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# Learning walks: Teacher professional development at one NSW school

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# ‘Learning Walks’: Teacher Professional Development at one NSW School

Michelle Scott

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education: School of Education

Southern Cross University

Date April 2018.

## Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Signed ..... Date ..... April 2018 .....

## **Abstract**

This is a qualitative ethnographic study that investigated key factors that influenced teachers as they participated in a school-based collaborative model of professional development (PD) called 'Learning Walks'. Situated in a regional New South Wales (NSW) Australian Catholic primary school (case study school), this study is set in the context of broader school reform initiatives. With an imperative to improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences for students, its aim was to identify key factors that sustained or constrained teacher participation in this model of job embedded PD. The case study school's use of 'Learning Walks' was intended to assist teachers to collaborate with and learn from each other in meaningful and relevant ways. The epistemological framework for the research is constructivism, which aligns with an interpretive stance. It is framed as an ethnographic case study because the purpose was to identify and understand the factors that influenced the teachers' participation in a whole-school collaborative model of PD. Data from an online survey followed by group interviews with sixteen teachers provided insight into teacher engagement in the initiative. Analysis of the data using case study method, and employing the heuristic lens of Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework for teacher PD, showed that teachers valued having trusting and respectful relationships between one another and with school leaders. The data also revealed that, for effective participation in the process, these teachers expected to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the PD. They indicated that there were factors that had the potential to constrain and sustain their effective participation in the process, dependent on how it was perceived by the teachers. The significance of the study is that it shows the efficacy of the Learning Walks process for engaging the teachers in the professional growth and development, regardless of age, experience or attitude. These teachers reported that they were increasingly collaborative, and focused in professional dialogue about their teaching. The data indicates that the collaborative nature of Learning Walks was a non-threatening

mechanism for engaging these teachers in PD. The significance of the study lies in the illumination of teacher experiences and the factors that sustained or constrained their participation in this initiative. The application of Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework provides validation for the findings. These findings contribute to the research on Learning Walks as a form of collaborative PD and thereby can support research into and implementation of similar initiatives designed to engage teachers in school-based PD.

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## List of Abbreviations

AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
APST	Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
CLF	Contemporary Learning Framework
COI	Cycles of Improvement
LOP	Leader of Pedagogy
MCEETYA	The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
PLT	Professional Learning Team
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLD	Professional Learning and Development
PD	Professional Development

# **CHAPTER ONE: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This introductory chapter provides a statement of the research problem, outlines the background to the study, and then provides a more detailed description of the context of the problem that resides as the impetus for the research.

## **1.2 Statement of the research problem**

This research investigated the self-reported experiences of a group of teachers in a regional NSW<sup>1</sup> Catholic primary school who had engaged in ‘Learning Walks’ as part of teacher in-school professional development (PD). The leadership at the case study school instructed all teachers to participate in Learning Walks (LWs). The problem was that no-one knew what these teachers were experiencing on the LWs, or the factors that may have constrained or sustained their participation. As a collaborative process, Learning Walks focused on peer observation of teaching practice, and feedback to teachers about their teaching. Because of the collaborative nature of teaching at the case study school, teaching feedback was given to the group. The model of collaborative PD called ‘Learning Walks’ was strongly influenced by the research of Doig (2009) and Sharratt and Planche (2016). More specifically, this research centred on the lived experiences of a group of teachers at the case study school who were engaged in a collaborative school-based professional learning process intended as teacher PD.

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<sup>1</sup> New South Wales (NSW) is one of the six states of Australia.

Given that the researcher wanted to know how these teachers were experiencing this PD initiative, the researcher investigated the teacher experiences to identify what factors might constrain and sustain their participation in this PD initiative. The researcher did this by developing a set of research questions to guide the study and creating a design that included an online survey and semi-structured group interviews to investigate the problem. An interpretive case study approach was employed in the analysis of data.

The remainder of this section outlines the background for the study, establishing the contexts and their relevance to the investigation.

### **1.3 Background to the study**

This section provides a broad synopsis of factors at the global, national, state and system and personal levels that underpin the study's research problem.

#### *1.3.1 Focus for the research: A personal stance*

This researcher conducted research about what was happening in her school. Her role was not only one of researcher committed to answering questions about teacher experiences of a specific initiative, but also one of 'Leader of Pedagogy' at the case study school. For this section, I will refer to myself in the first person. At the beginning of the research process I intended to investigate a school-based collaborative PD initiative and the factors that constrained and sustained their engagement. While I was aware that teachers were engaging in a range of PD at a whole-school or system level, I questioned whether their participation was largely a result of requirements for teacher compliance and was not sure how the PD might be connected to their teaching practice. As Leader of Pedagogy at the case study school, much of my work was about teacher learning in a social context given the deprivatised and collaborative framework in which the school operated. I wanted to investigate the factors

that constrained and sustained teachers in PD that was increasingly collaborative in nature. However, whilst it seemed to me that teachers were being required to teach and work in collaborate, deprivatised learning environments, the PD opportunities available to teachers remained driven by the system and were typically disconnected to the school context.

So too, the state and system requirements around quality teaching accountability and accreditation were in the throes of change, with all NSW teachers being expected to be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) by January 1, 2018. Teacher accreditation was intended to build a collaborative, reflective and evidence-based teaching culture. A significant component of this included a minimum of fifty hours of ‘registered’ PD, meaning that it had to be registered with the state based ‘Quality Teaching Council’ (QTC), and fifty hours of teacher identified PD or further study. Given this, the response to PD at the case study school would require change if the school was to support teachers and engage them in PD that not only met accreditation requirements, but were also underpinned by the collaborative, deprivatised framework in which the case study school operated.

The case study school had established Learning Walks (LWs) as a school-based model for PD, and planned to continue with its implementation for the long term. Thus, it became a strategic focus for the PD of teachers. In the context of this research it seemed that the separation of teacher learning and the context of the school was difficult because they were so intertwined. Having experienced LW as the ‘Lead Walker’ who gave feedback to year group teachers, this researcher had noticed that there seemed to be heightened levels of stress in the weeks during which LWs were conducted. I knew teachers at the case study school put their heart and soul into their work and took pride in their teaching. To now be expected to be

observed, and get feedback from other teachers, appeared confronting for many, regardless of years of teaching experience. As a teacher myself I had long been aware of how personal and how much of one's self is put into teaching (Nias, 1989), and to challenge the quality of someone's teaching seemed confronting.

In my role as Leader of Pedagogy (LOP), I had been immersed in literature that focused on building the professional capital of teachers in a school. In Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) book, *Professional Capital*, I was struck by the assertion that the way forward in education was to value and improve the profession of teaching. To do that Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) asserted that policymakers and teachers needed to think and act differently, in supporting all teachers to "teach like a pro" (p.22). For Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), to "teach like a pro" was not about more individual accountability, but the collective power of the group to champion change in teaching practice. What resonated with me about this idea, was that the case study school was trying to construct a new way of thinking around teacher PD in the implementation of LWs.

Concurrently, I needed to find a way to determine whether LWs was doing what it was supposed to be doing, that is, professionally developing teachers. Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework also resonated with me in that it reflected a social constructivist world view where the collective participation of teachers and learning in the school's broader social context was valued. Given that the LWs model had been in place for over a year, I considered it important to understand more about what the teachers were experiencing as they engaged in the process of LWs and the factors that were constraining and sustaining their engagement. That understanding could become a starting point for the school to eliminate some of the perceived 'road blocks' experienced by teachers. However, further understanding might also

assist to engage all teachers at the case study school in rigorous dialogue about their teaching practice, with possible positive repercussions for both students and teachers as learners in the broader quality teaching agenda. It was from this social constructivist stance that my research questions were formed. These will be explained further in this chapter.

Having explained my personal stance in identifying the specific research problem, the following section gives a global perspective on high quality teaching and professional development.

### *1.3.2 A global perspective*

According to Weber (2015) high quality teacher PD is one of the greatest levers for change in the current education landscape. The school-based collaborative model of PD employed by the case study school, that is, Learning Walks, was one school's response to a global, national and system-wide call for PD designed to improve teaching quality. Over the past fifty years, school systems worldwide have improved, if not transformed, the lives of children (OECD, 2015). The attention on quality teaching and learning has been acknowledged as a component in this transformation (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Worldwide, education systems have been subjected to intensive reforms and more recently that focus has turned to teacher PD. Hattie (2016) asserts that meaningful education reform cannot be embedded in "wasted good intentions" (p.1) such as structural fixes, more money for schools and performance pay. It must be about improving the quality of teaching methods through quality PD about teaching.

### *1.3.3 Policies in Australia*

With the global push for the improvement of teaching quality gaining momentum, government financial investment in teachers and their PD has begun to grow (Bayar, 2014).

Policy makers, systems and schools continue their search for models of PD that improve the quality of teaching and that demonstrate evidence of effect on teachers' knowledge, teaching practice, and student learning outcomes (Desimone, 2011; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005, p.2; Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). In Australia, a national response to the growing attention to quality teaching emerged with the construction of the 1999 *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century* (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 1999) followed in 2008 by the development of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) identified educational goals for all young Australians as central to national economic and social prosperity. The significance of the production of the set of goals is its assumed link between the nation's economy and the education of children. It explicitly linked these goals for students to the need to improve teaching quality. Improving teaching quality, according to the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals* (MCEETYA, 2008), was considered an essential reform in Australia's efforts to improve student learning outcomes, and, in turn, ensuring Australia had a world-class system of education and a strong national economy. So, it was to this end that Australian education departments, under pressure from national imperatives, began focussing their attention on quality teaching and learning and the necessity for professionally developing the teaching workforce.

*The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) articulated that excellent teachers are acknowledged as having the quality to "transform the lives of students and inspire and nurture their development as learners, individuals and citizens" (p.11). The declaration identified school principals and other leaders as playing a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching through "coaching and mentoring"



(p.11) teachers to find the best ways to facilitate student learning, and by promoting a culture of high expectations in schools. To that end, an imperative for teacher PD to meet the changing educational landscape was emerging. PD needed to be more adaptive in its approach to the development of teacher knowledge, instruction and, in turn, student achievement (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015).

In 2009, work commenced on the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* under the authority of *Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs* (MCEETYA, 2008). In 2010, the *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership* (AITSL, 2012) assumed responsibility for developing a set of teaching standards for Australian teachers. AITSL was established in 2011 to provide leadership for the state and territory education systems in promoting excellence in the teaching and school leadership. Their website indicates they were established to set and maintain standards for teachers and principals, to influence improvements in teaching and school leadership, and to support and recognise high quality professional teaching practice (AITSL, 2012). This development is significant because it meant school leaders were now required to retain an educative focus rather than an administrative one.

Thus, it was that in December 2010 that the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (APST) (AITSL, 2012) were developed with the aim of providing a quality framework to guide the professional learning and development of school leaders and teachers across Australia. One of the key principles described in the development of the APST was that of teacher PD and learning that deepened professional knowledge and cultivated quality professional teaching skills through both formal and informal processes. AITSL (2012) claimed that the APST were designed as a guide for developing the quality of teaching

practice, to facilitate the improvement of teaching, and positively contribute to the public standing of the profession.

The APST identified seven ‘Standards’ for teaching with each ‘Standard’ having three domains. These domains are: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. The seven ‘Standards’ outlined what teachers should know and be able to do. *Standard 6: Engaging in professional development* is most relevant to this study because this research focus pertains to the domain of professional engagement, more specifically, teacher engagement in PD and learning for the purpose of improving teaching quality.

Thus, the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (APST) are integral to this study in that they make explicit the elements of high quality teaching. They also recognise the necessity for teachers to engage in PD to improve practice, and for teachers to update knowledge and teaching practice within school and system priorities (AITSL, 2012). Therefore, Learning Walks as a school-based model of collaborative PD is linked to *Standard 6: Engaging in professional development* of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2012).

#### *1.3.4 The application of the ASPT*

With the national imperative for teachers to engage in teacher PD through the introduction of the ASPT, Australia’s education systems have sought to apply this information to PD for teachers within their own districts. In NSW, Australia, one local Catholic diocese’s response to the APST was to develop a *Contemporary Learning Framework* (Catholic Schools Office, 2012b). Its diocesan purpose was to provide a scaffold for school improvement that included the implementation of a range of types of teacher PD.

The *Contemporary Learning Framework* (Catholic Schools Office, 2012b) identified seven dimensions of learning for teachers that needed to be incorporated into their teaching. Of most relevance to this study, was the dimension that focused on teacher pedagogy and pedagogy to empower the learner. Its focus was on meaningful, relevant and shared teacher pedagogy. LWs were an attempt by one school to encourage teachers to learn from each other in a meaningful way. In developing the *Contemporary Learning Framework* (Catholic Schools Office, 2012b), the Catholic Schools Office acknowledged research drawn from across the world, including the work of Brookhart (2008), Butler and Winne (1995), Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, and Miller (2003) and Marzano (2007). The *Contemporary Learning Framework* (Catholic Schools Office, 2012b) recognised that how one teaches is inseparable from what one teaches, from what and how one assesses, and from how one learns. Thus, it placed an explicit focus on what teachers do and how teachers act. This focus was to be enacted across all the schools in the district, and thereby became a focus for the case study school.

### *1.3.5 A new role in the school: Leader of Pedagogy*

With the focus now on pedagogical excellence, every school within the focus diocese employed a person to undertake the leadership in developing the quality of teaching at their school. This role was called the Leader of Pedagogy (Catholic Schools Office, 2012c). It was a new role within schools, explicitly funded by the district, and aimed at directly improving teaching practice and, in turn, the outcomes for students across the district. To improve teaching practice, the focus turned to professionally developing teachers in the area of pedagogy – the ‘what and how’ of their teaching practice.

The Leader of Pedagogy was required to be a highly skilled teacher (Catholic Schools Office, 2012c), employed to refocus attention on quality teaching, and to model high quality teaching to colleagues across the school. Coaching and mentoring of teachers, to improve the quality of teaching, were significant in this role. This diocesan action was aligned with Hattie's (2009) assertion that the most powerful influence on improving student outcomes is the quality of the teaching.

Along with the instigation of the Leader of Pedagogy role in the district, *Cycles of Improvement* (Catholic Schools Office, 2013a) (COI) were established. COI (Catholic Schools Office, 2013a) were a district-specific, evidence-based PD process aligned with the APST. In the application of *Cycles of Improvement* (Catholic Schools Office, 2013a), teachers set individual teaching goals, established strategies for achieving these goals and received ongoing feedback about their progress from the Principal or school leadership team. Its alignment with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011) and the *Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders Framework* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2012) meant that teachers could engage with the APST through the processes embedded in *COI* (Catholic Schools Office, 2013a). The framework highlighted the features of a system approach to high teacher performance and development, the characteristics of such a system and the culture that needed to be in place for sustained school improvement to take place. The *Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders Framework* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2012) described the elements of a performance and development cycle and provided a framework for appraising, developing and improving teacher practice that included meaning feedback and support to and of

teachers. Teacher participation in the development of goals and engaging in PD and learning to achieve these was a district expectation for all teachers in its employ by 2017-18.

Hence, with attention now on the teaching quality, the challenge for the schools within the district lay in crafting models for PD that supported the cultivation of quality teaching and aligned itself within the system model of the COI (Cycles of improvement, 2013a).

### *1.3.6 The professional development initiative: Learning Walks*

Thus, the case study school's response to the COI (Cycles of improvement, 2013c) was the development of a PD initiative that responded to calls for a system of ongoing teacher observation and feedback on practice. It was under the leadership of the then Principal, that the implementation of the collaborative PD model called Learning Walks took place. This was a school-based, not a system-based initiative, led by the Principal. As such this research investigated teachers' self-reported perceptions about their experiences with Learning Walks, as a form of PD, and the factors that constrained and sustained their participation in the process.

Furthermore, the case study school, having undergone *Diocesan School Review and Development* in 2008, had established a five-year strategic plan, identifying teaching quality as a significant school-wide focus. During these five years, the school underwent significant structural changes in physical facilities and school timetabling. Teachers were working in flexible open learning spaces where individual teaching practice was shared and thus, visible to year cohort colleagues. Learning and teaching at the case study school was moving from a traditional model to a more collegial and deprivatised model of teaching practice.

Deprivatised practice refers to the open sharing of classroom management pedagogical approaches and teaching practices (Ho, Lee & Teng, 2016). It implies that teachers make their

practice “public” to other teachers and colleagues, and continue to learn about and improve their practice. It implies that colleagues support each other in professional learning, and that teachers collected and shared data about the performance of their students in a transparent and professional manner. Deprivatised practice has a collective, whole-school concern about the wellbeing and learning of all students across the school. It is a model where schools, teachers and students set improvement goals and targets, and where teachers adopt a collective responsibility for improving student learning outcomes (Cole, 2012).

At the case study school deprivatisation was understood to involve more than just the physical teaching and learning environments. Structurally, deprivatisation meant not only changes to the physical learning spaces, but also the realignment of the school timetable. Timetable adjustments provided two two-hour learning blocks of time across the school day, one in the morning and the other in the middle session of the school day. The final session for the day was one hour in length. The purpose of this change was to enable grade-level teams of teachers to be released from face-to-face teaching during these times to jointly work with the Leader of Pedagogy as a Professional Learning Team (PLT) (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2010). Further detail on this is provided in the following section (1.1.3 Contextualising the Study).

The implementation of PLTs at the case study school was intended to provide a structure for colleagues to support each in other PD and planning. It afforded the opportunity for teachers to discuss student learning data, teaching strategies to support the learner, and to adopt collective responsibility for improving student learning outcomes. It was in the PLTs that the model for collaborative PD called Learning Walks occurred. Research, based on the work of Doig (2009) and Sharratt and Planche (2016), provided the basis for the school-based model of Learning Walks at the case study school. A school-based rationale and process document

was created by the case study school's leaders and is included in the Appendix (See *Appendix A: Learning Walks: Rationale and Process*).

Hence, this research investigated the teachers' experiences of Learning Walks as a school-based model for collaborative PD, with a specific focus on the factors that may have constrained and sustained their participation in Learning Walks. The articulation of what teachers were expected to know and do in conjunction with the APST, the deprivatisation of teaching at the case study school, the introduction of goal setting and feedback on practice and the implementation of the Leader of Pedagogy role at the case study school provide appropriate background information for this study.

#### **1.4 Contextualising the research**

Having established the background contexts of the study, this next section of the thesis outlines the context of the research in relation to the case study school, and the context of collaboration in shaping their school-based model for PD the case study school is a large Catholic primary school on the north coast of NSW with an enrolment of more than 650 students. As a Catholic system school, it falls under the jurisdiction of the local Catholic Schools Office. In 2008, the school underwent a cyclic process of improvement to critically reflect on progress in key areas of school life, a system review and compliance audit. Because of the audit, a five-year strategic plan was developed which identified teacher collaboration and deprivatisation of the processes of teaching as key components for the case study school's improvement. Therefore, the school amplified its focus on teacher PD, with staff meetings shifting from an administrative emphasis to having designated time for whole-school PD. As noted above, concurrently, physical changes were made to the learning environment across the case study school. This resulted in increasingly deprivatised, collaborative learning spaces for both teachers and students. The case study school made changes to the school timetable,

as mentioned previously, creating two, two-hour teaching blocks and one, one-hour teaching block in the school day. Teacher release from face-to-face teaching time was timetabled to occur during one of the two-hour blocks across the week for collaboration, and the application of LW and other initiatives to support teacher PD. Year teachers were released simultaneously with the intention that they meet to plan and develop rich teaching and learning strategies for their class with the purpose of improving student outcomes.

The Leader of Pedagogy (LOP) role was introduced into all schools across the case study schools' district. The funding allocation for this role to schools was specifically dependent on school enrolment numbers. At the case study school, allocation for the LOP position was for a full-time out-of-class position. A teacher from within the case study school was to be appointed as Leader of Pedagogy. As was noted above, that the case study school's LOP is also the researcher in this study. More will be discussed below on the duality of these roles.

The local diocese had mandated that all schools implement professional learning teams (known as PLTs), that were intended to build teacher collaboration skills and focus on student learning outcomes. Each school's principal was required to establish and implement the PLT model at their school. Schools were given autonomy to localise scheduling of the PLTs. At the case study school, the Principal and leadership team made the decision to include PLTs in the weekly teacher release from-face-to-face time allocation, with PLTs constituting one hour of that time each week for each team. It was expected that the LOP would work with teachers during the PLT time and all teachers would attend their allocated PLT. Agendas were established by the LOP and shared with the teachers and Principal. The LOP worked with year cohort teachers to establish PLT norms focusing on teacher expectations for collaboration in the PLT. This discussion occurred during their first PLT of the year. Thus, it



was through this allocation of group time that the PLTs would meet with the LOP, to enact the PD initiative known as Learning Walks.

The case study school, under the leadership of the principal, had looked for models of PD that built on the deprivatisation of teaching and teacher collaboration that was being enacted. Since research (Darling-Hammond, 2012) indicates traditional models of PD provide little impetus for collaboration and discussion on teaching and improvement, the case study school saw an opportunity to develop a school-based model for collaborative teacher PD they called Learning Walks.

Thus, Learning Walks at the case study school were intended to provide a renewed emphasis on teaching and learning, so teachers could observe each other and reflect on their own teaching practice for deepening their understanding of effective pedagogy based on the needs of the students. Learning Walks aligned well with the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2012) and *Cycles of Improvement* (Cycles of improvement, 2013a) and the expectation that schools create a culture of professional improvement.

As mentioned previously, the development and implementation of LWs at the school was led by members of the school leadership team, and was introduced to all staff at a staff meeting. At this meeting teachers were briefed on the research, and the purpose and proposed structure of Learning Walks at the case study school. It was expected that all teachers participate in the Learning Walks process. Their teaching was to be observed by their peers, evidence of quality teaching across the school was to be gathered, and they were then to engage in collaborative discussions with their peers about effective teaching practices. Learning Walks were timetabled to occur twice per term for each year cohort team, during teacher release from face-to-face teaching and in PLT time.

Given the context of the model's implementation, the factors that sustained and constrained teacher participation were significant to the success or otherwise of the process. This study sought to focus on how the Learning Walks process was perceived and experienced by the teachers. In that sense, it was never intended to be an evaluation of the initiative itself.

The following section describes the implementation of Learning Walks at the case study school and the role of teachers and school leaders in that process.

