used to be developed by a member of the leadership

team. We really didn't discuss what would be in the plan before it

went out to staff. Each meeting we usually looked at something

different. Now I can look back and I realise it wasn't about learning.

We saw PLTs as a chance to teach teachers about different strategies

that we wanted to bring into the school. Now our PLT meetings are a

forum to share our learning. We have individual action plans that help

us to engage in learning within our classrooms. (Jenny, CT, P2, WR)

Over the term, the focus was about creating an action that was

important to your teaching. The PLT was a way to reflect and discuss

how this was developing each teacher's understanding of their

students' learning. It was important that the PLT was structured to

support a credible structure so as to move away from 'another

meeting'. Therefore, an agenda was designed to accommodate this

new arrangement providing a transparent outline of what the focus

would be during each meeting There was lots of discussion about the

school learning theme and how each action plan supported the school learning theme; Building a Community of Deeper Thinkers and Connected Learners. Over the course of [a] term, the PLT structure became about 'evidence'; could each teacher find evidence that their action plan was working? The reflection became extremely important as the evidence either supported what we were doing or allowed people to refine and continue the process. Furthermore, the sharing of action plans in both small Professional Learning Teams and as a whole staff have provided avenues for communication and appreciation for the diverse and at the same time parallel action plans that teachers are developing across the school; collectively there has been deeper conversations about how we integrate and continue to support these concepts from year to year, to provide building blocks for our students to grow and make deeper connections from year to year. (Allan, P, P2, WR)

The comments (above) show how the PLT meetings in this school became more purposeful when there was a shared understanding of the intention of the PLT process and how they connected to, and nurtured, ongoing professional learning. Table 6.3 is another example of a meeting schedule developed by the same school from which Tables 6.1 and 6.2 were derived. It was developed at a later stage than Table 6.1 and Table 6.2.

Week	Monday	Wednesday _Professional learning_
1 10-14 Oct	Whole staff meeting Evaluate term 3 PLTs & Individual action plans Connect to ARM (Refer to Appendix 4) process	Staff meeting Grade Structure Leadership structure ARM's continued
2 17-21 Oct	PLTs Individual action plans	Staff meeting (all staff) Spelling (where to?)
3 24-28 Oct	PLTs Individual action plans	Staff Meeting 2012 Class Lists
4 31- 4 Nov	PLTs Individual action plans	Staff meeting
5 7-11 Nov	No PLTs Report writing	Staff Meeting
6 14-18 Nov	PLTs Individual action plans	No Staff Meeting Report Writing
7 21-25 Nov	PLTs Individual action plans	No Staff Meeting Report Writing
8 28-2 Dec	Last PLTs Celebrate learning from action plans	Leadership Meeting
9 5-9 Dec	2012 Level Planning	Staff Meeting
10 12-16 Dec	2012 Level Planning	Staff Meeting
11 29-23 Dec		Staff meeting

Table 6.2: A meeting schedule developed by the same school as the meeting schedule shown in Table 6.1

	Monday: Meetings	Wednesday: Project Learning Forum
Building a Community of Deeper Thinkers and Connected Learners **How Do We Build Deeper Mathematical Thinking?**		
1	27th January	29th January
2	3rd February ▪ Staff Meeting	5th February ▪ MAI (Refer to Appendix 4)Data entry
3	10th February	12th February ▪ Whole school focus from MAI (Maths Assessment Interview)
4	17th February	19th February ▪ Making connections to learning from Term 4 ▪ Begin Level/Team project ▪ Connect to current research ▪ Connect to LTF (Learning theme framework)
5	24th February	26th February ▪ Continue level/team project

6	3rd March	5th March
	▪ No Staff Meeting	▪ Share Level Project
7	10th March	12th March
	▪ No Staff Meeting	▪ Develop a plan/focus in levels
8	17th March	19th March
		▪ Share plan
9	24th March	26th March
		▪ Link Team findings with planning
10	31st March	2nd April
		▪ Term 2 Planning

Table 6.3: Meeting schedule developed by the same school as Table 6.1 and 6.2

Table 6.3 shows that the name of the learning forums has changed from PLTs to Project Learning Forums (PLFs). The meeting schedule highlights the ongoing nature of action learning. The process involves a team approach to exploring how students might think about maths at a deeper level. The school learning theme 'Building a Community of Deeper Thinkers and Connected Learners', is visible at the top of the plan, along with the focus for their whole-school action learning project 'How do we build deeper mathematical thinking?' Table 6.3 also shows that the meetings build onto each other, connecting professional learning, teacher planning and the use of student learning data.

Table 6.4 is an example of a meeting schedule that was developed by Leaders of Learning in a particular school, to encourage teachers to explore learning in their classrooms. The schedule identifies the different meeting types (similar to the schedules shown in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). The focus for each meeting is clearly stated and the accompanying dot points identify possible classroom actions and PLT conversations. The dot points include strategies to improve the way students approach their learning. The shared language that has emerged and developed since identifying and then exploring their school learning theme 'Independent and collaborative learners' is evident in this meeting schedule as the focus includes terms such as students to have ownership of the tools, thinking tools and self-monitoring skills.

Date	*Type*		*Focus*
	Tues	Thurs	
Week 1 Mon 31/1	General	Free	ALN • Introduce PLT/Staff meeting planner • Collect evidence of an expository writing at the start of the year (written or oral).
Week 2 Mon 7/2	ALN* Numeracy	ALN Numeracy	NUMERACY

			• Identify specific areas to focus on in the area of number, place value and structure. (MAI results analysed during PLTs) (refer to Appendix 4) • Use planning template to plan for specific needs. • Make explicit the mathematical language needed to develop strategies as learning tools. • Use the idea of student tool kits for students to have ownership of the tools.
Week 3 Mon 14/2	Welcome BBQ	P/T meetings	
Week 4 Mon 21/2	Numeracy	ALN Numeracy	• Continue from Week 2
Week 5 Mon 28/2	Religion	ALN Literacy	LITERACY • Running Records to be used consistently and as a tool for on-going monitoring and informing teaching. • Teachers to use thinking tools before, during and after writing. • During PLTs to develop a student expository writing organisational framework and share samples of work and ideas. • Back to back planning time with teachers to plan writing experiences and teaching approach. • Use PLTs to explore what self-monitoring skills are. • How do we encourage self-monitoring? • Refer to 'First Step's Continuum' during PLTs to discuss student growth in expository writing.
Week 6 Mon 7/3	Literacy	ALN	
Week 7 Mon 14/3	Literacy	ALN	
Week 8 Mon 21/3	Welfare	ALN	
Week 9 Mon 28/3	Term 2 Planning	Term 2 Planning	Planning for Term 2 concepts
Week 10 Mon 4/4	Term 2 Planning	Assessment Term 1	Planning for Term 2 concepts Assessment of Term (**Thursday PLT**)

*ALN: Annual Literacy/Numeracy Plan

Table 6.4: Meeting schedule developed to promote classroom exploration.

The comments (below) highlight how Leaders of Learning (Leah and Lisa) captured their thinking about the changes that had happened to their PLT process. The data was collected during phase two of the research through written reflections on their practice.

As teachers began to look for flexible and new ways to explore their development plans, PLT meetings changed to become highly professional learning meetings where teachers learnt from each other. We became more flexible with our agendas as the conversations we were having decided on the direction we needed to go. Also, units of work now show a strong focus on the learning process and how to empower our students to be independent learners rather than focusing on content only. Teachers are using the conversations in the PLT meetings to support them with their classroom planning. We think we are more focused on bringing the learning theme into all of our meetings. Teachers are getting used to using the language we have been building … PLT meetings provided quality professional development as teachers had complete ownership in determining the purpose, content and structure of each meeting. The meetings were held regularly with the teachers working collaboratively on the needs of the group, coming up with an action plan for the week then meeting again to review what had been trialed and working out 'where to' next? In this way the professional development was ongoing and fully integrated as it was the teachers themselves who by sharing their experiences and expertise provided the professional development for each other. It became normal practice that teachers would call on each other for assistance and were naturally sharing knowledge, skills and capabilities as a collective responsibility for improving learning became embedded into the culture of the school. This then translated into staff meetings which became more like PLT meetings as teacher confidence and risk taking grew and they began to see that they did have the capabilities and knowledge to lead, demonstrate and present to their colleagues … Another area for development will be to incorporate current research and professional learning into our deliberations and thinking about teaching. Time for reading can be included as part of the PLT meeting and can be used as a starting point for meaningful discussions or to challenge current thinking with evidence based research. (Leah, P, P2, WR)

There are some really important changes to our professional learning and PLTs. Blue and yellow circle has been really powerful. You can visually see the importance of both and make sure we talk about learning first. I think the biggest change is that we have a much greater focus on learning. Talking about learning first really helped us to see what our old conversations about teaching only actually looked like ... There have been some key statements and questions that I now use a lot. They have made such a difference to the type of conversations we have: What will students need to be thinking about? What is at the centre of this?; What will the learner be doing. The 'learner can' statements [that identify examples of the learning behaviours and actions of students. These are evident within the learning frameworks] and our school learning theme [Independent and collaborative learners]. [We are reminded] that it is about our students ... I love leading the PLTs now. There is so much to do and they are really purposeful. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)

The comments (above) highlight that once Leaders of Learning have a shared focus for their professional learning, they reshape their PLT meetings to support the focus. The comments show that the PLTs became a forum to talk about classroom practice and influenced the ways in which teachers worked with each other. The deliberate shift to focusing on both student and teacher learning changed the content and nature of the conversations. The comments also highlight the reflective approach these Leaders of Learning developed as they articulated their thinking around the changes as well as shared possibilities for how their approach to PLTs and the exploration of classroom practice might further evolve.

Table 6.5 shows a professional learning plan that replaced the school's regular meeting schedule. The focus for the professional learning of teachers in this school was to explore student decision-making in a way that promoted self-questions or reflection. The plan explains the role of PLTs in relation to the building of the project and collaborative support. The content of the project plan makes the connections between the PLT meetings as a professional learning forum, teacher reflection and the exploration of student learning within the classroom. The emphasis clearly shifted from the meeting time to a greater importance being placed on teacher learning. The comment (below) by a Leader of Learning (Lisa) is

illustrative of the resultant approach to the ongoing building of the PLT structure and leading the learning of others.

> *Out PLTs are now a time where we develop our project on decision-making. How we do professional learning is so different, now teachers decide the content and direction and I just set success criteria for them. This time we created the learning framework on decision-making together and I think it's made a difference. They seem more on board. I have also introduced reflective journals for the teachers. I am making sure they reflect at every meeting and I've encouraged them to reflect on learning that happens in their classrooms. They can fill the journal with all sorts of things like student work, photos, planners, it is up to them. I think the reflections are still very safe but if we keep working on it I think they will get better. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)*

Lisa's comment (above) shows how she came to articulate how a PLT approach can promote effective professional learning. Lisa recognized the value in encouraging greater teacher input and raised her expectations of how they could work together within PLT meetings. Lisa's comments show a shift in her thinking around reflection and how introducing reflective journals supported teachers to reflect on different aspects of the chosen focus and the process in which they engaged.

DECISION MAKING ~ ACTION LEARNING PROJECT

Design a unit of work/learning sequence that builds student's ability to pose self-questions in relation to decision making.

ORGANISATION	PROCESS	CONTENT	PRESENTATION

Success Criteria	✓ Choose a MAIN decision making area, but INCLUDE other 3 areas ✓ Work must be documented ✓ Present a VISUAL MODEL of unit and the focus on decision making (eg. A mind map, a lotus tool) ✓ Write a REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT that shows: - your thinking on decision making for students - quotes from the students regarding each type of decision making - Photos etc. - Reflect on success in building student decision making
PLT's	We will use our PLT'S

	✓ to plan our DECISION MAKING unit (short, sharp and manageable… any learning area) ✓ share outcomes and progress ✓ seek feedback ✓ engage in professional learning conversations about student decision making ✓ add to our list of self-monitoring questions
Duration	4-6 weeks
Conclusion	Our units and reflective journals will be compiled into a book demonstrating our ACTION LEARNING FOR 2015

EXAMPLES OF SOME SELF-MONITORING QUESTIONS TO PROMOTE <u>STUDENT</u>

<u>DECISION MAKING</u>

ORGANISATION	PROCESS	CONTENT	PRESENTATION

What will I need to be successful?

What part of this learning is important for me?

What am I working on?

What actions will I need to use to be successful in this task?

What is my learning in this skill/idea?

What am I focusing on to build my understanding?

What am I trying to grasp next?

How will I show/demonstrate my learning?

Table 6.5: Professional learning plan, incorporating PLT meeting plan, developed by the same school as Table 6.4

Chapter Overview

This chapter illustrated the change in thinking of Leaders of Learning as they explored their approach to professional learning within their schools. Leaders of Learning identified the limitations of their current practices and considered new possibilities for developing PLT meetings as forums for professional learning.

As the chapter makes clear, a number of themes emerged that make evident the process that led to the nature of the capacity building of school leaders in learning to lead effective professional learning, these included:

- Leaders of Learning begin to recognize and (eventually) challenge current professional learning practices.
- Leaders of Learning restructure professional learning opportunities in their schools.
- Leaders of Learning create professional learning forums to support classroom exploration.

The data shows that Leaders of Learning needed opportunities to consider their current approach to professional learning in relation to their developing understandings of effective learning. These Leaders of Learning developed knowledge about how to reshape their approach to professional learning in order to enhance their teachers' approach to learning about, and of, practice.

The following chapter explores how Leaders of Learning developed a reflective approach to leading learning in their schools.

Chapter 7

Leaders of Learning model a reflective approach to leadership and teaching practice

Introduction

This chapter will explore the data in relation to how Leaders of Learning developed a reflective approach to their teaching and leadership practice. The chapter is organised into two parts: the first briefly explores the literature in relation to reflective practice; the second includes an analysis of the data - which has been organised under three themes. Each theme is explored separately and together focus on the way Leaders of Learning have developed a reflective approach to the different aspects of their work. These themes (structured as statements) include:

1. Leaders of Learning develop a reflective approach to their leadership of learning.
2. Leaders of Learning consider the role reflection has had on their leadership of learning.
3. Leaders of Learning promote reflection within their schools.

Reflective practice: A brief literature overview

This section of the chapter explores the literature with a particular focus on that which constitutes reflection and how teacher and leader reflection can lead to change in practice. As is abundantly clear, much of the literature suggests that reflection is a critical component of learning. Senge (1990) was of the view that 'skills of reflection concern slowing down our thinking processes so that we can become more aware of how we form our mental models and the ways they influence our actions' (p. 175). Aubusson, Ewing & Hoban (2009) defined reflection as 'a process that helps develop meaning from experiences. If you don't reflect, then what you learn from your experiences is limited' (p. 5). However, almost regardless of how reflection is defined today, generally, the roots lead back to Dewey's (1933) definition of reflective thinking which provides insight into the process that leads to new learning:

> *Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it lends, constitutes reflective thought. (p. 6)*

Reflective thinking involves making sense of a current context in relation to that which the learner chooses to focus on, considering what they already know and contemplating alternate possibilities. This view is shared by Hattie and Yates (2014) who similarly stated that 'reflective thinking allows us to go beyond experience, to envisage the future, to make plans to alter the world, and so engage in thinking that does not parallel one's immediate experiences' (p. 291). Reflection then involves complex thought processes that move in different directions depending on the stimuli at any particular time. Dewey (1933) suggested that reflection is a process that 'involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence.' He also suggested that 'the successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another; they do not come and go as a medley. Each phase is a step from something to something' (p. 3).

Dewey (1933) was also of the view that there are 'sub-processes which are involved in every reflective operation. These are: (a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify suggested belief' (p. 9). Learners need to consider what it is they believe in and then how a particular event or act relates to, challenges or reinforces that belief; 'reflection thus implies that something is believed in (or disbelieved in), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as witness, proof, voucher, warrant, that is, as ground of belief' (Dewey, 1933, p. 8). Through this process learners can then consider different perspectives and investigate new possibilities.

As the literature continually illustrates, it could well be argued that understanding the process of reflection is more challenging than engaging in a reflective process. How reflection is understood can determine how learners engage in reflection themselves. In many classrooms, reflection is seen as a separate activity in which students are asked to reflect at the conclusion of a learning task. They are often encouraged to recall what they have 'done' during a lesson or identify their successes and challenges. Although this can be a component of reflective thinking, this approach does little to promote different ways to think about learning and the act of reflecting is disconnected to the learning process; learning is not connected to the work. Senge (1990) stated that 'you have to make reflection part of the way work is done' (p. 290). If this approach is commonly used with students then it is likely that teacher reflection will be borne of a similar approach.

Aubusson et al (2009) noted that 'although reflection is a powerful vehicle for teacher learning, it is an individual activity and does have limitations when used in isolation from

other processes' (p. 43). Senge (1990) was of the view that teacher and leader reflection if done well 'starts with appreciating the realities of people's work and identifying where and how specific learning approaches, such as improved reflection, can make a practical difference' (p. 287). He also stated that 'a culture that integrates action and reflection arrives at better decisions' (p. 289).

Reflection should stimulate more complex thinking about learning and needs to become a natural part of the learning process. For this to happen reflection must be encouraged throughout a lesson and learners should be prompted to look beyond tasks and to make connections to other experiences and possibilities. Reflection needs to focus on particular aspects of learning and then structured in ways that support changes in thinking. This approach to student reflection requires a more informed and strategic approach. Teachers who engage in regular reflection themselves are more likely to create similar opportunities for their students. The Leaders of Learning within this research project developed their approach to engaging in reflective thinking in ways that impacted both their teaching and their leadership of learning within their schools. As this chapter will illustrate, they developed the skills to deliberately think about their context in different ways which then shaped the ways in which they thought about learning, teaching and their leadership of professional learning.

Hattie and Yates (2014) defined experts as 'individuals [who are] able to perform at the very top of an identifiable skill area (p. 84). Examples of the qualities of experts include: self-monitoring; perceiving large and meaningful patterns; and, thinking at deeper levels. Hattie stated that experts engage in ways of thinking that are not so common in novices. If quality Leaders of Learning are considered as experts in both teaching and the leading of professional learning, then they can 'organise information incredibly efficiently' (p. 86) and 'their awareness of patterns and their extensive store of knowledge mean that they are not misled by surface features. Instead their minds automatically shift into seeing the deeper principles that are at stake' (p. 87). The Leaders of Learning in this research project learned how to continually seek to understand their practice at a much deeper level and engage in ongoing reflection that allowed them to continually analyse their current contexts, i.e., they demonstrated their developing expertise.

> *Experts need to understand all aspects of the situation. They hesitate*
> *to proceed until they understand ... [They] use time to reflect on just*
> *how the present problem relates to what has happened before. They*

> *will use recognition processes and long-term memory in locating and*
> *finding patterns. (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 87)*

Dewey (1933) noted that 'surface processing is characterised by a lack of attention to detail where analysis is largely superficial … Deep processing, as the term suggests, is when full attention is paid to detail so that analysis leads to the creation of strong links to existing knowledge' (p. 80). The Leaders of Learning involved in this research project were given opportunities to think about learning in different ways. This then influenced the way they analysed and made sense of their current practice.

> *In learning, processing matters because it is one way in which a*
> *learner can begin to impose a structure on the material. Processing*
> *can help a learner begin to organise information in ways that make*
> *sense so that it can be recalled and used appropriately when needed.*
> *Clearly, when information is stored in a meaningful way, it is able to*
> *be more easily retrieved and used in the future. (Dewey, 1933, p. 79)*

Loughran (2010) was also of this view and described this process as the framing of practice. He stated that 'the busyness of teaching encourages framing of situations in particular ways' (p. 212). If these frames go unchallenged then teachers continue to engage in practice in familiar ways. Teachers 'seeking to see beyond existing frames of practice is one way of enhancing the professional knowledge of practice' (Loughran, 2010, p. 212). Reframing occurs 'when the same situation is viewed from alternative perspectives so that different ways of acting are more readily apparent. In responding to alternative perspectives new knowledge of practice emerges' (Loughran, 2010, p. 212). Hattie (2014) was also of this view that 'experts' engage in self-monitoring of their context and actions. They challenge their frames of practice and monitor their exploration of these frames; 'they are adept at keeping track of where they are up to, and adjust strategies … [They] can harbour several planned agendas, and switch between them' (p. 88).

Professional knowledge

Throughout the literature on reflection, the notion of the production of knowledge continually emerges often as a consequence of the framing and reframing that Schön (1983, 1987) described and which others (noted above) have alluded to. Through framing, teachers are able to see alternative perspectives and develop new ways of understanding the taken-for-granted in their practice (Barnes, 1992).

Drawing on ideas about learning from practice through framing, reframing and the resultant reflective practices, Loughran (2010) stated that 'the ability to explicate knowledge of practice is therefore clearly dependent on creating time and space for reflection, sharing and critique' (p. 210). Baird (1992), like many other authors interested in reflection and teachers' knowledge (see for example, Calderhead, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Munby, Russell & Martin, 2001) had a similar view: 'in order to improve the quality of classroom teaching and learning, teachers must be provided with adequate and appropriate time, opportunities, guidance and support to grapple with what is difficult, demanding and often unsettling process of personal change' (p. 148).

As is illustrated across the literature, what teachers think about and how they think about different aspects of learning and teaching can be supported though strategies that explore new perspectives on both teaching and learning. Loughran (2010) stated that 'in order to create real opportunities for professional learning, there is a need for teaching to be understood as comprising much more than just the doing of teaching' (p. 211) a view typically endorsed in the research literature:

> *… a different conception of teaching … a different type of teacher*
> *learning. When teaching is viewed as a profession, it implies that the*
> *body of knowledge is not fixed, and that what teachers do in*
> *classrooms depends on a myriad of factors. This means that teaching*
> *is more than the delivery of prescribed knowledge using a range of*
> *strategies, but is a dynamic relationship that changes with different*
> *students and contexts. (Hoban, 2000, p. 165)*

Teacher reflection then can be a catalyst for the development of professional knowledge, especially when focused on exploring and deepening knowledge of effective learning and teaching in order to build a greater awareness of the impact a teacher or leader might have on the building of their own practice in order for professional knowledge of practice to grow and for expertise not only to be developed, but also refined.

In this research project Leaders of Learning engaged in opportunities that challenged them to think about learning and teaching in different ways which then supported them to make greater sense of the complexities that surround the relationship between learning and teaching. As the data analysis in the following section will demonstrate, as their knowledge of each developed, they framed their practice in ways which encouraged them to

communicate their ideas with others. Initially, these Leaders of Learning focused on understanding and improving student learning which then led to a greater focus on their personal development as a teacher and Leader of Learning. The PEEL project (Project for Enhancing Effective Learning; Baird & Mitchell, 1986; Baird & Northfield, 1992), a school based teacher driven teaching and learning initiative, was itself successful for this very reason:

> *[the PEEL project which] started with a focus on student development (development of classroom learning approaches, progress and outcomes through enhancing students' metacognition) soon encompassed a focus on teacher development (development of teaching approaches, progress and outcomes through enhancing teachers' metacognition). (Baird, 1992, p. 148)*

Analysis of the data

This section of the chapter explores the data in relation to three emergent themes. The themes are organised into three statements.

1. Leaders of Learning develop a reflective approach to their leadership of learning.
2. Leaders of Learning consider the role reflection has had on their leadership of learning.
3. Leaders of Learning promote reflection within their schools.

Collectively the themes explore changes in the way Leaders of Learning think about and approach their teaching and their leadership of learning.

1) Leaders of Learning develop a reflective approach to their leadership of learning

This theme examines how Leaders of Learning developed a reflective approach to their work as leaders within their schools. Within this research, many of the Leaders of Learning worked with two imperatives in their practice: the building and modelling of quality learning within their teaching context; and, leading the professional learning of teachers within their schools. As the data (in this section) makes clear, the nature of the Leader of Learning reflections feature some recurring approaches to considering practice, these include: considering current practice (leadership and teaching); contemplating new possibilities; reframing understandings; and, reshaping practice (leadership and teaching). Each reflection highlights at least one of the four identified ways of thinking about practice. (The examples of

reflections within this section were collected from online conversations and written reflections during phase two of the research.)

