

# **Professional Development: What makes it work?**

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## **Abstract**

Each year, every school spends thousands of dollars and allocates many, many hours to the ongoing professional development of its teachers. Does this investment translate into changes in classroom practice and does it make a difference to student learning? This paper summarises the learning of twelve schools that participated in a Ministry of Education contact aimed at rethinking professional development practices. It examines changes they made to the way they planned and organised professional development, how they tailored programmes to the needs of individuals and groups, how they attempted to monitor and evaluate the outcomes, the induction of teachers new to a school and issues related to the change process itself. It also evaluates the experience of four of the twelve Principals who participated in a professional development group as part of their programme.

## **Introduction to the project**

In 2000, the Ministry of Education contracted the Institute of Professional Development and Education Research (IPDER) to deliver a Development Contract to twelve schools in the Auckland area. A number of other providers were contracted to carry out similar work in other areas of the country. The twelve Auckland schools comprised six primary and intermediate schools and six secondary schools.

The goal of the Contract was to support schools to evaluate their professional development practices against current best practice as outlined in the international and national literature and then to adapt and change their programmes in light of that review. In the previous year, the Ministry had developed a draft document, 'Making Changes: Improving Schools Through Professional Development', and it was intended that the schools would trial this resource as part of their commitment to the Contract. The Contract ran from February 2000 through to April 2001 and was designed to involve the whole school, including the Principal. Each school appointed a professional development team of between three and six people to coordinate the developments which involved a series of workshops with all twelve schools, a

number of in-school visits and the school working on a range of on-site activities, on their own, in between these meetings.

The next section of the paper details how the data were collected for the research. This is followed by a summary of the literature that guided the development work in the schools and, subsequently, the research. The final section of the paper details the findings. These are grouped under four major headings relating to the purpose of professional development, some philosophical considerations, the professional development process and the skills needed to implement a quality programme.

## How the evaluation of the Contract was conducted

The twelve schools were selected from forty-three that expressed interest in participating in the Contract. The criteria stipulated that there be a mix of secondary, intermediate and primary schools and a range of deciles<sup>1</sup>. As previously described, there were six primary and intermediate schools and six secondary schools. The secondary schools ranged in size from 100 students through to 1400. Seven of the schools are state schools and the remaining five are integrated. The decile distribution of the twelve schools is as follows:

Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
School	** **		*		*	** *		*		**

The data show that five of the schools are in the lower deciles (1-3), four are in the mid-deciles (4-6) and three are in the higher deciles (7-10).

The data for this paper come from a number of sources. Each school conducted a formal review of their school's professional development practices, based on a questionnaire devised by the IPDER Team. Each school summarized its own situation and IPDER collated the data across the schools. A number of evaluations were conducted towards the end of the programme. These included an evaluation of the year's work by the professional development teams in each of the schools, an evaluation by the Principal in each school and another by the four Principals who participated in a professional development group as part of their Contract programme. The criteria for these evaluations was a comprehensive set of expected outcomes and indicators set by the Ministry of Education.

In addition to this data, the experiences of two of the schools, one primary and one secondary, were written up as case studies. The data for the case studies

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<sup>1</sup> All New Zealand schools are ranked on a decile scale of one to ten. It is a measure of socio-economic position with decile one having the lowest ranking and decile ten the highest ranking. Some school funding is allocated on the basis of decile ranking in an attempt to provide for equity.

were collected over the 15-month period of the Contract and involved an analysis of meeting notes, action plans and in-school evaluations as well as facilitator observations. Each case study was reviewed and critiqued by the professional development team in each of the two schools.

## **The characteristics of effective professional development: what the literature tells us**

### ***Learning is for everyone***

Stoll and Fink (1996) state that no matter how effective a school is deemed to be, there is an assumption that more can always be achieved. Their concept of a 'moving' school is directly linked to people actively working together to respond to their changing context and a commitment to ongoing development. Barth (1990) goes further than this when he promotes the need for schools to be 'a community of learners'. He makes it clear that learning is a continuous process, that there is always more to learn and that students will only learn alongside adults who are learning - 'When teachers stop growing, so do their students' (ibid: 50). Hargreaves (2000) suggests that professionalism is dependent upon this ongoing learning and argues that it should be regarded as an individual obligation for all teachers, as well as an entitlement.