## **1.5 Implementation of Learning Walks**

In this section, implementation of Learning Walks as a school-based model of collaborative PD is explained. This covers a description of the whole school nature of the LWs initiative, how it occurred, and the roles that teachers and leaders assumed in its implementation.

### ***1.5.1 A Whole-School Focus***

In this section, the whole school focus for a Learning Walk, as it was occurring at the time of data collection, is explained.

At the case study school, the Principal, Assistant Principal and/or Leader of Pedagogy (the school's leadership team) would establish the focus for the up-coming Learning Walk. This focus would be a school-wide focus, engaging all the Professional Learning Teams (PLTs). It was based on the perceived needs of the school at the time, and aligned with the school strategic plan. The focus of a Learning Walk was intended to be an area of learning with which all staff had typically been engaged in as part of their PD. Examples include how teachers engage in small group instruction; and, the amount and quality of teacher talk while teaching. The school-wide focus was outlined to the staff at a staff meeting the week prior to a Learning Walk cycle commencing.

In the following section, the Learning Walk cycle is explained, and the role of the Host Team and the Walking Team and Lead Walker is described.

### *1.5.2 The Learning Walk Cycle*

A member of the school leadership team, that is, the LOP, Assistant Principal and/or Principal, developed an annual overview of the Learning Walk cycle. This overview included allocated times and dates for all participants, both as Hosts and Walkers (more on these roles shortly). This timetable was distributed to staff at the commencement of the year. The cycle consisted of two Learning Walks per term, per grade cohort; they were conducted during the cohort teacher's release from face-to-face teaching, and typically last 10-20 minutes in total.

Learning Walks would typically take place in Weeks 3 or 4 and 8 or 9 of a 10-week school term. Some flexibility of dates and times for unforeseen circumstances was embedded in the process given the nature of schools. In such circumstances, Learning Walks would be rescheduled but not cancelled. Protocols for the Learning Walks process were established (See *Appendix A: Learning Walks: Rationale and Process*) and shared with the staff.

### *1.5.3 LW Roles*

There were three clearly identified roles in the Learning Walks cycle: the 'Host Team', the 'Walking Team' and the 'Lead Walker'. Both the 'Host Team' and 'Walking Team' consisted of up to four teachers from the same grade cohort. A member of case study schools' Leadership Team, usually, but not limited to, the Principal, Assistant Principal or the Leader of Pedagogy, joined the 'Walking Team' as the 'Lead Walker'. The roles of both the 'Host Team' and 'Walking Team' along with the 'Lead Walker' are explained below.

It is acknowledged that the structural conditions and the allocation of roles established at the case study school for the process of LWs occur may appear rigid or inflexible. However, the school considered these structures paramount in its attempt to cultivate a culture of PD and learning at the case study school through LW.

#### *1.5.4 The Host Team*

The 'Host Team' was a group of teachers teaching the same year (grade) as each other, typically four in number. The role of the 'Host Team' was to:

- Know the whole school focus for the Learning Walk;
- Be prepared for the 'Walking Team' and 'Lead Walker' to visit the classroom as per the scheduled time;
- Be observed by the 'Walking Team' and 'Lead Walker' during normal teaching activity;
- Be available as a team to meet with the 'Lead Walker' at the end of the day, or as close to, for feedback on the Learning Walk.
- Be prepared to receive feedback from the 'Lead Walker' based on the observations of the 'Walking Team'.

#### *1.5.5 The Walking Team*

The 'Walking Team' was a team of teachers teaching the same year (grade) as each other. Their role was to:

- Make observations of the 'Host Team's' teaching practice and student learning based on the whole-school agreed focus for the Learning Walks;

- Follow Learning Walk protocols, specifically on timekeeping and teacher observation conduct;
- Provide observational feedback to the ‘Lead Walker’ following the Learning Walk in their PLT time in preparation for feedback to the ‘Host Team’.

#### *1.5.6 The Lead Walker*

As a member of the case study school’s Leadership Team, typically, but not limited to, the Principal, Assistant Principal or the Leader of Pedagogy, the ‘Lead Walker’ participated in the Learning Walk cycle as a member of the ‘Walking Team’.

The role of the ‘Lead Walker’ included: restating Learning Walk protocols to the ‘Walking Team’ prior to the commencement of the Learning Walk, make observations of the ‘Host Team’ during the Learning Walk, debrief with the ‘Walking Team’ at the completion of the Learning Walk, take the ‘Walking Team’ through a reflection process for gathering and providing feedback from the ‘Walking Team’ to the ‘Host Team’. This was typically given at the end of the day, or as close to. Feedback usually occurred in the Host Teams’ learning space. All members of the Host Team were expected to be present for the feedback. The role of the ‘Lead Walker’ was as a facilitator, not as a supervisor.

Having described the background and context in which the school-based model for collaborative PD was established, along with the roles of the key participants in the Learning Walk cycle, the aims of the research and its significance are outlined in the following section. The next section focuses on the research’s contribution to the field of knowledge about teacher PD and the factors constrain and sustain teacher engagement in collaborative professional development.

## 1.6 Research design overview

### 1.6.1 *Aims of the Research*

This study investigated the self-reported experiences of teachers who were engaged in a school-based collaborative model of PD called Learning Walks. More specifically, this research examined the factors that constrained and sustained teacher engagement in the PD that was intended to be collaborative and continuous in nature. The implementation of the model of PD was part of the case study school's strategic plan. It was aligned to the deprivatisation of teaching, which was occurring at the case study school and in response to the global, national and system calls for the improvement of teaching quality.

The research analysed the teachers' responses through the heuristic lens of Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework for teacher PD. The Literature Review provides an explanation and description of this conceptual framework.

In the context of this research, the researcher sought to know more about possible factors that could constrain and sustain teachers in their experience of this collaborative PD. It was considered that the consequences of these factors, both intended and unintended, may also provide insight for other schools when considering the implementation, a school-based model for collaborative teacher PD.

Thus, the aim of this research was to investigate the self-reported experiences of teachers engaged in a school-based collaborative model of PD called Learning Walks. This is a model which required teachers to participate, collaborate observe and provide feedback to other teachers for improving teaching quality at the case study school. More specifically, the research will investigate the factors that constrained and engaged teachers, when they engaged in a school-based collaborative model of PD called LWs.

### *1.6.2 Research questions*

The following research questions were developed from the establishment of the research aim and the review of literature. These questions have focused the research and provide direction for the investigation.

Research Question 1: What do teachers at the case study school report to be the factors that sustain and constrain their engagement in the process of collaborative PD known as Learning Walks?

Research Question 2: What are the self-reported teacher reflections about Learning Walks as collaborative teacher PD?

It was from these research questions that the study anticipated the identification of factors that might sustain and constrain teacher participation in the school-based collaborative PD. It also sought these teachers' reflections on this model as a school-based strategy for collaborative PD for improving teaching quality.

### *1.6.3 Research significance*

With high quality teacher PD identified as one of the greatest levers for change in the current education landscape (Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin & Milbrey, 2011; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Weber, 2015) the significance of this research is in the identification of factors that sustain and constrain teacher engagement in collaborative PD. Given increasing global, national and system investment into improving quality teaching, the self-reported responses of teachers at the case study school offer insight into factors that sustained and constrained their engagement in collaborative PD intended to improve teaching quality.

This study has identified these teachers' beliefs and opinions about this PD. As such it has potential to shed light on the importance of teachers' perception of the culture in which they work and its implications for future participation collaborative PD.

It needs to be noted that these findings have been influential in shaping change at the school, in tandem with being used for the Master of Education dissertation. Additionally, the findings may be of interest for other schools who find themselves in similar circumstances. It may also provide a heuristic lens through which other schools and researchers can implement their own school-based model of collaborative PD. As such, Learning Walks, as implemented at the case study school, provided one school with an important opportunity to focus on quality teaching in a collaborative and deprivatised way.

The significance of the study is in its contribution to the field of teacher PD, identifying factors that sustained and constrained teacher participation in such programs. Thus, it gives insight into one school's experience in a school-based collaborative model of PD. The study may support other such schools seeking to improve teaching quality through the provision of contextually based insights into the factors that sustained and constrain teacher engagement in Learning Walks as collaborative PD at one school.

#### *1.6.4 Research design*

This research is a qualitative ethnographic case study (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). The study's epistemological framework is constructivism. This aligns with an interpretive stance (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2009; Merriam, 1998), because the aim of the research was to investigate the self-reported experiences of teachers engaged in a school-based collaborative



model of PD called Learning Walks and thereby gain a deeper understanding in to the experiences and factors and that sustained and constrained teacher engagement in collaborative PD. *Chapter 3: Methodology* provides a detailed explanation of the research methods used in this study.

#### *1.6.5 Research limitations*

As a qualitative study, the research was responsive to the local situation, conditions and the needs of the participants in relation to Learning Walks at the case study school. However, it is acknowledged that the experiences of the teachers at case study school may not generalise to the settings of other schools and therefore may be limited in their application. It is also acknowledged that findings relate to the specifics of time, place and context. Nonetheless, emerging factors identified through the experiences of these teachers at case study school may be transferable to other school settings.

Similarly, whilst the sampling group was greater than fifty percent of the possible pool of teachers at case study school, the findings are representative of a single site, small sample study. Generalisability was not sought in this study. Qualitative research is concerned with making meaning (Cresswell, 2003) and in this study the sample group was large enough to ensure that teachers' perceptions, as they related to the research focus, were identified.

This study recognises that in the collection of interview data, participants are self-reporting. Whilst self-reporting is a valid methodological choice, it provides a potential for inaccuracy of information because it is recognised that participants can skew their responses to meet the researcher's perceived needs. Thus, it is known that participants can be less than honest in providing responses to someone who they know and with whom they have worked.

The data gathered for this study was done so in a naturalistic setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), that is, at the case study school. It is acknowledged that as the researcher had the dual roles of both researcher and Leader of Pedagogy the data gathered may have been influenced by the duality of the ‘insider researcher’ role (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) regardless of the naturalistic setting in which it was conducted (more on this below). Considerations were enacted to limit significant and overt biases, including the influence of personal perceptions. This is expanded in the next section.

### **1.7 Insider Researcher Position**

In undertaking the research, this ‘insider researcher’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) acknowledged that personal experiences influenced research decisions. In this study, the choice to research the experiences of these teachers engaging in Learning Walks as collaborative PD was a natural extension of a problem identified in the researcher’s workplace. Because developing teacher knowledge and skill is a key component of the role of Leader of Pedagogy at case study school, the researcher wanted to understand more fully how these teachers were experiencing these school-imposed changes and if the teachers saw Learning Walks as an effective strategy for influencing and improving their teaching practice. The ‘insider researcher’, also known as “teacher as researcher” (Burke & Kirton, 2006) and “researcher practitioner” (Sternberg & Horvath, 1999), uses small-scale inquiry. In this case, the study put the teachers at the centre of the investigation, using critically reflexive practices (Cunliffe, 2004; Watt, 2007), that is, to think more critically about assumptions participants bring as they engaged in this professional learning initiative. Reflexivity can facilitate the understanding of both the phenomenon studied and the research process itself “allowing the ‘insider researcher’ to determine how best to proceed in the context of the study” (Watt, 2007,

p.82). It is important to limit as much as possible the influence of the researcher's interpretation of the situation on the participants, moving the researcher beyond simple self-analysis to a "more explicit link between knowledge claims, personal experiences of both the participant and researcher and the social context" (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p.8). This was done by the researcher continually seeking clarification from the participants to ensure meaning was maintained in the gathering and analysis of data. This ensured that the findings reflected the experiences of the participants having engaged in LWs.

## **1.8 Chapter summary**

Having introduced the research problem and described the context of the research problem, the following chapter, *Chapter 2: Literature Review* provides a review of the literature that informed this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review provides a brief overview of the literature about Learning Walks. This is followed discussion of definitions of PD from the literature, then an historic perspective on PD over the past decades, linking the changing role and focus on teacher PD with the current imperative at national, state and system levels for quality teaching through quality teacher PD. This is followed by discussion of key topics relevant to this thesis that include:

- Teacher autonomy and the challenge that LWs provide to teacher autonomy and agency
- Deprivatisation that is required of teachers in the process of engaging teachers in LWs
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and their role in building a collective culture of learning
- The complexities of teacher PD and the dilemma of voluntary versus required participation in PD
- Culture of trust as a prerequisite for full engagement and benefit in LWs as PD
- Leadership and its role in the operationalisation of LWs at the school
- Teacher attitudes and beliefs and their implications for LWs for this school
- Job-embedded PD and the way this PD model is a case of job-embedded PD
- PD models: where LWs are positioned in a range of PD models

Teacher professional development (PD) has been perceived as a mechanism for improving the quality of teaching, but never more so than in the past two decades. During this time, there have been significant changes in school learning environments, which has had implications for both student learning and teacher PD. With unprecedented calls from national, state (AITSL, 2012) and system authorities for the quality of teaching to improve, engaging teachers in PD that aligns with contemporary models of teaching, including the deprivatisation of teaching practice and evolving pedagogical shifts in practice (Darling-Hammond, 2012, Hattie, 2009), has become an increasing priority for systems and schools.

And so, to better understand the research questions on the self-reported experiences of teachers participating in a school-based model of collaborative PD called Learning Walks, this review of literature looks at teacher PD over time and current global models of collaborative PD in the changing learning environments of school. It outlines the privatisation of teaching, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the importance of a culture of trust in schools and the relationship between interactions between teacher experiences, their attitudes and beliefs.

## **2.2 Learning walks**

Having outlined in the previous chapter how the PD initiative called Learning Walks was implemented at the case study school, this section now draws on literature about the use of LWs in educational contexts. It discusses a definition, the types of LWs that schools have been using, the phases of its use, and notes some difficulties with its use.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School learning (AITSL) define LWs as: “A group of teachers visiting multiple classrooms at their own school with the aim of fostering conversation about teaching and learning in order to develop a shared vision of high

quality teaching that impacts on student learning” (AITSL <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/learning-walks>). They note three key features of LWs as: a) a group of teachers visiting multiple classrooms at their own school; that they are b) focused on the walkers’ goals/needs aligned with school/team priorities e.g. monitoring the effectiveness of a school-wide literacy strategy, investigating student versus teacher talk time across different year levels; and that they c) aim to foster conversation about teaching and learning in order to develop a shared vision of high quality teaching that impacts on student learning (AITSL, 2017. para 1).

Essendon North Primary School in Victoria have offered a set of points about what LWs ‘serve to’ do at their school:

- Develop our professional learning community;
- Build our understandings, and develop our practice, in high quality teaching and learning;
- Develop a shared vision of every child in every classroom enabled to meet or exceed high standards;
- Offer ways to provide critical and constructive feedback on teacher instructional practice;
- Assist in classroom ‘coaching’ for improving instructional practice;
- Reflect on professional practice; and
- Gain new insights and understandings (Essendon North Primary School n.d. p.3).

Thus, the literature showcases that there is consistency in the intentions and application of LW as a form of PD for teachers in school settings. This is discussed in the next section.

AITSL (2017) and Fisher and Frey (2014) note that there are types of LWs: the ‘ghost walk’; the capacity building LW; and ‘Faculty Learning Walks (Fisher & Frey 2014. p.59).

The ‘ghost walk’ is when teams of teachers walk through classrooms when students are not present, examining the physical classroom, its layout and potential paradigms and pedagogies that might be evident. The capacity building LW is when teams of teachers visit a class while teaching is in progress, with a specified focus, to collect data about teaching practice and pedagogy. Faculty LWs are when school leaders and teachers visit in progress class teaching across the course of the teaching year. Each teacher is expected to visit a colleague’s class, with the intention of having later conversations about what was seen and done. At the case study school, the model of LWs that was enacted was a combination of what Fisher and Frey (2014) call Faculty and capacity building LWS.

AITSL (n.d.) note that there are five phases of the kind of LW they support. Like the form of LWs that was employed at the case study school, LW’s first phase was one of a pre-walk discussion with all members of staff involved in the LW, with the intention of revising protocols and establishing and clarifying the purpose of the LW. The second phase was the observation of learning. This was to occur in a 10 minute or so time frame in a small number of classes at each session, with a group of teachers visiting several classes, with the least amount of distraction to the class teaching tasks as was possible. The third phase was the short debrief immediately following each of the LWs, to share detailed and non-judgemental observations, pose questions, and reflect on what had been observed. The fourth phase was to repeat those observation and debriefings in subsequent classrooms as per the established schedule for the day and time. Then, the final phase was the debrief and feedback to the observed teachers, sharing findings and asking leading questions. Protocols for enactment, established by the school, were to be followed by all participants in the LWs (AITSL n.d.).

The literature does indicate some difficulties with the implementation of LWs. A critical review of the literature notes that the work of authors such as Finch (2010) and Stephens (2011), who take the administrative perspective of using LWs as a form of teacher surveillance and another version of what is known in the USA as ‘teaching rounds’, where administrators visit teachers with the purpose of evaluation of teaching rather than for teacher PD and learning. This more traditional model of observation of teaching for the purposes of evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning was not the intended purpose of LWs at the case study school. More recent literature, that presents LWs with a focus on teacher learning and PD in collaborative learning teams, could be seen in the writing from AITSL (2017; n.d.), Fisher and Frey (2014), Doig (2009), and Sharratt and Planche (2016), just to name a few.

Another difficulty noted in the literature is that teachers may feel uncomfortable with being observed in their teaching. This can, in part, be explained from the above scenario where teachers may have been ‘observed’ for what could be considered punitive purposes. However, it is also noted that some teachers may be unaccustomed to working collaboratively and to be specifically accountable for their students’ learning from their educational practices (Doig, 2009; Stephens, 2011). The case study school established its protocols to accommodate for a collaborative model of PD that enabled teams of teachers to learn from each other in a supportive environment.

The next section uses the literature to define and outline PD as it was conceived of at the case study school.



### **2.3 Professional development: Definition**

The term professional development has traditionally been a term used to denote a workshop, conference or other event (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016) through which teachers are instructed about issues that may assist them in knowing how to teach more effectively. Crowther (2015), however, describes PD as more than this, rather he asserts that it is one of the core constructs that drive the teaching profession forward. Barber and Mourshed (2007) point out that PD is a vital intervention for improving how teacher instruction is delivered. As such, Knapp (2003), explains that PD should be a policy pathway for educational reform, challenging the traditional models of PD and meet the needs of the contemporary teacher.

Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2008) describe PD as a more context-specific approach to teacher learning that develops knowledge and pedagogy which, in turn, promotes quality teaching practices. Others (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Desimone, 2009; Koellner & Jacobs, 2015; Timperley et al., 2008) refer to PD as applying knowledge and pedagogy into locally adapted situations, thus building teaching capacity. While the research literature is quite clear on what the key elements of teacher PD should be, there remains an apparent lack of consistency in the application of effective teacher PD across education systems and schools.

Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann, and Cooper (2014), Darling-Hammond (2006), Fullan (2007), Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) and Timperley (2011) assert that engaging teachers in PD to improve teaching practice is a burgeoning issue for systems and schools in Australia and North America. Over the past two decades, empirical research from a range of sources about teaching (Cordingley, 2008; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006) has shown effective PD to be continuous, long-term and best placed in a community of

teachers as learners. Despite knowing this, the PD available to teachers has been, according to Borko (2004, p.3) “woefully inadequate”, with much of its delivery presented as episodic updates of information and knowledge and not situated in authentic teaching (Gravani, 2007). Adding to this, Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009, p.2) describe most teacher PD in the United States of America as “episodic, myopic and often meaningless” and often delivering content rather than enhancing the learning of students (Webster-Wright, 2009).

According to Sharma (2016, p.466) whose research comes out of India, “the present-day system of education has been slowest in its innovation” and as a result, there remains the need for teacher PD to change its focus and delivery options. Whitehouse, McCloskey and Ketelhut (2010) explain that contemporary PD should assume a new role in the changing education landscape, and offer “the potential to go beyond the traditional ‘sit and get’ model for professional development” (p.24). Adding to this difficulty is the fact that many “teachers-educators are comfortable with status quo and continue to be obsessed with the old paradigm avoiding at any cost the intrusion of new development or thinking” (Sharma, 2016, p.466). Such attitudes have a flow-on effect in the type of PD with which teachers are willing to engage. Desimone, Smith, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) explain that while calls for high quality teacher PD have been repeated, there remains a lack of PD opportunities that meet the changing experiences of teachers. So too, Harwell (2003), whose work references to USA, points out that:

...teacher professional development has been a part of major initiative designed to improve student performance, however the quality of those programs has been inconsistent, and there has been no consensus on what constitutes quality. Many professional

development activities stop short of producing their intended results; they point out problems with traditional teaching but offer little help in changing what happens in the classroom and provide no opportunities for participants to practice what they learn (Harwell, 2003, p.2).

Given global, national and system calls for teachers to improve the quality of their teaching, “it is important that we find the most effective ways to encourage teachers to participate in the types of professional development most likely to improve their practice, and, in turn, student achievement” (Desimone et al., 2007, p.1092). Yet, finding ways to encourage such teacher participation in effective, meaningful, and aligned PD in the ever-changing educational landscape is complex. The explicit focus inherent in this research has been one of developing teacher skill and knowledge – enhancing their pedagogy – and the recognition that the long-term effects of types of PD have been limited positions the reader to better understand the case study school’s imperative for effective PD for their staff.

This next section outlines the historical context of PD in Australian schools.

## **2.4 Historical context**

According to Fullan (2016), currently teacher PD “may or may not involve learning something new. In this sense, PD might be professional learning, but it is decidedly not development” (Fullan, 2016, p.3). Researchers have examined teacher PD over the last decades, however, much of what still occurs is the remnants from an era where teacher PD became a financial enterprise for commercial enterprise and/or a system of surveillance, and therefore the core business of teacher growth and improvement was lost.

From the 1950s, teacher PD was a major enterprise (Ward, 1985), and, at the time, there was an implied narrative from educational experts that there was a deficit in teacher skill and knowledge (Guskey, 1986). As such, what resulted was a deficit approach. Experts, who were often disconnected from what teachers were doing in the workplace, delivered workshops and courses off-site. However, according to Little (1993), it was difficult for teachers to integrate their new learning into their existing classroom practice, as their workplace frequently did not understand or support their specific context or efforts over time.