Over time, Leaders of Learning became more aware of the different aspects of their leadership. Written reflections and online conversations highlighted how Leaders of Learning reflected on each component of leadership separately, and also in a connected way. Once Leaders of Learning realised their leadership extended to both the classroom and the learning of others, their written reflections considered both aspects of this leadership. In this section, the different elements of their leadership are considered separately.

The reflections (below) were written by Karen, a classroom teacher and were collected from online conversations, during phase two of the research.

> *My thinking is trying to get closer links between the tasks, assessment and learning focus all the way through a sequence/topic and making sure kids have a chance to monitor how they are going with the focus frequently. I have made this a real focus in my Maths planning for this term and am interested in trying out some different 'formative assessment' procedures which actually are learning (does that make sense) and help to determine where we go next or how quickly we move on. I just bought a book with some Maths assessment ideas - some we have already done in some way and others are so obvious you think 'why didn't I think of that!' Maths has always been an area that has been my weakest in terms of getting past the "activities" so I am trying to make a real focus of learning all the way through and am going to try out workshop situations for those kids who need further work. I am hoping eventually students will be able to determine if they need to workshop and I think the key to this is their understanding of learning - there is still a stigma attached to those who have the "teacher" so I am going to try and make sure there are extension workshops as well so it is different kids at different times. Our topic is place value/decimals and measurement. (Karen, CT, P2, OC)*

The reflection (above) highlights two ways of thinking about practice; considering current practice and communicating new possibilities. Karen articulates her vision of what is possible by considering making stronger links between learning tasks, assessments and the learning

focus. Karen believes her students can monitor how they are going with the learning focus and that she can move her teaching from a focus on activities to a workshop approach. Karen interweaves into her reflections an evaluation of her approach to teaching maths. She questions the current culture of the classroom and considers how this might impact on the success of her workshop idea. What is also evident in Karen's reflection is her intention to act and improve learning.

Table 7.1 was developed by Lisa, a Deputy Principal, as part of an online conversation and written reflection. The table highlights how Lisa has framed her understandings of what it means to be an independent learner and shows a collection of independent learning behaviours she considered important to build early on with a new class of students. (The following comments highlight Lisa's thinking around the development of table 7.1.)

> *The first document is my thinking so far on what I believe are the most important learning behaviours to tackle first. The top blue line is what an independent learner can do. I realised I needed to refine my list of GLBs [Good Learning Behaviours – refer to Appendix 4] to the most important to start with. There were so many that I found it really challenging to present to students. I thought about the areas of independent learning that I would like to build first then the paler blue underneath are the GLBs or the 'elaborations'. Now I need to use those statements in our L plate book. I haven't made the kids' L Plate booklet yet ... a bit of work to do first!*
> *I started working on the 'identifying level of challenge' first. This is what I've done so far!*
> *I have developed a new way for students to think about their levels of work/effort. I'm quite happy with the levels of work poster ... I chose green rather than RED for the challenge, as green is for Go and Red would be stop! (Subtle visual!)*
> *The Busy work on level 0 is 'cruising':*
> *1: Practising – swimming*
> *2: Challenge – snorkelling - got some help but it's tricky!!*
> *Very happy with that! (Lisa, DP, P2, OC/WR)*

ACTION LEARNING What does it mean to be an independent learner?								
Understands Quality & quantity	Make decisions about learning	Makes connections	Asks effective questions (Why? How?)	Seeks support when required	Manages time	Uses learning tools	Identifies level of challenge	Reflects on learning and seeks and gives feedback
Sets and meets agreed criteria	What to do when stuck Seek a challenge	To: • what has been done before • posters • other work • other learning areas	Can use a variety of question starters Knows surface and deep questions	Initiates a learning conversation	Self-monitoring Can complete tasks	Can connect 2-3 learning tools	Knows the difference between: • Busy work • Practising • Being challenged	Reflects on skills and strategies Asks for feedback Gives feedback to others

Table 7.1: Table categorising a range of independent learning behaviours

Lisa's comments (above) highlight again the sense of urgency to act and own the change as she focused on explaining the thinking behind her practice. She frames new understandings and re-shapes her teaching which again illustrates how she is thinking about learning.

Check your level!

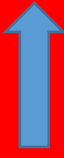| 2 | Challenged | |
| 1 | Practising | |
| 0 | Busy work | |

Table 7.2: Template for a classroom poster to highlight different levels of challenge.

Lisa also describes how she will build the section 'identifies level of challenge', included in Table 7.1. Table 7.2 shows the template of the classroom poster Lisa planned to introduce to her students to develop this aspect of independent learning. Table 7.3 shows a new template for a classroom poster that was developed after Lisa discussed the concept with her students. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 together are an example of ongoing change – a key feature of effective reflective practice (Loughran, 2002).

The comments (below) highlight Lisa's reflection on the process of creating a student approach to identifying the level of challenge presented by particular learning opportunities.

> *After hearing the kids through the week and discussing how they are using the levels of challenge, I've added a few extra levels to our graph. The 3 levels didn't present enough choices and students discovered other levels of challenge as they discussed their choices. I wonder how they'll respond to the new poster. (Lisa, DP, P2, OC)*

Check your level!

↑	Beyond	
2	Challenged	
1	Practising	
0	Busy work	
-1	Inactive	ClipartOf.com/433865

Table 7.3: Refined template for a classroom poster to highlight different levels of challenge.

The comment (above) is another example by which Lisa considers her current practice; observations of her students responding to the levels of challenge criteria. Lisa then re-shapes her practice after reflecting on the feedback from her students. The same type of thinking was evident in the reflections of Leaders of Learning as they considered their leadership beyond their own classrooms.

> *I thought for our team meeting this week we would use an affinity diagram to identify the criteria of a successful learning meeting. I thought if they thought and wrote about the elements they think would make a good learning meeting that might be a starting point. I know our team has great discussions but sometimes we do lack focus and easily get side-tracked – it's not that we are not still discussing*

learning, we just get off topic and sometimes we are guilty of running
too long. This would also be a good chance to define the meeting as a
learning 'checkpoint' rather than where the learning takes place - I
think I am right in assuming that this is what it is! I would really like
our team to come to the meeting with what they have been discovering
or working on in their classroom.

I thought if we got a framework of criteria (from the affinity diagram)
and what we need to do to make this happen (e.g., have a time keeper,
come prepared and on time, stick to the topic, have a focus, etc.) this
may help and would also give me a chance to give the team a bit more
of a rundown on what we have been looking at in the workshops.
I really do think that the team understand blue circle and yellow circle
from our earlier work but I am also keen to use the "quadrant circle"
we developed in our last conversation, to plan a writing topic for term
4 on explanatory writing. I think breaking blue and yellow circles into
content and GLBs [Good Learning Behaviours] or learning focus will
really help our team to see what they have been focusing on in the
past and what they need to focus on in their planning from now on.
That is also one thing I am extremely aware of in our team and I think
it is across the whole school - we actually need to give ourselves the
time to plan properly. When you do 'plan properly' the learning is
richer and in turn the kids need time so it is actually smarter planning
and leads to so much more learning than just one outcome. (Karen,
CT, P2, WR/OC)

Karen's reflection (above) shows how she uses her observations from team meetings to shape the way she leads PLT meetings. Karen is very aware of the existing understandings and challenges and continually tries to make sense of these to reshape her approach to these professional learning forums. Karen is very explicit about the types of strategies she will use to influence the way the teachers work and can explain the purpose of the strategies in relation to this change. Within this quotation, Karen contemplates possible ways to change the team's perceptions of the meeting as well as the way they plan for learning. The comments (above) capture the ongoing nature of Karen's reflection as she persistently addresses the challenges around leading quality professional learning.

Table 7.4 was a proposal for a new learning forum to replace the existing PLT approach within the school. The proposal was written by Lisa, a Leader of Learning, during phase two of the research. To encourage teachers to think about professional learning in different ways, Lisa identified new strategies to emphasise the exploration of learning and teaching. The proposal includes a focus on action learning projects, the use of teacher reflective journals and the building of effective learning conversations to support the shift to classrooms as contexts for professional learning. Table 7.4 is an example of a Leader of Learning reframing and communicating understandings of effective professional learning.

Lisa's commentary (below) on the development of her proposal for learning forums offers more insight into her thinking.

> *I put the proposal together to change the name and direction of our*
> *PLTs. My proposal format is similar to my project-based learning*
> *planning proforma that I use in my classroom. I thought that if I think*
> *about the learning forum the same way I think about planning units of*
> *work then I would find it easier to explain.*
> *Before I started to write it I brainstormed all of the things I have done*
> *in my own professional learning that has completely changed the way*
> *I think about learning and teaching and made sure they were all*
> *included in the proposal. I especially made sure that learning had the*
> *stronger focus. I'm hoping that the way I have written the proposal*
> *will show the difference between PLTs and the new learning forums. I*
> *realize that this is a good time to get some new ideas into our*
> *professional learning. I know the action learning focus will be*
> *challenging for some and I'm not sure how the reflective professional*
> *learning journals will go down but we have to keep giving the*
> *messages and 'drag' some forward. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)*

PROPOSAL FOR LEARNING FORUMS

PURPOSE	- To progressively build the LEARNING FRAMEWORK - To establish an ACTION LEARNING approach Therefore: - Enhance teacher professional learning
STRUCTURE	- Over 7 weeks - At Learning Forums on a Wednesday (or Thursday) afternoon
CONTENT	- Building of the Learning Framework based on ENGAGEMENT, REFLECTION & OWNERSHIP - Creating *'Learners can'* statements for each dot point of OVERVIEW document - Collate teaching strategies as teachers develop these in their classrooms and share at Learning Forums - Introduce a team approach to ACTION LEARNING PLANS and then create INDEPENDENCE within the staff as they choose their own ACTION LEARNING PROJECT - Introduce reflective professional journals and build reflection into every forum - Promote relevant professional reading that supports ACTION LEARNING PROJECTS - Build effective LEARNING CONVERSATIONS - Staff to share their action learning progress
EXPECTED OUTCOME	- The development of the School Learning Framework - Completion of '*Learners can*' and '*Teacher actions*' statements - The development of an ACTION LEARNING process Beginning of professional learning journals - Teachers will have their own ACTION LEARNING PROJECTS to enhance/change/develop their practice - The FIRST DRAFT of the LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Table 7.4: A proposal for a new professional learning forum to replace a current PLT approach

The comment (above) is another example of where a Leader of Learning considered her current practice. In this case, Lisa looked to her classroom practice to support her thinking around leading the professional learning of others. She also reframed her understandings of effective professional learning and reshaped her leadership to create an opportunity to communicate her thinking to others. The reflections (below) are further examples of how Leaders of Learning reflected on their leadership of student learning to inform their leadership of professional learning.

Here is a story - Just a quick one which shows the change in thinking of the teachers in my team. We were setting up the new expectations for the personal reading (comprehension) and in the middle of the conversation one of the teachers (the biggest blocker initially but the star of the team now!!!) piped up and said, "We could get the kids to make an action plan to follow!"

I could not stop smiling because I had just really shared the action plan idea with the team from last term and talked about how the kids went with it and showed a few at a meeting - she was interested enough to try it out so I think we are ready to start setting some individual goals and use the individual action learning plans in my team, I think they are 'there' in terms of seeing the learning and the teaching separately and having a clear focus for the learning. I really think we are ready to move on. (Karen, CT, P2, OC)

The comments (above) highlight the way Karen used examples from her classroom to support the conversations in the PLT meetings. By modelling how she built quality learning in her classroom, she was able to encourage her teachers to respond in similar ways. The comments also emphasise Karen's focus on understanding what is currently happening within the PLT meetings and then highlight how she considers new possibilities to improve the way teachers might work. This is also evident in the following comments written by Lisa during an online conversation, in phase two of the research.

We had a follow up/reflective PLT this arvo [afternoon]. I asked them to share their thoughts on the Professional Learning Team meeting we had the week before. Earlier in the week, one staff member expressed how overwhelmed they were and how it was enough info/discussion for a whole day's PD! She wanted more time to talk about examples for her class, etc. I took heaps of notes on what people said - see the attachment. I thought I would categorise the questions and comments into some themes and then we could explore each one and look at examples of what this might look like in the classroom. It's just like my PBL [Project Based Learning] approach I use in my classroom. Once students ask all of these questions you need to categorise them and turn them into something that is helpful. I also thought that like my

learning posters, if we display their questions and comments staff will be reminded that they are learning together. Following this discussion, I shared with staff how I taught subtraction with trading where the students were practising making decisions that can make their learning more effective ... Kids went off and had a go ... Then I invited students to a workshop where I taught the skill. Today I asked my workshop kids, 'What do you need me to help you with?' I'm sure they'll get the hang of making decisions like that! I also shared my planning of PBL (Project based learning) with the decision-making focus. I just wanted to show them that working on decision-making in the classroom is possible. Next week, we are supposed to have classroom walkthrough visits to look at student decision-making. I'm not sure they will be ready. (Lisa, DP, P2, OC)

The comments (above) again highlight the connections Leaders of Learning made between their leadership of learning within their classroom and their leadership of professional learning. Lisa draws on examples from her classroom practice to support the learning of the teachers within the professional learning forums and uses the teaching strategies she has developed with her students to enhance the learning of the teachers within the professional learning forums. (Table 7.5 captures the collection of teacher questions and comments in response to Lisa's focus on student decision-making.)

STAFF REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY LEARNING PD
• What is a contemporary teacher?
• We need to break this open/clarify what that means.
• I think it's more of this ... (blue circle – process of learning)
• Students being investigative.
• Kids problem solving/coming up with solutions and then checking with the teacher.
• What is the teacher's input in the learning process?
• Where is the explicit teaching?
• Is it through investigating/conferencing to the student needs? Would this be a good use of time?
• Is it peer teaching? Draw out the thinking from the whole group… students go back and try again?
• I have a reading on contemporary teaching- is it more of … What it isn't? eg,. kids sitting in rows listening to the teacher… It is about our beliefs on how students learn- our pedagogy…

• Where does Reading & Writing fit in- how does this work for a contemporary learner?
• This needs explicit teaching.
• It can be done with older kids- How do we approach this with younger ones---- they need explicit teaching… then perhaps discovery and explore learning.
• Handwriting- you can't explore that----- or number facts?
• It's about applying and use it in other contexts – interpret the learning.
• How does this work for phonemes?
• How does this work for slower children? - That's hard!
• … explained her take on the measurement project in 5/6.
• If students come to you - what they want help with … how do you manage that…. time wise?

Table 7.5: Collection of questions and responses from staff in a learning forum on student decision-making in learning

The following theme will explore the thinking of Leaders of Learning as they consider the role reflection has had on their leadership of learning.

2) ***Leaders of Learning consider the role reflection has had on their leadership of learning***

This theme will explore the thinking of Leaders of Learning as they consider the role reflection has had on the two aspects of leading learning: teaching practice; and, leading the professional learning of others. The comments (below) were written by Lisa, a Deputy Principal and classroom teacher, during phase two of the research.

> *Now that I know how to reflect I think about things that I didn't think*
> *about before. The biggest change for me is that I have learnt how to*
> *focus on the learner and learning. I am more aware of how their*
> *[student] actions and comments give me feedback on where they are*
> *as learners. I step back often and really listen to what my students are*
> *saying about learning. I think the way I use questioning has changed,*
> *I now empower my students more and encourage much deeper*
> *thinking. My practice looks different because I develop learning*
> *sequences to encourage students to be more independent and use*
> *learning tools which students use regularly to support their thinking.*
> *I have also changed the way I plan for learning. My planning is now*
> *ongoing rather than planning everything prior to introducing to my*
> *students. I'm more confident to use my observations and discussions*

with the students to help my planning. I think I have different criteria now for my teaching. Through my action plans I'm used to looking for evidence of success and I notice whether they have met my criteria for their tasks. I now have more challenging criteria and I offer teaching workshops so my students can meet my new expectations. At first they are a bit reluctant to join the workshops, but then they just do them as part of the learning sequence.

I am now so much more aware of getting my students to do the thinking. Especially in reading and writing I am really focused on what and how students are thinking, not just addressing the technical elements. I am definitely more creative. I am happy now when student work looks different and they have explored something in their own way. I don't feel constrained by the curriculum anymore. I used to worry that I wasn't covering all of the content, but now I focus on learning rather than just covering the curriculum. I take more risks in my teaching, if something doesn't work it's ok and I reflect on how I could do it differently next time. I now love change I am impatient to keep improving my teaching. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)

Definitely having a focus for changing learning in my classroom, this keeps refocusing me back. Feedback from the coaching sessions, parents, colleagues and of course the students keeps me on track. I know I am a different teacher and I'm doing something that is working. I have had to constantly challenge myself to be different it's not easy when other teachers are uncomfortable with what I am doing. Looking through blue circle or the learning lens has given me a very different perspective. This has helped me to learn about student empowerment and how important this is for students making their learning a success. (Lisa, DP, P2, OC)

The comments (above) highlight Lisa's awareness that by reflecting on her practice she is now more aware of different aspects of student learning as well as the impact her teaching is having on that learning. The comments also emphasise that reflection can lead to change in practice and the changes in practice are a response to improving identified aspects of student learning. Lisa draws attention to the role of her action learning plans in focusing on

identifying evidence that her teaching is making a difference to student learning. Lisa also shows an awareness of her own development and can articulate what is important to her as a teacher.

The comments (above) also highlight that reflection has been focused and supported through the coaching tools, conversations and the shared language of quality learning. Lisa identified how the blue circle lens has given her a very different perspective on the way she thinks about student learning and teaching. Lisa's reflections also contain language introduced through the action learning plan tool.

The comments (below) are another example of the impact of reflecting on practice. They were written by Karen, during phase two of the research.

> *My biggest learning is that I now take the time to develop and deepen my understanding of the learning process which has had an enormous impact on the way I think about teaching. In the past I was so focused on the teaching aspect of the "what" that often I just assumed that if I was teaching the students would be learning. Highlighting the fact that learning is a process and the importance of understanding thinking also stand out to me as areas that have helped me to develop learners who also understand this.*
>
> *The simple idea of introducing students to the language of learning and being open and clear about the purpose of the learning tasks presented has made a big difference in their ability to 'problem solve' and develop strategies for learning rather than just remembering the content. Knowing that they have resources at their disposal to use which include their prior knowledge and previous tasks has helped to develop their ownership of the learning and personalize it in a way that still achieves the focus but makes sense to them.*
>
> *The idea of reflection as an integral part of the process of learning and teaching has required me to think about my own understanding of reflection. In the past I had viewed it as an extra thing to be done, now it is worked into and through all aspects of the learning process and I can see the benefit in terms of improving the way we prepare and present learning tasks as well as the independence developed in students to think about how they are going with the learning. Once*

> *realized that without this element of reflection, it is difficult to take*
> *learning and teaching to deeper levels, I have begun to see it has the*
> *important link between the teaching and learning. Also - if we don't*
> *reflect on what is working we can't build on it and if we don't look at*
> *what is NOT working, we can't think of possible solutions to assist.*
> *(Karen, CT, P2, OC)*

The comments (above) again highlight the impact reflecting on practice has had on building understandings of what quality learning looks like. This has then led to new teacher expectations in relation to the role of the student and the role of the teacher.

Leaders of Learning also considered how reflecting on practice influenced their leadership of professional learning within their schools.

> *I think that by having to talk and write so much about my practice I*
> *am 'demystifying" the idea of reflective practice which I had heard*
> *about and read about. In seeing myself as a learner and asking and*
> *answering questions about learning, I realized that perhaps I was on*
> *my way to using reflective practice without even knowing it! Now I*
> *have to focus on developing this approach with my team.*
> *The biggest challenge initially was helping them see the importance of*
> *reflection in the learning and teaching process. When we began, our*
> *team was still very content focused and placed great importance on*
> *ticking the boxes of "things" that had to be taught. Looking back now,*
> *in relation to this model, we were ONLY viewing our role from a*
> *teaching aspect. We knew of course that students were learning things*
> *as we focused on the end product and they always showed good*
> *knowledge of content covered. The way this end product was reached*
> *was very teacher driven, prescribed and offered little scope for*
> *individuality from the learner.*
> *Once we began to deepen our own understanding of the learning*
> *process and view ourselves AS learners, we began to ask those*
> *reflective questions more intuitively. The content and knowledge was*
> *still viewed as necessary and important but the end product become*
> *less important than the journey to get there. We found that we were*

creating tasks which built on knowledge, deepened students'
understanding and moved into even deeper levels of thinking.
When we first introduced the idea of reflection into our classrooms it
was very foreign but it didn't take long for us to realize its importance
- simply giving students the time and some tools to think about their
learning opened our eyes to how important it is to INVOLVE students
in their learning in this way. It was challenging for students to think in
this way initially but with support and clear purpose for the reflection
to improve their learning, in time, the reflective aspect of learning
happens instinctively and we begin to look for those little clues which
reveal a great deal about how students are viewing themselves as
learners and the strategies they have. The simple act of asking a
clarifying question or checking a previous task was cause for
celebration in the initial stages of our journey as we realized the
students ARE thinking and reflecting for themselves!
Of course, some students still require the support of prompts, charts
or individual strategies to help them but we have seen that with this
support, students have great insight into factors affecting their
learning. We have found that the questions we ask and the tools we
use must relate to the focus for the reflection to be valuable and of
course, there should be some action from this reflection in future
tasks. (Karen, CT, P2, WR)
I know how much reflecting on my teaching, and learning about
learning has meant to me. I reflect all of the time on just about
everything. Now when I'm leading a learning meeting I only share
when I need to. My gut feeling is to hold back and then use examples
from my action plans as teaching points. I think then I can model
being a learner and show them how I reflect. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)

The comments (above) highlight that Leaders of Learning are aware of the process of
reflecting on their leadership of learning. These Leaders of Learning deliberately engage in
reflection to shape their role within the learning meetings and influence the direction of the
conversations with their own classroom experiences and ideas about learning. The actions of
these Leaders of Learning are deliberate as they consider the impact they want to have on the

learning of other teachers. The comments (above) also capture how Karen specifically engages in reflection within the learning forums to highlight the impact reflecting on practice can have on thinking and talking about practice. As Karen thinks about reflection she considers what this means for her students and the impact reflection has on their learning. Karen then considers the learning of her colleagues in the same way. Karen's reflections constantly move between student and teacher learning as she makes sense of the connections between them.

This theme looked at how reflection impacts on the leadership of Leaders of Learning. The final theme in this chapter will explore how Leaders of Learning focus on building reflective practice within their schools.

3) *Leaders of Learning build reflection within their schools*

This theme examines the ways in which Leaders of Learning promote reflection across their schools. As Leaders of Learning realised the benefits of reflecting on different aspects of their own practice and their leadership of learning, they created opportunities for their colleagues to reflect on the learning and teaching that was happening within their classrooms. As Leaders of Learning share their work in promoting reflection within their schools, they also articulate their own deeper understandings of the relationship between learning and teaching. Table 7.6 shows an example of how Lisa, a Deputy Principal and classroom teacher, incorporated reflection into the professional learning approach at her school.

The prompts and key questions included in Table 7.6 encourage teachers to make the connection between professional learning and classroom practice. Lisa intentionally asks teachers to consider how their learning is influencing the way they think about their teaching. These prompts deliberately build the reflective process. She begins with current understandings of decision making then encourages teachers to use these understandings to articulate what their practice looks like. Lisa then asks teachers to reflect on how their practice has changed as a result of engaging in professional learning that is focused on student decision making. The last question encourages teachers to think about what is possible in student decision-making to identify potential success indicators. The comment (below) is a written reflection from Lisa about the way she uses prompts, particularly key questions, to promote reflection within the learning forums.

ACTION LEARNING REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS
DEBRIEF PROTOCOL
Name 5 successes you have had in DECISION MAKING.
DECISION MAKING IS CRITICAL FOR CONTEMPORARY LEARNING. WE ARE EXPLORING HOW IT IS IMPACTING ON OUR CLASSROOM PRACTICE.
IS IT MAKING A DIFFERENCE?
What understandings do you have that drive the way you build decision making in the classroom?
List the types of decisions that you encourage your students to make in the classroom.
Since starting our Professional Learning focus on Decision Making, what changes have you made in your practice?
How will you know your students are becoming more effective decision makers in their learning?