There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that the principal also needs to be seen as an active learner (Burt and Davison, 1998, Evans, 1996, Stoll and Fink, 1996; Robertson, 1993). Barth (ibid: 42) extends his oxygen mask analogy by suggesting that if the principal wants his teachers to learn, he or she must also be learning. The principal plays a pivotal role in modelling learning, building a culture of collaboration, and identifying potential in and facilitating the learning of others.

### ***We learn by taking risks and trying something new***

If teachers are to engage in a developmental process of improving practice they need to be able to take risks, make mistakes and engage in honest self-reflection. This requires a culture where the relationships bind them together in a supportive, inquiring community that values and supports the judgements and expertise of its teachers (Fullan and Hargreaves: 1996). Fullan (1999) later writes:

*An innovation won't go anywhere unless the school culture is favourable in terms of the way people solve problems and work together.*

Schools need to ask what it is about their culture, policies and practices that will support development, both individual and collective, and what will impede progress.

### ***We need to 'own' the process***

Rudman (1999) makes the point that adults are self-directing in their learning and will resist or try to escape from situations where they are talked down to, are told what to do or are treated without respect. Therefore, professional development is more likely to bring about change if the programme is inclusive and if all the stakeholders have ownership of that process. It will not be effective if the process is imposed. Evans (1993) argues that resistance to change is inevitable and that the primary task of managing change is not technical but motivational. In other words, there is a need to build commitment to the innovation amongst those that have to implement it. It takes time to build this ownership and this needs to be taken into consideration when planning a professional development programme (Birman et al: 2000).

### ***The learning needs to be relevant***

Birman et al (ibid) remind us that effective professional development must meet the needs of teachers. It should have, what they call, 'coherence - consistency with their goals, addressing real and daily concerns and building on earlier experiences and learning. Willis (2000) argues that not only must the content of the professional development be relevant to a teacher's day-to-day concerns, but also must be located as much as possible in the teacher's real world. Professional development must take into account the context and characteristics of the school and its particular students if change is going to occur. It is also important to recognise that teachers will have different levels of readiness and commitment to engage in reflection and change (Hopkins et al: 1994). Sometimes, this will depend on a teacher's overall attitude and understanding and, at other times, it will depend on the area of development. A teacher who may champion one particular innovation may not bring the same readiness and commitment to another initiative.

### ***We need to focus on deep rather than shallow learning***

Professional development needs to be much more than going on a course and picking up a useful strategy. The focus needs to be on deep learning that provides the experiences and understanding that not only modify practice but also enable teachers to examine the values and beliefs that underpin that practice. As Hopkins et al (1994: 41) suggest:

*All successful change requires an individual response. Often the experience is individually threatening and disconcerting which is why we need organizational settings in schools which support teachers, and students, in the process of change. These settings need first to be organized around the realisation that change is a process that requires individuals to alter their ways of thinking and doing.*

As described by ERO (2000) in their review of in-service training for teachers in New Zealand schools, effective teaching also involves a complex interplay between theory and practice. Professional development based on a commitment to deep learning will assist teachers to develop their conceptual understanding

and connect this with their practice by providing opportunities to critically examine and reflect on their classroom practice.