According to Darling-Hammond (2012), teaching in isolation was commonplace prior to the 1980s so much of what was learned by teachers at PD workshops or conferences was the property of the teacher alone. Additionally, there was little or no expectation that new knowledge or skill garnered from these experiences would be shared with other staff. Hargreaves (2000) asserted that when teachers did interact, it was typically about matters of administration and discipline, and that teacher autonomy and protection from the interference of others was strongly guarded. Teacher autonomy had traditionally meant that teachers made their own decisions about the running of their classroom and decided the way in which students learned (Hargreaves, 2000).

With the introduction of a state curricula in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, teachers in NSW began to experience increasing limitations to this traditional model of teaching autonomy.

## **2.5 Teacher autonomy**

Teacher autonomy has relevance to this study in that contemporary teacher PD increasingly challenges traditional notions of teacher sense of autonomy. The term ‘autonomy’ is derived from the Greek word *autonomia* (Castle, 2006). Benard (1995, p.1),

described teacher autonomy as “having a sense of one’s own identity and the ability to act independently and to exert some control over one’s environment, including a sense of task mastery, internal focus of control, and self-efficacy”. So too, Street (1988, p.4) describes teacher autonomy as “the independence teachers maintain in exercising discretion within their classrooms to make instructional decisions”. More recently teacher autonomy has been defined as the freedom to act as a professional; that is, the discretionary freedom to organise one's job (Webb, 2002; Benson, 2010; Runhaar et al., 2013). A broader concept of teacher autonomy may include the concept of *agency*, referring to a teachers’ control over the choices made in the work, based on personal goals and interests (Vähäsantanen et al., 2008). Together these terms – teacher autonomy and agency – are implicated in teacher PD and learning.

Helgøy and Homme (2007) assert that individual teacher autonomy contributes to the status of teachers as a collective group, and is strongly connected to the decision of teachers to stay in the teaching profession (Webb et al., 2004). Teacher autonomy also contributes positively to teacher engagement in PD (Lee, 2008). Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2016, p.1) name teacher autonomy as a strategy that could “mitigate the negative effects of accountability sanctions”. However, without autonomy, teachers are more inclined to leave the profession.

However, with teacher autonomy as a continuing issue for many teachers, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010) challenge the rhetoric around teacher autonomy, arguing there needs to be a shift from protecting teacher autonomy to one where the focus is on how quality teaching could improve student learning. As such, they assert that teachers must take a collective view of addressing the issues impacting student learning, rather than

one that retains autonomy to the point of isolation. Fullan (2007) noted that the shift from teacher isolation to the deprivatisation of teaching was a productive move in education, with the goal of improving quality of teaching and the quality and type of PD.

In the following section, the literature on the deprivatisation of teaching is summarised, as is relevant to this study.

## **2.6 Deprivatisation**

With teacher autonomy rhetoric currently challenged (Ansteenkiste, Vansteenkiste, Van Keer & Haersen, 2016; DuFour & Eaker, 1998), the move for the deprivatisation of teaching practice has emerged across the education landscape. Deprivatisation of teaching has called on teachers to learn from collegial observations of other teachers (Owen, 2014), and to collaboratively build quality teaching to improve student outcomes (Dooner, Mandzuk & Clifton, 2008; Duhs & Traynor, 2010; Lim, 2007; Yang, 2009). According to DuFour et al. (2010) deprivatisation of teaching could mean the end of teacher isolation, and make teaching a more collective, public task (Owen, 2014; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006b; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). This would have teachers engaging in rigorous collaboration, engaging in reflection on teaching practice, and using student data to pave a way forward to quality teaching that could further improve student learning outcomes (DuFour et al., 2010; DuFour & Marzano 2015). Additionally, they assert that the practice of teachers observing their peers as they teach could serve as a vehicle for professional growth and development rather than performance evaluation (Derrington, 2016; Grierson & Woloshyn, 2013). As such, the deprivatisation of teaching calls on teachers to collectively and collaboratively work together with shared educational goals (DuFour et al., 2010; DuFour & Marzano 2015). According to Fullan (2007) such a focus on collaboration could ensure that teachers would change the way they teach and the

way they engage in teacher PD, recommending professional learning communities at the centre on the way forward (DuFour et al., 2010; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

## **2.7 Professional Learning Communities**

According to DuFour et al., (2008) and DuFour and Eaker (1998), the formation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) central to a model of PD that encourages deprivatised teaching and collaborative teacher peer reflection. DuFour and Eaker (1998) describe PLCs as a structure or model aimed to positively influence school culture. Under this model, teachers work collaboratively with other teachers, often on the same grade or cohort, to professionally challenge and support each other. Schools across the case study school district were expected to form and collaborate in Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) that had been formed from groups of teachers teaching on the same grades. Collectively, the seven PLTs formed at the case study school, one PLT from each grade, formed the school PLC. DuFour (2004) defined professional learning communities as:

.... a grand design—a powerful new way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling. But initiating and sustaining the concept requires hard work. It requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement (DuFour 2004, p.11).

Deprivatisation and collaboration have been key elements in the implementation of PLTs at the case study school. These were established and timetabled with teams of three or four

teachers meeting with the Leader of Pedagogy each week to collaborate on student learning and data. Collaboration in team contexts was a solution to problems around teaching quality (Day, 2002; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Little, 1982). In agreement, Sergiovanni (2015) asserts that:

Collaboration increases the amount of collective brainpower available to share with others and to help solve problems. And you need mutual trust amongst team members, a sense of identity as a group and the beliefs that collaboration is usually better than working alone (p.136).

The challenge faced at the case study school was working and learning as Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) based on collaboration (Marzano, 2007) rather than collegiality (Owen, 2014). In collaborative school cultures the working relationships between teachers are according to Hargreaves (1994, p.193) “spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, pervasive across time and space, and unpredictable”. Jarzabkowski (2002 p.2) asserts that collegiality, that is, “where teachers are involved with the peers on every level, be it intellectual, moral, political and/or emotional”, and is related to the types and quality of relationships in a group. Hargreaves (1994) has noted that these relationships can be contrived, merely enhancing the administrative control of teacher PD, and may not lead to meaningful and sustained change in teaching practice or PD or growth.

Many teachers, it seems, continue to operate in isolated classrooms, with doors closed. Sandholz and Scribner (2006) claim that problems across the education landscape continue as teaching and teacher PD continue to find themselves separated from the central concerns of teachers and their classroom practice. In the opinion of Darling-Hammond and



McLaughlin (1995), teachers have not typically been active participants in their professional growth. PD has tended to be about the transferring of ideas from the expert to the teacher, rather than from a social constructivist perspective, whereby teachers acquire new knowledge by constructing it for themselves through sharing ideas and experiences.

Given these continue to be times of exponential change in the education landscape, with a culture that increasingly values improvement of teaching practice both quality teaching, teacher PD has come under increasing scrutiny (Lynch & Smith, 2013). Given teacher PD has been described as one of the core constructs that drive the teaching profession towards deeper quality (Crowther, 2011), the many complexities of teacher PD need to be considered.

## **2.8 Complexities of professional development**

Meggison and Whitaker (2017) describe the complexities of teacher PD as the paradox between several features. These include the dilemmas of: compulsory participation versus volunteering; a school obligation versus an individual's responsibility; whether PD is about teacher teaching versus student learning; personal development versus organisational learning; and a focus on the purpose or the experience. However, Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) explain that it is more than these paradoxes. What makes a difference in teaching practice is "...neither professional development nor episodic job-embedded professional learning makes the difference to student outcomes. Rather, the essence of system success is a culture of daily interaction, engaging pedagogy, mutual trust and development, and regular, quality feedback related to improvement" (p.8). Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) describe PD and teacher learning as a mechanism for progress, where teachers are "learning a lot, all the time, individually and with your colleagues, in school and out of school" (p.6). They claim that the complexities of culture, trust, and feedback for

improvement are the cornerstone of engaging teachers in PD with the intent to improve teaching practice. Going further, Avlos (2011) states that teacher PD is:

....a complex process which requires cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers individually and collectively, the capacity and willingness to examine where each one stands in terms of convictions and beliefs and the perusal and enactment of appropriate alternatives for improvement or change (p.10).

The complexities of teacher emotion, attitude and beliefs add to the struggle of finding the most effective way to meet the needs of a diverse teaching workforce. Desimone (2009) notes the complexities as highly problematic because teachers experience a vast range of activities and interactions in naturalistic settings but not many of these are considered effective PD.

The following review of literature looks at these PD complexities through the lens of a culture of trust in schools, then teacher attitudes and beliefs, followed by leadership and finally stressors and change in the teaching workplace.

## **2.9 Culture of trust in schools**

Trust, according to Caldwell and Harris (2008) is a form of social and intellectual capital. Kutsyuruba and Walker (2016) claim that when trust is involved, knowledge and skills can be more readily shared, and new or stronger networks may be formed. Trust then, is a key component for school leadership, governance and teacher collaboration. Harris, Caldwell, and Longmuir (2013) identify a culture of trust as essential to enhancing teacher performance and as such, it is a factor in engaging teachers in effective teacher PD. Bibb and Kourdi (2004) refer to trust as “authentic communication, competence, supporting processes, boundaries, contact, positive intent and forgiveness” (p.10). In its complexity,

Bibb and Kourdi (2004) describe four distinct types of trust. The first type of trust is *self-trust*, which is where people feel confident in their capabilities and decision-making. The second type of trust is *relational trust*, which is the trust one person puts in another person or group and is typically established over time. *Structural trust* is the trust put into an organisation, such as a school or brand. Finally, *transactional trust*. This trust is specific to a context or event and is typically a moment-in-time experience.

Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) in their analysis of American urban elementary schools identified five dimensions of trust, being: *competence, benevolence, reliability, honesty* and *openness*. Hoy and Tarter (2004) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) go further to include *vulnerability* as a sub-element of trust. According to Wilcox, Lawson, and Angelis (2017) trust is an essential component for ‘developing individuals’ capacities to innovate and improve” (p.19) with high levels of trust supporting collaboration and a desire to want to learn how to improve (Byrk, Gomez, Gunrow & LeMaheiu, 2015). This is important to this study because one of the key premises of LWs at the case study school was collaboration and there is an integral link between being collaborative and trusting the people with whom one is collaborating.

According to Mitchell, Forsyth and Robinson (2008), trust is based on a relational process, with an expectation that all members of the community conduct their relationships appropriately. Rintoul and MacLellan (2016) note that “trust increases when behaviours align with expectations, while distrust increases with the converse” (p.43). Holland (2015) suggests that distrust is a result of a “lack of shared understanding regarding expectations and roles” (p.245). Austin and Jones (2016) explain further that distrust is characterised by “negative expectations regarding another’s motives, behaviours and competency levels”

(p.185). Contrived projects designed to build a culture of trust often fail or breed further distrust (Harris, Caldwell & Longmuir, 2013) amongst the school community, thus having implications for the mechanisms by which schools and systems engage teachers in PD. This is important to this study in that trust and relationships have the potential to promote or sabotage a collaborative model for PD such as LWs.

The next section links the literature on trust with school leadership.

## **2.10 Leadership**

Leadership inevitably plays an essential role in the culture of the school. Leadership is linked to both process, pedagogy and PD of teachers. Schools that are successful in building a culture of trust have leaders who make themselves available to staff and encourage open and honest communication (Walker, Kutsyuruba & Noonan, 2011). Building a culture of trust in a school is reliant on the school's priority on relationships that might be given by the principal and other leadership members. Literature indicates that where there is a strong culture of trust between leaders and teachers, levels of vulnerability are lowered, with teachers more likely to engage in collaboration and feedback processes (Harris, Caldwell & Longmuir, 2013). According to Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd (2009), reciprocal trust can build quality relationships, often giving insights into the attitudes and beliefs a teacher brings to their classroom or staffroom. Strong, positive relationships between the school leadership, teachers and students have also been shown to improve the learning outcomes for students (Van Maele & Van Houtte 2011).

Additional to the role of the school's principal and leadership team is the idea that teachers themselves can play leadership roles. According to the Killion, et al. (2016) leadership in a

school, can take many forms. They note ‘teacher leadership’ as an influential strategy to promote effective, collaborative teaching pedagogy in schools, and one that leads to increased student growth. Thus, ‘teacher leadership’ is more than a set of practices that enhance the teaching profession. According to the Aspen Institute (2014), teacher leadership is being leveraged by educational districts to facilitate PD for both educator and student growth. Killion, et al. (2016) advocate for expanded teacher leadership opportunities and roles in schools “based on the understanding that teachers, because they have daily contact with students, are in the best positions to make decisions about critical issues relating to teaching and learning” (p.5). Thus, the nature and frequency of support available to teachers is significant in developing the capacity of teachers as leaders. Routine feedback from colleagues and shared experiences from other teachers in leadership roles that are authentic plays a significant role in developing teacher capacity in and through teacher leadership actions.

Teacher leadership sees teachers taking responsibility for their own professional growth and the growth of their colleagues. MacDonald (2011) notes that teacher leadership promotes PD and learning as a collective responsibility with shared accountability for peer and student growth. Teacher leadership can also contribute substantially to developing and sustaining a workplace culture that cultivates and encourages continuous PD and growth (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). As such, effective teacher leadership depends on building trust around the joint work of improving instructional practice.

Teacher leadership recognises that the practice of fostering, nurturing and supporting colleagues in their own professional learning (Mangin, 2005) is integral to a school culture of continuous improvement. In doing this, peer accountability, collective responsibility to

student and peer growth and success is engendered through the building of strong relationships and a sense of belonging among the school community. Central to this sense of belonging is the creation of an environment where trust, relationships and attitudes amongst teachers supports collegial growth and student learning. Killion, et al. (2016) identify that how teacher leaders treat others is a key trait of teacher leadership. This means “being available and present for others, listening with desire to understand, acknowledging the contributions of others and sharing collective credit for accomplishments” (p.20). As such, and in the contexts of this study, the way teachers treat each other as teachers and as teacher leaders is a significant factor in how they give and receive feedback on practice.

The next section outlines what the literature says about teacher beliefs and attitudes in relation to PD.

### **2.11 Attitudes and beliefs**

In this section, the relationship between teacher attitudes and beliefs and teacher openness to change and improvement are explored. According to Richardson (1996, p.102), “attitudes and beliefs are important concepts in understanding teachers' thought processes, classroom practices, change, and learning to teach”. Pajares (1992) asserted that beliefs, values and attitudes form an individual's belief system, and these clusters of beliefs form personal attitudes. As such, the relationship between attitudes and belief have the potential to influence how a person receives, interprets and applies feedback on their teaching practice.

Raths and McAninch (2003, p.47) define 'belief' as “something believed or accepted as true” whilst the term 'attitude' implies “the enactment of one's beliefs” (p.47). Sorrentino

and Higgins (2003) describe ‘attitudes’ as the extent to which perceptions influence or guide behaviour. Foundational to the development of an attitude is what Sorrentino and Higgins (1986) describe as a pattern of behaviour, with a disposition to specific standards or situations. According to Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007), ‘dispositions’, are habits of thinking and action and include a nature to reflect and learn from practice and engage in inquiry into teaching practice. Engaging in enquiry about one’s practice, a positive disposition towards personal learning, was valued at the case study school.

According to Gressard and Lloyd (2007) a teacher’s attitude to change or the implementation of a new strategy can either promote or sabotage the process. However, Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) assert that reforming education policy to ensure school leaders are active participants with teachers in PD has been cornerstone to the school improvement agenda. According to the research conducted by Cooper et al. (2016), how teams of teachers and school leaders work collaboratively to bring about instructional change was paramount to improving student achievement. They noted that beliefs and attitudes can be shifted when principals and school leaders foster relationships with teachers and teacher leaders that build teaching capacity through collaboration, communication and learning (Little, 2006; Wood, 2007). The implementation of Learning Walks as a school-based model of collaborative PD involving teachers and leaders, was intended to support the feedback and reflection process in a collaborative and non-threatening manner. As such teacher attitude and beliefs are integral to this study because how the change initiative is received is both dependent on, and contributes to, teacher engagement with the initiative.

In the following section, a review of literature on job embedded systems of PD is presented, because the LWs approach to PD for teachers is a form of job embedded PD.

## **2.12 Job embedded professional development**

The term ‘job-embedded professional development’ refers to teacher learning that is grounded in teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers’ content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hirsh, 2009). This section outlines what the literature says about how ‘high performing’ education systems manage job-embedded PD to enhance teacher knowledge and student learning.

Research from a ground-breaking international comparative study from the USA (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) indicates that, in the top performing education systems and jurisdictions across four continents, the quality of teachers and teaching are important. Countries that focused on building effective operational and strategic systems for developing quality in teachers and teaching were far more effective than those that opt for short-term solutions (Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull & Hunter, 2016). Countries that had a commitment to professionalising teaching as a career as their central focus outperformed those countries who failed to do so. Therefore, providing structures for PD that support the commitment to professionalising teaching as a career were significant because it was through these structures that the quality of teachers and teaching could be improved.



According to the report (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) Canada, Shanghai and Australia are three countries that were identified in the as ‘high-performing’ education systems with strong teacher PD structures. Canada has no centralised national ministry of education, unlike the other countries with high performing education systems. Their system centres on diversity and decentralisation, and the governance of education happens at the territory or province level. Each province and territory has a ministry of education or an equivalent, with local schools also having some authority. In this study, two provinces in Canada were particularly noteworthy: Ontario and Alberta. These provinces provide support for teachers to develop teacher capacity to provide excellent instruction through strong teacher PD structures. These provinces focus on PD and teacher growth as an essential component for school improvement. Teachers participate in PD activities that are developed by teachers, for teachers. Canadian, “teacher preparation, certification and practice is also guided by standards set a professional body in each province” (Darling-Hammond, 2017, p.297), for example, the Ontario College of Teachers.

In addition, in Ontario, Canada, PD routinely enables teachers to learn collaboratively, with and from each other, both within and across networks of schools and other educational institutions such as universities. Teachers not only participate in PD opportunities provided by regional centres, within schools or by the schools’ jurisdiction, they are “funded to pursue learning opportunities aligned with their individual professional growth plans as well as school priorities” (Darling-Hammond, 2017, p.307). Such a model of PD engages teacher as active participants in their PD and demonstrates a strong investment in time and money to support teacher improvement.

Sato and Li (2017) claim that teachers are expected to refine and improve their teaching practice continuously throughout their career. Shanghai schools support teachers through the provision of both formal and informal teacher PD opportunities. Some of these opportunities reflect the cultural expectation that teachers will collaborate in planning and observing lessons. Professional learning in Shanghai schools takes a unique form, that of the 'jiaoyanzu', which is translated from Mandarin to mean 'teacher research groups' (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Each group comprises approximately three to eight teachers who typically teach the same year group or subject area. The research groups meet regularly, and are led by a teacher who is recognised as an expert or high performing teacher. The principal works closely with the teacher leaders of the 'jiaoyanzu' who advise and make recommendations for teacher improvement (Pawan et al., 2017). Furthermore, teachers in each 'jiaoyanzu' are frequently observed by the principal, senior teacher, mentor or peer teacher who observe, evaluate and provide feedback for continued teacher improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In addition to teacher 'jiaoyanzu', teachers are expected to attend weekly or fortnightly district-level PD meetings on best practice, test preparation, district-level, provincial and government initiatives. All teachers must also submit findings on research projects, engage in intensive ongoing study, and participate in discussion and observations of practice in all aspects of their teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). For the teachers in Shanghai, PD is central to their jobs, not added on to the end of a term or disconnected to their classroom practice. Teachers have given time to collaborate, plan and learn together. The Shanghai system for teacher professional development is job-embedded, and is how the system seeks to improve its schools. Its strategies are specially anchored in teacher PD (Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull & Hunter, 2016). Such models for PD iterate the global focus on developing PD that promotes teacher improvement PD.

The comparative study carried out by the *National Centre on Education and the Economy* (2016) described Australia's system for teacher PD as crucial to school improvement across the nation. Over the past decades, the Australian education system has been decentralised by states, systems and jurisdictions operating under their own policies and practices. With AITSL's development of a *National Framework for Teaching* and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2012), building teacher capacity through professional development and learning is seen as a lever for nation-wide school improvement with greater equity and consistency in Australian education (AITSL, 2012). The national framework for teacher appraisal is formally called in The *Australian Performance and Development Framework* (APDF) (AITSL, 2012). This framework, intended to support the growth and improvement in teachers and assist teachers to navigate the performance and development cycle. It also requires teachers to regularly review goals, to collect evidence that demonstrates their progress against their goal, and to receive regular observational feedback on their teaching practice (AITSL, 2012). This is what has been happening at the case study school.

The cycle of performance and development is enacted through the APDF with all teachers and leaders being responsible for creating a school culture where observation, feedback and continuous learning for both students and teachers are the core business of schools. By 2018 all teachers in NSW will be required to maintain one hundred hours of professional learning and provide evidence that their professional learning addresses the teaching standards (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2016).

Thus, the literature affirms that successful education systems such as are evident in Canada, China and Australia, include systems that embed PD into the job (Croft, 2010) and recognise the importance of teachers researching their own practice. It is when teacher's examine their practice, clarify and articulate their reflections, and share it with other teachers (OECD, 2013), that there appears a more seamless transition between teaching and student learning. This highlights that specific structures for job embedded PD that need to be in place to facilitate deeper quality in teachers and teaching.

The next section will outline specific models of teacher PD.

### **2.13 Models of PD**

Given the research literature indicates that teacher and teaching quality in the top performing education systems and jurisdictions have all have strong teacher PD structures (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), three structures or models of teacher PD will be briefly described. These have direct connection to the conceptual framework of Desimone (2009) which was used as a heuristic lens in the analysis of the data for this study.

The first model of PD to be outlined here is that of Marra et al. (2011) who assert that PD must simultaneously provide a balanced focus on content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. More specifically, when the balance between content and pedagogical knowledge is present and consistent in its application to PD, teachers exhibit greater intention to make improvements in their teaching practice.

Secondly, Koellner and Jacobs (2015) describe a different model of PD, one that is more of a balanced approach, that sits on a continuum of experiences. The continuum stretches

from a highly-specified model “that requires the precise specifications of the professional development to highly adaptive PD models that involve the commitment of ongoing and sustained time, in-house personnel, and other resources to a flexibly structure professional development” (p.52). The level of rigidity or flexibility determines the PD’s placement on the continuum. Like Desimone’s (2009) framework, to be outlined shortly, there are components that reflect the focus and structural nature of LWs as PD.