Table 7.6: A list of prompts and key questions to encourage teachers to reflect on different aspects of their practice and professional learning opportunities.

> *To support other teachers to reflect I now give them questions to think*
> *about at our learning forums. I need them to see that the work we do*
> *in our learning forums or in their professional learning should change*
> *their practice. Usually you just do the PD and you never really know*
> *if it has made any change. I want reflecting on their learning to drive*
> *the next part of the professional learning so teachers can decide the*
> *direction. Then I know we will have really made the shift from PLTs to*
> *Learning Forums. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)*

The comments (above) highlight the importance Lisa places on the building of reflection as part of their professional learning approach. The comments also illustrate how Lisa has constructed reflective questions with the intention of supporting her teachers to see the connection between professional learning and changing teaching practice.

Table 7.7 highlights how Lisa introduced Learning Journals into the Learning Forums to support reflection even more.

USING LEARNING JOURNALS

- Include the Action Learning Project Planner/Proforma- discussed and filled in at LEARNING FORUMS [paste this in each time it changes]

- Mix up the way of approaching this each time:

  - reflection at the start (oral or written) on teaching or students

  - Share with a partner

  - Share something you're proud of

  - Share a 'change in practice'

  - SHOW PHOTOS

  - Show work samples or anecdotal notes

  - Make some notes on a challenge/change

  - Make some notes on a student (group) to focus on

  - Discuss the PROFESSIONAL READING issued the week before

[note any KEY ACTIONS that can come from this reading – document in your journal]

Table 7.7: List of ideas to develop Learning Journals as part of the professional learning approach.

The comments (below) capture Lisa's thinking around the use of learning journals within the Learning Forums.

> *My idea behind the learning journal is to get teachers to think about how they can show they are changing their practice and their students are changing their learning. I really want them to think about their learning while they are teaching and then share that learning at the learning forums. The learning journals are for reflection. I want them to keep a record of their reflections and evidence of their learning. The new action learning plan [Figure 7.1] I developed has sections that specifically ask teachers to reflect or encourage the students to reflect. (Lisa, DP, P2, WR)*

Table 7.8 highlights how Lisa has developed an action learning plan that asks teachers to reflect on practice, in different ways. Incorporated within the plan are key questions that

encourage teachers to think about student learning and teaching beyond existing practice. The intention of the action learning plan is to assist teachers to explore new practice and observe the impact this has on learning. Student reflections and concrete artefacts support teachers to look for changes in the way students approach their learning. Overall the plan promotes a reflective process that helps teachers to think about the relationship between learning and teaching and reminds them to explore and build new practice.

ACTION LEARNING PROJECTS

FOCUS STATEMENT: Learners can:	
THE WHY? (What will this mean for the students if they are successful? How will it change their thinking about learning? Why do we want this skill/statement?)	TEACHER (How will I develop this through my teaching?)
REFLECTION FROM THE STUDENTS (What did they think?)	REFLECTION FROM THE TEACHER (What happened?)
EVIDENCE OF CHANGE: (Thinking, behaviour, skills) (Photos, work samples, reflections, anecdotal comments) RECORDED IN A LEARNING JOURNAL	WHAT NEXT? (What is the next step in my ACTION LEARNING PROJECT?)

Table 7.8: Action learning template created to support the building of reflection through professional learning forums.

Leaders of Learning used different prompts to promote reflection within their professional learning approaches. Figure 7.1 is a coaching tool used to encourage thinking about learning and teaching separately as well as in partnership with each other. In this instance, the tool focused on exploring ideas about reflection. The questions within the model support teachers to reflect on their current practice as well as consider new possibilities. Karen, a classroom teacher, used the model to promote reflection with her team. The comments (following figure 7.1) were collected during phase two of the research and highlight Karen's thinking.
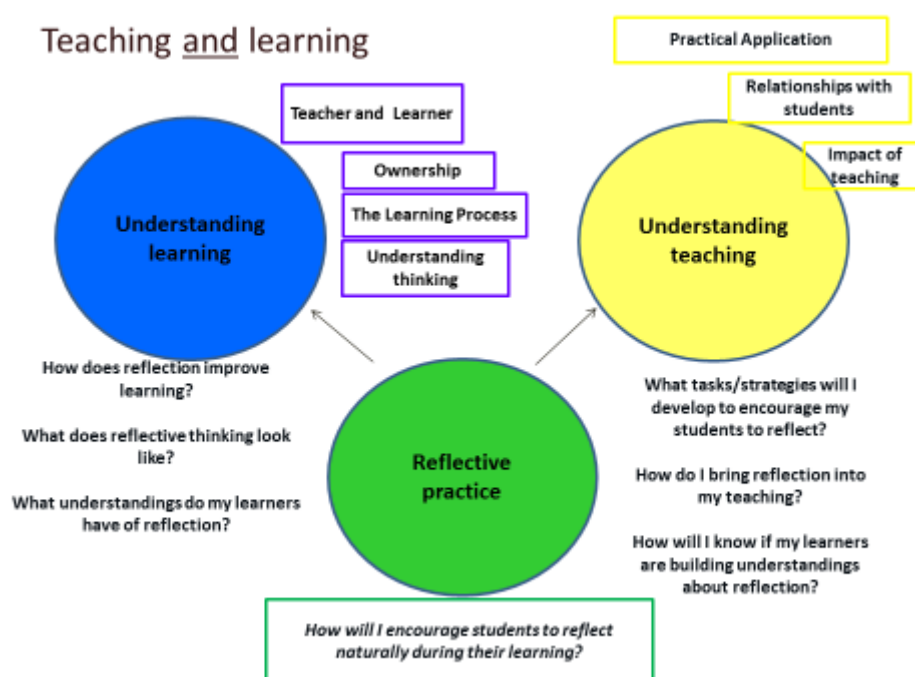
Figure 7. 1: Coaching tool used to support conversations during professional learning meetings.

> *We have found that as we continue this journey we are becoming less aware of the fact that we are asking deep questions and thinking deeply about our learning and teaching. We are finding that as we go further with this and the students have more scope to personalize their learning, they are more engaged and excited about their learning and want to talk about it- this was often difficult in grade 5/6 in the past. As we are continuing to become more comfortable with this, we are finding that personalized learning is beginning to occur through 'natural causes'. If we begin with a clear focus of content, skills and learning and thinking required for a task, we can 'target' our teaching*

to explicitly teach particular skills, students and content. From there, students are armed with the tools they need to go ahead at their own pace supported by each other and us. With the help of our 1:1 technology, students have access to all aspects of a task at any time and this is invaluable - we can re direct them to the focus, they can check earlier parts of the task and they have a clear picture of where they are going. Reflection now occurs more naturally and in various ways - discussions, charts, thinking tools, journals... and at various times during the task.

Our future sees us continuing to develop our own skills to continue supporting the students to become independent and self-monitoring learners. This involves personal reflection on where we need to target our own learning. This may be in developing questioning, assessment opportunities and deepening our understanding of learning and teaching even further.

I think this model [Figure 7.1] gives us the confidence to try new things because it encourages us to ask questions continuously. The green circle is where we want to be and I think we are in there more of the time now. Gone are the days of pulling out the task from two years ago and presenting as is - we still make use of these past learnings but with more reflective 'lenses', blue now as well as yellow. Was that the right task for that focus? Did that task deepen the learning? How can we alter the task to meet the needs of this group of students?

We are becoming more open to flexible groupings for the purpose of deepening learning and the model helps us to always ask those reflective questions of ourselves and to think about how we encourage our students to reflect and then check that this is the right grouping for the focus we have.

Our journey to continue to develop learners as thinkers who self-monitor for their own learning is supported by this model as we view ourselves as the learners and continue to deepen our own understanding of learning and teaching through ongoing reflection. (Karen, CT, P2, WR)

The comments (above) highlight the way Karen encourages teachers to reflect on both learning and teaching. The comments show that Karen understands that reflective practice requires moving between the learning lens and the teaching lens and making sense of these connections. Karen's focus on building reflection into professional learning opportunities has encouraged her to continue to make sense of what reflection means.

Chapter Overview

This chapter has illustrated that as Leaders of Learning developed a more reflective approach to their own practice, they then explored ways to encourage other teachers to do the same. As the chapter makes clear, a number of themes emerged that make evident a process to build the capacity of Leaders of Learning to engage in reflective practice, these included:

- Leaders of Learning develop a reflective approach to their leadership of learning.

- Leaders of Learning consider the role reflection has had on their leadership of learning.

- Leaders of Learning promote reflection within their school.

The data shows that Leaders of Learning need to experience reflection, adopt a reflective approach to their own work and build understandings of what effective reflection involves, before they can promote the same approach across their schools.

The following chapter will explore a process of development of Leaders of Learning as their capacity to lead the building of quality learning in their schools is realised.

Chapter 8

Building the capacity of leaders to build quality learning

Introduction

This chapter discusses the insights gained from the data. It brings together and considers the individual themes as a whole, and reflects on the notion of building effective Leaders of Learning from pedagogical and change perspectives - as their capacity to lead learning and teaching in their schools is realised. The chapter is organised around an elaboration of a process of change as explicated through the data into four distinct phases. The phases illustrate a clear process of development that shows how the leaders realised, and then reacted, to what was really happening in their schools. In discussing these phases, the student and then teacher learning perspectives are offered as a way of illustrating how the circumstances and their thinking influenced their understandings of quality learning, pedagogy and leadership.

Discussion

It could well be argued that the nature of ongoing school improvement requires leaders to have the knowledge to continually create a level of difference that challenges existing mindsets, promotes the exploration of current practice and leads to sustainable change. Successful change leadership then requires quality student learning to be a serious focus with a concern for how decisions impact the learners involved.

Over time, the leaders involved in the research reported in this thesis developed understandings about how to lead change from within their contexts. These Leaders of Learning gradually moved from a more common approach to the change process (adopting strategies created by external sources), to establishing a more personalised and thoughtful approach derived of their own learning in their own context. Engagement in strategic professional learning opportunities exposed these Leaders of Learning to new perspectives on learning that significantly changed the way they thought about student and teacher learning, their practice and their leadership. These leaders focused first on understanding quality learning before they could establish an approach to building such learning across their schools.
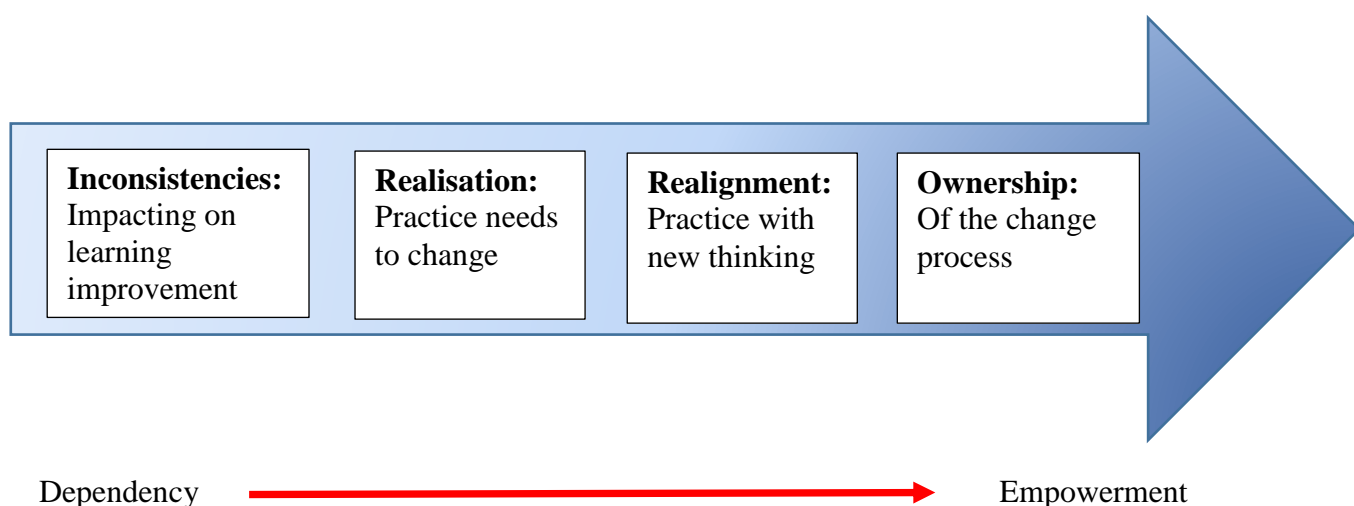
The following discussion explores the changing understandings that the Leaders of Learning developed about their work. As they built their knowledge of effective learning, it changed the way they thought about their practice, as well as how they led professional learning in their schools. The 'active learning lens' was particularly powerful for examining and exploring their teaching, as well as building their awareness and understandings of pedagogy and of their particular pedagogical approach. These leaders were supported to make sense of the complex nature of pedagogy by making transparent the many facets of learning and teaching, and the leadership of those practices, in their schools. Leaders became empowered to own, shape and communicate their pedagogical knowledge – a key aspect of their learning to lead.

Exploring effective learning provided an ongoing focus for the work of Leaders of Learning and prompted them to address the tensions and challenges associated with pursuing ongoing school improvement. A number of frames were used to support leaders to consider the notion of quality learning and although various terms were introduced and used interchangeably, e.g., deep learning, good learning behaviours, effective learning, empowerment, active and passive learning. It was 'active learning' which became the term deliberately chosen to summarise the type of conversations developed to support leaders to identify the characteristics of quality learning. Leaders were encouraged to communicate how their thinking about learning had changed over time and then share how this influenced the way they thought about their practice.

Initially, opportunities for reflection were a strategic component of the professional learning of leaders and gradually they developed the skills and understandings to build a reflective approach to their work. The focus for their reflection was determined by the challenges they faced individually and what became important to them throughout that process.

Although the thinking of these leaders was in many ways unique to their personal experiences, current approach and context, when reviewing their learnings together (i.e., synthesis of the previous chapters) four common themes emerged. Each theme accounts for a distinct phase within the development of these leaders as they built their capacity to lead learning in their schools. Together, the phases describe their journey as leaders, as they came to understand the complexities involved in building active learning in their schools. The phases illustrate how leaders developed the knowledge and skills to lead change in their own way as represented in Figure 8.1 below. Leaders developed the confidence to shift from a 'dependency mindset' where change was shaped largely by the thinking of others and a

reliance on implementing strategies considered 'popular' at any particular time, to an 'empowerment mindset'. Empowered Leaders of Learning had the confidence to react to the challenges to learning in their personal contexts and explored and refined practice to improve learning for both students and teachers.

| Inconsistencies: Impacting on learning improvement | Realisation: Practice needs to change | Realignment: Practice with new thinking | Ownership: Of the change process |

Dependency → Empowerment

Figure 8.1: The four phases of change Leaders of Learning experienced

Initially, Leaders of Learning were able to articulate their goals around the improvement of student learning and had developed a whole school improvement plan reflecting these goals. Within these proposals, leaders had identified particular strategies to address their concerns about learning. These were already in place at the commencement of the research and such action showed they had the understanding that change requires setting goals and implementing strategies that are different to those already in place. What was not evident in their improvement process was the inclusion of an ongoing evaluation process or strategies to understand and address the culture of the school and the impact of such culture on learning and teaching. These Leaders of Learning developed an understanding that a quality improvement plan needs to challenge current practice and create strategies that will influence the way teachers talk and think about learning and teaching within their context, while also addressing the underlying tensions that influence the way they work. A deeper understanding of quality learning prompted leaders to reconsider how learning was represented within their school improvement process.

As was evident in the data in the previous chapters, change is associated with the building of leadership and teaching practice that promotes active student and teacher learning. The terms active and passive were used consistently to describe effective and ineffective learning. These
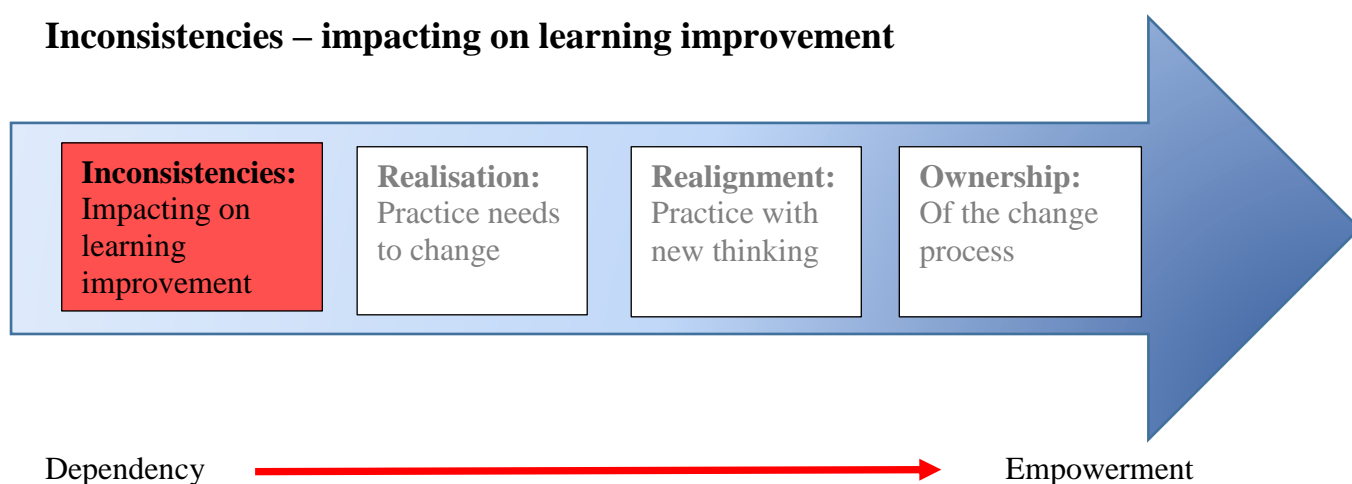
labels together, provided a point of comparison to support Leaders of Learning to make sense of their observations of learning and communicate their findings. Understanding active and passive learning supported them in evaluating their improvement processes, in particular the professional learning conversations within their schools. Each phase (see Figure 8.1 above) highlights the significant insights these leaders developed about learning and the implications of this knowledge for their role in building both student and teacher learning.

The phases described in Figure 8.1 became evident after reflecting on the development of Leaders of Learning. Each phase was characterised by the concerns and ideas raised in conversations with leaders at that time. As a consequence, Figure 8.1 offers one way to explain how leaders came to understand their contexts at different stages of their experience and then how they used that knowledge to influence their work. As leaders grappled with a new idea, they moved through the phases in a linear manner, however when they were challenged in multiple ways, it was possible that at any one time they were engaging in themes associated with different phases.

Leaders of Learning experienced a shift in the way they thought about student learning before they considered teacher learning. Student learning provided a context in which to make greater sense of active and passive learning as well as coming to a richer understanding of the challenges associated with current professional learning practices. Understanding the limitations of existing approaches to student and teacher learning was important for challenging leaders to explore new directions.

In the remainder of this chapter, each phase is explored separately, and within each phase there will be a discussion of the thinking and actions of Leaders of Learning as they built deeper understandings of student and teacher learning in their contexts.

Inconsistencies – impacting on learning improvement

| **Inconsistencies:** Impacting on learning improvement | **Realisation:** Practice needs to change | **Realignment:** Practice with new thinking | **Ownership:** Of the change process |

Dependency → Empowerment

Professional learning tends to be understood as being what is experienced at the various international, national, state-wide, regional and district gatherings of teachers where a professional learning program is delivered by experts in curriculum, pedagogy, child development and other matters of high concern to school leaders and teachers. (Cole, 2012, p.3)

This first phase (i.e., inconsistencies) emphasises how Leaders of Learning were not consciously aware of the many factors and challenges involved in improving student learning. Leaders lacked the understandings of what a context conducive to effective learning would look like, or the pedagogy required to make this a reality. Largely influenced by the knowledge and practices of experts, leaders were relying on implementing ideas without a rich understanding.

Leaders of Learning had not created opportunities to help them make sense of the nature of learning. This phase highlights what happened when leaders were exposed to the challenges created as a result of the inconsistencies between desired learning and current teaching practice.

This phase also captures the way Leaders of Learning explored their contexts and exposed their inconsistencies and how, in so doing, this influenced the way they thought about their role as a teacher and leader. Leaders focused on understanding their school cultures by uncovering current thinking about learning and teaching and realising how their school improvement processes were inadequate for changing existing pedagogy. The exploration of their contexts exposed challenges that leaders had not previously considered and they began to question their current approach to their leadership of learning. In exploring the way learning was approached in their schools it raised three major concerns:

1. Learning was not well understood by leaders and teachers.
2. Teaching was the main focus for teacher planning.
3. The relationship between learning and teaching was not made explicit.

Surface understandings of learning can be described as the acquisition of knowledge and facts and is often referred to as the curriculum content. It has been well noted that an emphasis in learning content influences the way teachers teach (Case, 2008; Masters, 2015). Leaders of Learning realised that their personal approach to their work reflected this thinking and were challenged to describe learning beyond this view as shown in chapter 5. Leaders struggled to find the language to talk about learning without including their teaching. They

had previously been exposed to ideas around contemporary or twenty-first century learning and when prompted, could convey the associated rhetoric in relation to the actions of active learners, however, this did not necessarily mean that they could describe how this played out in their practice. After exploring the way learning was approached in their contexts, leaders realised that the situation was well established across their schools. They came to recognize that the current professional learning conversations consistently reinforced this thinking by neglecting to explore the characteristics of effective learning as part of their approach as illustrated in chapter 4.

Talking about learning was not a feature of the regular dialogue of Leaders of Learning and ideas about quality learning were not developed through their conversations. Learning was simply assumed and thought to just happen as a natural consequence of the teaching that was taking place. Identifying classroom goals for learning largely focused on checking off the student outcomes found in the curriculum. The way learning and teaching was used as a singular term, applied more to describing teaching strategies and student tasks. Existing expectations of how teachers and leaders work meant that this approach was continually being reinforced. As a result, leaders did not overtly deepen their understandings of learning.

Leaders of Learning had not previously thought about how learning was approached in their schools and had not considered how current views of learning were impacting on practice. Although improving learning was a shared goal for these leaders, building a collective vision of what it looked like was not part of their existing strategy. Initially, leaders were exposed to a range of terms to describe the quality of learning. For the purposes of this research a consistent language was necessary to describe the nature of the conversations with leaders and between leaders. The term 'active learning' became the collective term used to describe the new language Leaders of Learning were using to describe quality and desired learning which was necessary in supporting these new conversations. At the same time, they were also introduced to the notion of passive learning, which provided a comparison to a more active approach. Understanding the difference between active and passive learning was a critical step to better understand current expectations of learners and consider new approaches to teaching. These terms were interchangeable with varying terms which provided an opposing view. These included: surface and deep learning; dependency to empowerment; effective and ineffective learning; as well as, good and poor learning. Providing comparative views of learning exposed the differences in the expectations and roles of the learners and of the teachers (Harris, Spina, Ehrich & Smeed, 2013; O'Neill & McMahon, 2005). Leaders were

encouraged to capture their ideas of active learning in personal ways and create a language that would be meaningful in their contexts. Leaders of Learning were supported to explore the relationship between learning and teaching as they used active learning as a prompt to think about their teaching.

With new insights into active learning, leaders were in a better position to understand the inconsistencies between goals for learning and existing practice. There was no clear vision guiding learning and teaching and leaders recognised they had an 'ad-hoc' approach to change. This challenged the way they thought about their leadership in relation to both student learning and professional learning and prompted them to better understand how they could address their concerns.