### ***We're working on this together***

The importance of a school seeing itself as a learning community has already been discussed. The notion of community suggests collaboration with teachers working together as well as teachers working with students and parents. New Zealand schools, especially primary schools, have a strong tradition of teachers working in teams. The question is, does this level of collaboration extend to the deep learning to which Hopkins et al (1994) refer? Does it change their ways of thinking and doing? Teachers need to be able to learn, observe and network with their peers, both within schools and across schools, at both informal and formal levels. They need opportunities to share their collective wisdom and build on it (Rudman: 1999). Extensive research by Showers et al (1996; 1987) suggests that one of the most effective ways of building on that wisdom is through peer coaching that involves in-class observation and sharing of best practice. Edwards (2001) suggests that feedback is another essential component and argues that this is not always done well:

*Teachers don't know how to give and receive feedback, both positive and negative, and how to act on this. The good news is that it is learnable and learning these skills can have an utterly profound effect on an institution.*

In contrast, Showers et al (ibid) argue that, because of its potentially destructive effects, feedback should be omitted from the process. Given the critical importance research places on feedback to students in the teaching and learning process, Edwards' argument that this should occur between the adults in schools seems very sound. The point is made, however, that giving feedback in appropriate ways and developing the self-efficacy to be able to receive it, require training and practice.

### ***What difference is this making to our students?***

Professional development should make a difference to the delivery of the teaching and learning programme and ensure that both opportunities and outcomes for students are improved. Showers and Joyce (1996: 16) advocate that:

*Teachers need to plan how they will monitor implementation of new initiatives and how they will determine the impact of each initiative on their students.*

The notion of planning for this aspect of the development is crucial. There is evidence to suggest that schools struggle to do this. Responses from 187 schools to an ERO survey (ERO: 2000) showed that very few schools had formal systems for evaluating the impact of professional development on teachers or students against pre-determined objectives.

The schools in the 'Making Changes' Contract used the principles described above as a basis for their review and development work over the twelve months. The following section details the findings from their individual and collective endeavours.

## **Translating the theory into practice: what was learned from the schools**

### ***The purpose of professional development***

#### **A commitment to building a learning culture**

In schools that have an effective learning culture, the love of learning is evident throughout the organisation. Students want teachers who love their job, love the school, love the subjects they teach and who genuinely care for them. They need teachers who do not stop learning and who actively engage in ongoing professional development. They need principals who want to lead the development of a learning culture - enabling, encouraging, recognising and rewarding the learning of others - and who see themselves as active learners. A number of the schools in the Contract set out to deliberately build a stronger learning culture in their schools. As in any culture changing or culture building process, there was no magic solution or quick fix, but rather a tapestry of both overt and subtle actions that would shift approaches and practices over time. The ideas described below are just some of the ways they went about this task.

#### **Professional development should make a difference to classroom practice**

There was a growing expectation amongst the schools that professional development should result in tangible outcomes for the school and, certainly, for the teacher. There is an awareness that one-off, one-day courses often do not provide the kind of professional development that enables teachers to return to school and implement what they have learned. A course might improve professional knowledge but does not necessarily change professional practice. School personnel endeavoured to find ways of organising ongoing, on-site professional development that met the real needs of their teachers and the real needs of the students they were teaching.

#### **Induction**

A number of schools commented on the need for more formal and comprehensive induction programmes for teachers new to their schools. They acknowledged that while it is essential to meet colleagues, know the layout of the school and be familiar with the schools procedures, it is also important to understand some of the 'bigger picture' aspects of the school - its goals, its approaches to teaching and learning, its philosophy in relation to professional development. A carefully planned programme with training, readings, observations and discussion invites teachers to be learners from the time they enter the school, helps them to 'belong' to the school and supports them in making a positive contribution to achieving the school's vision.

## ***Some philosophical positions in relation to professional development***

### **Do less better**

There is a danger of overloading teachers with professional development. It was common for staff to have three or four professional development topics to work on in any given year. Sometimes this was planned and, in other instances, it was a result of Principal or other senior staff seeing an opportunity, such as the chance to participate in a Contract, and deciding to apply in case they did not get the chance again. Invariably, this work got added to what they had already planned. In many of the Contract schools, teachers typically had three or four appraisal goals to work towards in addition to the whole school goals. It was common for the teachers to complain that there was not enough time for professional development. For a number of the Contract schools, it was not lack of time that created problems but rather that they were trying to do too much. When they reduced the programme to cover just one or two whole school professional development topics a year, teachers expressed greater satisfaction and were able to make a genuine attempt at making lasting changes. Some schools were also planning to reduce the number of appraisal goals or to link them more closely to the school-wide professional development initiatives.