Thirdly, and in contrast to the continuum, Darling-Hammond et al. (2011), developed a model that comprises a set of features to describe PD that is effective and engaging for teachers. These features move the PD beyond the basic acquisition of knowledge and skills. Instead, teachers are expected to critically reflect on their practice and “fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners” (p. 82). Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) described ‘effective and engaging teacher PD’ as that which engages teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection which illuminate the processes of learning and development. They assert that it must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that is participant-driven. Additionally, it must be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and have a focus on teachers’ communities of practice rather than on individual teachers, and be connected to and derived from teachers’ work with their students. They explain that it must be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modelling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice and must be connected to other aspects of school change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011, p.82). This model is similar to that of the heuristic lens of Desimone (2009) through which the data in this study will be analysed.

In addition to these three models of PD, Hawley and Valli (2000), in their review of PD research and policy documents in the USA, suggest there are nine design principles that guide the implementation and evaluation of PD. These nine principles are:

1. The content of PD focuses on what students are to learn and how to address the different problems students may have in learning that material;
2. PD should be driven by analyses of the differences between (a) goals and standards for student learning and (b) student performance;
3. PD should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and, when possible, in the development of the learning opportunity and/or the process to be used;
4. PD should be primarily school-based and integral to school operations;
5. PD should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organised around collaborative problem solving;
6. PD should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and outside perspectives;
7. PD should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on outcomes for students and processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned through professional development;
8. PD should provide opportunities to engage in developing a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned;
9. PD should be integrated with a comprehensive change process that addresses impediments to and facilitators of student learning (Hawley & Valli, 2000, pp.2-4).

This model – as a set of descriptors like that of Desimone (2009) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) – signpost the significance of PD that is: content based; provides continuous and

ongoing feedback; and is primarily school-based. These factors are consistent in each of these models of contemporary evidence-based PD.

Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) describe a ‘new framework’ for PD and learning. They call it *Professional Learning and Development* (PLD). When describing PLD Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) assert that the process of professional learning and development is “not a total eclipse of one by the other, but a lot of mutual interaction and overlap” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p.3). In this framework, there should be no PD without learning and no professional learning without development. They explain that PLD is “the essence of an effective teaching profession” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p.4). They claim this framework builds strong cultures of professionalism in schools where teachers “thrive on diversity and disagreement, promote good variation of style, strengths, and overall approach, and increase individual as well as collective talent” (p.18). Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) framework used the research and findings from the recent study on the *State of Educators’ Professional Learning in Canada* (Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, Faubert, Zeichner & Hobbs-Johnson, 2016) to develop their framework. Interestingly, the findings from the study made it clear that not all achievement and impact of teacher PD should be related to student results. This new Hargreaves and Fullan (2016) framework is important to this study as it reinforces the expectation that teachers need to be active participants in their learning and, as a result, show development and improvement in practice.

The next section outlines Desimone’s conceptual framework for PD.

## 2.14 Desimone's conceptual framework for PD

Desimone (2009), along with Guskey (2002), contend that the focus of teacher PD over the past decades has been largely around teacher satisfaction and teacher attitude to change, rather than a position of professional growth and development. She argued there needed to be a means by which to empirically validate measures of PD, and uses empirical research on which to base her work, including quasi-experiments by Banilower and Shimkus (2004) on the impact of a content focus of teacher learning on student outcomes.

As such, Desimone (2009; Desimone & Garet, 2015) used longitudinal studies of teachers (Cohen & Hill, 2001) focusing on changes in teaching practice that could be attributed to PD, and research into powerful teacher discourse (Borko, 2004; Fullan, 1992) as the basis for her framework.

Desimone (2009)'s conceptual framework of PD also draws on a compilation of work from researchers such as Little (2006) and Wilson and Berne (1999). From that compilation, and those noted above, she identified core features of teacher PD that were more likely to reposition teacher's knowledge and pedagogy, and in turn, potentially improve students' learning outcomes. There are five proposed features that form the conceptual framework.

The *first* feature of the conceptual framework is that PD should be *content focused*. This aligns with Hawley and Valli (2000), who assert the focus of PD is on what students are to learn, that is, the content is teacher knowledge about the curriculum to be taught and pedagogy for that teaching. Desimone (2009) states that this feature may be the most influential feature in the framework, describing the correlation between increased content knowledge and possible changes in teachers' teaching practice. She asserts that PD should



focus on teaching strategies associated with a specific content area of the curriculum such as Mathematics or Science and Technology, and support the learning needs of the teachers and their classroom context.

The *second* feature requires opportunities for teachers to engage in *active learning*. This is noted by all three models noted above. Desimone (2009) describes *active learning* as active engagement in the learning process, observing other teachers, being observed by other teachers and giving and receiving feedback on practice. PD should incorporate active learning which engages the teacher as learner and allows them opportunities to try new strategies in their classroom and feed back to their peers what they have learned. In doing so, the PD is highly contextualised and allows teachers to be vulnerable and take greater risks. Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner (2017) state that PD should support collaboration, creating space in the daily timetable for teachers to share ideas with each other and collaborate in the learning environment. In doing so, schools create a culture that permits teacher learners to observe, question and challenge each other in a positive, productive manner. The PD should focus on effective practice, where best such practice is modelled and where teachers have a clear and consistent vision of what best practice is. There should be coaching and expert support in the design model of effect PD. Darling-Hammond et al., (2017) assert that coaching and expert support on the curricular content and on best practice focuses directly on the needs of the teacher. Aligning with Desimone's (2009) framework, active learning in PD should have opportunities for teachers to give and receive feedback and reflection on practice. Teachers need time to internalise and action new learning and make changes to their practice. According to Darling-Hammond et al., (2017), teachers need permission and opportunity to take risks in their teaching and receive supportive feedback from their peers. Such a process means that teachers feel supported as

they move closer to the model of best practice, reducing the potential for negativity that may steer teachers away from change or innovation in their practice.

The *third* of Desimone's (2009) features for effective PD is that there must be a *coherence* between teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs, ensuring consistency in practice and beliefs across the school and system. This coherence in knowledge and beliefs may be challenging and create tension. Desimone (2009) also notes that coherence may also need time for an alignment in intellectual and pedagogical beliefs and knowledge. It requires collective participation from teachers across the same grade where interaction and discussion become powerful levers for change in teaching practice (Desimone, 2009).

Desimone suggests *duration* as the *fourth* integral feature of effective PD. This recognises that teachers and school systems need time to experiment and evolve with learning new ways to approach their teaching. Given opportunity, encouragement and time to learn new strategies and reflect on the process can result in teachers feeling they are supported rather than pushed into pedagogical changes.

Finally, *collective participation* is the *fifth* of Desimone's (2009) features. She cites collective participation as a powerful form of teacher learning because it draws on the collective experience of a small group and permits change within the boundaries of supportive and collegial teams. Collective participation can be across grades, schools or departments and have the potential to lead to rigorous teacher discussion on pedagogy. This feature also aligns with the work of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012).

Desimone (2009) asserts that the application of the above features in teacher PD may lead to increased teacher knowledge and skills. These, in turn, can result in a change in teacher attitudes and beliefs, ultimately causing a change in teacher instructions, leading to improved student learning. Applying these features to any model of PD undertaken by a system, jurisdiction or school can create the conditions for school-wide, best practice and effective PD. The implications of applying Desimone's (2009) framework as a heuristic lens is that it provides a structure that will inform this study and assist in the analysis of data.

The next section discusses and justifies the use of Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework for PD and outlines how it is applied in this study.

### **2.15 Heuristic lens**

A heuristic lens is an aid used in research to learn, discover, or problem-solve through experimental and trial-and-error method (Kleining, Gerhard, Witt & Harald, 2000). As such, Desimone's conceptual framework (2009), as described in the previous section, has been used as a heuristic lens to assist in the analysis of the data in this study. This framework was selected as the heuristic lens because its features best aligned with the collaborative model of PD at the case study school. Other models of PD, as noted previously, were considered, however, Desimone's (2009) was selected for application as it was deemed the best fit with the study's contexts. For this study, several specific features of the Desimone framework have been applied to the data. The findings and discussion about analysis of Research Question 2 is discussed in more detail in the Methodology and Results Chapters.

It should be noted that two of the features of Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework, have not been included as a component of the heuristic lens as the study. These are feature three – that of needing *coherence between teacher beliefs and knowledge*; and feature four, *duration: that intellectual and pedagogical change needs time*. These two features were deemed less important because the research did not track teachers over time, neither was it the intent of this study to measure the impact of LWs on changing teacher practice -either their beliefs or their knowledge. Limited data were garnered about changes to practice but this was not deemed sufficiently significant to warrant deeper application in the analysis of data.

It is important to note too that Desimone (2009) acknowledges, that whilst the conceptual framework model for PD is recommended, there is not enough research and “no clear indication of thresholds of these features” of her framework (Desimone, 2009, p.191). It should also be acknowledged that this study does not seek to empirically validate Learning Walks as collaborative PD, or the veracity of Desimone's conceptual framework for PD, rather to use the framework as a heuristic lens through which the data can be viewed and analysed.

## **2.16 Chapter Summary**

The review of literature in this Chapter has focused on teacher PD. At the macro level, teacher PD has been considered in terms of global, national, state and local jurisdiction imperatives around improving student outcomes through improvement of teaching practice. At the micro level, models of teacher PD have been described along with factors

that influence teacher participation in PD. Thus, the Chapter provides a basis for the next in which the research design is described in detail.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction and overview

The previous chapter, *Chapter 2: Literature Review*, has provided the context for this study and identified the key themes underpinning this research. This chapter begins by outlining the theoretical framework of the study and then gives a detailed description of the methodological approaches used in this study. This chapter also includes detail about the researcher as ‘insider researcher’ and the limitations that brings to the study.

This research is a qualitative short-term ethnographic-type study (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). The research strategy is an ethnographic case study (Merriam, 2009) because the aim of the study was to investigate the self-reported experiences of teachers engaged in a school-based collaborative model of PD called Learning Walks and thereby gain a deeper understanding of how teachers construct knowledge and form perceptions around the factors that constrain and sustain them in the school-based model of PD called LW. The epistemological framework is constructivist, which aligns with an interpretive stance (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009) because the study gathered firsthand knowledge (Rossmann & Rallis, 2016) of teachers’ experiences and the factors that constrained and sustained their engagement in LWs as PD, a collaborative process intended to improve the quality of teaching at the case study school. This will be discussed further below.

Data were collected from 16 participants in the form of an online survey and small group interviews. This was followed by three interviews, the transcripts of which were analysed using and applying the framework for effective PD compiled by Desimone (2009).

Findings related to the two research questions that are noted below are described in more detail in the Findings and Discussion Chapter.

Details about the research design, including the nature and gathering of data, data coding methods and study limitations are also described in this section. Details of how this qualitative, constructivist ethnographic study employed an online survey and small group semi-structured interviews to gather data will also be explained further.

The following theoretical framework underpinned the research design to answer the research questions:

Research Question 1: What do teachers at the case study school report to be the factors that sustain and constrain their engagement in the process of collaborative PD known as Learning Walks?

Research Question 2: What are the self-reported teacher reflections about Learning Walks as collaborative teacher PD at the case study?

The following describes and justifies the theoretical framework that underpinned the research design.

### **3.2 Theoretical framework overview**

With the purpose of this study to investigate the teacher self-reported experiences and the factors that sustained and constrained them in LWs as PD, an interpretive case study approach has been employed. An interpretive approach (Lincoln & Guba, 2016) is appropriate to this study in that the research aimed to provide an understanding of the

factors identified by teachers that constrained and sustained them engaging in LWs as a school-based collaborative PD in the context of national and system imperatives to improve teaching quality.

The epistemological underpinning of this study is constructivist (Willis & Muktha, 2007) which aligns with the interpretive approach. Crotty (1998, p.45) states that “reality is socially constructed” and from a constructivist viewpoint meaning is not created, rather constructed. For this study, the meaning constructed by the participants has been central in seeking to interpret and understand factors that might constrain or sustain their engaging in a school-based model of collaborative PD. Crotty (1998) emphasises that when meaning is constructed, there is “no true interpretation, only the interpretations that are more or less useful” (p.8). To analyse and understand the data at the case study school, the researcher needed to understand that “meaning resides in the context” (Willis & Muktha, 2007, p.222). Any analysis of the data cannot occur without understanding the context, including the wider context of national and system imperatives for school improvement, including quality teaching and PD that promotes improvement and growth. Additional to the construction of research knowledge and its analysis, were factors such as teachers’ prior experience with and in PD, and their relationships with the participants in the study (Patton, 2015).

In the application of a constructivist interpretive stance, it is acknowledged that participants in the research may have had their own understanding of PD, which may, in turn, have influenced other participants in the group interviews (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2016). It is acknowledged that social interactions within the group interviews including how participants understood and responded to one another may have influenced the individual, shared and collective responses of the group (Smith, 2008).



It is also acknowledged that the findings from the analysis of data of these teachers' lived experiences and the factors that constrained and sustained their engagement in a school-based model for collaborative PD of teachers, provide one researcher's interpretation, at one moment-in-time (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998). The findings remain as one account of the data, at that moment-in-time and may not reflect the perceptions or actions of the participants now.

Thus, this study remains a 'moment-in-time' account and analysis of data from a group of participants at the case study school at a given point in time. The following sections provide an overview of the methods used to improve the trustworthiness and validity of the data and the decision to act as insider research in this study.

### **3.3 Ethnographic Case study**

This research is a type of ethnographic case study in that it is about the experiences and actions of a group of teachers engaged in a lived experience (Lincoln & Guba, 2016) of PD called Learning Walks. Creswell (2014) describes ethnography as an inquiry design in which the researcher studies "the shared patterns of behaviours, language and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting...Data collection often involves observations and interviews" (p.43). This study is aligned with ethnography in that its goal was "to capture the native's point of view, and this is taken to require a description of the representations, experiences, or other traits of the individuals" (Creswell, 2014, pp.42-43). This research aimed to capture these teachers' self-reported reflections about Learning Walks as model of collaborative PD along with the factors that may have constrained and sustained their engagement in a school-based model. Although this research claims to be aligned to ethnography, it is not pure ethnography because the researcher did not "spend extensive

periods of time with the participants” (Risjord, 2007, p.401). Strictly speaking, this research has not accommodated this aspect of ethnographic research. Although in rigid ethnographic methodology, observation is an important data collection method, for this study it was not deemed useful, given the aim of the study was to investigate the self-reported experiences of teachers engaged in a school-based collaborative model of PD called Learning Walks. Thus, the research intended “to get inside the way a group of people sees the world” (Hammersley, 1985, p.152). According to Merriam (2009), the case study method adopted links well to the interpretivist approach taken in this study because it enabled a holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit situated in a specific context that can provide insight into real-life situations.

### **3.4 Research Design**

Having outlined and justified of the methodological approach taken in this study, the following section explains the ethical issues with the study, including the recruitment of participants, participant anonymity, the decision to employ an online survey and group interviews as data gathering strategies, and the storage of data in this research best for resolving the research problem identified previously in *Chapter 1: The Research Problem*.

As noted previously, ethical approval was sought and granted for the research from the school Principal, the Director of Schools of the local Catholic Schools Office, and the SCU Human Research Ethics Committee (SCU approval number ECN-14-123; See *Appendix B: Ethics Approval Notification*). It was made clear to all prospective participants that their participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time (which two participants chose to do), that all data collected would be securely stored off site, be unavailable to the

case study school Principal, leadership team or any other staff member and would be destroyed appropriately after seven years. All the required ethical considerations around data collection, storage, data analysis and reporting were adhered to in the study. The teachers were de-identified in the analysis and reporting of this study, thus ensuring their anonymity.

To avoid bias, the de-identified interview transcripts were coded and themes identified by a member of Southern Cross University. Cross-checking of thematic coding between the researcher and SCU member ensured greater rigor and validity of finding. The purpose was to conduct a ‘double blind’ (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2016) analysis of the data. Burke and Kirton (2006) assert that removing oneself from the research context does not eliminate bias, in fact, from a constructivist point of view, bias can never truly be eliminated. To minimise potential bias in data analysis the researcher employed this double-blind process to sort and identify themes, and check for ambiguities that had been missed by the researcher, possibly due to the duality of her roles.

#### *3.4.1 The ethics of the ‘insider researcher’ role*

As the researcher in this case study and as an ‘insider researcher’ (Raths & McAninch, 2003) conducting the case study research as a member of the case study school Leadership Team, specifically the Leader of Pedagogy, it was important to acknowledge the duality of these roles and the advantages and disadvantages of being an ‘insider researcher’ in this study. It is acknowledged as ‘insider researcher’. This position may have created difficulties in the research, however, it enabled me, as the researcher, to gain deeper insights into the school-based model of collaborative PD. In the following section, an

explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of being an ‘insider researcher’ are explored.

Unluer (2012) defines ‘insider researcher’s as those who choose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group under study. Thus, this researcher was integrally involved in both the workings of the school and the research study as it progressed.

Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) pinpoint three key advantages of being an ‘insider researcher’. These advantages are, that the ‘insider researcher’:

1. Has a greater understanding of the culture being studied, in this case, PD at the case study school;
2. Positive flow of social interaction during the process of collecting data; in this study rapport had already existed with participant teachers;
3. An established relationship with participants, that promoted openness and trust; in this study’s group interviews familiarity had already been established at the case study school because of my role as Leader of Pedagogy (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002, pp 9-14).

In contrast, DeLyser (2002) noted the challenges that an ‘insider researcher’ may face, observing difficulty collecting data especially via interviews, with participants aggravated by questions to which the participants know the interviewer already knows the answer to because of their insider role. Further difficulties that may be encountered by the ‘insider researcher’ can relate to ethical codes or issues such as privacy, confidentiality and informed consent and a balance between their insider role and the role of the researcher

(Breen, 2007). In this study, managing such difficulties meant member checking back to participants with summaries of interviews; and the de-identification of participants in data analysis and reporting. It also included ensuring consent forms and data were stored off-site and remained unavailable for any school staff, thus safeguarding them against access by others at the case study school.

In recognising the duality of my role and taking evasive action to ensure it did not overrule both ethical decisions and study rigour, the assistance of a member of Southern Cross University was enlisted to conduct a 'double-blind' analysis of the data. Burke and Kirton (2006) says that removing oneself from the research context does not eliminate bias, in fact, from a constructivist point of view, bias can never truly be eliminated (Breen, 2007).

As 'insider researcher', there is always the potential for bias (Hewitt-Taylor, 2002) when interviewing and analysing the data. Objectivity as 'insider researcher' was not being sought. A level of subjectivity in this study is acknowledged, because it added depth to the data analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Given the researcher's role as Leader of Pedagogy at the case study school and as an 'insider researcher' I could employ strategies that Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001) assert are based on foundational knowledge and skills about the participants and their context that conversely added depth to the study. These strategies applied specific knowledge and understanding about participants in the following ways:

- Body language, which is described by Wetherell et al. (2001) as semiosis, that is, "making meaning through body language and other visual representations" (p.229)  
In this study the 'insider researcher' could consider the body language of the

participants in the group interviews such as: adopting open and emotionally neutral body language including nodding, smiling, looking interested or disinterested and making encouraging noises (Gill, Stewart & Chadwick, 2008).

- Dynamics and interrelationships between peers: Wetherell et al. (2001) note that additional information from the transcript can be gained by the analyst about relationships in a group, adding depth to the research.
- Relationship with the ‘insider researcher’ as Leader of Pedagogy: Wetherell et al. (2001) describe the analysis of conversation with an ‘insider researcher’ as “more conversational, where the speakers jointly make meaning within that interaction, constructing new knowledge” (p.16). At the case study school, participants often added to another participants’ comments without the ‘insider researcher’ having to prompt the group for further detail, information or a personal experience, as if engaged in a conversation rather than as a single response to a question.
- Pre-existing attitudes e.g. towards PD: An attitude expressed or the recount an event from the past, within the highly context-specific (Wetherell et al., 2001) of the case study school. Some participants in the group interviews recounted a personal experience to describe why they felt as they did e.g. one participant recounted a past personal PD experience to describe how disconnected PD was to their teaching and learning and how frustrated it made them feel.

It was also noted by the ‘insider researcher’ that the group interview participants appeared to share willingly and openly with the ‘insider researcher’, providing details about their personal experiences with Learning Walks as PD at the case study school. During the interviews, it was noted that the Leader of Pedagogy was often referred to in third person, thus indicating that participants could separate my role as researcher from my role as LOP.

This demonstrated that the participants did not seem to have a problem speaking about me, the LOP, whilst I was there as the researcher and interviewer. Given participant openness during the interviews, and interview data gathered from the participants, demonstrated in some way that teachers felt at ease in the interview and were willing to contribute to the study openly and freely.

This section has detailed my position as ‘insider researcher’ and as LOP at the case study school and the potential for bias as a result. It has described the strategies implemented to limit bias in the interview process or in the findings as ‘insider researcher’ and LOP at the case study school. Having detailed the ethical considerations for this study including potential ‘insider researcher’ bias the next section continues with details about recruiting the participants.

#### *3.4.2 Participant recruitment*

This section continues to overview the research process and choices, with the recruitment of participants and considerations employed for data gathering, participant anonymity and storage of the data.

Once ethical clearances were finalised and with the support and permission of the case study school’s Principal, invitations to participate in the research were offered to a potential pool of 30 full-time teaching staff at a K-6 Catholic primary school in regional NSW. These invitations were sent via the schools’ email system. Details of the study, its purpose, the role of participants, data gathering methods including an online survey and small group interview were outlined. Ethical considerations and participant confidentiality were also explained in the *Participant Information Letter* (See *Appendix C: Participant Information Letter*).

Participation in this study was voluntary for the invited staff, however participation in the study was restricted to full-time teaching staff. This was necessary to ensure all participants had engaged in the Learning Walks cycle at the case study school. For participants, engagement in the research requested the completion of an online survey and their engagement in a group interview. Thus, data became the survey responses and the transcriptions of the three small group interviews

From a potential pool of 30 full-time teaching staff at the case study school, eighteen full time teachers from Kindergarten to Year 6 accepted the invitation to participate in the research. *Participant Information Letters* (See *Appendix C: Participant Information Letter*) and *Consent Forms* (See *Appendix D: Consent Forms*) were emailed to those eighteen teachers, who printed and signed them, then returned them to the researcher.