Understanding student learning

Leaders of Learning realised that a strong emphasis on 'teaching the curriculum', in a limited time frame, placed constant pressure on teachers and reinforced a didactic approach as a common practice, as illustrated in chapter 5. In the past, this teacher-centred approach has been, and for many still is, a preferred view of teaching – such a view situates teachers as the source of knowledge, telling students what they need to know. As a consequence, students are seen as the recipients of teachers' knowledge and a greater emphasis is placed on listening, memorising and practising skills in contrast to how students make sense of ideas and build deeper understandings of how to use these ideas in new ways. Although some students learn as a result of this lecture-style teaching approach, success is determined by the personal response of the students and their awareness of how to learn effectively and the ability of the teacher to extend the learning experience to include deeper levels of thinking and problem-solving (Hattie, 2009). How teachers inform and prompt this response increases the likelihood of student success. Understanding the role of the student is just as important as understanding the role of the teacher. If teaching approaches, no matter how they are packaged, promote passive learning then learners are more likely to become dependent on their teachers and less likely to make decisions that affect their learning in positive ways.

With support, Leaders of Learning came to articulate examples of the characteristics of active learners. Although they had understandings of what these characteristics looked like as student actions, they found the idea of establishing a definition of learning more challenging. Important features of active learning, such as monitoring and managing the learning process, understanding and utilising the social and collaborative nature of school learning contexts and

knowing and displaying the actions of effective learners, were easier to list as attributes of active learners. It appeared to be more difficult to define active learning or to consider how to build these actions in the classroom (as illustrated in chapter 4.) When leaders talked about teaching, they usually shared known teaching strategies or the tasks they developed to support their students to learn the curriculum content. Imposed teaching strategies were usually implemented following a step by step process that focused on the actions required of the teacher. Understanding the expectations of learners such as how students need to think while they engage, was not a usual focus. The familiar teaching routines and actions of leaders influenced the outcome of these new strategies and these rarely became established practice, as illustrated in chapters 5 & 7.

Leaders of Learning were encouraged to engage in regular observations of their students to identify passive and active learning actions. They noticed that their students regularly displayed more passive learning actions than active, examples included students: not asking effective questions; not being able to articulate what they were learning; staying stuck on particular parts of a task; and, needing to be prompted to use or attend to particular skills and strategies. Leaders also observed examples of active learning actions which included their students: making connections to past work; staying on task; discussing the task with peers; and, identifying resources they needed to use (as evidenced in chapter 7).

Building a picture of learning helped leaders to realise that, like their teaching, student actions were mostly expected patterns of behaviour displayed in response to teaching actions. Such actions were not necessarily deliberate, as students had limited understandings of how to approach their learning effectively. Leaders discovered that their students found talking about learning challenging and were not used to engaging in conversations about how they approached their learning.

Leaders realised that the active learning actions that were evident in their classrooms were not necessarily intentional actions and were not taught explicitly to their students. An example of this was the way leaders approached reflection. They focused mainly on students recalling knowledge or skills or reflecting on the tasks they had completed. Reflection was seen as a way of looking back on what students had done and was regularly placed at the end of the lesson. Leaders of Learning realised that their students did not have a language to support them to talk and think about learning beyond the current focus, as illustrated in chapter 5.

In this phase, Leaders of Learning could identify the reasons that appeared to prevent a more strategic approach to learning and teaching. They came to recognize that existing approaches to their practice assumed that learning would just happen. Leaders realised that across their schools an 'ad-hoc' approach to learning and teaching created inconsistencies in the understandings of leaders and teachers in relation to learning and teaching and their approach to planning. Leaders considered their approach to teacher learning in light of their understandings of these inconsistencies and their developing knowledge of active student learning.

Understanding teacher learning

Leaders of Learning identified the same concerns in relation to teacher learning that they had discovered with student learning. Like their approach to student learning, leaders had not considered how teachers could engage in the professional learning opportunities available to them. Existing understandings of learning meant that leaders and teachers did not have a rich understanding of what an effective approach to professional learning could look like. Leaders of Learning were relying on a professional development (PD) approach where pre-determined ideas and practices of 'experts' were 'done to' teachers. (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Mockler, 2005) Leaders usually assumed the responsibility for developing the agendas for the teacher learning forums, which maintained a strong focus on subject area content. Leaders and teachers appeared to simply accept this approach as part of their normal routine, and became compliant learners in the process, as evidenced in chapter 6.

To support their improvement agendas, Leaders of Learning relied on accepted research-based teaching or professional development strategies (typically viewed by teachers as being developed by experts, hence not directly involved in their contexts). Best practice usually refers to evidence based strategies that have been developed by others and then communicated to the teaching profession to improve learning and teaching. These strategies could be the best in the world at improving student learning, however unless the leaders or teachers implementing them understand the philosophy that underpins them, they could be only building knowledge of the teaching approach and not how these influence student learning. An emphasis on the technical elements of teaching approaches can result in teachers seeing new procedures as a series of steps to follow and not an approach to building effective learning. Simply having knowledge of teaching strategies does not guarantee knowledge of effective learning, so adopting what others conceive as 'best practice' may not change the way students learn.

Designing practice that builds the capacity of students to be effective learners, while addressing curriculum content, became the focus for leaders. Their professional learning was an opportunity to build their knowledge through exploring their classrooms and reflecting on their understandings of learning and considering the implications for teaching in light of these new understandings. Leaders of Learning realised that the professional learning opportunities they had put in place relied on implementing what others considered 'best practice'. Leaders did not have the understandings to ensure their approach challenged current thinking or established shared understandings of active learning or effective teaching. An example of this was the way leaders adopted a professional learning team (PLT – see Appendix 4) approach as a key strategy to support teacher learning, as illustrated in chapter 6.

PLTs were introduced as a teacher meeting and although they were called professional learning team meetings, there was usually no 'team' component to them. Professional development opportunities were a major component of these meetings, usually facilitated by the leaders themselves or external experts, refer to chapter 6. PLTs were planned on a term by term basis and identified a weekly, subject related focus. They usually ran separately to other meetings or professional development opportunities and the conversations were confined to the meeting time. Leaders implemented the strategy without identifying shared goals or establishing a culture of teamwork.

Professional learning was not always the motivation for these meetings with administrative agendas regularly claiming large amounts of time. Introducing new teaching ideas was usually seen by teachers as an 'add on' to current practice and not a refinement or replacement of an existing approach. Leaders came to realise that they were promoting a passive approach to teacher learning that mirrored their approach to student learning. Teachers were not expected to explore and build a personalised approach to practice in response to the challenges facing student learning.
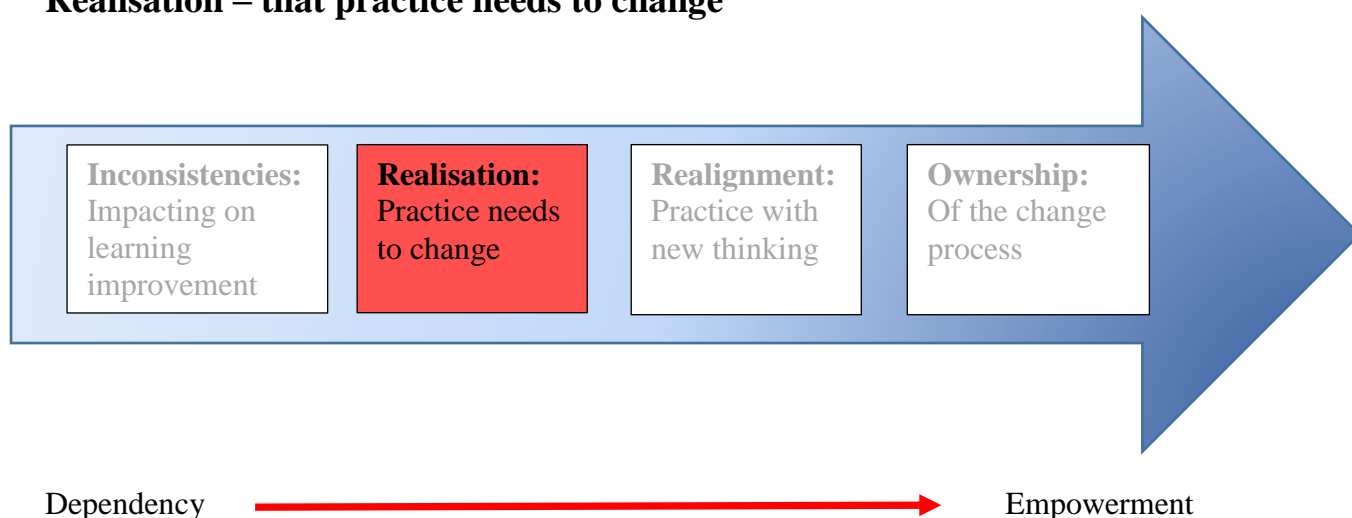
This phase supported leaders to realise that the inconsistency between the idea of active learning and the approaches to teaching was largely due to leaders and teachers not actively seeking to understand learning and teaching beyond accepted or existing views. In this phase, Leaders of Learning started to make the connection between building active student learning and building active teacher learning. They began to use the term 'learners' to describe both; once they realised the influences on learning were common to each group, illustrated in chapter 6.

Section overview

This phase (i.e., Inconsistencies) exposed some realities to Leaders of Learning that made them more aware of the complex nature of ongoing improvement in learning. Exploring these inconsistencies supported leaders to recognise their limited understandings of quality learning and the many influences on learning. Leaders were now in a better position to consider what changes were needed in order to build active learning in their classroom and across their schools.

The next phase explores how leaders began to consider what their teaching and leadership practice could look like to improve both student and teacher learning.

Realisation – that practice needs to change

Inconsistencies: Impacting on learning improvement	**Realisation:** Practice needs to change	**Realignment:** Practice with new thinking	**Ownership:** Of the change process

Dependency ⟶ Empowerment

In this phase (i.e., Realisation), leaders began to consider what an alternative approach might look like and a shift in thinking was evident when they began to take responsibility for shaping their work. This shift in responsibility was important and was characterised by leaders developing an awareness that their pedagogy was influenced by their understandings of active learning. The idea that they needed to create their own unique practice, in response to their students and to their understandings of effective learning, started to take hold during this phase.

The first phase of the development of Leaders of Learning provided leaders with new ways of thinking about learning and teaching and the importance of building understandings of the relationship that exists between them. Building on the first phase, not just starting something new during the second phase, was evident in the way the leaders began to identify how they could change their practice to reflect these new understandings. Leaders began to see their

leadership of learning in two parts: leading student learning through their own teaching practice; and, leading teacher learning.

During this phase Leaders were supported to explore their practice in relation to their classroom and their leadership of professional learning. Leaders were encouraged to 'play with ideas' to promote active learning and then reflect on the reactions of their students. Teaching strategies different to those that they currently used prompted different behaviours from their learners. Their approach was not necessarily strategic and evolved over time as leaders considered what their discoveries meant for learning and teaching. They also realised that they were experiencing a new approach to their professional learning and were encouraged to reflect on both student learning and their own professional learning.

Re-thinking student learning

Leaders developed personalised action learning plans to document their process which involved identifying a focus to explore active learning, developing new teaching strategies to build their focus and collecting evidence to capture the reactions of their students, as shown in chapter 5. At first, they found this challenging. Leaders did not necessarily have teaching strategies that would build their area of focus, so were encouraged to start with a conversation with their students to find out their understandings and then build from there. Leaders realised that this would involve new ways of working with their students and would need to change the expectations in their classrooms. They were shown examples of student tasks that reflected active learning to prompt them to think about possible strategies to build their focus. Initially they simply implemented these ideas and used the teaching scripts provided to them at the time. This involved questions, statements about learning and the process students could work through. This became a starting point from which they gradually built onto these initial tasks to establish their own teaching strategies related to their focus.

Leaders engaged in regular learning conversations with their students and over time they established a language to help them to talk and think about active learning. Leaders took the time to observe their students at work and document changes in the way they talked about their learning. Leaders paid greater attention to the actions and comments of students as they engaged in new learning opportunities. This helped them to frame active learning actions in short, concise statements which at first, they found particularly challenging. Describing active learning in this way was new to Leaders of Learning and was an important step in making their learning agendas more transparent (see chapter 4).

This phase was 'messy' as leaders played around with their new ideas, refining their approach and reflecting on their effectiveness. Leaders realised that these active learning statements significantly influenced the way they thought about their teaching, both the product and process of learning were now made explicit through their teaching. During this process, leaders realised that students needed to be taught how to learn effectively in a classroom context and that their teaching influenced the way they understood and approached their learning.

Throughout the process leaders were supported to frame their thinking and share their insights into effective learning and teaching. This provided leaders with the opportunity to consolidate what they had learnt and set goals around a new or refined focus. This process evolved as each focus merged into the next and leaders began looking at multiple ways to build active learning. During this phase, leaders initiated greater online communication to support their thinking. They began to 'pull apart' all aspects of their practice as they focused on building quality learning. A more complex and focused language developed that was evident in their reflections and conversations as illustrated in chapter 7.

Leaders collected evidence that reflected a change in their students' learning. They used artefacts and stories to communicate how their students had changed and what were now important considerations in their teaching (refer to chapter 5 & 7). The process of establishing a rich learning focus and then planning the teaching, became a more natural course of action, drawing attention to the relationship between learning and teaching. Leader conversations deliberately emphasised this relationship and mediated their existing teaching patterns, encouraging them to reflect on how their thinking had changed. Importantly, throughout this phase, there was no expectation for the leaders to share with other teachers in their school. They were purposely given the time and space to learn and become more comfortable with their new thinking.

Re-thinking teacher learning

Using their classrooms as contexts to engage in ongoing professional learning changed the way leaders thought about what professional learning could look like. These experiences supported Leaders of Learning to consider the second part of their leadership. They realised that their professional learning approach needed to promote active learning in their conversations with other teachers and in the ways they expected their teachers to work. Leaders now considered their teachers as learners and realised they needed to create

opportunities for them to experience active learning for themselves and build understandings of what active learning could look like for their students.

Leaders realised that their current PLT approaches would need to make the connection between effective teacher learning and building effective practice; professional learning needed to largely happen within the classrooms of teachers. This meant that professional learning conversations could extend beyond PLT meeting times to become part of the day to day dialogue of teachers and leaders (Smith, 2017). Leaders of Learning recognised important features of their own professional learning approach that would support the learning of their teachers. These included: using individual teacher action plans; creating a vision of active learning; engaging in focused conversations about rich learning tasks and effective teaching strategies; and, participating in regular opportunities to reflect, as illustrated in chapter 6.

Leaders realised they needed to lead professional learning conversations to explore the difference between passive and active learning and establish a shared language to support their teachers to talk and think about active learning. Leaders of Learning recognised that their personal understandings of active learning would not necessarily be shared by others, building a collective vision of active learning would support the conversations and the individual teacher action learning plans.

Central to this phase was the fact that leaders now had personal experiences and practical examples from their own classroom experiences to draw on to support their conversations with their teachers. For their teachers to be active learners they recognized the need to use their own artefacts and stories to illustrate ideas of active learning (refer to chapter 7). Leaders therefore needed to create a culture of sharing and to encourage personalising of practice to support teachers to challenge existing thinking and design innovative teaching strategies to promote active learning.
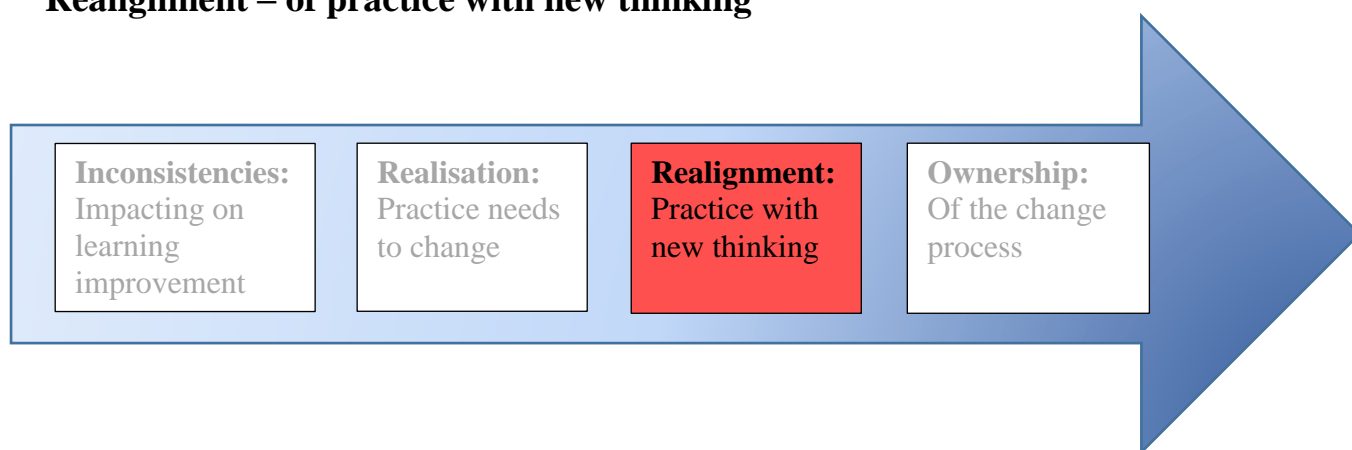
Section overview

This phase (i.e., Realisation) reflected a change in the way leaders approached their practice in their classrooms to explore ideas of active learning. Re-thinking their approach to student learning and their teaching came as a response to the reactions of students and the focus of their coaching conversations. In this phase, there was a greater practical element that influenced their thinking about student learning than was evident in re-thinking teacher learning. Leaders needed to learn about learning before they could lead others through the

process. During this phase their attempts were not strategic and well planned, they were reactionary and evolved as they paid attention to their students' responses and explored their wonderings and concerns.

The next phase describes how leaders realigned their practice to reflect their new thinking.

Realignment – of practice with new thinking

| Inconsistencies: Impacting on learning improvement | Realisation: Practice needs to change | Realignment: Practice with new thinking | Ownership: Of the change process |

Dependency ————————————————————→ Empowerment

The third phase (i.e., Realignment) is marked by Leaders of Learning beginning to see how their thinking about learning was reflected in their practice. They had explored new ideas during the second phase and were ready to realign their practice in response to their developing understandings of active learning. Their actions were more strategic as they transformed their teaching and their school's approach to professional learning. They followed a process to create a shared vision of active learning to guide their work across their schools.

In the form of learning themes and learning frameworks, leaders established a common language to support a *whole school approach* to building active learning. The learning themes became the title of their stories as they supported their schools to shift the focus for ongoing improvement to building a personalised approach to active learning (see chapters 4 & 6)

The learning frameworks provided starting points to support conversations and guide teacher practice. The Leaders of Learning continued to adopt an action learning approach to explore their practice, following the previously established process. They were encouraged to manage their own learning and initiate conversations about their work.

The leaders framed and documented their changed practice during this process and collected examples of student and teacher work (evidence) to show change in the way they approached learning. Leaders of Learning captured how they had transformed their thinking and how it

was influencing their work in new ways. In the form of visual artefacts and classroom vignettes, they demonstrated how they had altered their teaching in practical ways and what that meant for improving student learning.

Improving student learning

In this phase leaders created practice in response to their emerging understandings from the previous phase. They focused on building teaching strategies that promoted active learning in their students. They developed personalised approaches to bring their active learning focus to the attention of their students in a more strategic way than their previous attempts.

A major strategy was to create a learning framework that captured key attributes of active learners and included action statements to build understandings of what those attributes might look like in the classroom. The ideas captured in the frameworks were displayed in different ways and were considered a 'work in progress' as leaders continued to build them over time, with their students.

The learning action statements began with the stem 'learners can …' and were followed by a verb (that is observable). For example, *'Articulate and share the difference between a surface and deep question'* (see Table 4.3). Each statement described one clear action of an active learner to support teachers and students to visualise what this would look like in the classroom. The content of these frameworks depended on the understandings of the leaders but did not necessarily capture action learning in its entirety – they were intended to provide a way of thinking about quality learning. Learning frameworks and visual prompts captured the thinking of Leaders of Learning at particular times and became important reminders of their development.

Leaders built a shared language to support students to engage in conversations and to reflect on the way they were displaying these actions in the classroom. These frameworks provided a constant reminder to students to display active learning actions as well as a reminder for leaders to draw attention to them throughout their teaching. Leaders of Learning used their frameworks to support their learning conversations with their students and captured these ideas in a variety of ways visually. They explored the use of prompts to focus their students on particular ideas about learning, to make the processes and language more transparent and to support students to use these more independently. Classroom displays captured active learning through key words and images and provided snapshots of how active learning looked in their classrooms (refer to chapter 5).

Leaders explored ways to explicitly teach active learning actions to their students. They explained how the actions would make learning more effective and introduced the language specific to each action. The learning actions were communicated as 'catchy' concise scripts to support students to talk and think about these actions. They provided opportunities for targeted learning actions to be developed in different learning contexts. They used the visual prompts and created learning tools to make active learning actions explicit in the task or lesson. Students were aware of the actions throughout the learning opportunity and were encouraged to reflect on these actions in different ways. Regularly drawing attention to these actions prompted students to apply them in different contexts as illustrated in chapters 5 & 7.

Once Leaders of Learning had introduced the learning actions to their students, and they had practised them in different contexts, students were expected to display these more independently in their approach to learning. Leaders drew attention to particular learning actions through task criteria and focused reflection to remind students to attend to them while they worked. The visual prompts and learning tools created previously became constant reminders of these learning actions. Leaders became more deliberate when creating structured tasks to promote active learning. They provided opportunities for students to compare before and after thinking to make learning more transparent. These became important artefacts to prompt leaders to reflect on their own development.

The blue and yellow coaching tool (see Figure 5.2) was instrumental in supporting Leaders of Learning to explore the relationship between learning and teaching and supported them to approach their planning in a new way.

The learning or blue circle reminded leaders to identify particular active learning actions together with the curriculum focus before they planned their teaching (or yellow circle). The active learning focus had a much greater influence on their practice than simply focusing on curriculum. Leader reflections highlighted a need to understand how their students were making sense of learning and changing the way they approached their work. Students became more empowered as they were encouraged to make decisions about how they managed their learning in the classroom.

This third phase captures the way leaders responded to their understandings of the relationship between learning and teaching and their aim to build practice that fosters active learning in their students. This was also the focus for their leadership of teacher learning.

Improving teacher learning

Leaders of Learning had already experienced an approach to professional learning that was focused on exploring their practice. Leaders' classrooms became a forum for experimenting with their practice and trialling new ways to build active learning. Leader professional learning became an ongoing process of developing new teaching strategies and reflecting on the impact on student learning. Professional learning became a normal part of their everyday work and provided the content for their professional learning conversations beyond the classroom. Engaging in professional learning in this way gradually changed the way these leaders thought about how they could develop professional learning opportunities in their schools as illustrated in chapter 6.

The Leaders came to genuinely understand that effective professional learning approaches support teachers to focus on exploring the relationship between learning and teaching and using their classrooms as the contexts for ongoing exploration and reflection. They needed to provide an approach that focused on teachers building their knowledge of active learning and effective teaching. They refined their current approaches to teacher learning in two significant ways: they adjusted their professional learning forums to promote teacher inquiry; and, they changed the nature of the conversations. Leaders addressed their existing professional learning team (PLT) structure by refining their term by term agendas (i.e., the agenda for each school term as they unfolded across the year). In most cases they removed the pre-determined content area focus and developed a more flexible agenda, refer to chapter 6.

Leaders of Learning initiated conversations about learning to address what they could now see as inconsistencies between desired learning and current practice. They introduced the notion of active and passive learning to support conversations about learning. Leaders led their teachers through a process of establishing a vision for active learning which included identifying a shared learning theme and a learning framework. The learning themes provided a lens to think about active learning as they captured a key aspect that teachers believed was important for their students to develop. These learning themes (e.g., *Building independent and collaborative learners*) (refer to Tables 4.2 & 4.3) were the beginning of the journey to establish a new improvement agenda and a different change process. However, the themes only started the conversations, leaders needed to create more focused opportunities to break open their learning theme. Learning frameworks captured powerful words and actions that

supported teachers to make sense of their learning themes. These frameworks became a shared vision of learning.