### **Professional development programmes should meet the prioritised needs**

If learning is to be relevant to teachers it has to meet real needs, and a distinction drawn between real needs and wants. There will be times when the needs will be those of the whole school, of groups and/or individuals. It is imperative that the needs are clearly identified and then, because it is impossible to work on everything at once, that priorities are established. In the schools where there was good baseline data to support their decision making, it was much easier to set priorities. It took them longer to get started but it was much easier to gain commitment to the goals that were set and faster progress appeared to be made once they began the development work. Including a professional development strand in their strategic plan allayed the fears of teachers in some of the schools who felt that some important needs would be 'lost' if a commitment was not made to meeting them a little further down the track.

One of the dangers of whole school professional development is that the programme is planned with the view that all teachers are at the same place in their learning. Given that the focus or the goal may be the same for all teachers e.g. integrating technology into the curriculum, improving the standards of literacy across the school or applying multiple intelligences theory - consideration needs to be given to the particular needs of teachers. The important questions to be asked include:

- Are there some teachers who are already very knowledgeable in this area?
- Are there some teachers with some prior learning?

- Who are the teachers who need to start at the very beginning?
- Are there some things we need to work on together and other things we can work on in groups or as individuals?
- What are the best ways of meeting the different needs of these teachers?

One secondary school in the Contract set up a range of different tasks for teachers at varying levels of difficulty. Each teacher selected their starting point and worked their way through the different levels. Some of the more 'expert' teachers took workshops for other teachers and others 'buddied up' with colleagues to provide additional support. Teachers kept a portfolio of their achievements including a record of the whole school professional development activities in which they participated.

### **Pay attention to pedagogy as well as subjects**

Over the last few years, the focus of professional development has been on the implementation of the new curricula. In primary schools, in particular, it was usual for professional development programmes to centre around subjects, for example English, Maths, Technology or the Arts. For many schools, assessment was one of the few generic, or pedagogical topics that was addressed during this period. Even now, it is common for schools to have planned another 'round' of subject based professional development programmes. While this work is very important and necessary, it is also critical that schools decide on the approaches they want teachers to bring to the teaching and learning process. There are some bigger issues that relate to quality learning that go beyond subjects - the relationship between a teacher and the students in a class; the quality of the teacher talk; the processes used by the teacher to encourage learning; teaching problem solving. These issues cut across subject lines and also require professional development time and resources.

### **The active involvement of Principals' in their own professional development as well as in that of their teachers**

When the principals engaged in serious and visible professional development, important messages were being given to teachers about commitment to ongoing learning. Principal professional development means more than attending conferences and geographic cluster meetings. Networking is important but should not be confused with learning, development and being professionally challenged. Four of the principals in the Contract set up a professional development group, facilitated by one of the members of the IPDER Team, that provided a forum where they could openly discuss their greatest concerns and work with the others to explore options and solutions. It was also a forum to discuss readings, sent out in advance, around 'hot' topics decided on by the group. This group was one of the most valued aspects of the programme for the principals and it has continued to meet even though the Contract finished at the beginning of this year.

A number of the principals played an active leadership role in the school's professional development programme. Almost all of them were members of the professional development teams that were set up to coordinate the programmes in each of the schools. As the professional leader in the school and the 'head learner' (Barth, 1990: 72) they were able to contribute their wisdom and experience to the process and reinforce important messages about the school's vision for and expectations of the professional development programme. These messages sometimes required the kind of bravery that only a principal, as the professional leader, can show - backing a decision that all the professional development funding will be put towards whole school PD for a year rather than both whole school and individual PD; or explaining why 'call back' days will be used for professional development at the beginning of the year; or backing a plan for staff to enter into a programme that involves a lot of additional teacher time and energy.