The researcher, who was the Leader of Pedagogy at the case study school, knew the participants from their work at the case study school. Participants were made aware of the duality of roles, that is, ‘insider researcher’ and Leader of Pedagogy at the case study school. Ethical considerations about the role of the researcher as an ‘insider researcher’ will be described later in this chapter.

### **3.4.3 Data collection: Online survey**

With *Participant Information Letters* and *Consent Forms* completed, all documentation was placed in a separate file and kept off-site from the case study school for retaining participant anonymity and keeping the data secure. The link to the online survey, created through SurveyMonkey, was emailed to each of the eighteen participants upon completion and submission of the *Participant Information* and *Consent Forms*. A one-week deadline



for survey completion was given to ensure the survey data could be collated prior to conducting of small group interviews.

The survey used in this study was generated through SurveyMonkey. A copy of the survey can be reviewed in *Appendix G: Online Staff Survey Questions*. The purpose of the online survey was to gather participant demographic data in relation to years of teaching experience and types of professional feedback on practice with which teachers had previously engaged. SurveyMonkey was the selected online platform to administer the survey because of its secure sockets layer protocol, which provided a secure connection between to participant and the server (see SurveyMonkey Inc.). The system could recognise repeat users, had real-time results, enabled the researcher to filter the data and provided easy access to all participants. Access was available on a mobile, iPad or computer. It is acknowledged that SurveyMonkey had its limitations (Wright, 2005). These included limited functionality with the free version used in the design and construction of this study's survey. However, it was chosen over Qualtrics, as staff at the case study school was familiar with the use of SurveyMonkey, having prior experience with it, thus it allowed for an ease of access and use for both the participants and 'insider researcher' at the case study school.

The online survey consisted of five single-select multiple-choice questions and one check all answers that apply question, which was the last question in the survey. From a respondent's point of view, a 'check all answers that apply' question is much easier to answer than making a single selection where multiple experiences may apply (See *Appendix G: Online Staff Survey Questions*) (Fink, 2003). All survey responses were anonymous.

With a response rate to the online survey at 60% of staff at the case study school, the data gathered is considered more than adequate for use in this study. Of the fulltime teaching staff (n=30) at the case study school, eighteen participants engaged in the online survey. According to Palmquist (2003), self-administered surveys do not elicit large responses, however, a 40% response rate is considered adequate. The data were collated by SurveyMonkey and was used by the ‘insider researcher’ for quasi-statistical analysis.

Participants completing the online survey remained anonymous, in an attempt to allay any fears participants may have had, or if they were feeling intimidated because they did not have enough knowledge to justify an answer (Schwandt, 2000). It also maintained ethical protocols. The Principal at the case study school had given approval for the study and provided time for the completion of the online survey during a scheduled staff meeting.

The survey data provided the ‘insider researcher’ with background knowledge about the participants’ gender, age, years of teaching experience and participant’s prior experience with PD models. However, the demographic data alone was insufficient to fully answer to the research questions.

#### *3.4.4 Data collection: Small group interview schedule*

With participants having completed the online survey, the ‘insider researcher’ generated a small group interview schedule. ‘Insider researcher’ knowledge assisted in the construction of interview groups in an attempt to minimise the risk where participants would “change and sometimes reverse their positions after interactions with others” (Kreuger & Casey, 2001, p.16).

The interview schedule was created to accommodate for individual and group interview availability options and times. This information was emailed to the participants for perusal and confirmation of their availability. The schedule was somewhat flexible, designed to meet the changing needs of the participants. Where changes were requested, the interview schedule was adjusted to ensure a balance of participant numbers. It was then resent to participants via email for confirmation and finalisation. Group interview reminders were emailed to participants prior to their interview date.

As the ‘insider researcher’, personal and professional knowledge of the teacher interactions and their specific relationships in the school context were applied in developing the interview groups. This was done so that each participant could potentially have their opinions heard in a safe and open environment. It is acknowledged that at this point two participants requested to discontinue their participation due to clash of timetabling and participants’ workload, and were not included in the interview schedule.

#### *3.4.5 Data collection: Conducting the small group interviews*

For this study the data consisted of the survey responses and transcripts from three semi-structured small group interviews that were conducted over a four-week period of time. Weisberg (2009) and Creswell (2014) describe the semi-structured interview as a series of prepared interview questions based on predetermined inquiry areas, broad enough in nature to allow the participants to explain their ideas. In this study, the researcher used of probes (King & Horrocks, 2010) to leaven information from the participants during the interview. This aided the interviewer to explore responses in more detail. The researcher’s position as ‘insider researcher’ meant that probes could be more participant-specific in relation to the

research questions. The conduct of semi-structured group interviews was intended to provide depth of response and insight into teachers' self-reported factors that constrained and sustained teacher engagement in Learning Walks as a collaborative school-based model of PD (see *Appendix H: Semi-structured Group Interview Guide*). It was also a time-efficient mechanism for gathering data.

The interview groups consisted of teachers from across the K-6 grades at the case study school. Groups typically did not have teachers from the same grade in them. This strategy was employed by the 'insider researcher' to maximise the opportunity for all participants to contribute to the interview, knowing potential dominant participants could restrict the openness of some participants to share their insights.

Small group interviews were conducted after school hours and on-site at the case study school. Interview room bookings were made through the school prior to the scheduled day and with the permission and support of the school's principal. Furniture was organised to meet the size of each small group, and set out in a way in which all participants were visible to the researcher and to each other. Participants were interviewed in two groups of five and one group of six. The interviews typically lasted forty-five minutes in length.

Participants were reminded prior to the commencement of the interview that the interview would be digitally audio-recorded, and that participant acknowledgement of this intention had been indicated on their *Participant Information and Consent Form* and prior to the commencement of the interview. Digital audio-recording was chosen rather than note-taking as, according to Creswell (2002, p.398), note-taking is likely to disrupt the natural flow of the conversation and therefore it was deemed preferable to audio-record the

interviews using a digital recorder. No notes were taken during the group interviews. Interview recordings were transcribed within two days of the interview occurring and used for further analysis. This was essential because “hearing a taped conversation whilst still fresh in your mind makes transcription much easier” (Clifford, Cope, Gillesie & French, 2016, p.150) (See *Appendix E: Sample interview transcript* and *Appendix H: Semi-structured Group Interview Guide*).

In the transcription of data, each participant was allocated a gender-neutral name and participant number to optimise anonymity in the research findings. For example, Fred Blogs might become ‘Harvest 2’. Direct quotes from the data are presented in the Findings and Discussion Chapter. Data protection and confidentiality was taken very seriously in the study with the understanding that the information would be analysed by the ‘insider researcher’. The participants and the school are not directly identifiable in any reporting or publication of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

It is acknowledged that information from the group interviews was transferred into quasi-numeric data to inform the study as explained previously in this chapter. The semi-structured group interview was used in this research as a method to explore the self-reported factors identified by teachers at case study school that constrained and sustained their participation in Learning Walks. The group interviews provided insight into the teacher’s personal reflections about Learning Walks as PD.

Having described the structure and conduct of the online survey and small group interviews, the following section explains and justifies the analysis, collation and coding of the data.

#### *3.4.6 Data collation and analysis*

SurveyMonkey provided an online platform for the participant survey that systematically constructed data into tables and graphs. Manual coding to capture a key theme or idea was used in the collation and coding of semi-structured interview data which was transcribed into text format. Coding, as described by Braun, Clarke, and Terry (2015) is a “systematic and thorough process whereby codes are derived from an entire dataset” (p.100). They note that coding often informs the refining and shaping of research question(s). Elliot and Timulak (2005) explain further that coding of data with “constructive critique and openness to reassessment of the chosen focus ... begins to point in a different direction” (p.151) possibly identifying new, unintentional themes.

From the online survey, the following data were gathered about the participant teachers: years of teaching experience; number of years at the case study school; number of other schools where teachers had worked; and the types of professional feedback mechanisms experienced by participants over their teaching career. The survey data provided the ‘insider researcher’ with data that gave a collective representation of the participant group that otherwise was anecdotal and assumed.

Having conducted the small group interviews, and the recordings were transcribed within a two-day timeframe of having been recorded. All participant names were de-identified and allocated gender-neutral nametags and numbers to safeguard participant anonymity. By colour-coding the transcript, highlighting words that were repeated by participants across the interviews, for example, words such as ‘leader’, ‘nervous’, ‘judged’, ‘stressed’ and ‘faked’, and thus patterns began to emerge. The colour coded words or terms were then transferred into a table for further analysis.

Once the repeated terms were tabulated, the researcher began to look more broadly at the transcripts, looking for phrases or words that may correlate with the repeated terms already colour-coded. Having identified multiple phrases across all transcripts meeting this criterion, a more effective way to manipulate the data were sought. Thus, a large printed copy (A3) of the table, that included the colour coded terms was created and the transcript was manually dissected to locate and identify similar terms or phrases. These were then mapped against the colour coded terms to reveal the themes and subthemes.

These phrases were cut out of the text and manually placed onto the hard copy of the table, with the intention of allowing the researcher to continue, in an iterative way, to manipulate the data as new links were identified. Thus, by manoeuvring the text and progressively creating a mind map of overarching themes with smaller sub-themes below analysis continued. It was important to note that at that time the researcher also recorded participant names on the back of the phrases or words cut out to ensure accuracy when writing up the findings. This iterative process of data coding is affirmed by Saldana (2015) for pattern detecting, theory building and proposition development.

Having identified, tabled and mind mapped key words and phrases from the transcripts, and then identified key overarching themes, a final completed table with all this information on it was formulated. I then looked to the literature to see if the research had any correlation with my data. Still working as a hard copy, the researcher recorded key researchers against my themes. It was now that the researcher noticed that many of the researchers researched had been recorded under multiple themes on my mind map. Most noticeable of these researchers was Desimone (2009). Interrogating further, a mind web

was created, showing the interconnection of many of the themes identified in the data and the researchers behind them. It was here that the researcher made the link between Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework and its alignment with an ethnographic-type, the theoretical approach undertaken in this study. The transcripts were cross-checked for thematic coding by conducting a 'double-blind' (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2016) analysis of the data between the researcher and an SCU member to ensure greater rigor and validity of finding. Once completed and themes verified, the findings could be written up.

Thus, key codes, or succinct labels and phrases, were derived from the interview transcription text. Both descriptive and interpretive codes were derived (Kirsch, 2001). The descriptive codes summarised the content of the text whilst the interpretive codes allowed the researcher more insight and meaning. This process was completed several times to ensure associated extracts of data were attached to the correct codes. From these codes, themes surfaced. According to Braun et al. (2015) a theme "generally identifies a broader level of meaning than a code" (p.102). Informed by Braun et al. (2015) and Fink (2003), a thematic analysis of the data was then undertaken. Clusters of similar meanings across the codes identified potential patterns. Some patterns or themes did not have the frequency of others, yet were important to the research question, others were clear and central to the research.

The themes and their link to the literature will be expanded upon in the following chapter where findings are discussed. It should be noted that there is no claim in this study that the sample group at the case study school is typical of any other group. As a case study, the group were selected because of their full-time status and thus, regular participation in Learning Walks at the case study school. The aim of the research, guided by the research



questions, was to investigate the self-reported reflections of teachers who had engaged in a school-based collaborative model of PD called Learning Walks. It also sought to identify factors that constrained and sustained teacher engagement in this process.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter has detailed the methodology of the research and its limitations. The justification of the role of the Leader of Pedagogy as ‘insider researcher’ has been set out. The chapter has overviewed the use of the online survey and semi-structured interview that formed the basis of the data. Ethical considerations, participant recruitment, and data analysis have all been described and justified. Next, *Chapter 4, DISCUSSION, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION*, provides the reader with an analysis of data and a discussion of the findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to investigate the factors that constrained and sustained teacher engagement in LWs as PD at the case study school and gain insights from teachers' self-reflection on LWs as PD. Preceding chapters have outlined the context of the study and reviewed the relevant literature relating to the imperatives to improve teaching quality in a changing education paradigm. This Chapter represents the analysis of the data. The first section details the demographic data gathered from the online survey. The second section presents findings derived from the small group interviews in response to the following two research questions that have guided this investigation:

Research Question 1: What do teachers at the case study school report to be the factors that sustain and constrain their engagement in the process of collaborative professional development known as Learning Walks?

Research Question 2: What are the self-reported teacher reflections about Learning Walks as collaborative teacher PD?

The findings of this study are not an evaluation of the LWs process at the case study school, nor does it evaluate the effect LWs may or may not have had on teaching practice of the participant teachers. Rather it was an investigation into the factors that influenced teacher engagement in this collaborative model of PD.

## 4.2 Online survey: Demographic data

This section is a summary of findings from analysis of the online survey, having been collated using SurveyMonkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>) providing quasi-statistics (Alreck & Settle, 2004) that add depth and validity to the claims. The strengths and limitations of SurveyMonkey have been discussed in the Methodology Chapter. This survey data is demographic and includes information about the age and experience of teachers at the case study school. Five questions were asked of eighteen participants. Each question is identified below with a summary of the findings from the data.

### *Question 1: What is your gender?*

A summary of the online data showed that most respondents were female with the 18 surveyed participants, two were male (11%), and 16 were female (89%). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2015) data states that 83.2% of teaching staff in Catholic schools comprised of females, making the case study school comparable to other Catholic primary schools.

### *Question 2: What is your age?*

A summary of the online data showed that the age of the respondents ranged between 21- 62 years, noting that one participant did not identify their age on the survey. A summary of demographic data shows that:

- Two of the participants were aged between 20 and 24 years (11%)
- Four of the participants were aged between 25-34 years (22%)
- Six of the participants were aged between 35-44 years (33%)

- Five of the participants were aged between 45-62 years (27.5%)
- One participant did not indicate their age (5.5%)

This data from the case study school show that the participant staff were younger than is typical for the profile of Australian teachers as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2015). They show that from data reported in 2015, 9.6% of teachers were under the age of 30 years (perhaps 18% of the participants at the case study school), 38.0% of teachers between 30 and 44 years of age (perhaps 35% of the participants at the case study school) and 52.4 % of teachers were 45 years and over (27.5% of the participants at the case study school). This data indicates that the teachers at the case study school are younger than the state and national averages by category (NSW Education, 2015).

### *Question 3: How long have you been teaching?*

A summary of the online data showed that teachers at the case study school were at various stages or phases of their career (Alreck & Settle, 1985; Day, 1999). According to Day (1999), these phases, tend to influence teacher attitude to teaching, including their attitudes to feedback on their teaching practice and their willingness to change. These may therefore be indicative of teacher attitudes to teaching at their respective phases of their career. The data showed that:

- Seven participants had been teaching for 1-7 years (averaged at 4 years)
- Four participants had been teaching for 8-15 years (averaged at 11 years)
- Six participants had been teaching for 16-30 years (averaged at 23.5 years)
- One participant had taught for more than 30 years (averaged at 40 years)

According to ABS (2015) the average length of service for teachers in primary schools is

14.3 years. At the case study school when the averages were tallied, it came to 253 years. When averaged at 18 participants, it shows that at the case study school the average length of teaching service was 14. Therefore, it is noted that the case study school participants' length of teaching service was very similar to what the ABS (2015) reports as the national average length of service of teachers (14.3).

*Question 4: How long have you been teaching at the case study school?*

A summary of the online data showed the following data about the 18 participant teachers and the length of their tenure at the case study school.

Seven participants had been teaching at this school for 1-3 years (39%)

Five participants had been teaching at this school for 4-7 years (28%)

Two participants had been teaching at this school for 8-15 years (11%)

Three participants had been teaching at this school for 16-23 years (16%)

One participant had been teaching at this school for 24-30 years (5%)

No participants had been teaching at this school for more than 30 years (0%)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics does not collect data on the length of a teacher's tenure in a school. However anecdotal indicators are that while stability of the workforce is important, the longer a teacher stays in a particular school, the more likely they are to be resistant to change (Hargreaves & Fullan 2009). The significance of this data may be in the implications of long-term tenure in an institution where change adaptability is essential. This study did not investigate the impact of long-term tenure; however, it may be an area for future study.

*Question 5: What type of feedback have you experienced*

*directly on your teaching practice over your career? Please tick all that are applicable and add where necessary.*

The online data showed that participants had experienced a broad range of feedback about their teaching. In Question Six, all participants (100%) in the study reported that they had engaged in LWs, implying that they considered LWs as a form of feedback on their teaching. This was not surprising given the topic of the study. A substantial proportion (77%) of participants indicated they had engaged in the mentor/ee process during their career. Peer-to-Peer observation and feedback ranked highly amongst participants as having engaged in the process. The data showed that over 33% of participants had experienced Principal observation and feedback as a supervisory model of feedback on their teaching practice. Likewise, 33% of participants had experienced coaching as a model for professional feedback, with 11% of participants having no experience in formal feedback on their practice at all.

The online data showed 88% had engaged in some form of professional feedback on their teaching during their career. The structure and purpose of that professional feedback was not a central focus of this study; however, it could be an area for future exploration.

In summary then, the demographic data identified information about participant age, tenure, longevity in the teaching profession and teacher involvement in PD and feedback. The data were analysed for specific purposes (Day, 1999) and revealed that the teachers at the case study school was somewhat like those at other schools, however because of the uniqueness

of each school, this study's findings were never intended to be generalisable to all other schools.

The following section is the summary of findings in response to the two research questions using data analysis of the transcripts of semi-structured group interviews. The process of data analysis is outlined in the previous chapter.

### **4.3 Semi-structured group interview data: Findings and discussion**

This section discusses the findings from the data as they are associated with the research questions:

Research Question 1: What do teachers at the case study school report to be the factors that sustain and constrain their engagement in the process of collaborative professional development known as Learning Walks?

Research Question 2: What are the self-reported teacher reflections about Learning Walks as collaborative teacher PD?

As stated previously, the participants in the small group interview comprised of sixteen full-time teaching staff ranging in years of service from the first year of teaching to more than thirty years of service, both male and female, with fewer males than female.

In response to Research Question 1, the findings from the small group interviews revealed two overarching themes: **Protocols** and **Relationships**, with two sub-themes of 'collaboration' (in relation to protocols) and 'trust' (in relation to relationships). Drilling down into these themes, the findings from the data analysis revealed the factors that constrained or sustained teacher engagement in LWs. These are discussed in order.

The two main themes from analysis, Protocols and Relationships, otherwise known as the ***P and R factors***, were:

- **P** = Protocols around the implementation of LWs were in place. They had been agreed to and written up, and are adhered to by participants, including teachers and the school leadership team. Collaboration was a key component of the Protocols as teachers were expected to be collaborative in the processes of engaging with LWs.
- **R** = relationships, built on trust, underpinned the success or failure of LWs as PD. These included relationships between teachers themselves as they engaged, and between teachers and leadership members (the Principal, Assistant Principal, and Leader of Pedagogy).

In the following section, each **P and R** component is discussed.

#### *4.3.1 Protocols*

The first factor for discussion is that of Protocols. Responses around Protocols were themed as factors associated with the implementation of LWs. After analysis, these have been categorised as:

**Protocol 1:** ‘Walking’ teams were expected not to interact with the ‘Host’ team teachers during the LW so they did not disrupt the flow of the lesson being taught/observed.

**Protocol 2:** The use of clipboards on which ‘Walking’ teams would record observational notes.

***Protocol 1:** ‘Walking’ teams were not to interact with the ‘Host’ team teachers during the LW.*



The data revealed that the Protocol requiring teachers to not interrupt the teaching and learning during the LW was an issue for many of the participants at the case study school. While they acknowledged the potential disruption if a class visitor would ask a question during their visit, the participants were concerned that this Protocol led to misunderstandings regarding what was happening in the classroom. In turn, this led to misunderstandings and cases where feedback was not representative of the teacher's actions. Some participants identified this erroneous feedback as inaccurate, confusing or hurtful. Typical responses on this topic included:

*They've misunderstood, there's a misunderstanding, because it can't be clarified at the time because the teachers can't be involved (Peyton 1-6).*

*Some of the feedback has been incorrect. They've not understood the context of what or how we do things in our learning space. They can't ask us. That's a real problem. So, then it feels like people are judging us without foundation, coming in picking on us (Lex 3-1).*

These data show that when teachers were unable to speak with other teachers during LWs, teacher feedback was often perceived as laden with misunderstandings, thus limiting its validity and effectiveness for the teacher. Issues with Protocol 1 are important in that, according to Darling-Hammond et al., (2017) high-quality teacher PD and learning requires feedback and reflection that supports teachers to thoughtfully improve practice. The limitations of Protocol 1 in this study meant that teachers at the case study experienced frustration and hurt. Teachers felt their LW observation feedback was founded on the premise that observing teachers did not adequately understand why teachers were teaching

the way they were at that time and therefore were making unfounded evaluations about their teaching. Participant's emotional responses to feedback because of the LW Protocol 1, indicated a conflicted relationship with feedback highlighting the important role of teacher beliefs about themselves and their teaching, and their desire to improve. This conflict and tension was contrary to the intent of Protocol 1 in the LWs process. That Protocol was put in place to ensure smooth running of the lesson being observed and to minimise the disruption of the Walking team visiting a class during teaching time. However, it acted as a constraining factor when the unintended outcome was that some participants had a negative experience with feedback about their teaching.

Understanding the impact of Protocol 1 in this study is important because research literature, including that of Darling-Hammond et al., (2017), describe feedback and reflection as necessary in high quality PD. The potential for Protocol 1 to inhibit the feedback and reflection process is significant. According to Little (2006), the more teachers understand their emotional responses to feedback and why they are feeling or reacting that way, the less likely they are to use counter-measures to protect themselves from perceived hurtful or unfair feedback on their practice. And so, given Desimone's (2009) iteration of the value of *active participation* in the PD process, careful consideration of any such Protocol is recommended because they has the potential to either promote or sabotage teacher participation in the PD process. It should be noted that at the case study school, this protocol changed, encouraging all teachers engaged in LWs to discuss with each other what was happening in the classroom with the caveat that the discussion did not unnecessarily interrupt student learning.