Once leaders had established learning themes and frameworks, they introduced the *action learning process*. Teachers developed an individual action plan to support their inquiry into active learning. Leaders supported their teachers to identify a focus from the learning framework. Some leaders opted for an individual approach, which encouraged teachers to choose their own focus and some worked through a collaborative process to decide on a shared focus. The approach and focus seemed less important than the change in the way teachers approached their professional learning. Changing mindsets became an important consideration for leaders while building their new visions of learning. For example, many leaders changed the name of their PLT meetings to reflect this new way of working.

Early within the transformation from PLT meetings to Learning Forums, Leaders of Learning found their conversations would regularly default to focusing primarily on teaching. Initially, leaders failed to realise this was happening. Gradually they became more aware of when the conversation shifted from focusing on learning and the implications for teaching, to only focusing on teaching. To address this concern, Leaders of Learning used the learning and teaching tool to remind them during the conversations. The tool not only helped them to stay focused on learning, but supported them to make the relationship between learning and teaching more transparent. The tool provided a way for leaders to support their teachers to organise and record their thinking about learning and teaching.

Leaders used the blue and yellow colours to support their written reflections and their descriptions of their leadership of the professional learning conversations. The colours became part of their shared language to describe different aspects of learning and teaching (see chapter 6) This was also the beginning of how leaders learnt about how to challenge their teachers to take their thinking about learning *and* teaching to a deeper level. Using the tool showed leaders how they could inspire their teachers to engage in different conversations.

Once Leaders of Learning had established the connection between effective professional learning and exploring classroom practice, they focused on building quality conversations within their PLT meetings. A major part of leaders' reflections at this time was focused on how they were building these conversations. They grappled with a number of ideas, including: when they might share their practice; how to refocus the conversations back to learning; and, how to challenge their teachers to take their thinking to a deeper level. Leaders
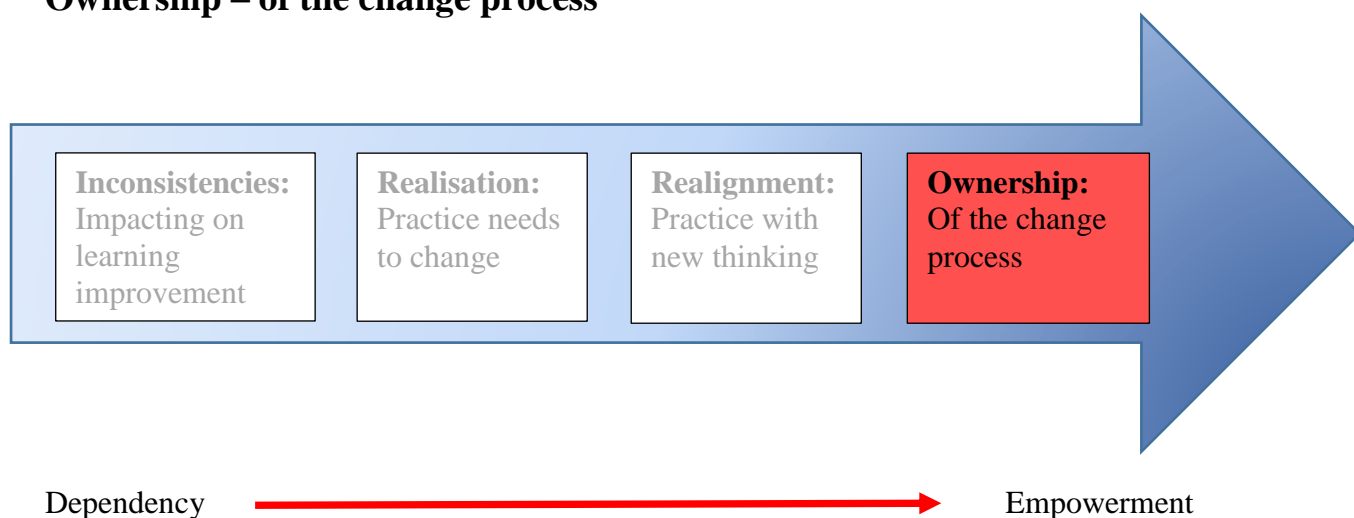
were now reflecting on their teacher learners in the same way they had reflected on their student learners (refer to chapters 6 & 7).

Already experiencing the opportunity to explore practice and establish new thinking about learning and teaching, Leaders of Learning became mindful of not 'telling' their teachers what the practice should look like. The point here being that they did not present as the 'experts' telling others what/how to do; they learned how to share their practice in ways that illustrated a point or gave an example of how practice might look. In particular, leaders used the focus of one of their earlier action plans to demonstrate the action learning process, or particular sections of the action plan.

Section overview

Being in a position to be able to share their own experiences meant leaders could lead professional learning from their classroom contexts and model active learning as a teacher learner. The positive experiences of leaders helped them to create a more effective approach for teachers themselves to transition to this new approach to professional learning.

Ownership – of the change process

| **Inconsistencies:** Impacting on learning improvement | **Realisation:** Practice needs to change | **Realignment:** Practice with new thinking | **Ownership:** Of the change process |

Dependency ⟶ Empowerment

The final phase (i.e., Ownership) captures the pedagogical understandings of Leaders of Learning as they independently 'design practice' in response to the challenges arising from their student and teacher learners. 'Design practice' refers to a leader's ability to respond to their personal understandings of quality learning and build teaching strategies and learning opportunities that address the challenges impacting negatively on learning, while creating ways to make features of quality learning explicit to the learners and considering the learner needs and learning environment within their personal context. Leaders had the knowledge

and confidence to take responsibility for designing their own approach and leading change. They continued to build on their previous work to create a personalised approach to building active learning. They independently shaped teaching and professional learning strategies in response to their ongoing observations of their student and teacher learners, as illustrated in chapter 7. This developed into a more reflective approach to their leadership as they continually reflected on their context in order to make sense of what was happening and then responded to their observations and insights.

Leaders of Learning used known models and created new tools in response to the emerging challenges and tensions. They continually revisited the original inconsistencies to reflect on and evaluate their current approach. Up until this phase, to varying degrees, Leaders of Learning still relied on some external support. This final phase captures the way leaders created more personalised approaches to addressing challenges that worked within their contexts. They drew on the thinking generated within the other three phases to refine the vision and create their own possibilities.

Leading student learning

This phase reflects the confidence and knowledge of Leaders of Learning to continue to build reflective practice and establish their own focus for ongoing teacher inquiry. Understanding active learning and building practice to promote this learning became a normal part of the way these leaders worked. Their conversations highlighted how they continually reflected on the way their students approached their learning and then responded through their practice. The major change in this phase is related to the level of creativity of the leaders as they developed their own ideas about learning tasks and teaching strategies. They became much less dependent on the work of others and more naturally considered ways to affect student learning. As a consequence, they required less support to shape their practice. However, in so doing, they became more focused on receiving feedback on their thinking.

Leaders continued to develop their approach to making aspects of active learning explicit to their students. This followed a pattern of practice that had been established through their action learning approach. They discussed the focus of active learning with their students and then created a summary of the key actions or considerations as a visual display, to prompt students while they worked on their learning tasks. Leaders then engaged in further conversations to evaluate how students were addressing the learning focus (see Tables 7.1, 7.2 & 7.3)

Leaders were able to independently identify a learning focus to build with their students. Each foci, emerged from their current work and they became more aware of the process of reflective practice and the important actions that made for effective reflective practice (Loughran, 2002).

This final phase highlights how leaders displayed their leadership of student learning and used their richer understandings of active learning, reflective practice and teaching strategies that promote active learning, to support their conversations with others. Leaders were conscious of collecting examples of how they had refined their practice to support teachers with their personal action plans. The process of collecting evidence of change, engaging in conversations with students, and creating new teaching strategies to address aspects of active learning was strong and clear.

Leading teacher learning

In this phase, the connection between leading student learning and leading teacher learning was at its richest. Leaders used their understandings of active learning and examples of their practice to continually refine the professional learning opportunities they created for their teachers (see chapter 7). They had the confidence to challenge their teachers in new ways and to continually evaluate how that was being received. Leaders of Learning naturally became more reflective and strategic in how they worked. The professional learning conversations became more focused as leaders tackled the harder conversations and were able to give more valuable and honest feedback. Gradually these leaders took ownership for the change and were able to independently create opportunities to support this change.

Leaders were more aware of the actions of their teachers and how they might respond through their leadership. They were able to communicate more effectively their thinking about their leadership and how they could directly shape the way their teachers were thinking about learning and teaching. This growth in confidence grew as their desire to continually evolve as a Leader of Learning became central to the way they shaped their role. Engaging in ongoing professional learning in both classroom and teacher learning contexts became part of their pedagogy (refer to chapter 7).

Leaders provided a variety of opportunities for teacher learning. They no longer relied on PLT meetings or their learning forums, however they expected their teachers to engage in tasks that would challenge their thinking within their classrooms. Thus, teacher inquiry became familiar as they refocused their teachers to look to their students and their practice to

make sense of new ideas (as illustrated in Tables 7.4, 7.6 & 7.7). The language leaders used with these teachers changed to challenge them to explore their own ideas. They continued to use the blue and yellow learning and teaching tool to remind their teachers of the relationship between learning and teaching and to prevent them defaulting to focusing on teaching alone.

Leaders of Learning initiated the development of teaching frameworks that identified practice that builds active learning or provided ideas for teachers to consider when thinking about their teaching (see Table 4.4). Framing knowledge had now become a part of how they worked, they continued to build their own tools, models and frameworks and also encouraged their teachers to do the same. They became conscious of identifying, with their teachers, a focus for their learning which guided their work individually, in teams and as a whole school.

Section overview

Each of the phases contributed to the confidence, skills and knowledge of Leaders of Learning and represent a move from a dependency mindset to one of empowerment. They were challenged along the way to expose and confront the real tensions hindering the building of active learning. Leaders developed their leadership in ways that made a difference to themselves, their students and their teachers. They were supported throughout their journey in ways which were deliberate and strategic and at other times the approach simply evolved from what was happening at the time.

Chapter overview

This chapter has 'unpacked' the four phases of change the Leaders of Learning experienced through their work in this project. The phases illustrate that leaders came to understand their contexts in new ways which influenced the way they thought about their leadership of learning. Their understandings of active learning and their approach to building it, with both their students and teachers, enabled them to become more aware of their pedagogy. Understanding effective learning and recognizing the implications for practice provided a powerful lens for establishing a teaching and leadership pedagogy that Leaders of Learning could use to talk about and shape their work.

The next chapter explores the pedagogical reasoning that underpinned my approach to working with these Leaders of Learning and is designed to offer insights into what it means to support the leading of change at the school level.

Chapter 9

Leading the development of Leaders of Learning

Introduction

This chapter discusses the insights derived from the researcher's approach to supporting a whole school approach to building pedagogical leadership. The chapter is organised in such a way as to describe the challenges facing Leaders of Learning as they attempt to improve student learning, and explain a process to understand and respond to these challenges as a critical step to establishing pedagogical leadership. This process, captured as a visual model is revealed as the conversations with Leaders of Learning address what is really happening in their schools. This chapter also identifies key coaching tools designed to challenge the thinking of these leaders and support their ongoing conversations.

My pedagogical reasoning for my approach to working with Leaders of Learning

My approach to working with the Leaders of Learning in this project was focused on building their capacity to lead student and teacher learning in ways that would made a difference to how their learners learn. I come from a position whereby schools need innovative and passionate leaders that nurture the design of quality practice in their schools and are not pressured to conform to more accepted ways of working (i.e., that which Barnes (1976) described as transmissive practice). My view of Effective Leaders of Learning is that they have a relentless focus on understanding and building quality learning and are not side-tracked by things that do not support/advance that agenda. I deliberately chose to refer to these leaders as Leaders of Learning, rather than Instructional Leaders, in order to place a greater emphasis on learning.

I was always aware of the influence my pedagogy and my understandings could have on the development of the leaders with whom I worked. I chose to work in ways that challenged their dependency on the expertise of others, while at the same time using their ideas to challenge current thinking about practice and generate the energy and understanding to create personalised practice.

I had a sense of confidence that this approach would build Leaders of Learning that had a deep understanding of how they could shape their own pedagogy. Hence why I chose to

expose them to what was happening in their own schools. Their existing understandings, or what leaders chose to pay attention to, were not always insightful or helpful when it came to ongoing improvement. Leaders needed to become more aware of the inconsistencies that were negatively impacting learning and therefore needed to be able to disrupt the status quo to create a level of difference that challenged the prevailing thinking within their schools. Drawing their attention to these challenges not only influenced the way I worked with the leaders but also how they chose to approach their leadership. These challenges are described below.

Challenge 1: Understanding learning

My approach was influenced by the existing understandings leaders had of learning. Student learning is at the centre of everything we do in education, yet how we perceive learning shapes what that really means in practice. Leaders of Learning were in a leadership role directly responsible for improving learning, yet they initially found defining quality learning a challenge. Building understandings of effective learning was not often a focus for these leaders. Their conversations centred on teaching and reinforced the idea that learning was a natural consequence of this teaching. A view that learning comprises the knowledge and skills found within curriculum documents was commonly held amongst the leaders and is a view that can too easily limit teaching to a more lecture-style or didactic approach.

I wanted to change the way leaders thought about learning and so I focused my approach on building their understandings of quality learning. To do so involved creating a language to support leaders to talk and think about learning in new ways. Their approach to their leadership began to include a greater focus on learning that influenced their teaching and later their leadership of professional learning.

Challenge 2: Pedagogy is more than teaching

The term pedagogy was rarely used by leaders during the conversations I had with them. Leaders did not offer their understandings of pedagogy and were again challenged to define it beyond the more practical element of teaching. Their existing practice as leaders suggested that there was a culture of implementing research-based strategies and practical activities, designed by experts/others. These pre-determined, and often imposed teaching strategies defined and even dictated a pedagogy that teachers felt pressured to adopt. These teaching ideas may well be effective for those that created them, but implementation of these ideas by

others, does not guarantee effectiveness. If leaders and teachers rely on the work of others they are less likely to create their own possibilities for practice.

Simply talking about and implementing teaching strategies or 'best practice' did not guarantee effective and successful student outcomes. In essence, I was of the view that teachers needed to see themselves (and value themselves) not simply as consumers of other people's knowledge but also as producers of knowledge; that was an important shift in practice and in views of Professional Learning rather than Professional Development per se (see Smith, 2017; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009).

Challenge 3: School professional learning approaches need to promote active learning

Typical professional development opportunities in the schools of Leaders of Learning consisted of accepted 'expert practice' that did not require leaders to think beyond the implementation process. Without a rich understanding of how such strategies worked or why they had been created in a certain way, leaders tended to rely on existing approaches to professional development (PD) to make them successful (i.e., top down, mandated change). Challenging professional development and according it the label professional learning is about an ongoing process that continually shapes the way teachers think about learning and teaching. Professional learning tends to evolve and build from within the contexts in which teachers and leaders work over time and is not simply a change in name from Professional Development to Professional Learning.

Teacher inquiry involves teachers observing and understanding student learning and reflecting on and refining their teaching. Leaders of Learning had not recognised that their current professional learning approaches promoted an expert model where teaching ideas were provided to teachers to implement in their classrooms. Without making the link between professional learning and classrooms as a context for teacher learning, the teaching strategies often sat in isolation and rarely enhanced teacher practice.

Leaders and teachers need to be active learners before they can expect the same from their students. Teacher learning should create opportunities to learn about quality learning and design practice in response to such developing understandings.

As the previous chapter illustrates, the approach to change led to the development of a process model that captured the ways in which the challenges (above) influenced my practice

with the Leaders of Learning and shaped their thinking and their practice with their students and their teachers.

Building pedagogical leadership: A process of change

The process model outlined in the previous chapter simplifies the complex nature of changing pedagogy across a school. As a product (i.e., Figure 9.2), the visual aspect is strong but the real power is in the fact that (as the data illustrates), it allows the process to be created through conversation and therefore has the capacity to encourage ongoing dialogue.

The model was created over time and was developed before it was named 'Building pedagogical leadership'. It began as a way for me to make sense of what was happening in the schools of Leaders of Learning, but also it later became a useful tool for reflecting back with them on the change processes they experienced. The 'Building pedagogical leadership' model reflects the nature of the approach used with these Leaders of Learning and reveals the key ideas highlighted within the phases of leader development described in detail in the previous chapter.

The content included within the model are examples of the responses from Leaders of Learning, collected from leader reflections and online conversations. The model was never intended to be used in isolation and other tools and frameworks complemented the model and supported the conversations with leaders at different times.

Responding to the challenges through practice

Challenge 1: Understanding learning

I began by initiating conversations about learning. I used the terms active and passive learning to build a shared language and to provide a comparison that would help leaders to identify examples of effective and less effective learning. Although these terms are found within the literature, at the time they were not associated with any known commercialised teaching programs or approaches. I was confident that Leaders of Learning would not consider this approach simply as pressure to adopt a predetermined pedagogy. This was an important consideration at the time as I was encouraging leaders to take responsibility for their own professional learning and design practice in response to their new thinking about active learning.

I used the coaching tool shown in Figure 9. 1 to challenge leaders to think about learning in different ways. The tool was designed to present an example of a learning framework and

was never intended to be a definitive list of ideas about learning. I needed leaders to consider learning beyond the content of the curriculum. I knew that if I encouraged leaders to challenge their current understandings and realise they needed richer understandings of learning then I was convinced they would explore new ideas.
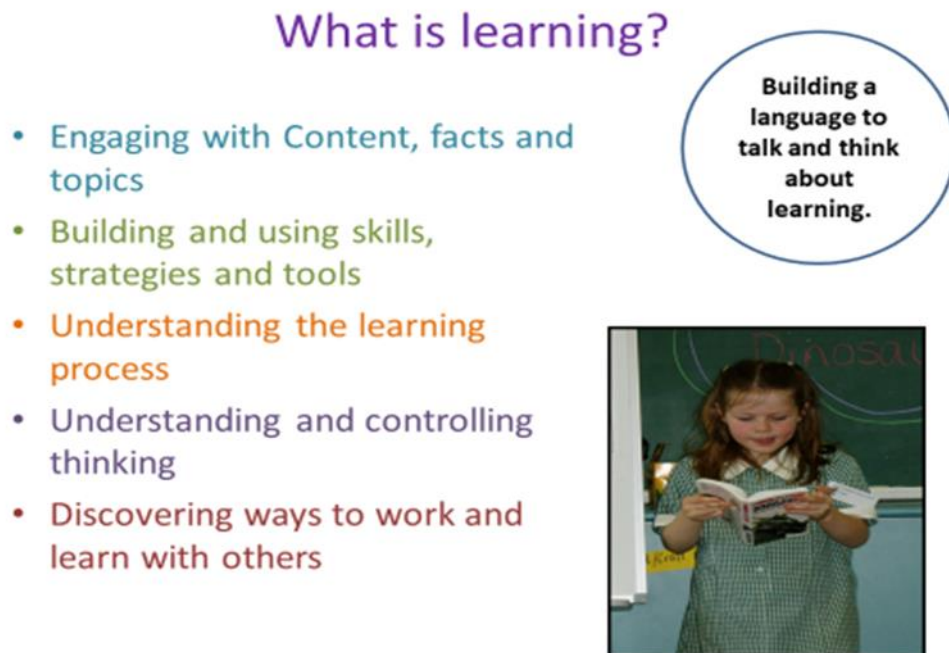
Figure 9.1: Coaching tool used to prompt different ways to think about learning

I was confident that Leaders of Learning had previously been exposed to contemporary approaches to learning and had ideas about the actions of active learners. Understanding what active learners do and to explain this in words, is very different to knowing how to develop the same in practice. Just expecting students to display active learning actions reflects a lack of understanding about the influence the learning environment and teaching practice can have on student learning.

I am of the view that students need to know how to learn effectively in a school context. Teachers need to make such learning explicit and then support students to build their capacity to become independent learners. When Leaders of Learning were prompted to articulate examples of active learning actions they were able to create a comprehensive list (see Figure 9.2).

Building pedagogical leadership				
			ACTIVE LEARNING	
			Active learners: • Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways	

Figure 9.2: Examples of the actions of active learners

Once Leaders of Learning could list active learning actions I encouraged them to think about the actions of passive learners. These were recorded at the opposite end of the table to reflect two ends of a continuum (see Figure 9.3).

Building pedagogical leadership				
PASSIVE LEARNING			ACTIVE LEARNING	
Passive learners: • Are dependent on teachers • More likely to engage in surface thinking • Focus on content, answers • Focus on completing tasks • Don't learn from mistakes • See content in isolation			*Active learners:* • Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways	

Figure 9.3: The model showing examples of actions of passive and active learners

Supporting Leaders of Learning to identify examples of the characteristics of passive or active learners helped them to see learning as a series of actions that could be named, modelled and observed within a classroom. Learning therefore became more transparent to leaders which then encouraged them to explore the relationship between learning and teaching. Once leaders realised that learning actions were a direct response to the strategies used by teachers, they became more aware of their need to build their practice in different ways. Leaders identified examples of teaching that were more likely to promote a passive approach to learning (see Figure 9.4).
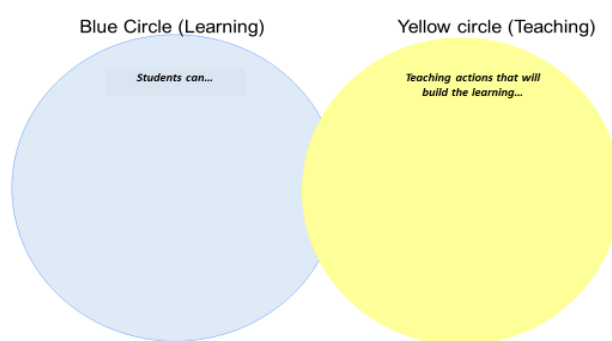
Building pedagogical leadership				
PASSIVE LEARNING			ACTIVE LEARNING	
Passive learners:	*Teaching practice:*		*Active learners:*	
- Are dependent on teachers - More likely to engage in surface thinking - Focus on content, answers - Focus on completing tasks - Don't learn from mistakes - See content in isolation	- Focus on content and skills - Focus on right or wrong answers - Focus on completing tasks - Focus on practising skills - Rely on memory - Promote surface thinking		- Ask questions - Make decisions - Monitor and manage learning - Make connections - Problem solve - Reflect on their learning - Know how to think in different ways	

Figure 9.4: The model showing examples of teaching practice that promotes passive learning

Challenge 2: Pedagogy is more than teaching

To emphasise the connection between learning and teaching, I developed a coaching tool to support leaders to think about learning before they planned their teaching. I placed the blue (learning) circle on the left to encourage leaders to start with learning and then the yellow circle (teaching) on the right side of the tool (see Figure 9.5). The content of the blue circle should influence the content of the yellow circle. The tool shows learning and teaching as two separate ideas, but it also brings them together. My intention was to change the way leaders considered learning.

I wanted leaders to bring together the requirements of the curriculum and identified active learning actions and then plan teaching that would interweave these in ways that might make students more aware of what they were learning and how they could learn effectively. This became the two-lensed approach to thinking about learning.

Figure 9.5: Learning and teaching coaching tool

Building pedagogical leadership				
PASSIVE LEARNING			ACTIVE LEARNING	
Passive learners:	*Teaching practice:*		*Active learners:*	
• Are dependent on teachers • More likely to engage in surface thinking • Focus on content, answers • Focus on completing tasks • Don't learn from mistakes • See content in isolation	• Focus on content and skills • Focus on right or wrong answers • Focus on completing tasks • Focus on practising skills • Rely on memory • Promote surface thinking		• Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways	

Figure 9.6: The model for building pedagogical leadership showing the blue and yellow colours to distinguish between learning and teaching.

The actual colours of the circle became part of the language used by Leaders of Learning to talk about learning and teaching. They became prompts to reflect on their teaching and support their professional learning conversations. Leaders also used blue and yellow to

distinguish between learning and teaching in their own documents. I used the same colours to represent learning or teaching in other tools and frameworks and used them in the 'Building pedagogical leadership' model (see Figure 9.6)

The two-lensed idea to thinking about learning and how it influences practice was critical to leaders understanding the reality of what was happening in their schools. They needed to realise that although the focus for learning improvement might reflect ideas of active learning, teachers were not necessarily prompted to change their practice or make active learning explicit with their students.