Their presence, their talk and their actions play a major role in building a learning culture. In one school, where the Principal was not actively involved in the school's professional development programme, predictable problems occurred. Advance planning done by the professional development team was dramatically changed when the Principal saw the plan. From that time on, the group became demoralised and ceased to function effectively. Furthermore, the Principal's actions denied the staff the opportunity to change some very traditional professional practices that a survey had already shown were effecting very few, if any, changes in classrooms.

### ***The process of professional development***

#### **Planning strategically for professional development**

There was a growing awareness of the need to link professional development to broader school goals, often articulated in strategic plans and school self-review programmes. Professional development is at the heart of changes teachers make in their teaching and learning practice and should mirror the school's goals. Typically, schools have asked questions like:

- What PD shall we do next year?
- What Contracts are there on offer?
- What courses are the local Education Centres offering?
- Isn't it about time we revisited (a subject)?
- Shall we have a 'go' at (a new programme or teaching and learning approach? I've heard that (a school down the road) has just 'done' it and it was very successful.

Now, an increasing number of schools are asking:

- What are our data telling us? Are there any gaps or trends that we need to address?
- What are our strategic goals?
- How are we progressing with these?
- What PD do we need to undertake to achieve these goals?

Making these links with longer term goals and avoiding an ad hoc approach to professional development provides coherence and gives a sense of relevance and meaning to teachers' learning, especially if they have played an active part in establishing those goals.

In addition to linking it to strategic goals, professional development itself should be planned for strategically. It has been common for schools to plan their professional development over a twelve-month period. There was a growing realisation amongst a number of the Contract schools that change happens over a much longer timeframe, especially if changes are to be embedded into practice. Rather than 'doing' a topic in a year, a number of the schools were taking a strategic goal and planning a professional development cycle around it that included a review in one year, making changes in the second year and embedding practice in the third. Even then, the induction of new staff, ongoing 'refresher' sessions and sharing of best practice is needed to maintain the changes as 'something we always do around here'.

### **Analysing the school's culture in relation to professional development**

Three of the schools in the Contract began their process by analysing their school culture to determine the extent to which it supports or hinders professional development. The school leaders recognised that some of their current practices did not measure up to what the literature was telling them about effective professional development but they were anxious to ascertain the perceptions and opinions of the staff. Some of the aspects of the school's existing culture that staff identified as supporting professional development were:

- A reasonable budget
- A climate of trust and openness
- Using the 'right' outside provider with expertise and credibility
- Working in groups on common professional development issues

Aspects they found that were currently working against effective professional development were:

- Not setting a clear purpose for professional development meetings or workshops

- The assumed right of individuals to select their own professional development topics
- Allocating a set amount of professional development funding per teacher, regardless of their needs or the cost of addressing them
- Teacher defensiveness about colleagues observing them in their classrooms
- Anxiety about the links between appraisal (associated with accountability) and professional development
- Inappropriate timing of professional development sessions

This information was shared with staff. It heightened teachers' awareness of the changes that needed to be made and gave the planning team important insights into the structural and organisational changes that could be made to improve the delivery of professional development. They set some longer-term goals to help shift teachers' attitudes to professional development and intended that, over time, the school's professional development culture would change.

### **A professional development team**

One of the most successful strategies used by the schools was setting up a professional development team. This group met approximately once a term and their task was to coordinate the professional development programme and to plan, in detail, for the next term's programme. In the past, especially in the secondary schools in the Contract, one person had been given the lonely job of motivating staff in whole school professional development. Only one set of ideas and the knowledge and experience of one person was brought to the decision making process. Sometimes, this person was a senior member of staff who may not have been in touch, or was perceived not to be in touch, with certain groups of staff such as beginning teachers, Heads of Departments or teachers who had been at the school a long time.