Participants' emotional responses to feedback in this study also revealed two juxtaposed dispositions around feedback itself that created tensions for some participants. These were that teachers recognised that the feedback on their teaching could be threatening, unhelpful or erroneous, but it could be useful in guiding improvement in teaching practice. An example of teachers noting that feedback was considered useful in improving teacher practice, included:

*We worked hard on improving our teaching. We did get some feedback and we did try to think about how we could change what we were doing. I think the feedback brought it back in our minds. It helped focus us. Otherwise, we'd just forget about it and keep doing the same things as before (Nat 4-4).*

Darling-Hammond et al., (2007) describe dispositions as habits of thinking and action. These habits include a predisposition to reflect and learn from feedback on teaching practice and engage in inquiry into teaching practice. This first disposition sees the receivers of feedback looking forward to understanding where the feedback is going and how they can use it to improve their practice. It is a proactive approach to receiving feedback and gives the participant an opportunity to consider what could be done differently. Darling-Hammond et al., (2007) note that this is an 'inquirer' disposition rather than a 'defensive' disposition.

The following participant comment is indicative of those more defensive responses about feedback:

*I think also sometimes the feedback can be particularly negative and when that happens, and obviously, everybody works so hard, and it just makes you feel "What's the point?" (Eden 1-5).*

The data shows how that, at times, a participant's response to feedback may be a 'kneejerk' one, perhaps because they found it challenging or confronting. In the light of the above information about Protocol 1, it may have been a response of frustration about LWs and the misunderstanding that meant that feedback may not have reflected the reality of their teaching intentions.

These emotive responses reflect what Sorrentino and Higgins (2003) note as the extent to which attitudes and perceptions influence or guide behaviour. Teachers reflect on and consider the feedback and information that may be helpful in improving their practice. They then chose to accept or reject those pieces of information. Raths and McAninch (2003) assert when something is believed or accepted as true, people will act on their beliefs.

The following section discusses the second of the Protocols – that of the use of clipboards for note taking – and the potential for Protocol 2 to constrain the purpose of the LW from collaborative observation and feedback to a perceived mode of performance review.

***Protocol 2: The use of clipboards on which 'Walking' teams would record observational notes.***

Participant responses indicated that one Protocol had a significant impact on teacher perceptions of the purpose of LWs. This Protocol was around the use of clipboards for note taking by the 'Walking' team when recording their observations of the 'Host' team. Some (n=5) participants were critical of the use of the clipboard commenting that its use was symbolic of a more traditional model of teacher supervision. In comparison, some LW

participants (n=4) felt that the clipboard had little influence on what teachers were doing during LWs.

This difference of opinion about the use of clipboards is illustrated in the responses below:

*I know with the clipboard thing that somebody might be sitting in on judgment, and especially if there is an executive member that isn't the LOP, that that could be a bit intimidating (Dakota 1-4).*

*Having a group of teachers observe you is hard enough, but to look up and see them all with clipboard and writing about you is really confronting. I want to know what they are writing and what happens to that piece of paper (Oakley 3-5).*

*I didn't notice they had clipboards. I was too busy teaching (Kendall 2-6).*

The use of a clipboard for the purposes of this study is called the 'Clipboard Effect'. Given concerns raised by some participants (n=5), questions regarding its use had arisen, specifically about its symbolic representation of a more surveillance paradigm and the constraining influence it may have on teacher engagement. According to Sharma (2016) teachers who are comfortable with *status quo* often continue to be obsessed with the old paradigm to avoid the intrusion of feedback on teacher practice. It is not clear if this was the case at the case study school but is an area for further investigation.

Some participants (n=7) identified the use of a clipboard by the 'Walking' team as influencing teacher planning and preparation in the lead up to LW. Under threat of receiving negative or confronting feedback some teachers wanted to present the best possible

‘demonstration’ lesson. From the data, there was evidence that teachers presented lesson for the scheduled time of the LW that would not have ordinarily been taught – both subject area and lesson type. Thus, the lesson to be observed often had little or no connection to the cohort program, rather, it was an isolated lesson designed to give the ‘Host’ teacher the most favourable feedback. This worked in opposition to the intention of LWs and became a constraining factor for effective engagement and teacher PD. Teachers described this process as staging or faking lessons. Responses that typified the staging of lessons specifically for LWs included:

*People would plan for days for LWs. It wasn't their real lesson planned as a cohort. You could tell walking through that it was fake (Jamie 2-5.)*

*I can say that I have staged lessons. Why wouldn't I? Teachers are recording notes about me. I want the lesson to look fantastic. I don't want any negative feedback. The lesson really was a one-off (Oakley 3-5).*

This faking of lessons to ensure positive feedback sits in stark contrast to the research by Wilcox, Lawson, and Angelis (2017) and Byrk, Gomez, Gunrow, and LeMaheiu (2015) who remark that to develop an individual's capabilities there must be high levels supporting collaboration and a desire to want to learn how to improve. In this instance, the threat of potentially poor feedback over-rode the teachers' desire to be collaborative and to learn from the experience. Given the collaborative nature of the school both in structure and practice, the purpose of LWs included building both individual and collaborative practice. Where teachers were reverting to isolated, one-off or disconnected lessons either as a team or as an individual, the purpose of LWs was lost.

Some participants (n=6) made links between the use of the clipboard and the type of feedback being given. Typical responses included:

*They're coming in with clipboards, observing us then giving us feedback that either doesn't really make sense or is hurtful. So, I've started to fake my lessons to look the way I think **they** want them to look (Gabriel 2-2).*

Several participants (n=8) described observational anxiety as an outcome of the use of clipboards to record notes. Typical comments included:

*It makes me really nervous when they stand there writing information about me. I don't like it. I feel sick in the stomach sometimes (Inis 2-4).*

Given the collaborate nature of LWs at the case study school, the identification of 'Clipboard Effect' is important in that it too has the potential to constrain the process from its intended purpose. Data showed how this Protocol effectively restricted the usefulness of the feedback process. It acted to draw some teachers back to what they could consider a more traditional model of teacher surveillance, blunt supervisory observation and an individualistic teaching model. This contradicts what Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) describe as 'teaching like a pro', when teacher observation and reflection is not about individualistic teaching, but the collective power of the group to champion change in teaching practice. Thus, it can be noted from this study that, when individuals or teams veer away from the use of collective power to champion change, that opportunity for true collective learning is reduced and constrained. Additionally, the research literature asserts that there is a strong connection between the decision of teachers to stay in the teaching profession when they are collectively supported towards quality teaching and learning (Webb et al., 2004).

*I wish they'd just come and look. Taking notes makes me feel like I'm being supervised rather than something positive. I've decided to fake some of my lessons. It helps me feel better during the LW (Nat 3-4)*

So too, teachers reported the use props and tasks that would not be typical in their classroom, but known as an expectation across the school. Staging or setting up lessons could involve teachers doing the following:

*...practicing appropriate responses with students should they be asked a question by the teachers on the LW (Nat 3-4).*

*...creating lessons that had nothing to do with the curriculum the rest of the year team were working on. For example, while the rest of us are running a lesson on fractions and decimals, someone else is doing a quite number task. Fractions and decimals can be really messy and hard (Innis 2-4).*

*...putting out W.A.L.T cards [We Are Learning To...] with goals on them that the kids have no idea about, but it looks like the teacher is doing the right or expected thing (Morgan 3-2).*

### ***The purpose of LWs***

The data indicated that most (n=11) participants were not fully engaging with the intended purpose of LWs for PD, through the staging of lessons that were disconnected to the everyday learning in the classroom. There was some evidence of why this had occurred in the data. There seemed to be some confusion over the intent or purpose of LWs school approach to PD. Typical responses included:



*My understanding of Learning Walks is confused to be perfectly honest. The purpose of it [Learning Walks] has been clouded and we're [speaking for the group] not sure if it's our PD, or whether it's for the person to whom we are going to is the PD. So, I've, we've become a little confused about the purpose of it (Landry 1-1).*

*I don't really understand the purpose of LWs. We just have to do it. (Harley 2-3).*

In contrast, a few (n=3) participants appeared to understand the purpose of the LW, and engaged in the process to get feedback that could improve their teaching practice. One participant commented:

*It is what it is. I know what I should be doing and I am doing it. Give me feedback and I will take it on board. What's the point of adding to your workload by planning a special lesson to be observed. Then they will give me feedback that really isn't relevant or useful. Why would I do that? (Finlay 2-1).*

### *Authentic Engagement*

While no participant mentioned refusing to participate in LWs, some noted that the process was non-negotiable, describing their participation as a matter of compliance rather than as an opportunity for PD. One participant commented:

*Really, we have no choice in the matter. We have to do it, so I do it. I'm not really interested in being part of it. It's wasting my time. But I'm not one to make waves, so I'll do what I'm told (Lex3-1).*

Such revelations are important in that the research literature indicates that when PD is pathway for educational reform it should challenge traditional models of PD (Knapp, 2003).

It should also meet the needs of the contemporary teacher and be more context-specific to teachers so that they develop knowledge and pedagogy which, in turn, promotes quality teaching practices (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung, 2008). Where teachers perceive LWs as a matter of compliance or were unsure of the real purpose for engaging in the process (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015), as was clearly the case for some participants, the application of new knowledge and pedagogy into locally adapted situations could be compromised and constrained. Given that Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann and Cooper (2014), Darling-Hammond (2006), Fullan (2007), Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) and Timperley (2011) assert that engaging teachers in PD to improve teaching practice is a burgeoning issue for systems and schools, this research shows the importance of clearly thought through and flexible protocols that support and sustain rather than potentially constrain teachers in the process of their PD and learning.

While teacher compliance to the process was referred to by the teachers, no specific information from the participants on LWs being compulsory for all teaching staff was discussed. Further investigation into compliance versus teacher ownership of their PD, a factor constraining or sustaining teacher engagement, could provide more depth of understanding about how teachers are able to fully engage in processes of learning.

In summary, less than half of participants (n=6) accredited protocols with issues directly connected to feedback and supervision. Some feedback that resulted from misunderstandings between teachers, was deemed irrelevant or hurtful. These misunderstandings caused tension and anxiety between the participants, often leading participants to stage lessons specifically for LWs with most participants the participants (n=11) acknowledging that they had staged a specific lesson for the LW. This strategy was

used to alleviate some observational anxiety experienced by participants. The use of clipboards by observing teachers added to observational anxiety for half the participants (n=8). For some, participants (n=5), the ‘Clipboard Effect’ meant the purpose of the LW was became more about supervision of teachers rather than genuine opportunity for teacher PD. It could be argued that some of observational anxiety experienced may be linked to the relationships between teachers and leaders. This will be explored in the following section. Overall the data shows that protocols around LWs were important to the participants. It can be assumed that these protocols need to be carefully planned and agreed to. Unintended consequences often resulted from a lack of forethought in the establishment of these protocols.

#### 4.3.2 Relationships

In the following section, the ‘**R**’ (Relationships) component of the **P-R** component is discussed. It includes Relationships between teachers but most significantly, between teachers and school leadership. The data analysis also showed the importance of uses of trust as a sub-theme within the data about Relationships.

Two important types of relationships were noted in the data: those of teacher-to-teacher; and between teachers and their leadership team (‘that is’, the Principal, Assistant Principal and Leader of Pedagogy (LOP)).

In relation to *teacher-to-teacher relationships*, respondents acknowledged some positive attitudes about their relationships with other teachers in the LWs process. It was evident that there was a level of trust felt by participants as they engaged in LWs as either the ‘Host’ or ‘Walking’ team members. Responses that typified this trust included:

*Everyone's professional. I trust them. I don't think there is any malice (Gabriel 2-2).*

*I think teachers here respect each other and trust each other (Lex 3-1).*

*We get each other. If a student is climbing the walls, we're not going to think badly of the teacher. There is always a bigger picture that we might not know about or understand (Inis 2-4).*

The research literature says that relationship and the trust between participants often influence the way feedback is given and received. According to Wilcox, Lawson, and Angelis (2017) trust is an essential component for developing one's capacity to innovate and improve that feedback is integral in that process. So too, high levels of trust that support collaboration and a desire to want to learn how to improve (Byrk, Gomez, Gunrow & LeMaheiu, 2015) are necessary to engage effectively in LWs. As such, the findings of this research are important in that the data reveals how trusting relationships between teachers, and teachers and leaders deeply influenced their engagement in LWs.

#### *The Lead Walker role*

Like the 'Clipboard Effect', the role of the 'Lead Walker' in LWs revealed itself as a factor that challenged teacher perception of the purpose of LWs and too, referenced back to more traditional models of teacher surveillance and observation that were punitive and threatening rather than collective, collaborative PD.

The position of the ‘Lead Walker’ revealed itself as being somewhat problematic, given that it could be any member of the school Leadership Team – ‘that is’ the Principal, Assistant Principal or LOP. The data revealed that many teachers (n=13) felt the LWs process was more valid as a collaborative opportunity to professionally learn from each other when the Leader of Pedagogy was in the role of ‘Lead Walker’. Teacher preference for the LOP in the role of Lead Walker showed support but had created some minor tension within the Leadership Team. Typical responses from participants included:

*Well, I think that it needs to be someone who’s involved in the process. Like whether the LOP comes, she knows the grade that’s coming in and the people coming in and knows the grade that they’re going into because she works with both grades. When it’s random, like we could walk into any classroom randomly, and go, “Now, I wouldn’t do that, and I wouldn’t do that” and they might not know that they’ve done that purposely, for a reason (Landry 1-1).*

*I think that the leader of the Learning Walks needs to be someone who’s involved in the planning process. The LOP knows the grade that’s coming in and the people coming in, and knows the grade what they’re doing because they work with both grades (Kendall 2-6).*

This is important to the study in that the role of the LOP is one resides both within the Leadership Team and within the teacher PLTs. In the LOP role, trusting relationships had been developed over time and both the teachers and the LOP had a shared understanding of the teaching program, teachers themselves, and students. The LOP at the case study school worked with every (year cohort based) PLT team of teachers each week. The LOP was also involved in the collaborative planning of their teaching units and its implementation. As

such, given what the data has already shown about teacher attitudes and their engagement in LWs, the relationship between the participants and the person giving the feedback is a key factor. This finding aligns with Little's research (2006), who asserts that teacher beliefs and attitudes to feedback are deeply connected to trusting relationships. Trusting relationships between those giving and receiving feedback can be seen clearly in the literature as paramount and precursory to teacher learning and growth.

Aligned with this preference for the LOP to be the Lead Walker, the interview data revealed that some teachers were concerned about being unfairly judged by a person in a position of authority on the Leadership Team who took on the role of 'Lead Walker'. Typical responses that demonstrate this include:

*...depending on who was leading the Learning Walk, sometimes it feels like we're being judged on what we're doing (Eden 1-5).*

*The LOP is part of our PLT. We talk about things as a team and know why we're doing what we're doing. When someone else from the School Leadership team leads the Learning Walk, to be honest, they don't have any idea what's really going on and make assumptions that are often incorrect (Nat 3-4).*

This research shows the importance of the role of 'Lead Walker'. The person who is in that role and the skills they bring to the task are essential for the development of trust and collaboration. This is supported in that the research from Harris, Caldwell and Longmuir (2013) named trust as essential element to enhancing teacher performance, and Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) explain that a culture of daily staff interactions, engaging pedagogy, mutual trust, and regular, quality feedback related to teaching improvement are foundational

to teacher growth and improvement.

In summarising the findings about Protocols and Relationships, the research has revealed that Protocols and Relationships are involved as constraining and sustaining factors in engaging teachers in LWs as PD. There appears a possible correlation between the ‘Clipboard Effect’ and the role of the ‘Lead Walker’. Concerns raised around Protocols and Relationships led to a sense of mistrust by some participants. Further investigation into the role of the LOP in PLTs and the correlation to LWs along with potential strategies might further promote trust between the teachers and the ‘Lead Walker’ would be an area for further inquiry.

The next section uses group interview data to review *Research Question 2: What are teachers’ reflections and opinions about their experiences of LW as a form of collaborative PD?* Aspects of Desimone’s (2009) conceptual framework have been used as a heuristic lens when analysing the data about this question.

#### **4.4 Research Question 2 and Desimone’s conceptual framework**

This section uses aspects of Desimone’s (2009) conceptual framework as a heuristic lens to identify self-reported evidence that Learning Walks provided a model for collaborative PD at the case study school. The second research question is: *Research Question 2: What are teachers’ reflections and opinions about their experiences of LW as a form of collaborative PD?*

Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework for effective PD asserts that despite the myriad of learning experiences that may qualify as PD for teachers, there needed to be specific set of core features for effective PD to occur. These features, she claimed, were based on a compilation of empirical evidence and have been described earlier in this thesis. In the analysis of data in this study, three of the five core features have been used as a heuristic lens through which Research Question 2 was analysed. Core features three and four will not be applied to the data, given this is a short-term study that did not seek to explore the coherence between teacher knowledge and beliefs nor did it seek to observe intellectual and pedagogical change of time.

#### *4.4.1 The first of Desimone's features*

The first of Desimone's (2009) core features of effective PD used in the analysis of data at the case study school is that PD is *content focused*. Desimone (2009) explained this feature as the need to focus on developing teacher knowledge about the teaching content matter. The focus is on the what teachers are teaching and how they are doing it; 'that is', teacher knowledge and pedagogy. She described *content focus* to include knowledge acquisition and as "ways of observing and noticing things in the environment" (p.184).

Data affirmed that there was a *content focus* for each LW. Teachers provided feedback about the development of their teaching content knowledge through the observation of other teachers and through the giving and receiving of feedback. Responses that typified this belief included:

*The ideas help. When you go into a room and go look at this and that, I think, "We could try that". We often come back with an idea from another room and implement it straight away (Blake 1-2).*



*We might see a way of teaching fractions or something and that is going on in the classroom and think “Wow, that is great!” and go back to the classroom and use it (Morgan 3-2).*

*It’s more of a time to see what their room looks like or how they are teaching. You don’t often get to go to another cohort. It is an opportunity to visit and to give you some ideas and to give them ideas. I know we go on Learning Walks and come back with ideas for yourself and the classroom, different ways to display things and set up activities (Nat 3-4).*

A few participants (n=3) commented that they followed up with a teacher following the LW to find out more about a strategy or scaffold observed in the LW. This follow-up meant teachers continued to engage in collaborative PD and exhibited a genuine desire to improve teaching practice. Responses typical of this included:

*I wanted to know more about how she used that scaffold. So, I went and asked her. That helped me a lot. I hadn’t thought of doing it that way before, so I go something out of it. It will be interesting to see what I find next time (Jamie 2-5).*

*I’ve gone and spoken with someone after the LW to find out more.  
Really helpful! (Oakley 3-5).*

It can therefore be seen that this focus on developing teachers’ content knowledge acted to sustain teachers’ engagement in LWs as they sensed that it was positively contributing to the quality of their teaching practice and their students’ learning. It was interesting to note that

some teachers (n=10) considered that the content focus was superficial, indicating perhaps that they wanted greater depth of focus in this area. It should also be noted here that no data were sought that could show any long-term changes made to any teacher's practice as a result. This could be an area for further research.

#### 4.4.2 *The second of Desimone's features*

The second of Desimone's (2009) core features of effective PD that was used as a heuristic lens to analyse data were that there were opportunities for teachers to engage in *active learning*. Desimone (2009) compared active learning to passive learning where teachers sit and listen to a lecture or presentation. Desimone (2009) explained that active learning can "take a number of forms, including observing expert teachers or being observed, followed by interactive feedback and discussion" (p.184). It is this description of active learning that will provide a heuristic lens in describing and discussing PD for these teachers at the case study school.

The data at the case study school showed evidence of active learning taking place. Teachers described LWs as opportunities to share with each other in comparison to working in isolation. They indicated recognition that the learning was active and collaborative. The following comments typified that teachers saw the learning as active:

*I think there is a big sharing element in Learning Walks. Sometimes in a school you find yourself isolated and the blinkers go up. Learning Walks is an opportunity to get out there and see what the kindergarten people are doing, see what the Year 6s are doing and build your strategies and ideas (Lex 3-1).*

*When we go on the Learning Walks and we are looking at what other cohorts are doing, it gives us ideas even though a lot of us have been teaching for a long time. We learn from each other (Eden 1-5).*

*I think it [Learning Walks] makes us better teachers. We get and listen to the feedback or go and have a look at someone else's space and see what's happening in those groups, we learn from it, I'm learning from it (Camryn 1-3).*

Thus, active learning for this context meant that the learning would be: not being lectured to; be collaborative; regular; iterative; and learning through which they could safely take professional risks with their pedagogy and practice.

Desimone (2009) described interactive feedback and discussion as an essential component of active learning. Whilst there were varying and broad commentaries on teacher feedback about teaching, it was clear in the analysis of data that interactive and collaborative feedback was certainly a component of Learning Walks that was recognised and valued by the participants. As 'insider researcher' it is acknowledged that the case study school were in the early phases of developing teacher content knowledge and giving of feedback to both students and teachers.

#### *4.4.3 The third of Desimone's features*

The next of Desimone's (2009) core features of effective PD is the fifth one in her list. It is "that there is collective participation from teachers across the same cohort where interaction and discourse become powerful cantilevers for change" (Desimone 2009, p.184). Desimone (2009) explained that powerful learning could occur where structures were put in place for

teachers from the same school, grade, or department to engage, interact and discuss learning, both of students and teachers. The collective participation in their own learning was readily acknowledged by these participant teachers.

Analysis of the survey data revealed that there was evidence of collective participation in the LWs model at the case study school. Typical responses supporting this claim included:

*In our teams, we are seeing what other years are doing, so we're getting more feedback (Nat 3-4).*

*We learn from it. I'm learning from it (Camryn 1-3).*

*It made us actually focus on that area which we probably wouldn't have normally and actually ended up reorganising our learning space (Dakota 1-4).*

There was further evidence in the data supporting the collective participation of teachers across the same cohort. During the small group interviews, participants frequently used collective pronouns including: 'us', 'we', 'we've' and 'our'. Across the three interview groups, teachers used the terms 'we' and 'we've' 134 times, with the terms 'our' and 'us' were used 35 and 26 times respectively.