Building pedagogical leadership				
PASSIVE LEARNING			ACTIVE LEARNING	
Passive learners: • Are dependent on teachers • More likely to engage in surface thinking • Focus on content, answers • Focus on completing tasks • Don't learn from mistakes • See content in isolation	*Teaching practice:* • Focus on content and skills • Focus on right or wrong answers • Focus on completing tasks • Focus on practising skills • Rely on memory • Promote surface thinking		*Active learners:* • Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways	

Figure 9.7: Showing the desired learning and the default to existing practice that is more likely to promote passive learning

Leaders and teachers were defaulting to existing practice and familiar teaching behaviours without realising that some of their practice was actually promoting passive learning.

My view here was that simply relying on introducing new teaching strategies to create change was not adequate for challenging existing practice. Unless teachers deliberately build active learning actions then students are more likely to maintain a passive approach. The inconsistency between desired learning and current practice is captured in Figure 9.7.

I prompted leaders to consider possible reasons for teachers defaulting to existing practice. Leaders of Learning consistently identified a lack of confidence, not enough time or opportunity and assessment and reporting pressures, as the main reasons for maintaining the status quo. I exposed other reasons for this default which included: current understandings of learning; and, a reliance on expert practice. Examples of such reasons that became part of the conversations with leaders are shown in Figure 9.8.

| Building pedagogical leadership			
PASSIVE LEARNING		WHY?	ACTIVE LEARNING
Passive learners: • Are dependent on teachers • More likely to engage in surface thinking • Focus on content, answers • Focus on completing tasks • Don't learn from mistakes • See content in isolation	*Teaching practice*: • Focus on content and skills • Focus on right or wrong answers • Focus on completing tasks • Focus on practising skills • Rely on memory • Promote surface thinking	• Lack of vision • Time & opportunity to change • Reporting & assessment pressure • Current understandings of learning • Pre-conceived ideas about what active learning is	*Active learners:* • Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways

Figure 9.8: Incorporation of possible reasons for the default to existing practice

Leaders of learning needed to understand why there was a default to existing practice before they considered how they could address the situation in their schools. Building the capacity to change teaching practice became the work of Leaders of Learning and this challenge is captured in Figure 9.9.

Building pedagogical leadership				
PASSIVE LEARNING		**WHY?**	**ACTIVE LEARNING**	
Passive learners: • Are dependent on teachers • More likely to engage in surface thinking • Focus on content, answers • Focus on completing tasks • Don't learn from mistakes • See content in isolation	*Teaching practice*: • Focus on content and skills • Focus on right or wrong answers • Focus on completing tasks • Focus on practising skills • Rely on memory • Promote surface thinking	• Lack of vision • Time & opportunity to change • Reporting & assessment pressure • Current understandings of learning • Pre-conceived ideas about what active learning is **HOW?**	*Active learners:* • Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways	*Teaching practice:*

Figure 9.9: The challenge for Leaders of Learning to change teaching practice

There was a need for the Leaders of Learning to think about their leadership in two ways: build active student learners; and, build active teacher learners. I created the Figure 9.10 to prompt discussion around what each might look like and possible implications for leader work.
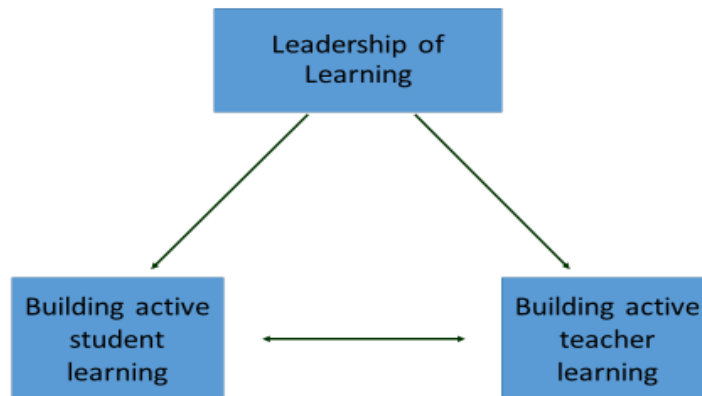
Figure 9.10: Diagram showing the two components of leading learning

If Leaders of Learning are to have a relentless focus on improving learning in their schools, then they needed to consider the groups of learners with whom they work. Leaders needed to consider how they would build their students as active learners and then repeat the process with their teachers. Initially, Leaders of Learning needed to become active learners and experience effective learning as they explored ways to build active learning with their students. This became a natural focus for teacher inquiry and was the beginning of leaders building a more reflective approach to their work.

A focus on understanding active learning provided the motivation to shift leader professional learning into their classrooms. In this context they could explore learning and use their developing understandings to consider new practice. Leaders of Learning needed to establish credibility as expert teachers that modelled practice that leads to improvement in learning. Figure 9.11 captures the challenge for Leaders of Learning to design the practice that leads to active learning of their students. The question mark represents the unknown and reinforces that leaders need to develop their own unique and personalised approach.

Building pedagogical leadership				
PASSIVE LEARNING		WHY?	ACTIVE LEARNING	
Passive learners: • Are dependent on teachers • More likely to engage in surface thinking • Focus on content, answers • Focus on completing tasks • Don't learn from mistakes • See content in isolation	*Teaching practice*: • Focus on content and skills • Focus on right or wrong answers • Focus on completing tasks • Focus on practising skills • Rely on memory • Promote surface thinking	• Lack of vision • Time & opportunity to change • Reporting & assessment pressure • Current understandings of learning • Pre-conceived ideas about what active learning is **HOW?**	*Active learners:* • Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways	*Teaching practice:* **?**

Figure 9.11: Leaders of Learning need to design the teaching practice that builds active learning

To change the way leaders thought about their teaching they needed to be challenged to take their new ideas through a process that would lead to more innovative and focused practice. I established four themes that prompted leaders to work in particular ways. These included:

- Explore new ideas.
- Identify evidence of change in personal or student thinking.
- Frame understandings of active learning.
- Consider teaching practice in relation to these frames.

These themes shaped the conversations I had with leaders and helped to establish a reflective approach to their practice. The next part of the chapter discusses each theme separately.

Explore new ideas

It often felt like I needed to give leaders permission to deviate from their normal classroom approach and 'play' with some of the ideas arising in our discussions. To support leader thinking I developed a simple action learning plan template to guide them through an action learning process (see Figure 9.12).

I wanted leaders to put their time into developing their understandings and skills to enable them to engage in ongoing reflective practice. The plan was only a means to an end and was never intended to focus leader attention on following a detailed or prescriptive process. The plan was simple, visual and encouraged leaders to record their thinking in short and concise ways. At any time, leaders could change the content of their action learning plans or rein in the structure to support their thinking in different ways.
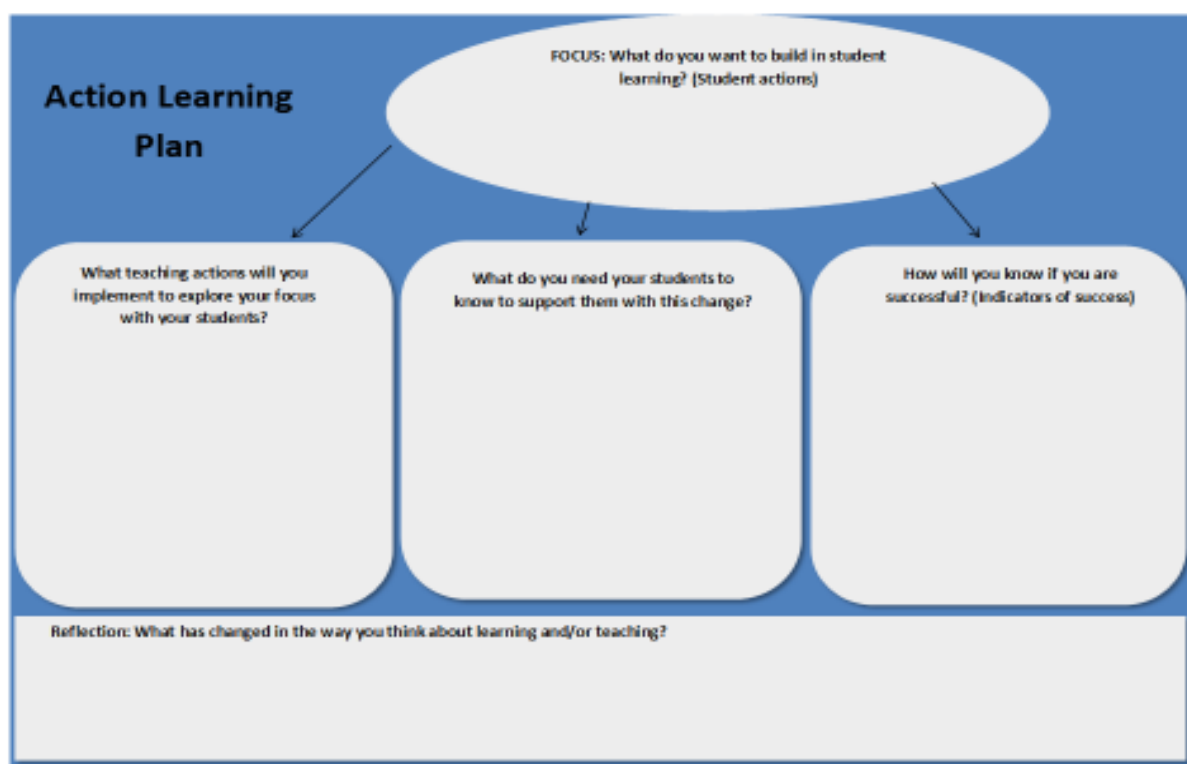
Figure 9.12: Original action learning plan used by leaders

The action learning plan begins by prompting leaders to identify a learning focus they want to explore with their students. This required leaders to choose particular active learning actions

as the motivation for their inquiry. Leaders then identified possible teaching actions which needed to be different to those they currently used.

I was interested in supporting leaders to try ideas that focused student attention on active learning and then to observe their reactions. Included in their teaching actions was the initiation of learning conversations with their students. This then led into the next section of the plan where leaders considered what their students might need to know to engage with this learning focus. This section could also include students having conversations with each other, accessing visual prompts to support their thinking, looking at examples of what this learning focus could look like or having further conversations with their teacher. This section of the action learning plan was important for leaders to be more conscious of how to make active learning more transparent.

Identify evidence of change in personal or student thinking

I encouraged Leaders of Learning to identify possible changes that might occur in the way their students thought about or approached their learning. This might include initial student reactions to the new expectations or change that happens over time. This then supported leaders to reflect on changes in their own thinking. Samples of student work, classroom stories, documented classroom conversations and teacher and student reflections became important artefacts to demonstrate both student and teacher change. Once leaders were conscious of looking for change it became an ongoing expectation of their work.

Frame understandings of active learning

Once leaders began to build their understandings of active learning they were encouraged to frame their thinking in different ways. This included creating frameworks, classroom displays, learning prompts and task criteria that captured key ideas about active learning. In particular, the learning frameworks contained more detail and were later used to initiate further action learning. These frameworks used 'Learner can' statements to identify the actions of students as they approached their learning in active ways. Working through this process individually supported leaders at a later stage when they worked through this process at a whole school level.

Consider teaching practice in relation to these frames

Leaders were prompted to think about how their practice could support the ideas within their learning frameworks. They had already considered active learning along with their

curriculum requirements when planning for learning, however, often explicit teaching was focused on the curriculum aspect and not the active learning actions.

Layers to develop active learning actions	Possible teaching strategies
Layer 1 Provide opportunities for students to practise learning actions	• Targeted learning action is incorporated into the learning experience • Observation of focused student actions during learning experiences • Students reflect on their learning actions • Students can access learning prompts within the classroom • Task criteria may draw attention to particular learning actions
Layer 2 Use **strategies**, **tools or prompts** to develop and focus on a learning action	• Targeted learning action is the focus within a learning opportunity. The action is made explicit within the learning intentions/context of the lesson • Visual prompts remind students of the learning action • Specific strategies/tools are used to focus on developing the learning action • The learning action is the focus in different learning contexts
Layer 3 **Explicitly teach** a learning action	• Learning action is made transparent to the students • Explanation of how the learning action makes learning more effective • Specific language is developed with the students to support them to think and talk about the learning action • The learning action is the focus for personal and shared reflection • Students engage in conversations about the learning action

Figure 9.13: Coaching tool displaying a three-layered approach to teaching active learning actions.

Often leaders had implemented learning tasks that required active learning actions, however their students were not aware of displaying these actions. I designed a coaching tool that identified three levels of building active learning actions (see Figure 9.13). The tool shows three layers of teaching and student awareness of the active learning actions and possible strategies that build the capacity of students to develop this approach. The tool suggests that teachers need to teach students how to be active learners in classroom contexts and not assume that they have the knowledge to do this for themselves. The teaching strategies described within the tool are possibilities only and are there simply to encourage leaders to think about their practice.

Layer one encouraged leaders to plan learning opportunities where their students were encouraged to display particular learning actions. The focus for leaders was to observe their students' approach to learning and identify the learning actions they displayed. Layer one was already common in leader classrooms, they created learning opportunities where students could practise the focused learning intentions, however this was usually related to the skills and knowledge from the curriculum and rarely focused on the active learning actions. Leaders needed to consider ways to make both aspects of learning the focus within learning opportunities and then build student awareness of active learning actions in different contexts. Students often needed to be prompted to think about and display these active learning actions. Leaders explored task criteria, classroom displays and oral reminders to remind their students of these actions.

Layer two supported leaders to design learning opportunities that focus students' attention on displaying particular active learning actions that have previously been taught explicitly. Again the focus is to support leaders to make students aware of both aspects of learning during the learning opportunity. Once students are aware of active learning actions they can focus on them during the learning experience. Leaders discovered different ways to focus their students on these actions throughout the learning opportunities.

Layer Three encouraged leaders to explicitly teach each of the active learning actions they had identified. This included explaining how the active learning action could enhance learning, introducing particular language to support students to talk and think about the action and designing specific tools and strategies to make the action a focus throughout the learning

opportunity. Visual prompts were developed to capture the language specific to each action, to remind students of the active learning action they were working on and to support students to make the connections between different learning opportunities.

The coaching tool was important to introduce to leaders, a way of framing pedagogy. This supported leaders to think more deeply about pedagogy and what drives their personal pedagogy.

Challenge 3: School professional learning approaches need to promote active learning

I encouraged leaders to think about their leadership of student learning before they explored their leadership of teacher learning. I was confident that the understandings leaders developed throughout the process of engaging in action learning would support them to re-think their approach to leading professional learning. I created a professional development to professional learning model to support leaders to reflect on their current experiences and identify the characteristics of quality professional learning (see figure 9.14). The model was designed to expose the dependency on expert practice as well as the idea that teachers can be given the knowledge they need to improve practice.

Figure 9.14: Model showing the difference between a professional development and professional learning approach to teacher learning

The professional development (PD) part of the model reflects the idea that professional learning is something that happens outside of the classroom or the context where teachers teach. Leaders of Learning had previously attended forums, including professional learning team meetings (PLTs) where they either had to set the agenda for their teachers or work with agendas created by other leaders. The view that the answers to improving practice reside with 'experts', disempowered leaders from building a personalised approach to practice and reinforced a 'doing to' approach. The arrows deliberately point to the teacher in the classroom to indicate that the knowledge is given to the teacher or leader. I used the colour yellow to emphasise the focus teachers have on teaching in a Professional Development approach.

The second part of the model - the professional learning approach - promotes the idea that professional learning happens within classrooms and that teachers and leaders engage in their learning everyday with their students. They seek opportunities to talk about their learning and teaching with others and their thinking is stimulated by these conversations. The arrows move in both directions to indicate that the teachers look to these forums to support their thinking which then influences their classroom practice. The Professional Learning part of the model is blue to highlight the focus on teacher and student learning. The model suggests that teachers need to become active learners before they can expect that of their students.

When Leaders of Learning saw their role as a position of leadership and not as Leaders of Learning, they relied on a PD model to provide teacher learning. Leaders needed credibility as teachers who knew how to build active learning in students before they could lead effective teacher learning. Leaders needed to establish their ability to talk about and demonstrate active learning. Through our work together leaders experienced an approach to professional learning that focused their time and energy on making greater sense of learning and their practice. They developed learning frameworks, established examples of teaching strategies and collected numerous student reflections and classroom stories to share with their teachers. Leaders were prompted to work with their teachers to support learning and not default to a 'doing to' model.

Leaders needed to make active learning actions explicit to their teachers, just as they had done with their students. I encouraged leaders to reflect on what had supported their thinking about active learning and then consider how that might support their teachers.

Learning themes and learning frameworks were consistent avenues that leaders chose to build their whole school approach to active learning. I introduced the idea of school learning themes to support the process of building a whole school learning vision. To encourage 'buy-in' of teachers, leaders captured the learning conversations by identifying the most consistent and powerful words from these discussions. I described the learning themes as the title of each school's story about building active learning. The learning frameworks followed and provided some shared learner actions for teachers and leaders to build together.

Each framework was visual in nature and became personalised to each context. The frameworks became reminders of the school vision for learning, supporting the ongoing professional learning conversations. Leaders had established a shared language and key ideas about active learning that led to building reflective practice across their schools. As the frameworks captured the understandings at the time, they needed to remain as working documents to allow them to evolve over time and capture new thinking. The frameworks were never intended to be an implementation plan and the process of exploring the ideas within the framework would alter the normal change process in the school.

Leaders of Learning then had to consider what this framework meant for their leadership of teacher learning. The frameworks provided a range of starting points for teacher inquiry and a shared focus for professional learning. Through their own experiences, Leaders of Learning were in a better position to lead professional learning conversations about active learning, and shape the professional learning opportunities. I encouraged leaders to look to their classroom practice for inspiration to support them with their thinking about the professional learning structures and forums. At times leaders grappled with deciding whether they should share their practice and risk being seen as the expert or encourage their teachers to talk about their own practice.

Leaders of Learning became just as reflective of their leadership of teacher learning as they did with building student learning. Figure 9.15 shows the completed 'Building pedagogical leadership' framework. The final inclusion is the examples of teaching practice that build active learning. Leaders could identify practice to include in this section before their teachers, however as established Leaders of Learning they became focused on building this list together.
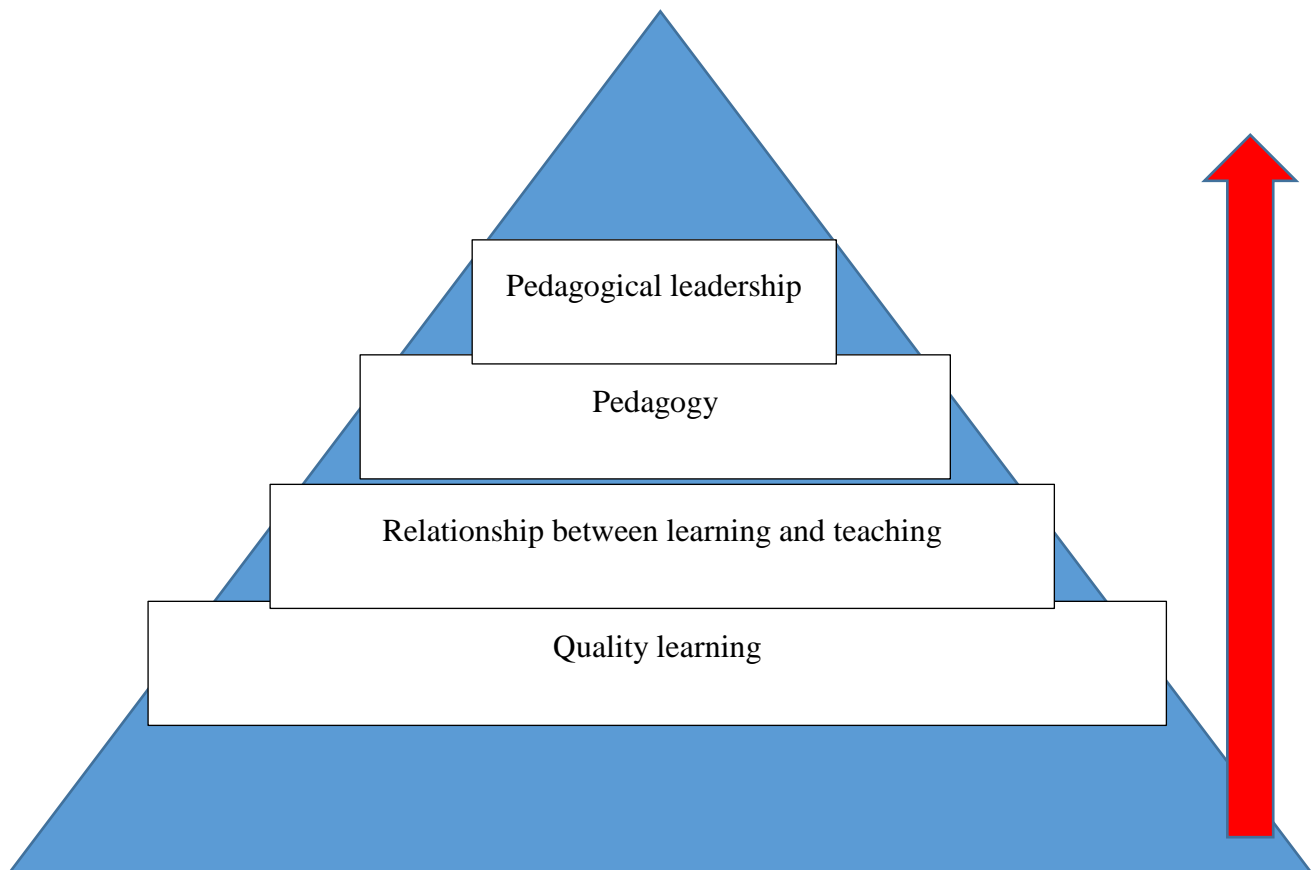
Building pedagogical leadership				
PASSIVE LEARNING		WHY?	ACTIVE LEARNING	
Passive learners: • Are dependent on teachers • More likely to engage in surface thinking • Focus on content, answers • Focus on completing tasks • Don't learn from mistakes • See content in isolation	*Teaching practice*: • Focus on content and skills • Focus on right or wrong answers • Focus on completing tasks • Focus on practising skills • Rely on memory • Promote surface thinking	• Lack of vision • Time & opportunity to change • Reporting & assessment pressure • Current understandings of learning • Pre-conceived ideas about what active learning is **HOW?**	*Active learners:* • Ask questions • Make decisions • Monitor and manage learning • Make connections • Problem solve • Reflect on their learning • Know how to think in different ways	*Teaching practice:* • Explicitly teach active learning actions • Make features of active learning visible • Support students to be aware of active learning actions that can enhance their learning • Make active learning a part of task criteria

Figure 9.15: Building active learning model that includes examples of teaching practice that promotes active learning

Just as I had continually challenged leaders in their current space, they were able to build the confidence and skills to do this with their teachers. Leaders became more pedagogically aware and became conscious of how they worked with their student and teacher learners. Building the understandings of leaders to lead learning began with understanding learning and then more importantly, quality learning. Once leaders had become more aware of effective and ineffective learning they could explore the relationship between learning and teaching. Teaching practice was designed in response to the way leaders were thinking about

learning. Through these two lenses, Leaders of Learning became more aware of their pedagogy and the complex nature of building a pedagogy that focuses on exploring and promoting active learning. Once leaders could talk about their pedagogy, then they were pedagogical leaders in their schools. Figure 9.16 shows the building of key understandings that supported leaders to become effective Leaders of Learning.

Development of Leaders of Learning

Figure 9.16: Model showing the building of key ideas supporting the development of Leaders of Learning.

I could not have started exploring pedagogy with leaders until they had richer understandings of effective learning and the relationship between learning and teaching. Effective pedagogical leaders, model active learning as a learner, a teacher and a leader. Once leaders were aware of their pedagogical approach to building active learning they were able to demonstrate these understandings in the ways they worked with students and teachers.