There were between three to six people working in each of the professional development teams depending on the size of the school. Generally, its members were leaders of the current professional development 'topics' or had particular expertise or were representative of particular groups within the staff. Its membership needed to be adjusted each year as the professional development programme evolved. In each case, the schools' professional development budgets allowed this group to have quality planning time. They did not meet for two hurried hours after school. They set aside a whole day or a half day that extended to the late afternoon so that the previous term's programme could be properly reviewed and evaluated and plans made for each step of the next term's programme. Readings were identified, teacher support activities were thought through, staff meeting programmes were prepared, data gathering tools were designed and tasks allocated to the different members to complete. Most importantly, the programme's successes and problems could be shared and collective decisions made to determine the best ways forward.

## **Professional reading**

A greater emphasis was placed professional reading. For many of the schools, there was less resistance to this by teachers than in the past although it was still important to find articles or extracts that were relatively short and which were recognisably relevant and useful to them. Just giving out readings to staff does not ensure that the teachers who most need to read them will get around to doing so. Nor does reading them mean that the learning is applied to the school or class situation. Some of the best outcomes were achieved when the reading was incorporated into a staff meeting or workshop. Not only did this ensure that everyone had read the article and was able to participate in the discussion that followed, but it also allowed for immediate processing of the information with others and the opportunity to determine how the information could be practically applied to their school. Time was put into finding ways of 'sharing' the task of reading the material using a number of groups and cooperative learning strategies. Teachers often use these strategies with their students but do not think using them with their colleagues.

## **Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the outcomes**

If one of the main purposes of professional development is to make a difference to classroom practice, it is important that schools find ways to measure the difference. In almost all of the Contract schools, the focus was on the delivery of the programme rather than measuring any benefits against professional development objectives. If they set out to design a measure, it was not uncommon for them to design development tasks rather than a method for reviewing outcomes.

Many of them wanted to know if they had made a difference but had not established any kind of baseline against which to measure their progress. Sometimes they already had the baseline data but did not think of using it. Many found it difficult to think beyond questionnaires and to come up with simple strategies to collect and instantly analyse data such as a post box exercises, wall graphs, notes from small group discussions and notes from feedback from several groups. Nor were there indications of teachers using the techniques and tools they use in their classrooms to measure progress and adapting them to their own learning such as self assessments, keeping a journal, videoing and making observations. There was little evidence of schools or individual teachers seeking feedback from students or using student work or achievement outcomes to measure the impact of changes they had made. Teachers' attitudes (e.g. to students in general, to boys, to other cultures, to students asking questions, to inappropriate behaviour) have an enormous impact on classroom learning. Though not impossible, changes in attitude are some of the most difficult changes to measure.

To help them begin their monitoring process, one school made the decision to set up a professional development database. They had lost track of the professional development each of their teachers had undertaken and, over time, struggled to remember the details of some of their whole school work. They wanted to keep individual records as well as aggregate trends across the whole

staff. Their intention was to maintain the database in an ongoing way and to analyse the information on an annual basis.

### **Sharing best practice**

Like students, teachers need to know what best practice looks like. They need to see work done by students in other classes. They need to see each other's planning and each other's practice. This should happen within the context of the professional development programme and needs to be linked to the needs of the teachers and the professional development goals that have been set. One school was working on the teaching of writing and every two weeks, they brought samples of student work to the staff meeting to critique and evaluate. They used this as a catalyst to support each other and to fine-tune the new techniques they were learning. It reinforced the notion of 'we're in this together'.

Joyce and Showers (1996; 1987) have provided compelling evidence in support of coaching. They suggest that if we want to change classroom practice, the most effective and direct way is to work in class with a teacher, either observing or being observed. This is common practice in pre-service education but does not happen again outside of an appraisal process observation. There are clear differences between coaching and the one-off appraisal observations with a more senior teacher observing someone further down the hierarchy. A coaching model suggests a more naturalistic and unplanned process where there is time to achieve trust and rapport, where feedback is ongoing and where both are expecting to learn from the exchange. In one of the secondary schools, the decision was made to allocate its entire professional development budget to releasing teachers to work with each other in classrooms. It was intended that most of this work would be done within the school but another option is to release a teacher to work with a teacher from another school.