Teachers' recognition of the collective participation in LWs at the case study school was facilitated by the school-based structures put in place at the case study school that enabled teachers on the same grade participate in the LW together. As part of the suite of changes that was occurring at the case study school, Learning Walks were timetabled by a member of the school leadership team. PLTs were allocated specific times to collectively participate in

the Learning Walks as a year group. By establishing set times for LWs to occur, teams of teachers (PLTs) had time to discuss before and after the LW with each other. Whilst structures were in place, the data showed that participants questioned the time allocated specifically for observation and discussion following the LW. Responses illustrating this included:

*How much can they really see in 10 minutes? (Finlay 2-1).*

*We come back and talk about it for 5-10 minutes, then we forget about it (Nat 3-4).*

Concerns around time allocations for different components of the LW were identified in the data. While this was a minor concern, it still added to the issues that could potentially constrain teacher engagement in LWs.

Thus, it can be shown that there was evidence that the structures that were put in place to enabled teachers on from the same grade to interact and discuss their teaching and their students learning. This meant teachers could discuss, collaborate and share teaching and learning in a planned, scheduled, collective way.

In summary of the analysis using Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework has shown that the data from this study affirms the claims laid out in the conceptual framework. It has also highlighted that teachers valued the collaborated nature of the LWs; that having trusting and respectful relationships between one another and with the Leadership Team was important; and that for effective participation in LWs, clarity of the purpose and intentions needed to be evident and enacted.

## 4.5 Findings Summary

The following table provides a summary of the findings from analysis of the data. It notes these in relation to the key focus of the sustaining or constraining elements of the LWs experience. Understandably not all of these issues were deemed by participants to be of equal significance. No claims can be made about the perception of the level of constraint and sustainment because this was individually known and felt for participants. Thus, this table provides an unranked aggregation of findings.

**Table 1: Summary of findings**

	<b>Sustaining</b>	<b>Constraining</b>
<b>PROTOCOLS:</b>		
1. Protocols about the purpose of LWs	For teachers who had a developed a clear understanding that LWs were a form of PD that facilitated their learning in collaborative and supportive ways, LWs acted to sustain that growth and development.	For teachers who indicated they were confused or unsure about the purpose of LWs, or who saw it as a form of teacher control, LWs acted to constrain that growth and development.
2. Protocols about the structure for LWs (time allocations; whole school approach; timetabling)	The protocols about the structure of the LWs process – the timing of them, the whole-school approach; and the timetabling – acted as a form of empowerment for some teachers, enabling them to make thoughtful observations and provide constructive feedback, thereby sustaining their engagement in LWs.	For other teachers, the protocols about the structure of LWs constrained them because they felt it was an unnecessary invasion of their teaching time.
3. Protocols about the collaboration and use of PLTs	For some teachers, the whole-school protocols about the de-privatisation of teaching, learning to be	For some teachers, the whole-school protocols about the de-privatisation of teaching, learning to be

	more collaborative during PLTs and during LWs acted to sustain their engagement in LWs	more collaborative during PLTs and during LWs acted to constrain their engagement in LWs because they were unused to being expected to work collaboratively and share their teaching pedagogy and practice
4. Authentic engagement in LWs	Some teachers were able to authentically engage in the processes with a view to improving the quality of their teaching and student learning. For them LWs was a sustaining from of PD	Some teachers were constrained by the perceptions of the suite of changes that were developed around improving teaching and learning. They were then constrained by the expectation of engagement in LWs.
<b>RELATIONSHIPS: trust and collaboration</b>		
5. Trust about using LWs as a form of PD	For those teachers whose disposition permitted it, and had high levels of trust in process of LWs as a mechanism for PD, the data showed that LWs acted to sustain their engagement.	For those teachers who were less trusting and more sceptical of the process of LWs as a mechanism for PD, LWs acted to compromise and constrain their engagement
6. Relationships with the school Leadership Team (trust and the Lead Walker role; role of the principal in developing the staff)	The data showed that some participant teachers' relationship with the Leadership Team (the Principal, Assistant Principal and Leader of Pedagogy) was such that it acted to sustain their engagement in LWs.	The data showed that some participant teachers' relationship with the Leadership Team (the Principal, Assistant Principal and Leader of Pedagogy) was such that it acted to constrain their engagement in LWs. These teachers did not appear to trust their leaders.
7. Relationships with colleagues (whole	The development of a more collaborative culture within	None of the participant teachers indicated that

school culture of trust)	the case study school was a pre-cursor to the study itself. The majority of teachers indicated that they valued the collaborative and trusting relationships they were developing. This valuing of the relationships sustained their engagement in LWs	their relationship with colleagues – and the development of a culture of trust at the case study school – acted to constrain their engagement in LWs
8. Relationships with PLT members (trust of colleagues during LWs)	All the teachers indicated that they valued the use of PLTs as a mechanism for LWs implementation. Thus, for all participants, the relationships with colleagues acted to sustain their engagement in LWs. It needs to be noted that not all participants valued every colleague.	
9. Feedback: giving and receiving	For teachers with more open and positive approaches, learning to give and receive feedback was a sustaining element of LWs	For teachers who felt more threatened or unsure, the protocols about feedback structures and strategies when learning to give and receive feedback was a containing element of LWs
10. Feedback: the “Clipboard Effect”	Some teachers did not see it as a problem so were not affected by the use of clipboards	For some teachers, the use of clipboards meant that they felt unnecessarily threatened and thus the clipboards acted to constrain their authentic engagement in LWs

Thus, it can be seen that there were two key external factors have determined whether and to what degree these participant teachers were able to effectively engage in LWs. Because



these factors are external to the LWs themselves and regardless of the protocols put in place, for these participants it was these two factors that were influential not the LWs process itself. These two factors are that effective engagement was dependent on the *person* and the school *context*.

*The person:* it is noted that whether and to what degree a teacher might engage fully in the process of LWs as a mechanism for teacher professional growth and development appeared to reside within the teacher. A teacher's disposition, their personal attitudes, beliefs, needs and expectations were a key variable, influencing how the implementation acted to sustain or constrain their engagement.

*The school context:* the data also noted that the overall context and culture of the school was a key variable in determining whether teachers were able to fully engage in the processes of LWs. The researcher acknowledges that the suite of changes that was occurring simultaneously was concurrently responsible for facilitation of engagement. LWs were only possible because of the time that was allocated; the re-designing of physical spaces to ensure collaborative teaching; the reallocation of school timetabling; the development of grade level PLTs; and the application of the LOP role to support teacher development. Therefore, LWs did not function alone in the expectation of professionally developing teachers.

In conclusion then, and lest anyone make unfounded assertions about the effectiveness of LWs as a mechanism for collaborative teacher PD, there can be no "formulaic" approach for LWs. It must be taken in the context in which it was occurring at this case study school, and no claims are made about its potential for success in other contexts. The individual disposition of each of the teachers appeared to be a key variable in determining whether and to what extent the teachers were able to engage in LWs.

#### **4.6 Chapter summary and conclusion**

This chapter has presented analysis and discussion of the data collected in the study of LWs as a model of collaborative PD. It has noted findings from the analysis of data about teachers' experience on LWs, and the factors that constrained and sustained teacher engagement in the process. The interview data revealed that teachers had a clear idea of the factors that constrained and sustained their participation, specifically, protocols and collaboration and relationships and trust.

From analysis of the data through the heuristic lens of Desimone (2009), there was certainly evidence of teacher learning about teaching practice and enhancement of their knowledge. They valued the collaborative nature of the LWs initiative and developed trusting relationships with each other and with the school's Leadership Team. There was also recognition that the suite of changes that included LWs allowed for powerful and rigorous teacher discussion about pedagogy and practice.

In Chapter 5, data presented in this chapter is synthesised and the research questions are addressed.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DATA SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

It will be recalled that the aim of this research was to investigate teachers' self-reported experiences, and the factors that constrained and engaged them, as they engaged in a school-based collaborative model of PD called LWs. It must be noted that this research confirms much of existing research about PD for teachers, especially the recent work of Desimone and Garet (2015) who have asserted that best practice in PD requires the following features.

These are that:

1. changing procedural classroom behaviour is easier than improving content knowledge or inquiry-oriented instruction techniques;
2. teachers vary in response to the same PD;
3. PD is more successful when it is explicitly linked to classroom lessons;
4. PD research and implementation must allow for urban contexts (e.g., student and teacher mobility); and
5. leadership plays a key role in supporting and encouraging teachers to implement in the classroom the ideas and strategies they learned in the PD (Desimone & Garet, 2015. p.252).

This chapter, further discusses the research findings synthesising the information provided.

There are three sections to this chapter. First, the major findings of this research are

summarised. Second, these major findings are examined in relation to the research questions, the theoretical framework of the thesis and the literature review, to show the new knowledge generated from this study. The chapter is concluded with recommendations for further research.

## **5.2 Major findings**

Additional to confirming the work of Desimone and Garet (2015), this study has identified six major findings. These are as follows, and will be discussed in order of appearance:

1. That for the teachers in this study, the context of the school was the key determinant for their understanding of and engagement with LWs as a form of job-embedded PD.
2. The ‘Clipboard Effect’ had an initially negative effect on teachers’ engagement with the PD initiative, but because of reflexive school leadership, this effect was reduced.
3. The data strongly supported that these teachers valued the collaborative nature of the PD initiative.
4. That the benefits of LWs to these teachers could not be considered to be solely drawn from LWs because the LW initiative occurred in tandem with the suite of changes designed to develop a culture of collaboration and enhance the quality of teaching and learning at the case study school.
5. The benefits of teacher feedback because of LWs as PD, were multifaceted and different for all teachers. Individual teacher disposition was a key factor in determining whether and to what degree a teacher was able to effectively engage with LWs as a form of PD.

6. It would appear that the true benefit of participating in LWs resides with those who are doing the observing and not those being observed. As such, many of the concerns the LWs participants had about being observed could be ameliorated by positioning the role as being of assistance to those who are coming in to see them teach, rather than being judged by those coming to observe the quality of their teaching.

Firstly, the data indicated that for these teachers, the school's context, with its culture of collaboration and trust, was essential to the level of engagement and to the benefits they could draw from the PD initiative. Teacher engagement in LWs as collaborative PD was enhanced because the relationships between teachers and with school leadership operated in a constructive and positive manner. Teachers indicated their valuing of the opinions of the school leadership team that permitted them to connect deeply to the context of teaching and learning and to the teams of teachers at their school. When this trusting and connection did not occur or it occurred without legitimacy, teachers indicated that they felt unfairly judged and misrepresented in the processes of the LWs.

Secondly, teachers were affected by the 'Clipboard Effect'. While the 'Clipboard Effect' was symbolic of another type of teacher surveillance that was not present at this school, it harked back to those times, and had negative connotations for some teachers. Perhaps the most positive point in the data is the noting that, once management were aware of the negative effect, they responded to teacher concerns and the clipboards were no longer used. While the Clipboard Effect acted as a distraction to the real purpose of the LWs as PD, and may have caused teachers to take evasive action rather than engage purposefully and deeply in the PD process, the outcome of the dilemma was positive.

Third in the key findings of this study was that these teachers strongly indicated that they could see the value in collaboration. These teachers were willing to learn from each other

and to support each other's professional growth and development through this PD initiative. The researcher notes that this remains the focus of the LOP role in the case study school. While there was some hint of teachers engaging in the initiative from the perspective of simply compliance, this was indicated as both an initial teacher response which dissipated as teachers continued to engage with the initiative, and that when it did occur it was limited to a small number of teachers. The researcher also recognises that for other schools who may be seeking to implement similar initiatives, care needs to be taken with the co-construction of protocols and norms to which teachers and leaders at a school agree and adhere.

Fourth in the key findings for this study is the recognition and acknowledgment that this initiative did not occur in isolation and that the suite of other changes, in tandem with the culture of collaboration and support that was developed by the school's leadership team, were inherent in the way teachers perceived and experienced the effectiveness of this initiative. Thus, the collective nature of the changes enacted at the school needs to be noted. No claims are made in this research that the LWs initiative alone would be sufficient to professionally develop teachers in these ways. The initiative is not seen as a stand-alone program, rather it is one of a suite of changes that supported teachers' professional growth, learning and development. Alignment to school or system goals along with other mechanisms for teacher collaboration, observation and professional discussion and planning around teaching and learning were integral to this process.

Additionally,, the benefits of teacher feedback because of LWs as PD, were multifaceted and different for all teachers. The data indicated that benefits to individual teachers was dependent on the individual disposition of the teachers. How they felt, believed, perceived and received the initiative was individually determined. Benefits however could be drawn from the fact that this initiative was based on continuous professional learning about

feedback and how to give and receive it. It is also noted that while individual participants noted personal benefit from their engagement in LWs, the initiative was also expected to provide whole-school, collective benefits in quality and consistency of teaching and learning. The long-term extent of change in teaching practice because of LWs as a process for PD was outside the scope of this study but worthy of future investigation.

Finally, it was duly recognised that these participants were concerned about being observed in their teaching and the fear factor of that observation related to being judged. For these teachers being observed was automatically linked to the traditional model of teacher supervision that implied judgement and criticism on teaching practice. However, the data might suggest that if LWs were presented as a mutually beneficial process for teacher PD whereby the observed teacher is sharing and supporting the professional growth and development of colleagues who observe, it could reduce the fear factor. Presenting this as a reciprocal process of sharing and benefit may lessen the negative connotations teachers may bring to this activity.

### **5.3 Recommendations for further research**

There are three areas that lead from this study into further research.

- As the role of Leader of Pedagogy (LOP) was revealed as essential to this school's goal of professionally developing its staff, a follow-up study investigating aspects of the role of the LOP is recommended in these contexts. This could be designed as a comparative study, researching how LOPs across a range of these Diocesan schools achieve their given goals, how the teachers at their schools perceive their LOP's effectiveness in support of their own professional growth and development, and what the LOPs indicate are the challenges faced. Such a study could then reveal strengths and limitations in the

processes of in-school professional growth and development for teachers and the effectiveness of the LOP role.

- The impact of LWs on teaching practice over a sustained period of time. This research did not seek data about whether or to what degree the initiative had sustained and positive impacts on both the quality of teaching and on student learning. Investigation about this aspect of its implementation would be worthy of further study.
- The issue of whether and to what degree teachers engaged in the LWs initiative from the perspective of nominal compliance versus from the perspective of having ownership of the process and with a genuine degree of intention to learn is another area that would warrant further research. While it is acknowledged from both the research literature and from this data that teachers' opinions can change, can be resistant to reform, and are dependent on personal and individual circumstances, further research into these complex issues may facilitate the effective implementation of such programs.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

Despite the requirement to be involved in the process of LWs and regardless of difficulties encountered by some participants, the majority of teachers' self-stated experience of LWs was characterised by appreciation and value of the process. Using the features of Desimone and Garet (2015) it can be confirmed that this model is indeed 'best practice' in the provision of PD. Teachers' self-stated experiences about observing each other and reflecting on how they could embed some of strategies that they had observed into their own teaching affirmed that it was a positive, learning experience but not without its difficulties.



From the data analysis, it was clear that protocols that support clarity of intention and positive relationships and trust were key factors in engaging teachers in this collaborative PD model. There were varying opinions on the benefit of feedback given to teachers throughout the process, however, when asked teachers identified positive learning and change in their practice. This self-reported change was part of a much broader focus on teacher improvement at the case study school, in response to global, national and jurisdiction imperatives around improving student outcomes through improving teaching pedagogy as described in *Chapter 1: The Research Problem* and *Chapter 2: Literature Review*.

Analysis of the data using case study method, and employing the heuristic lens of Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework for teacher PD, showed that teachers at the case study school valued having trusting relationships between one another and with school leaders. The data also revealed that for effective participation in the process teachers appreciated clarity of protocols that supported collaboration and active participation. These teachers self-reported that they were increasingly collaborative, and that LWs was a mechanism for engaging them in PD. The significance of the study lies in the illumination of teacher experiences and the factors that sustained or constrained their participation in this initiative. The application of Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework provided validation for the findings.

The significance of the study, based on these teachers' experience and perceptions of LWs as a model of teacher PD is that in order to move from compliance to authentic teacher engagement the initiative required three pre-existing conditions:

1. Relationships that are trusting and collaborative
2. Protocols that are clear and agreed to

### 3. Leadership that is supportive

Thus, the research recognises that these teachers' experiences of the initiative was inherently bound to these three pre-existing conditions. Although these findings are simplistic they underlie the complexity of a school's and its leader's capacity to establish and maintain these pre-existing conditions.

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## Appendix A: Learning Walks Rational and Process

(De-identified case study school documentation)

### Learning Walks: Rationale

Focus Primary School has had a renewed focus on learning with a view that the teacher must see *himself or herself as a learner* to truly consider the needs of the student learner. As an evidenced-based school, it is important for teachers to reflect on their practice and to deepen their understanding of effective pedagogy for students in the 21<sup>ST</sup> century.

Learning Walks nestle neatly into the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* and the expectation that schools create a culture of professional improvement. The expectation is that every teacher, every year, receives regular, effective and constructive feedback on their performance as well as to identify areas for further development. The focus of Learning Walks is underpinned by the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*.

In a Learning Walk teachers are able reflect on their own practice and to challenge their own thinking in a non-threatening way. When participating in Learning Walks teachers are able to look at how students respond to instruction, collect evidence of effective learning and revise their own practice based on this knowledge. As learners, teachers learn more from reflecting on their own practice than from their engagement in the experiences. All learners benefit from effective feedback and this is an essential part of the Learning Walk process.

of the advantages of a Learning Walk is that it occurs within the school. It is day-to day teaching practice and occurs regularly. It is aligned with the learning philosophy of the school and is a collaborative effort.

For improved practice to occur teachers need to analyse and reflect on how students learn best and make changes to improve their own teaching practice. Because Learning Walks take

place in teams across the school, a collective responsibility for improved student outcomes is possible.

Learning Walks is an opportunity to collaborate with and learn from each other in a meaningful and relevant way. There is a purposeful sharing of instructional practice and adoption of pedagogical practices that improve student learning.

It is hoped that through Learning Walks teachers will take charge of their own growth and development by seeking to strengthen their teaching effectiveness. It is critical that teachers develop a disposition for ongoing analysis of their instruction and reflect on their practice to improve effectiveness.

### **What are Learning Walks?**

In small groups, with a team leader, teachers make a focussed visit through learning spaces followed by feedback and reflection. It is a time to gather data and use it to improve student learning. The focus for the walk is on something the whole staff has been engaged in with their learning. This would be something the staff had looked at in depth as part of their learning. In other words, if we agree as a staff that the teaching strategy is part of an effective school then what evidence do we see of it in cohort learning areas. It is timely as the school has been 'deprivatising' teaching and the time is right for such an activity.

Teams are critical in this learning community. The Learning Walk fits well into the PLC framework. Growth is a focus of a PLC and the Learning Walk will foster the learning conversations that take place in the team meetings. Relational trust is an important condition for the success of this process.

### **Learning Walks Process**

1. Pre-walk discussion lead by the Lead Walker (5 mins)

Team decides on:

- Learning areas/classes to be visited
  - Focus of the visit
  - Timeframe, including cohort feedback and then whole school feedback
  - How will evidence be gathered? Templates may be used
2. Learning Walks to Cohort Areas (10 mins – a brief snapshot)
- Look and Listen
  - Take notes
  - Conversation with students if appropriate e.g. “What are you learning?”
3. Post Walk Discussion (5 mins)
- Debriefing
  - Share observations
  - Formulation of ideas based on evidence
  - Self-reflection on the agreed focus – implications for own practice/cohort organisation
  - Personal Goal setting based on reflection
  - Collation by lead walker
4. Reflection and Feedback
- Feedback is based on evidence
  - Visited teachers receive feedback from the Lead Walker at the end of the day or at their next PLT meeting
  - Whole staff feedback is given at the next staff meeting
  - Visiting teachers reflect on their own practice, their cohort practice and discuss implications for their own teaching. Goal setting comes from this.

### **Protocols**

- All teachers are involved in the Learning Walk
- Prior to the visit teachers explain to students that staff will be coming into their learning space
- Visiting teachers do not interrupt the learning taking place
- Visiting teachers do not have a conversation whilst in the learning area
- Visited Teachers receive feedback at their next PLT meeting
- Walkers should concentrate on the focus of the walk e.g. classroom climate, feedback, small group instruction, learning intentions, the learning environment, the walls supporting learning

### **The Lead Walker**

Initially, the Leaders of Learning take on the role of Lead Walker. It is important that the Lead Walker facilitates the pre-walk and post-walk discussions as well as the feedback sessions to cohort teachers and the whole staff. The Visiting teachers should be clear on the focus of the walk and the evidence to be collected. Discussions should be made on the evidence and the implications for the walker's personal practice. Judgement of individual teachers should not be part of any discussion. The Lead Walker reminds the visiting teachers of these protocols before the walk takes place.

The lead Walker collects any templates or observation notes from visiting teachers.

## Appendix B: SCU Ethical Approval Notification

### HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC) HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE (HRESC)

#### NOTIFICATION

**To:** Professor David Lynch/Dr Jenny Johnston and Michelle Scott  
School of Education  
david.lynch@scu.edu.au;jenny.johnston@scu.edu.au;msscott@lism.catholic.edu.au

**From:** Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee  
Division of Research, R. Block

**Date:** 21 May 2014

**Project name:** *An investigation of the experiences of a group of teachers in a regional Catholic primary school who have taken part in 'Learning Walks' as part of their professional development*

**Approval Number ECN-14-123**

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*The Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee has established, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research – Section 5/Processes of Research Governance and Ethical Review, a procedure for expedited review and ratification by a delegated authority of the HREC.*

Thank you for expedited ethics application, dated the 6 May. This research protocol is now approved by the HRESC, Coffs Harbour and your research may commence.

All ethics approvals are subject to mandatory conditions of approval. These must be noted by researchers as there is compliance and monitoring advice included in these conditions.

Ms Sue Kelly  
HREC Administration  
T: (02) 6626 9139  
E: [ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au](mailto:ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au)

Professor Bill Boyd  
Chair, HREC  
E. [william.boyd@scu.edu.au](mailto:william.boyd@scu.edu.au)



## Appendix C: Participant Information Letter



Division of Research

### **Participant Information**

**Research title: An investigation of the experiences of a group of teachers in a regional Catholic primary school who have taken part in ‘Learning Walks’ as part of their professional development.**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Michelle Scott, and I am conducting a research project as part of my Master degree in Education by Research at Southern Cross University under the supervision of Dr David Lynch. My research will investigate the experiences of a group of teachers in a regional primary school who have taken part in Learning Walks as part of their professional development. All teaching staff at the focus school (School X) are invited to participate in this study.