Chapter overview

This chapter has described the pedagogical reasoning underpinning the approach to working to develop Leaders of Learning. The approach is based on a building up of ideas over time in concert with creating rich learning experiences, seeking evidence and building confidence. By having Leaders of Learning genuinely experience active learning, they were able to work productively as Leaders of Learning with both their students and their teachers.

Chapter 10

Implications and recommendations

Introduction

This chapter offers the insights that became evident through working with the Leaders of Learning involved in this research. The summary accompanying each insight outlines the implications for school leadership and system growth in relation to the development of effective Leaders of Learning. Together, the insights build upon the notion that Leaders of Learning are critical to realising a whole-school focus for ongoing improvement of student learning and their development needs to be a major consideration for any approach to educational reform.

The insights gained from the data illustrate how Leaders of Learning were initially dependent on the expertise of others to lead change in their contexts. As a consequence of bringing to their attention the challenges surrounding the building of effective learning and teaching, and establishing a serious focus on understanding quality learning, Leaders of Learning developed the capacity to establish personalised change agendas that addressed school improvement in new and meaningful ways in their schools.

Insight 1: Understanding and building quality learning is central to ongoing school improvement

Approaches to school improvement need to establish a serious focus on understanding and building quality learning if they are to shift current thinking in schools. Learners that feel empowered are more likely to have the confidence to take risks, challenge existing ideas and create new possibilities. Effective learning requires teachers to position their students in ways that encourage and support them to make decisions which have a positive impact on their learning. Current practice in schools can present conflicting views of learning where students are exposed to approaches that reinforce passive learning in one context and demand active learning in another. Approaches to teacher professional learning can mirror this same challenge.

Effective Leaders of Learning lead both student and teacher learning in ways which promote active learning. They establish a collective vision that communicates the characteristics and actions of effective learners and support teachers to reflect on and reshape practice, to

respond to the ideas within the vision. By first capturing learning in new ways and then maintaining a consistent focus on building understandings of effective learning, Leaders of Learning raise awareness of the need to develop new and personalised approaches to learning, teaching and professional learning. Leaders of Learning need to build school improvement processes that focus conversations on understanding quality learning and continually challenge teachers to respond to this through their practice.

Insight 2: Leaders of Learning need high level support to understand and address the inconsistencies that exist between learning and teaching

Schools need to build the capacity of their leaders to lead learning in ways which expose the 'real issues' that hinder learning improvement. Existing patterns of learning, teaching and leadership behaviour that support ineffective learning can continue to be accepted actions that sit alongside more effective approaches. Effective Leaders of Learning deliberately expose the issues and challenges that hinder the building of effective learning and make these transparent within their schools. This process reveals how these ad-hoc approaches to learning and teaching are rarely challenged and continue to influence the way students and teachers think about learning. Understanding quality learning and how this relates to teaching is central to establishing a consistent whole-school approach to improving learning.

Effective Leaders of Learning continually challenge the thinking of others and build opportunities where teachers are encouraged to be reflective and innovative as well as maintain a focus on making sense of, and building, effective learning. Leaders of Learning lead and teach in ways which consistently model the pedagogy that promotes quality learning. They develop their own practice to illustrate the connection between knowing about learning and knowing about teaching before they expect this of others. Leaders of Learning are then more likely to have the credibility to establish approaches to professional learning that build the capacity of teachers to reshape their practice.

Insight 3: Building pedagogical awareness is central to the leadership of learning

An ongoing focus to build the capacity of Leaders of Learning to lead both student and teacher learning is critical if they are to make a difference to how their learners learn. Effective Leaders of Learning have the ability to promote the design of quality practice in their schools and are not (solely) dependent on the expertise of others. Strategies used to

effect change are established and understood within the context in which they are applied. Effective Leaders of Learning continually reflect on these strategies and refine them to address the needs of the learners involved. They have the understanding to shape their own pedagogy to improve learning and this becomes an ongoing focus. These leaders know how to continue to challenge existing mindsets and establish new ways of working.

Understanding the nature of pedagogy is not something that is a familiar focus in schools. Teaching is too often viewed only as the practical component, or act, of teaching. Developing understandings of pedagogy exposes the complex relationship between learning and teaching, and helps to 'surface' assumptions about and unconscious approaches that can lead to ineffective practice. With pedagogical awareness comes the impetus for change

, and knowledge growth, associated with refining and reshaping practice. Approaches to professional learning need to raise pedagogical awareness to support leaders and teachers to explore new possibilities in practice that deliberately address the exposed challenges in learning. Pedagogy should continue to evolve if Leaders of Learning establish a culture of ongoing learning within their context.

Insight 4: Promote approaches to professional learning that position Leaders of Learning and teachers as the designers of quality practice

Quality professional learning needs to happen in the everyday work of teachers and leaders. It starts and continues in the contexts in which they teach and lead. Effective Leaders of Learning engage in ongoing professional learning that encourages them to regularly reflect on their leadership and/or teaching practice and respond in ways that address the inconsistencies in learning and teaching. The default position of providing professional development designed by experts hinders Leaders of Learning from establishing expectations around risk-taking and creativity in teaching. Leaders of Learning need to continually model how they want their teachers to work and re-establish professional practice within their schools. When they deliberately focus on understanding effective learning and how this relates to their teaching, they are in the position to design new practice in response to changes in their thinking.

Professional learning approaches that model and promote active learning provide opportunities for teachers to experience first-hand what it means to learn in this way. Personalised action plans that communicate the approach that Leaders of Learning take to make greater sense of their practice, is a strategic approach that not only helps them to

appreciate the complex nature of teacher change but also provides real examples of action learning. This continual process of exploring learning and responding through practice becomes the accepted way that Leaders of Learning and teachers work. Approaches to teacher planning also reinforce this continual focus on promoting active learning as an important step in creating the most effective learning opportunities for their students.

Framework for Professional Learning

The framework described in the previous chapter, communicates a process that supports the professional learning of Leaders of Learning as they learn to consider ongoing school improvement from new perspectives. The framework illustrates the inconsistencies that can exist between learning and practice. When the professional learning of Leaders of Learning was based within the contextual reality of their teaching and leadership, these leaders were able to effectively attend to the challenges that hindered building effective learning and teaching, and establish personalised change agendas for their schools.

Chapter Overview

This chapter has identified the range of high level insights that emerged from this research about the thinking, practice and professional learning of Leaders of Learning. The chapter has discussed the implications these findings have for system and school leadership, particularly in relation to the development of effective school-based Leaders of Learning. The next chapter closes the thesis by reconsidering the research questions and briefly reviewing the study as a whole.

Chapter 11

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis was a study of a professional learning approach developed to build the capacity of Leaders of Learning to lead quality student learning and quality professional learning through the development of effective pedagogy in their schools. The research examined how a 'model' of professional learning might be conceptualized and then communicated as a result of working with and supporting the learning of participating Leaders of Learning as they made sense of the existing practices within their schools - and then responded to each of these in order to improve the quality of learning.

Three major research questions directed and shaped the nature and practice of the study. Those questions were:

- What influences the way Leaders of Learning approach their leadership of student and teacher learning?
- What impact does focusing on building quality learning have on the professional learning of Leaders of Learning?
- How do Leaders of Learning remain focused on enacting their vision for quality learning.

While working with these school-leaders it became evident that building quality learning involved the consideration of student learners and teacher learners. Initially, participating leaders explored the nature of quality learning in their own teaching contexts and were supported to experiment with practice to build a more active approach to learning. These experiences encouraged leaders to consider the current approach to professional learning in their schools and to begin to make connections between student and teacher learners.

Findings associated with each of the research questions are briefly revisited below.

Revisiting the research questions

1) *What influences the way Leaders of Learning approach their leadership of student and teacher learning?*

Participating Leaders of Learning were exposed to the inconsistencies that existed between the school's current vision of learning and teaching, the personal understandings of leaders in relation to effective learning and teaching, and how learning was promoted through practice in their schools. Leaders of Learning were supported to consider the implications of these inconsistencies on student learning and their existing approach to school improvement.

Chapter 4 highlighted the impact a focus on quality learning had on the way Leaders of Learning thought about their leadership of both student and teacher learning. Leaders realised they needed to develop a shared vision for quality learning, identifying the important features of effective learning which would then expose the limitations and challenges associated with more passive approaches to learning. Capturing quality learning through the development of learning themes and frameworks provided a means to establish a shared language to support ongoing conversations around quality learning. This led the Leaders of Learning to conceptualise a change model and an associated process that focused on the ongoing building of quality learning.

In Chapter 5, the discussion highlighted how Leaders of Learning realised that the existing conversations within their school focused on teaching; in particular, the more practical elements of practice. With their developing knowledge of quality learning, leaders were able to recognise this and re-shape conversations to focus on learning first and then consider teaching in relation to their developing ideas about quality learning. Leaders of Learning found the 'blue and yellow' coaching tool particularly effective in prompting them to consider learning and teaching separately, as well as reminding them of the relationship that exists and the impact each has on the other. Leaders used the notion of quality learning as a lens to reconsider their own teaching and explore new practice before they expected the same of others.

In Chapter 6, the data showed how Leaders of Learning realised that the professional learning approaches in their schools were promoting a more passive approach to teacher learning. Leaders drew on their personal experiences of their recent approaches to improve student learning to identify the key strategies and tools that would support their development.

Leaders of Learning then made adjustments to the professional learning approach they employed in their schools to reflect a similar process.

Chapter 7 highlighted how Leaders of Learning developed a reflective approach to building student and teacher learning. Leaders continued to analyse, refine and frame their practice in order to improve both student and teacher learning. Leaders of Learning came to articulate the importance of reflection in their own development as a teacher and as a leader of professional learning.

2) ***What impact does focusing on building quality learning have on the professional learning of Leaders of Learning?***

A continual focus on building quality learning supported leaders to develop richer understandings of what that meant for their learners and to consider new possibilities to explore within their teaching and their leadership of professional learning. As became apparent through this study, the leaders involved were highly dependent on implementing 'expert practice' to address identified areas of improvement across their schools. Leader professional learning focused on building their capacity to understand and then design practice that promoted quality learning. Participating leaders became more empowered to shape and lead a change process that focused on building quality learning in their schools.

Chapter 4 captured how leaders developed richer understandings of the features of quality learning and then identified examples of practice that promoted a more passive approach to learning in their own teaching and across the school. Through coaching conversations, Leaders of Learning were exposed to a range of coaching tools and learning frameworks that influenced the way they explored learning in their teaching and leadership contexts.

Chapter 5 highlighted how Leaders of Learning shifted their conversations to consider both learning and teaching. They developed personal action plans that outlined the focus for their professional learning as they explored components of quality learning in their classrooms. This process supported leaders to establish a more reflective approach to their professional learning and to their teaching. As they made greater sense of their practice through reflection and analysis, they learned how to develop teaching and learning frames that communicated their new thinking.

Chapter 6 described how Leaders of Learning learned from their approach to professional learning to make sense of, and refine, the existing approach to teacher learning in their

school. Leader experiences with the 'action plan' process supported them in leading others through a similar approach.

Chapter 7 demonstrated how Leaders of Learning engaged in ongoing reflection to make sense of their student learning and teacher learning contexts. They realised the importance of continually reflecting on practice and the impact this had on their own learning. They supported teachers to engage in regular reflection as part of their approach to professional learning.

3) *How do Leaders of Learning remain focused on enacting their vision for quality learning?*

This question explored how Leaders of Learning maintained a focus on enacting their vision for quality learning. Leaders continued to focus on exploring their practice and refining their personal vision for quality learning to reflect their new thinking. Enacting a shared vision in their schools became the ongoing focus for their leadership of teacher learning.

Chapter 4 highlighted how Leaders of Learning developed learning themes and learning frameworks to capture current thinking around quality learning and then used these as prompts to promote rich conversations about learning. By establishing a shared language around quality learning, teaching and learning conversations were supported and teachers were encouraged to make sense of 'big picture' thinking in relation to the building of quality learning.

Chapter 5 discussed how Leaders of Learning made the exploration and building of quality learning the focus for ongoing professional learning in their schools. Leaders used examples and experiences from their own practice to challenge existing practice and to support the learning and teaching conversations. Leaders created visual models and prompts to remind students and teachers of the quality learning agenda. Promoting the features of quality learning in classrooms became a part of the ongoing planning approach of leaders. The language from the school learning frameworks was evident in the documentation of their planning.

Chapter 6 made clear how Leaders of Learning established new professional learning forums and agendas that reflected their understandings of quality learning. Leaders supported others to engage as active learners and create personalised 'action plans' to explore quality learning in their own classroom contexts.

Chapter 7 revealed how Leaders of Learning modelled an ongoing reflective approach to their teaching and to their professional learning. Through continual analysis of their practice they made refinements to their teaching and their leadership of professional learning. Leaders built opportunities for teachers to engage in reflection as part of their approach to professional learning. Leaders designed strategies to ensure they maintained focus on exploring the nature of quality learning and that this remained central to the professional learning approach.

The exploration of the research questions raised a number of important themes that were central to all phases of the development of Leaders of Learning. These themes were closely connected as the leaders' learning in one area influenced the way they thought about another area. The themes were: quality student learning, quality teaching, and, quality professional learning and building leadership capacity.

Professional Learning as a Leader of the development of Leaders of Learning

As a participant-observer in this research my approach to working with the Leaders of Learning initially aimed at building their capacity to improve student learning. I was in a position to create an approach to working with leaders that explored the contexts in which they worked and then respond to their challenges in personalised ways. My motivation was to support Leaders of Learning to remain focused on understanding and building quality learning, and not be side-tracked by factors that did not advance that agenda. (I was constantly reminded of the difficulty this posed as schools are busy places and with competing agendas, the improvement of learning and teaching was often interrupted.)

I was confident in my understanding of quality learning and the influence my pedagogy could have in supporting Leaders of Learning to establish a whole-school approach for the improvement of learning; which was personalised to each context. My approach consistently modelled the features of quality learning as I established learning partnerships with leaders that were flexible and responsive to the challenges in their schools. I also encouraged Leaders of Learning to engage as active learners where they were empowered to make decisions about their own teaching and leadership practice.

Doing so required an ongoing focus on raising personal awareness of pedagogy and the motivation to experiment with, and design, practice. As Leaders of Learning became more aware of their own pedagogy, they were then more empowered to explore the challenges that

hindered their building of effective learning and teaching and they became 'designers of practice' rather than 'consumers' of the practice of others. These leaders understood how to expose and then respond to the challenges that arose in order to maintain a serious and strategic approach to building quality learning.

The framework 'Building Pedagogical Leadership' reflects the challenges faced by Leaders of Learning as they explored ways to improve learning. It captures the complex nature of changing learning and teaching in schools and illustrates the direction of my learning as I became more aware of the discrepancies between desired learning and actual practice, as well as the reliance on the implementation of 'expert practice' as the main change strategy in schools. In order to improve learning and teaching, Leaders of Learning needed to understand examples of practice that promoted a passive approach to learning and identify important features of quality learning before they could make sense of what was happening in their schools, and then design practice to promote quality learning for students and teachers.

Conclusion

The findings of this research show that it is possible to build the capacity of school-based Leaders of Learning to establish and maintain a serious focus on building quality learning and teaching in their schools. Effective Leaders of Learning are important to conceptualising an approach to building quality learning that promotes the design of new practice. By exposing the real challenges that hinder the building of quality learning in schools, Leaders of Learning can establish personalised change agendas that address school improvement in new and meaningful ways.

For some time, researchers such as Sarason (1996), Fullan (2001, 2007) and Richardson and Placier (2001) – to name but a few – have argued about the importance of teachers in the change process. More so, such arguments depend on understanding and appropriately responding to the culture and context of teaching and learning for both teachers and their students. This research has pursued educational change at a school level by working with, and empowering teachers, through a serious focus on learning which ultimately led to observable changes in practice. Such change was largely dependent on an approach to professional learning and leadership that took seriously working within the teaching-learning relationship that is embodied in the reality of that which is required to pursue high quality pedagogy.

In a thoughtful review of learning and development and how change might genuinely impact student learning, Mulford and Silins (2003) asked the question: "Leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes - What do we know?"

The research in this thesis strongly suggests that placing learning at the centre of the educational enterprise supported by teacher led professional learning really does make a difference and can lead to the changes sought but so rarely realized; the rhetoric can become reality, maintaining fidelity of intent through implementation when 'scaling up' appears to be the major challenge.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Leader of Learning Artefacts

Physical environment of the classroom and classroom displays:
Leaders of Learning engaged in classroom observations to demonstrate how they were building the ideas discussed during 1:1 coaching sessions and group conversations. The discussions occurring during the classroom observations were captured through photos and videos. This photo was taken during a classroom observation of a selected Leader of Learning. It was later used to support this leader to identify key changes they had made to their approach to teaching narratives.
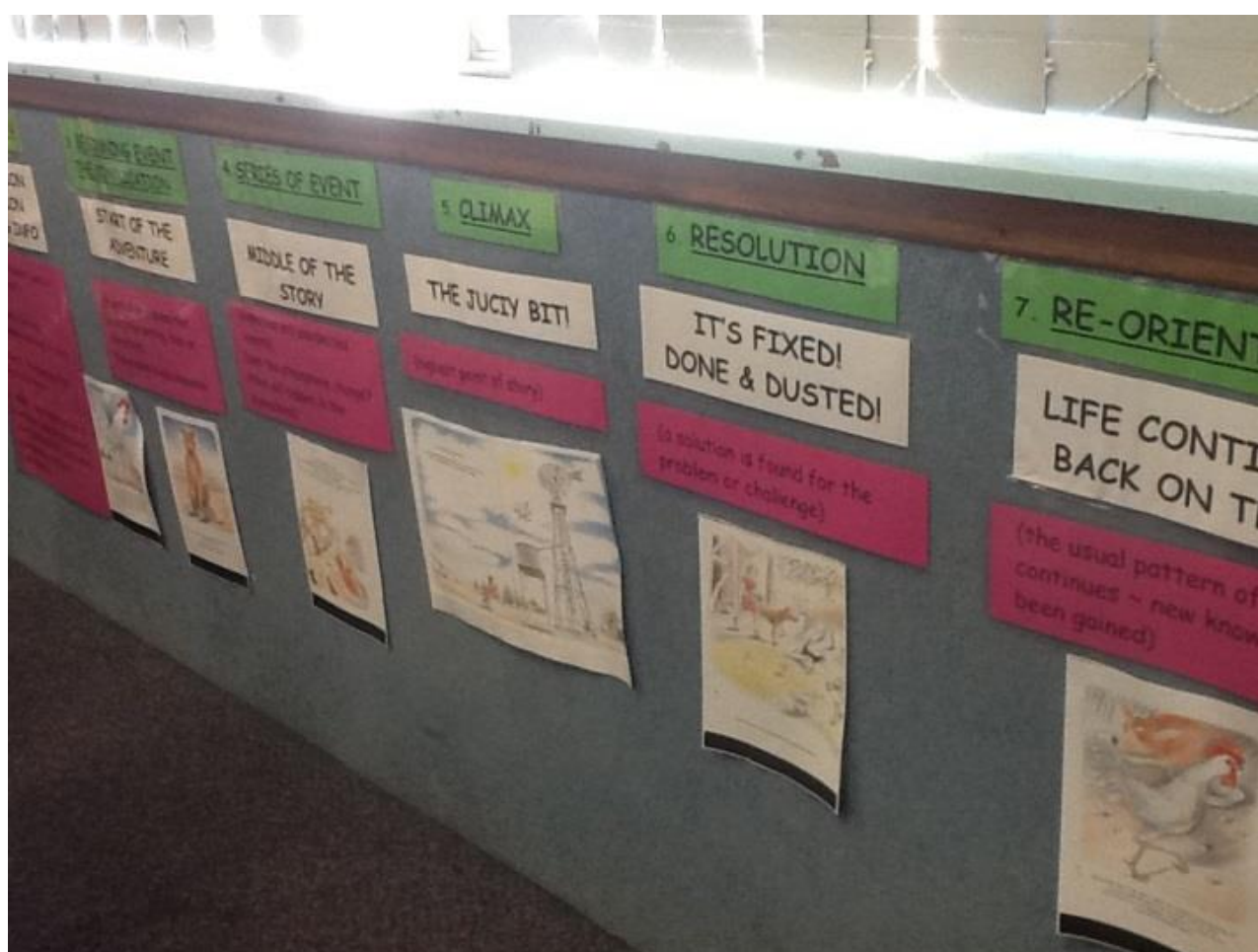
Classroom displays:
Leaders of Learning brought classroom displays to coaching sessions and group conversations to support their communication of their practice. This photo is of a poster developed by a Leader of Learning. The poster was brought to a 1:1 coaching session to support an explanation of what reflective conversations looked like in the classroom.

Conceptual drawings:
Drawings that explore aspects of student and teacher learning are developed during the conversations with Leaders of Learning. These drawings capture current thinking and frame new ideas and directions for change. Photos of these drawings are taken and later used to prompt further conversation. This photo illustrates a model drawn during a group conversation designed to capture the key ideas discussed in relation to the professional learning structure in the school. The photo was used to prompt further thinking during an online conversation.
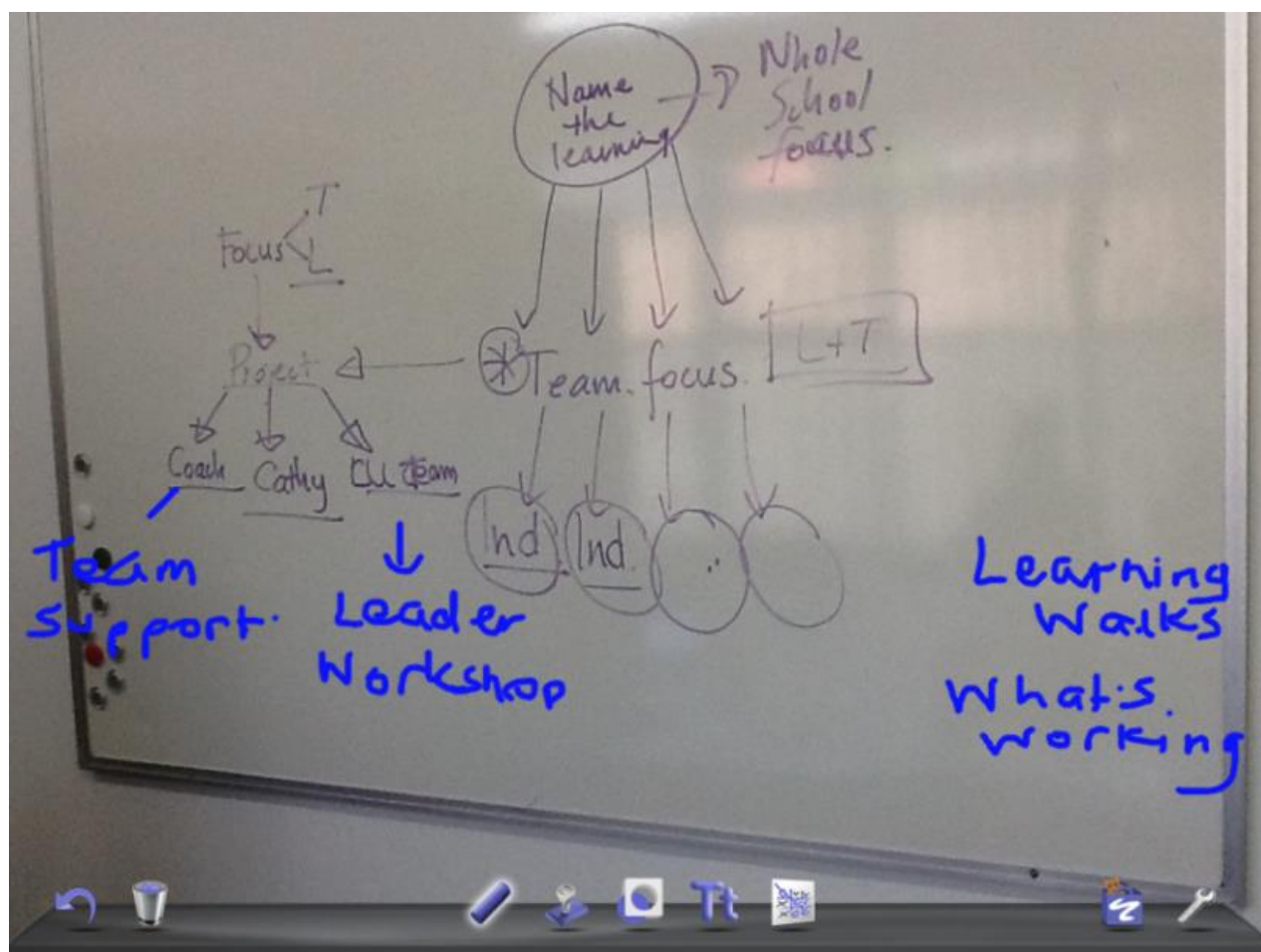
Models:

During conversations with Leaders of Learning introduced models are incorporated into the conceptual drawings. The physical nature of the models reminds Leaders of Learning of key aspects of change and quality learning. Below is a photo of a conceptual drawing incorporating a change model that captures ways to build both quality student and teacher learning. This photo of a conceptual drawing incorporates a change model, school learning theme and current thinking around identified strategies**.**
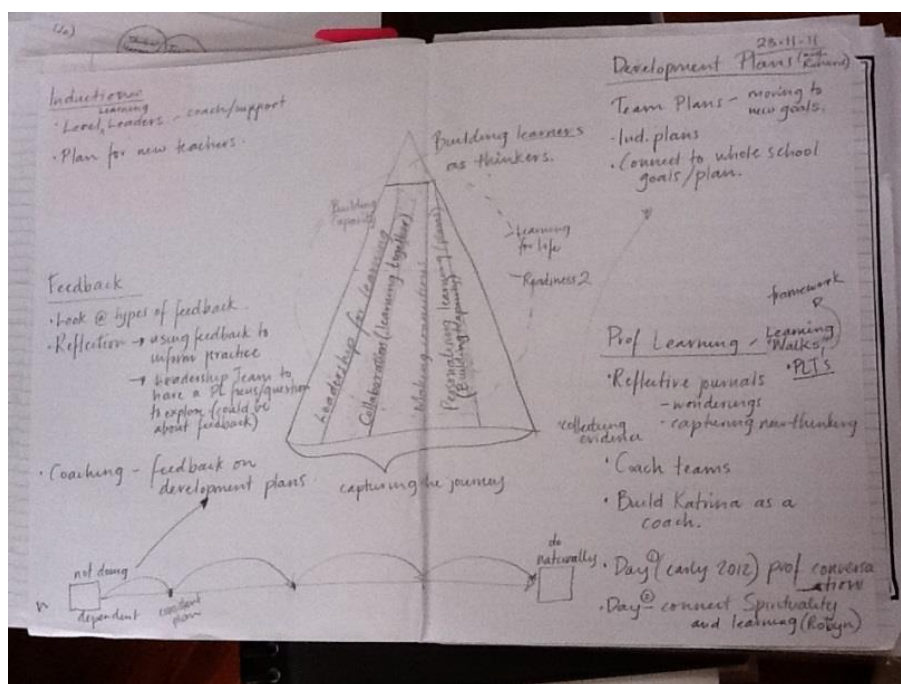
Student work samples:

Leaders of Learning used samples of their students' work to support their communication of teacher and student change. Student work samples were used as an artefact to support Leaders of Learning when sharing their individual action plans with others. This photo shows a collection of student work that highlights how students have explored ideas around quality learning.