It was important for the schools to recognise what did not qualify as 'sharing best practice'. Asking a teacher to give verbal feedback to staff about what they had learned at a course or conference was not a productive use of staff meeting time. Invariably, it took up a whole staff session and teachers reported that it made little impact on practice. In one school, teachers were required to write a report on professional development they had undertaken. In reality, this took up teacher time, made no difference to that teacher's practice and did not benefit other teachers in the school. The school changed from asking for a report, to asking teachers to set themselves a development goal and to write a concise action plan to help them achieve it. The school's professional development group monitored the action plan and the changes that were made. This is one way that links can be made between professional development and appraisal.

### **The timing of professional development**

There was considerable debate amongst the schools as to the best time to undertake professional development. There was a growing recognition that not all professional development could take place during term time. The schools were aware of the need to provide quality professional development but were scrambling to fit it in during term time and, because teachers were out of their classrooms so often, student learning was in danger of being compromised.

Some of the schools worked on alternatives to after-school professional development when teachers were likely to be tired and less focused. Some tried breakfast meetings. Others, all secondary schools, extended their school day and once a fortnight sent students home early (2.00) or had them arrive later (10.00) so that quality time could be set aside for professional development. One school set up an individualised programme and offered two or more chances for staff to access the training. These included before school, after school and holiday tutorials. More of the schools were using their holiday 'call-back' days and, after initial resistance, teachers reported that the quality of the programme on these days was now more important to them than their concern about the requirement to be at school when it was officially closed.

### ***Skills for professional development***

#### **Understanding data gathering**

A major issue for schools in monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of a professional development programme is understanding what data to collect, how to collect it, how to process and analyse the data and, when appropriate, how to write the information up in a way that makes sense to others - teachers, the Board or parents. The teachers in the Contract wanted to be able to say that the professional development programme had made a difference to teacher attitudes and practices and that a positive impact had been made on student achievement. However, they lacked the confidence and, to a lesser extent, the skill to do this. There was little evidence of teachers using student work or achievement data for this purpose and adapting tools they use to assess student progress to assess their own learning. Not all data gathering has to be formal or done on a large scale. It requires that some simple questions be asked in the early stages of any professional development planning:

- How will we know we have made a difference? What will this difference look like?
- What data do we already have?
- What are some simple ways we can collect the information?
- Are there some opportunities to collect data during some of the PD activities we have planned?

There is a strong case for school leaders, and appraisers, to have training in this aspect of professional development.

#### **Facilitation**

The advantages of having a Team that meets regularly and spends time planning the professional development programme has already been discussed. How the programme is delivered is also important and people in schools with this responsibility need training in how to facilitate adult learning, especially when the whole staff, or groups of staff, are working together. Teachers who are very

skilled in managing students are often less confident when working with adults. They find it daunting to come up with solutions when staff, very often only a small number, are lacking in enthusiasm, resistant or confrontational. Coaching in facilitation skills would help these professional development leaders with their adult interactions but these needs are often overlooked in favour of a curriculum focus. In one school, the best coaching happened when real situations were discussed with the teachers. Options for working through the issues were discussed and then put into practice quite soon after the discussion.

## Conclusion

Professional development plays a vital role in ensuring that a school is a vibrant learning community for teachers and students. From time to time, there may be value in teachers going outside of the school to attend a course or a workshop or even a conference such as this. But the evidence is clear that quality professional development happens on-site, where teachers have access to the ongoing support and encouragement of their colleagues. One of the biggest shifts that occurred in the schools, particularly the secondary schools, was a move away from giving funds to individuals to organise whatever professional development they wanted. Instead, a priority was placed on carefully identifying and prioritising needs of individuals, groups or the whole school and insisting that these needs would be a priority for funding and time. If professional development is going to make a difference in the classroom, schools must 'do less better' and find ways of making sure that teachers gain more than just professional knowledge. It needs to change professional practice. It needs to be linked to improving outcomes for students.

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