Classroom actions:

Leaders of Learning used photos, videos or written annotations to describe key teaching actions relating to their individual action plans. This is a photo taken of a learning tool developed by a Leader of Learning as part of their individual action plan**.**

This photo shows a student exploring the new learning tool

Frameworks:
Leaders of Learning developed their own frameworks to capture their thinking around different aspects of student and teacher learning. The frameworks supported Leaders of Learning in the communication of their thinking. This photo shows a framework created by a Leader of Learning developed to communicate a vision for a whole school action learning approach.
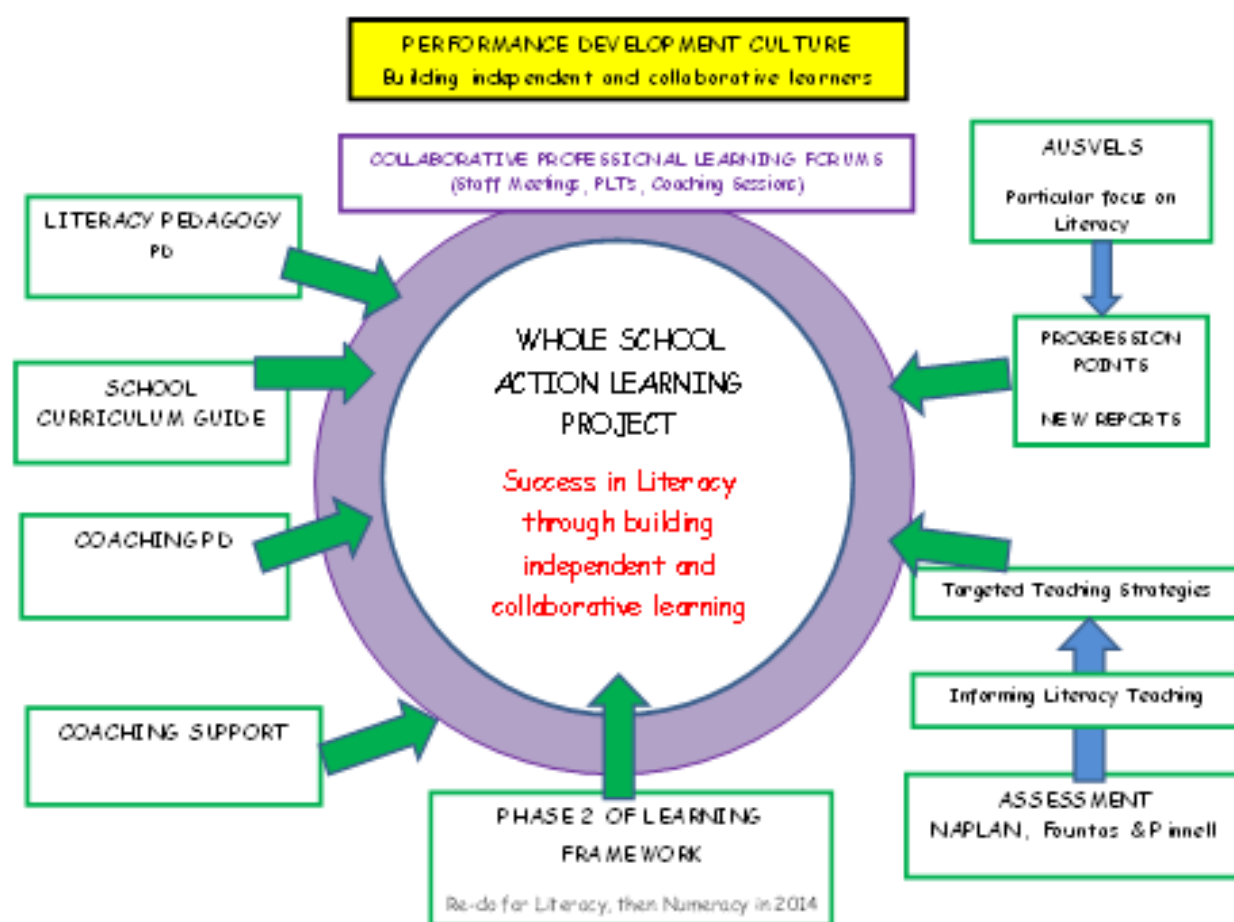
The following table is an example of a framework developed by a Leader of Learning to support teachers to explore quality student learning

2014 LEARNING FRAMEWORK
BUILDING INDEPENDENT, COLLABORATIVE & INNOVATIVE LEARNERS
PHASE ONE

LEARNING TOOLS	GOOD LEARNING BEHAVIOURS	COLLABORATION
INTRODUCE & REVISIT TOOLS EXPAND INDIVIDUAL & CLASS TOOLBOX USE A VARIETY OF TOOLS TOOLS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES Articulate the name and purpose of learning tools • Use prompts around the classroom to remind them of the name, visual mature and purpose of a bank of learning tools. • Use learning tools in ways that allow them to personalise their learning (innovation) • Use learning tools to show connections between ideas, tasks, lessons, topics and curriculum areas • Use learning tools that prompt them to ask a range of questions	• Articulate the GLB's they will use to prepare for a task • Articulate the GLB's they used during the learning task • Can articulate the difference between GLB's and GSB's • Use GLB's • Articulate the GLBs that will support their interactions with others **MAKING DECISIONS** • Decide which GLB's they will need to use in a task • Articulate the decisions they can make or have made in a task. • Make good choices about nutrition • Seek opportunities for physical activity • Act safely when using electronic communication • Ensure that they wear a hat • Be aware of personal hygiene • Utilize times for fruit and water • Understand and manage their own S & E needs • Know how to problem-solve and make informed decisions • Accept the consequences of the decisions they make and actions • Be 'HEART S' • Can be responsible for their own belongings and working environment • Identify and responds appropriately to potential hazards • Contribute to and follow the routines and structures of the classroom	• Communicate the ways they will contribute to the team task • Evaluate and share their contribution to the team • Explain the collaborative strengths of each class mate • Have eye contact with people when communicating • Confidently welcome and greet all members of the community • Engage in community events • Be collegial amongst each other • Will seek opportunities to actively share their learning • Demonstrate empathy and social awareness towards others • Build and foster positive relationships with others

Reflections:
Leaders of Learning were encouraged to reflect on their practice and record these reflections in various ways. These became artefacts that were used to promote conversations about their learning and provide data on how their thinking had changed. This photo is an example of a reflection of a Leader of Learning around existing challenges in building student reflection.

What I thought about reflection before

A way to finish off a lesson

ANOTHER thing to do – no time for it

How do you do it?

Show and Tell – this is what I did

"Airy Fairy" – hard to see its purpose

Notes from conversations:
Leaders of Learning recorded the key ideas discussed during group conversations. These artefacts supported leaders to share their thinking during follow up 1:1 coaching conversations, written reflections and online conversations. This is a photo showing a list of learning goals. The list was developed by a team of teachers, led by a Leader of Learning.

At the end of term 1 we hope our students will:
- know where to look for thinking tools
- be supported in using new thinking tools
- know strategies to problem solve for learning
- know where to look for reading strategies (...
- be able to identify good learning behaviours and for reflection and goal setting
be able to make appropriate cybersafety choices
be able to ...*3 iPad apps with support to enhan...
...e involved in how the space is to be effectively uti...
...arning (making good choices - rules (expectations)
...e all classmates as potential learning partners a...
...embers - We all have something to offer!

Appendix 2: Coaching Tools

Coaching tools were developed in response to the conversations with Leaders of Learning. The tools supported Leaders of Learning to consider specific aspects of learning, teaching, professional learning and leadership.

Learning and teaching tools:

The learning and teaching tool supported Leaders of Learning to consider learning and teaching separately as well as explore the relationship that exists between them. The learning circle appears first in the tool to encourage leaders to consider this as a lens to think about their teaching. This diagram shows the blue and yellow, learning and teaching tool.

Blue Circle (Learning)   Yellow circle (Teaching)
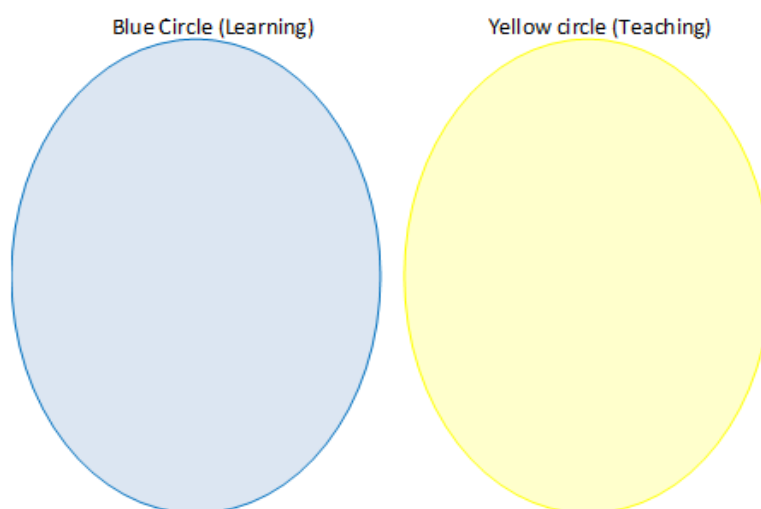
This graphic shows the learning and teaching tool used to explore a focus on student reflection.

Teaching <u>and</u> learning

Understanding learning

Teacher and Learner

Ownership

The Learning Process

Understanding thinking

Practical Application

Relationships with students

Impact of teaching

Understanding teaching

How does reflection improve learning?

What does reflective thinking look like?

What understandings do my learners have of reflection?

Reflective practice

What tasks/strategies will I develop to encourage my students to reflect?

How do I bring reflection into my teaching?

How will I know if my learners are building understandings about reflection?

How will I encourage students to reflect naturally during their learning?

Jo Osler, 2011

Individual teacher action plans:

During the 1:1 coaching conversations and group conversations, Leaders of Learning were encouraged to identify their future teaching and professional learning actions that will support them to build quality learning. This graphic shows an individual action learning plan and has been transcribed in chapter 5.
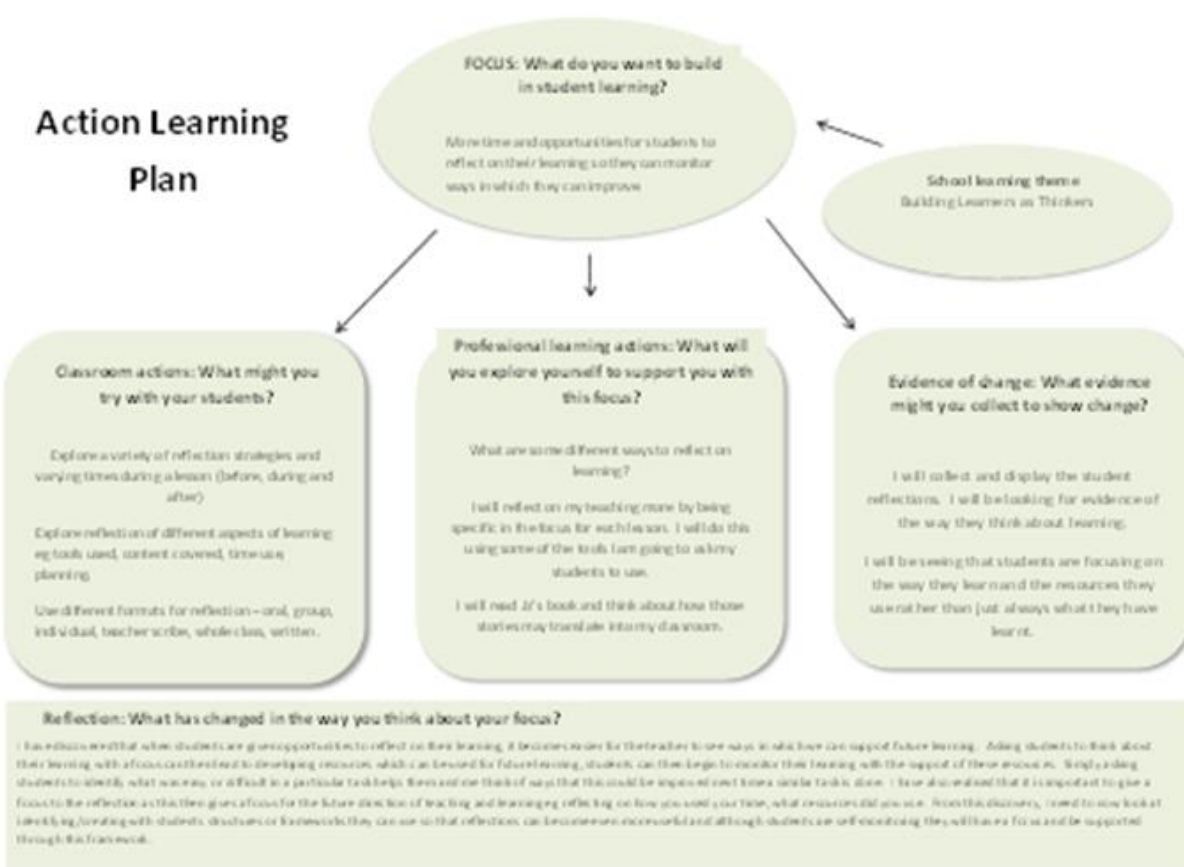
Big picture tools:

Coaching tools were developed to help Leaders of Learning build 'big picture' thinking around quality learning and leading change. This graphic shows a Change model created by a Leader of Learning to show the directions for change of a Principal group.
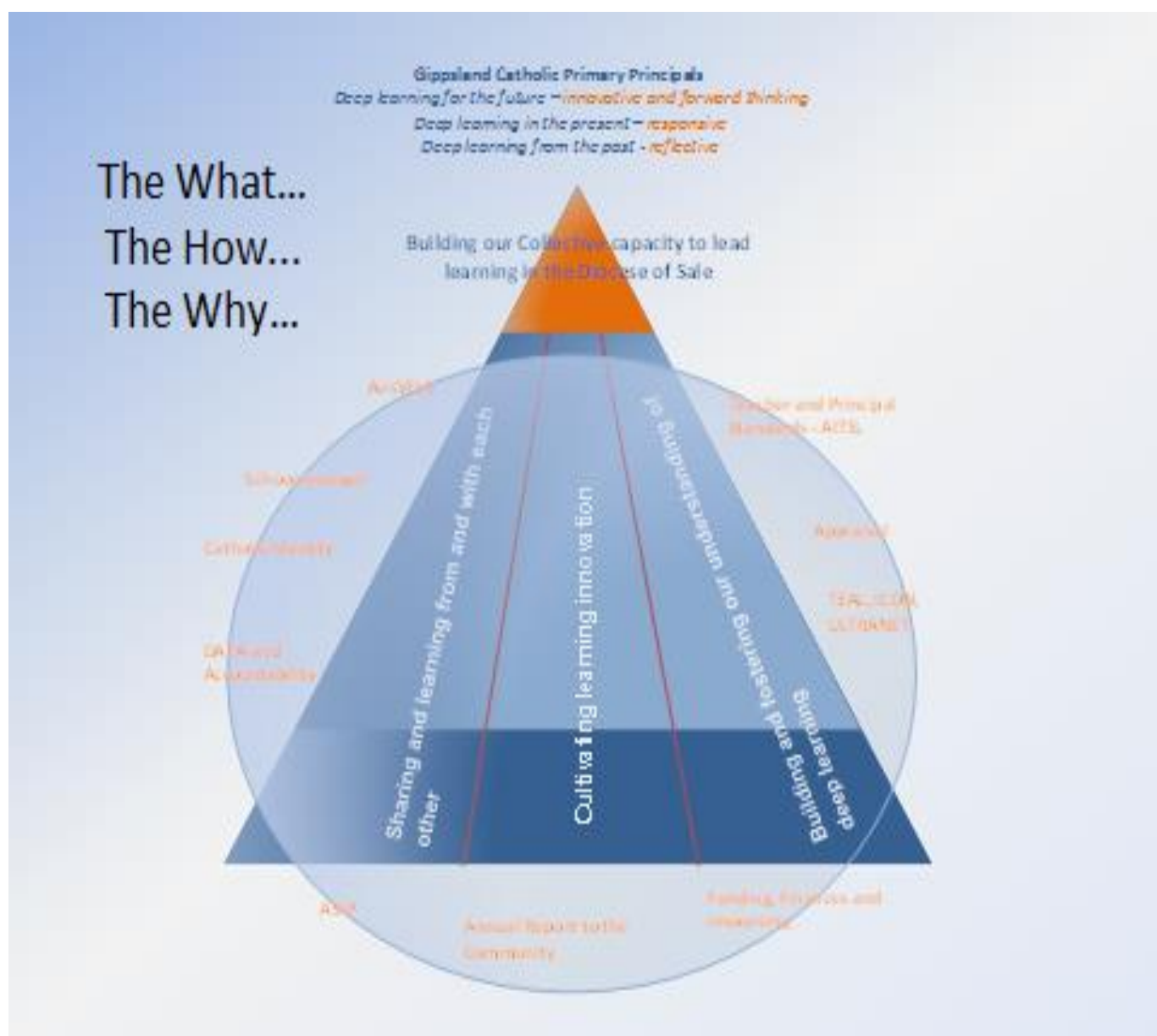
Pre-determined questions:

Pre-determined questions were used to focus Leader of Learning preparation before 1:1 coaching sessions and group conversations. Selected questions were also sent to leaders to support conversations and classroom observations.

Responsive questions:

During 1:1 coaching sessions, group and online conversations and in response to classroom visits, questions were used to respond to the situation at the time. Further questions encouraged Leaders of Learning to take the conversations deeper, clarify their thinking and continue to explore particular directions. Responsive questions arose from the conversations generated by the pre-determined questions, the sharing of artefacts, the development of coaching tools and during the process of identifying possible actions for the future.

Appendix 3: PEEL List of Good Learning Behaviours

This is the original list of Good Learning Behaviours developed by PEEL. Within this research Leaders of Learning identified learning behaviours that described different aspects of active learning and vary from this list. Each statement was written as 'Learner can…" statement to identify the actions students will engage in to be more effective learners.

1. Tell teacher **when** they don't understand.

2. Asks teacher **why** they went wrong.

3. Tells teacher **what** they don't understand.

4. Checks work against instruction, correcting errors and omissions.

5. When stuck, refers to earlier work **before** asking teacher

6. Checks personal comprehension of instruction and material. Requests further information if needed.

7. Seeks reasons for aspects of the work at hand.

8. Anticipates and predicts possible outcomes

9. Plans a general strategy before starting.

10. Explains purposes and results.

11. Checks teacher's work for errors; offers corrections.

12. Seeks links between adjacent activities and ideas.

13. Seeks links between non-adjacent activities, ideas and between different topics.

14. Independently seeks further information, following up ideas raised in class.

15. Seeks links between different subjects.

16. Asks inquisitive but **general** questions.

17. Offers personal examples which are **generally** relevant.

18. Seeks **specific** links between schoolwork and personal life.

19. Searches for weaknesses in their own understandings; checks the consistency of their explanations across different situations.

20. Suggests new activities and alternative procedures.

21. Expresses disagreement.

22. Offers ideas, new insights and alternative explanations.

23. Justifies opinions

24. Reacts and refers to comments of other students.

25. Challenges the text or an answer the teacher

Seeks Assistance

Checks Personal Progress

Plans and Anticipates

Reflects on the Work

Links to Beliefs and Experiences

Assumes a position

MONITORING BEHAVIOURS

CONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING BEHAVIOURS

Appendix 4: Acronyms used with the thesis

Acronym	Explanation
PD: Professional Development.	The term used to describe more traditional approaches to teacher learning. Usually developed by leadership and 'experts' to present identified strategies and consistent messages to larger groups of teachers.
PEEL: Project for Enhancing Effective Learning	A project developed to support groups of teachers to explore quality learning together. (Baird & Northfield, 1992)
PLT: Professional Learning Team	Professional Learning Teams are groups of teachers exploring a common focus. These teams come together in meetings to discuss their learning and identify future actions. PLTs are commonly seen as meetings with a wide range of purposes.
GLBs: Good Learning Behaviours	Refer to Appendix 3.
PLF: Professional Learning Forum	Name given to professional learning meetings to reflect a change in agenda and structure. Professional learning forums replaced Professional Learning Team meetings (PLTs).
LLL: Learning Level Leaders	Common title given to Leaders of Learning that describe their role within the school. Level refers to the grade levels of students where the teaching team is placed.
ASIP: Annual School Improvement Plan	Common name of school improvement plans that describe key strategies for implementation within a year.
ARMS: Annual Review Meetings	Meetings to identify and discuss teacher and leader performance and future development.
MAI: Maths assessment Interview	Assessment interview where students work through a range of levelled maths questions. The interview is administered by a teacher or leader.