#### **What this research involves**

This research collection has two phases:

Part 1: An online survey taking approximately 15 minutes to complete during a staff meeting

Part 2: A small group interview, with up to four (4) participants, taking approximately 40 minutes, asking you to discuss your participation in Learning Walks. This will take place at a time mutually agreeable for all participants.

#### **Possible discomforts and risks**

This study has minimal risk, and no discomfort is anticipated from your participation.

However, if any distress or discomfort is experienced you are free to withdraw from the study with no negative consequences to yourself or questions asked.

#### **Responsibilities of the researcher**

Any personal information collected will be confidential and protected. Your name and any other identifying information will be removed from data collected. You and the school will not be able to be identified from the publication of any results.

The data obtained will be used in a written research thesis, in accordance with the requirements of the Master degree course. Data may also be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal. However, you and the school will not be able to be identified from the publication of the results.

All information and data collected will be held securely and confidentially at Southern Cross University for a period of 7 years.

### **Responsibilities of the participant**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw, you will be free to do so at any time. If you are feeling uncomfortable or wish to withdraw from the study, your participation can be withdrawn immediately and your data will be removed from the data set.

### **Consent**

If you decide to participate in this study you will be required to give informed consent. By completing the study survey and interview you are giving your consent. If at any time, you wish to withdraw your consent and discontinue the study, your participation can be withdrawn immediately and your data will not be used.

### **Feedback**

If you would like to receive general feedback regarding the results of this study, please provide your email address in the feedback section of the survey.

### **Ethical conduct**

The Human Research Ethic Committee at Southern Cross University has approved this research. The approval number is ECN-14-123.

If you have concerns about the **ethical conduct** of this research or the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Complaint Officer with the following contact details:

The Ethics Complaints Officer  
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157  
Lismore NSW 2480  
Email: [ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au](mailto:ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au)

All information is confidential and will be handled as soon as possible.

### **Inquiries**

If you wish to make any further enquiries about this research, our contact details are as follows:

Michelle Scott Email: [mscott@lism.catholic.edu.au](mailto:mscott@lism.catholic.edu.au)

Dr David Lynch      Email: [David.Lynch@scu.edu.au](mailto:David.Lynch@scu.edu.au)

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

### I PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



Division of Research

, ..... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the school now or in the future.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- I understand that I may leave the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my comments once the group has started, as it is a group discussion.
- I understand that my survey responses cannot be withdrawn once they are submitted, as they are anonymous and therefore the researchers will not be able to tell which one is mine.

- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Digital Audio-recording** of interview                      YES                       NO

**If you would you like to receive summary information about this study, please provide your email address so this can be emailed to you when it becomes available**

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

.....

**Signature**

.....

**PRINT name**

**Date**

## Appendix E: Sample Transcript (de-identified)

**Interview Participants:** Landry 1-1, Blake 1-2, Camryn 1-3, Dakota 1-4 and Eden 1-5

Five participants, of these three participants have ten to twenty years of teaching experience, two participants with less than ten years teaching experience.

*Welcome everyone and thanks for taking part in this group interview. I appreciate your time. Today's interview should take approximately 45 mins. Just a reminder I am digitally recording the interview and will write up the transcript. You will be given a gender-neutral name, so you won't be able to be identified by your given name. Is everyone happy to continue? Great. Here we go.*

**Question 1: Do you consider Learning Walks a form of professional development? Why/why not?**

Blake (1-2) Yes. Learning from your colleagues

Dakota (1-4) Sharing experiences

Landry (1-1) Sometimes.

Camryn (1-3) I see Learning Walks not like we used to. When someone who is more experienced than what I am, someone who I can go and ask questions to and guide me in what I need to learn.

Eden (1-5) But I think we also mentor each other in Learning Walks

*(Tell me more. How do you see this happening?)*

Eden (1-5) By sharing what we are doing in the classrooms. When we go on the Learning Walks and we are looking at what other cohorts are doing, it gives us ideas even though a lot of us have been teaching for a long time. We learn from each other

Blake (1-2) Yeah! (Said supportively)

Landry (1-1) My understanding of the Learning walk is confused to be perfectly honest. The purpose of it has become clouded and we're not sure if it our PD, whether it's for the person to whom we're going to PD, so I've, we've, I've found that we've become a little confused about the purpose of it.

**Question 2:**

**What are your attitudes to Learning Walks and why do you think you feel that way?**

Eden (1-5) *(Interjecting in an assertive manner)*  
And depending on who's leading the Learning Walk, pause... sometimes it feels like we're being judged on what we're doing.

*Noting that Landry (1-1) has used the term “we’ve”, I want to dig a little deeper into her/his meaning. I asked... **Can you expand a little more on that, Landry (1-1)?***

- Landry (1-1) Yes, we’ve had that experience too (*said in a concerned tone. Looking around the group for support*)
- Blake (1-2) You mean the people in the class being watched? (Clarifying with the group in a questioning tone)
- Landry (1-1) Yes! (*said firmly and crosses arms*)
- Blake (1-2) And being judged? (*still clarifying Eden’s (1-5) statement about being judged and looking confused by the statement*)
- Landry (1-1) Yes! (*Said firmly, still with arms crossed*). And, and sometimes that’s what causes my confusion.

***Can you tell me more about your confusion, Landry (1-1)? When pushed for more information, Landry (1-1) continued***

- Landry (1-1) Sometimes, we’ve set goals, focusing on what we’re looking at improving. Sometimes that’s not what the feedback has been on. Sometimes it is something completely different, something else that’s being fed back that isn’t to do with what we thought the goal of the Learning Walk was. So that’s where we’ve become a little confused about whom the purpose [of the LW] is for and what the feedback is supposed to be for or about.

### **Question 3:**

**What factors do you think influence your discussion on your teacher practice with other teachers?**

- Landry (1-1) I don’t want to tell teachers what I think they’re doing right or wrong. It’s not my business.
- Eden (1-5) I don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings. But when we work together to collaborate, that’s different. We table ideas and share them. I can basically disregard them if I want to.
- Blake (1-2) Who you are talking to. Do they know what has been happening in the classroom? Have they been in the PLT?
- Eden (1-5) I don’t like that you are being judged on your practice in Learning Walks. (*said abruptly*)

**Question 4: How does/doesn't the school model, Learning Walks build teacher dialogue on your teaching practice?**

Dakota (1-4) We get to talk to each other at the end and share what we saw and like. Even with us working with [REDACTED] that's very much dialogue to me. Us learning from her expertise and then it's been very much a big thing up there in our cohorts

Landry (1-1) We collaborate, so that's dialogue.

Dakota (1-4) But not in Learning Walks.

*Some of the group nods and gestures in agreement. I decide to ask the question again with components of Question 5. I then re-state the question slightly differently due to a noticeable pause in the group.*

Landry (1-1) Well if it is an expectation then we have to.

*Noticeable group silence, looking at Landry (1-1) to continue.*

Landry (1-1) Well if it is an expectation, if it is something that is set upon us, then we'll just do it and make it work in the best way you can.

Eden (1-5) I don't think it should be a directive because it depends who is on the Walking Team or who is giving feedback as to what people get out of it.

Peyton (1-6) Well I think too that people go to different people for different things. Yes, yes (*3 group participants nod in enthusiastic agreement*). So how can you have one team giving you feedback? You're narrowing your scope

Eden 1-5 And with one team there is always going to be that possibility of personality clashes or not getting along with the person especially if its someone I'm not fond of.

Dakota 4: It seems more contrived if it's an officially appointed person. I think there's more legalities or more formalised accountability around it.

Landry 1-1: And sometimes you cruise along ok for a while. You might go weeks without needing to go and speak to someone the you might have 3 things in 3 days, so if it's a directive and it's got to be done, you going to be ticking boxes?

Eden 1-5: I think if it does become a directive then it's important for people to choose their Walking Teams that um they do feel comfortable talking to those people and with their feedback and

Dakota 4: I think it happens in an open learning situation like we have. It happens every day. At some point, you can pop your head in and say, like I'll say



to the person next to me, I'll say... Is this where we're going with this or am I doing this correctly or like what are we doing next?

**Question 6: Does the feedback from the Learning Walk itself change what you do as a teacher and if so how?**

- Landry 1-1: They don't really. We do it all the time, all the time. We still do. I know last year we would do it on the run. I can't get this kid moving, can you have a look? I, even last year when we were doing our grading, we were unsure of a few grades, and Peyton 1-6 walked through and all the children we were saying were A's in reading, um, someone was in her room and she walked through and listened, did a little assessment on those 6 kids and went yep, yep, we got a x the cohort thing. We are all the time saying, "Can you have a look at this kid?"
- Eden 1-5: Particularly with technology in constantly saying we don't know how to do this or what's the best way or is there another way into this. And that's not just from peers that are also mentoring from students.
- Landry 1-1: It helps us get ideas, but I think we're a bit confused as to the purpose of the Learning Walk and we've had a couple of experiences where we've felt particularly exposed on something that we didn't feel that we were going to be exposed on, so I the ideas help, when you go into a room and go "look at that", "we could try that". We often come back with an idea from another room and implement it straight away
- Peyton 1-6: But I don't know whether the time it takes to do that compensates getting an idea from another classroom. Sometimes when [REDACTED] has come and said, "Look, such and such is doing this. Can I show you that? Or, you know... I think that's far more... I'd rather see that, half an hour spent with our cohort team members rather than going to someone else's room to get an idea or critiquing someone. I just think, for me personally, I'd rather sit for that half an hour with the others and have you [REDACTED] say, 'cause everyone's happy to share, and you come back and say "these guys have got a great idea, um, you have a look at it and either go with it or you don't or we could go over and have a look if we wanted too.
- Dakota 4: A good part of it is when you have to focus on a particular area. That's been good learning, in terms of if you say, ah one of the examples was, we had curriculum on the walls, what's happening, the COW, made us actually focus on that area which we probably wouldn't have normally and actually ended up re organising our learning space, well I did, I felt I did, in a positive, positive way.
- Landry 1-1: But I don't think another cohort walking through for 10 minutes can give you justice on that and I also think that.

Eden 1-5: And sometimes the comments aren't really related to what, you were saying we were supposed to be looking at, and yet sometimes the comments that come up are completely off the wall.

Landry 1-1: And I think sometimes through not being able to talk to the teachers, I would love to be able to say, "What are you doing that for?" I know we're not, we went on a learning walk once and the grade was doing reading and only that I'd taught these children before, that I could tell which groups were where. Yeah, that persons working on that and that person's working on that, but the people with me couldn't, and they came back saying "Was that graded or was that this?" and I could tell them that. Had they been able to say to you, what group are you working with? Or "Is this your class?" It would clarify all those questions on the spot.

**Question 7: What would change, if you could, to make the Learning Walks a better model for teacher professional development?**

Landry 1-1: Most (said quickly and strongly)

***Group agreement; said adamantly***

Landry 1-1: I would like to be able to ask the teacher for their ideas, not say what are you doing? But "What are you doing?"

Peyton 1-6: Being able to ask for clarification

Landry 1-1: And also, I think that would help new teachers, when all these people come and looking at them like this and if you were able to walk over and say, "What are you doing?" and they say, "I'm doing a reading task, I'm doing it because of this and I'm targeting these children". They'd feel better about themselves

Eden 1-5: We don't necessarily know whether it's across the cohort grouping or class grouping and I think also sometimes the feedback can be particularly negative and when that happens, and obviously, everybody works so hard, and it just makes you feel "What's the point?"

Landry 1-1: ***Noticeable hum of deflation***

Eden 1-5: So I think, on every learning walk there are positive and yes there are things we need to work towards, but there needs to be a balance, be mindful

Landry 1-1: That we're humans and that we put our hearts and soul into this.

Eden 1-5: And sometimes those negative comments come because the teachers aren't aware of what's going on

Peyton 1-6: They've misunderstood, there's a misunderstanding, because it can't be clarified at the time because the teachers can't be involved

Landry 1-1 and Eden 1-5: Yeah (*said in agreement*)

Landry 1-1: Well, I think that it needs to be someone who's involved in the process, like whether the LOP comes, knows the grade that's coming in and the people coming in and knows the grade that they're going into because they work with both grades. When it's random, like we could walk into any classroom randomly, and go, "Now wouldn't do that, and I wouldn't do that" and that's, you know' but you might not know that they've done that purposely, for a reason or that's to help that kid learn

Peyton 1-6: And this is how it came about

Peyton 1-6/Landry 1-1: Yeah (*said in agreement*)

Peyton 1-6: This goes back to that conversation with the teachers

Landry 1-1: We agree, or we had an instance where we agreed but we were 3 weeks into the school year with 3 new people on a grade and we just hadn't got to that yet. We hadn't had time to have a conversation about the thing that we were being critiqued on, and we weren't able to say, 'Yeah we agree with all this, we just haven't had time, we've just got this group going and this group going but we have quite got that one working yet. And then the people might have went 'Yeah, we'll look at that next time, so I think the person doing it needs to have some experience with the grade's their going in to.

Eden 1-5: And I agree with [REDACTED] that because the [REDACTED] is part of our PLT time and we're able to have discussions as a whole team as to what's going on, when someone else leads the LW, to be honest, they don't have any idea! And then the context is lost.

*Yes, yes!!! Said in enthusiastic agreement by the group*

Blake 1-2: Can I just clarify right now weren't we deciding what our focus will be and people are coming in and focusing in on that focus that we want to improve on? That was not, correct me if I'm wrong, how learning walks started?

Camryn 1-3: We had a common focus, we were all looking at, for example, learning environment

Blake 1-2: It was about "What can I learn from other people, from their environment?"

Eden 1-5: So where did the "I want some feedback come from?"

Camryn 1-3: That's always been happening

Eden 1-5: 'Cause I don't know that that came from us

Camryn 1-3: I think it makes us better teachers, when we get and listen to the feedback or go and have a look at someone else's space and see what's happening in those groups. We learn from it, I'm learning from it – when I go through those other cohorts, just something in the last few years I haven't had a chance to do but since I've been on class as opposed being a casual having to go into all the different cohorts and going in and seeing what Year 5 are doing and what Year 6 or 3 are doing. It provides me with ideas, I can make myself better and I can watch other people teach.

Landry 1-1: But that's where I find the Learning Walks confusing. Is it, I learn every time I step into someone else's classroom and so it for my improvement walking into the class or is for the person you are watching?

Peyton 1-6: Yes, yes! I'm confused too

Landry 1-1: That's where I am very confused. I don't know that, yeah, I think the bit about us learning form looking is a positive but I don't know that we've quite streamlined the, how to work out, the critiquing system. I don't know that we ever will because we take things personally because we put so much effort into it. So, its, you know, the thing is you should be able to take feedback and why wouldn't you want to improve? I do understand that and everyone does but I think there are ways of doing that in an environment that is perhaps.

Peyton 1-6: I think going back to if you're able to talk to someone in the room you've got the clarification. So, if you do the feedback later it doesn't become misunderstood. I had that conversation with you and this is what I got out of it and this is what I think, this is my projection

Camryn 1-3: With the protocols too, with the first 20-30 minutes going into class, I find that, I know that the last few have been about the curriculum on the wall, but to actually go in when the class is organised and on task and actually stand back and watch. So, we should be negotiating these times

*Group: "MMMMMM" said in agreement*

Peyton 1-6 And making sure the teacher feels comfortable in the environment. We do that for our students, but are we putting those protocols in place where teachers feel safe in their work. Simple things like the clipboard! A number of cohorts have said please don't come with the clipboards.

*Group: "MMMMMM" said in agreement*

Dakota 1-4: In the situation, whilst they're doing it and they're able to clarify things, so it doesn't look like, I know with the clip board thing that somebody might be sitting in on judgment, and especially if there is an executive member that isn't the LOP, that that could be a bit intimidating.

Camryn 1-3: So, I think it's the context as well, because we said that when they know what is happening, our learning walks on a positive effect on us. But I have had it (LW) happen right when we're starting a new topic in Maths, and we're disorganised and...

*Interrupting*

Landry 1-1: That happened to us too

Camryn 1-3: And we're trying to set them up, where as if it was the next day

Landry 1-1: And we've had a couple of situations where it's meant to be what you're doing but what we're doing was the one sort of block in the week where as a cohort. We're all over the place because someone has the library so we and we would plan that we would do our PD and because with Year [redacted] it's very specific your PD, you really need to have a relationship with your kids, so we do that on class. So, it looks like we're either all doing something different which we actually run a rotating timetable or we're running as four separate classrooms and that isn't the case and that's how I've had to timetable it.

***In terms of protocols, what's the issue?***

Eden 1-5: The timing of the Learning Walks

*Group: yes, in firm agreement*

Landry 1-1 1-1: So we're at odds as to whether we go with what we would normally be doing or should we be setting something up, which we think's fake anyway, so we can't change what we're doing just because someone has release on Wednesday at 12 o'clock.

Eden 1-5: yep, yep

Landry 1-1: We have library bookings and PD lessons and our timetable has been very carefully thought out but it doesn't look like it

Camryn 1-3: I agree with what [redacted] said just before about that making it look fake because I've seen people who go "oh they're coming through. I've got to make sure I've got groups going, I've got it going the way it's supposed to look."

Dakota 1-4: All the bells and whistles

Camryn 1-3: Yes, but I'm in the mind that I'm just going to do what I'm doing and it's the other people that get anxious about it... they're very concerned

Peyton 1-6: Especially for new teachers, perhaps not so much for us that are experienced and sometimes you get what you get. When you're nervous about people coming in anyway and watching you, um, you're going to

set it up to make it look like it's going really smoothly. And in fact, you're not really learning anything from it.

- Dakota 1-4: Um no, but maybe not to the max, you might get something but you're too busy worrying
- Camryn 1-3: I see that as they know what they should be doing but they're not doing it so they've got to try and make it look that way and that's what worries me, people putting a lot of stress on themselves because they know, rather than fixing something, they're putting on a show, not putting the right thing on show, it's not what is needing adjusting.
- Blake 1-2: When you were talking about the Cycles of Improvement and everything, it would very much depend on what area you'd chosen to work on as to whether you even need (*stressed*) someone walking through your classroom. It might be something to do with planning or.. or curriculum, looking at the outcomes and how you go about that. It may not be the actual implementation of the lesson in the classroom. So, Learning Walks is just one tool, just one of many tools, yes,
- Eden 1-5: One in a cog
- Landry 1-1: I really agree with that, we are on a Cycles of Improvement all the time, we sat down with the LOP last week and set an agenda for the whole of the term with a couple of things that we want to get or do really well this term and set out our agenda so that we could not have 50 million things to do that day. This is our cycle. Everything else is going to have to wait to get this really well. We don't need a LW for that. We KNOW that these are what we want to work on.
- Blake 1-2: (*interjecting*) That's right.
- Camryn 1-3: I... for the last Learning Walk we've worked on we looked at curriculum on the wall. I really enjoyed that ghost walk, cause that was the focus, looking at what's on the wall then, and taking the kids out of the classroom and looking at what's on the wall rather than going in and everyone's nervous about it, be whether it's looking in a classroom or not, they're being looked on.
- Landry 1-1 1-1: Teachers need to agree on that too, to be part of setting the protocols.
- Blake 1-2: As good as it would be to have a conversation with that teacher we have to be mindful that they are teaching and you can't interrupt
- Eden 1-5: Get into a conversation
- Blake 1-2: Because they're teaching
- Landry 1-1: Doesn't matter. We're interrupted all day everyday day any way!!!

*Well thanks everyone for your input. It is really valued. If you have any further questions just ask me or email me and I will get back to you asap.*

## **Appendix F: Participant De-Identification Schedule**

**Table 1**

*Participant De-Identification Schedule*

\* Participants 13 and 18 initially indicated interest, but withdrew before the interviews were conducted

<b>Participant Interview Group Number</b>	<b>Participant De-Identification Code</b>
Participant 1	Landry 1-1
Participant 2	Blake 1-2
Participant 3	Camryn 1-3
Participant 4	Dakota 1-4
Participant 5	Eden 1-5
Participant 6	Peyton 1-6
Participant 7	Finley 2-1
Participant 8	Gabriel 2-2
Participant 9	Harley 2-3
Participant 10	Inis 2-4
Participant 11	Jamie 2-5
Participant 12	Kendall 2-6
Participant 13*	Addison 2-7
Participant 14	Lex 3-1
Participant 15	Morgan 3-2
Participant 16	Nat 3-4
Participant 17	Oakley 3-5
Participant 18*	Amari 3-6



## Appendix G: Online Staff Survey Questions

**Question 1: What is your gender:**

- Male
- Female

**Question 2: What is your age?**

- 20-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old

**Question 3: How long have you been teaching?**

- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-15 years
- 16-23 years
- 24-30 years
- 31+ years

**Question 4: How many schools have you held full time employment in?**

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7 or more

**Question 5: How long have you been teaching at the case study school?**

- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-15 years
- 16-23 years
- 24-30 years
- 31+ years

**Question 6: Professional Teaching Feedback: What type of feedback on your teaching practice have you experienced over your career? Please tick all that are applicable.**

- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Peer to Peer
- Learning Walks
- Principal observation and feedback
- NSW Institute observer
- None of the above
- Other- please specify

## Appendix H: Semi-Structured Group Interviews Guide

### Semi-Structured Group Interview Schedule

**Meeting Place:** Meeting Room at focus School. The interviews will take place over two weeks. Teachers will be interviewed in small groups, of 3 or 4 participants. The interview will take approx. 40 minutes.

**Interviewer:** Thank the teachers for their participation in the project. Reiterate and thank them as they have agreed to the recording of this interview.

**State the aims of the interview:** Explain how this interview will help me with the research and its benefits to our school's ongoing development. Allow the teachers to introduce him/herself, their specialty areas and their interest in participating in this project before commencing with the questions.

**Begin questioning:** (Remembering these questions may evolve or change as the interview continues as it is a semi structured process)

As a group and individually, can you make comment on the following questions?

**Question 1:**

Do you consider Learning Walks a form of professional development? Why/why not?

**Question 2:**

What are your attitudes to Learning Walks and why do you think you feel that way?

**Question 3:**

What factors do you think influence your discussion on your teacher practice with other teachers?

**Question 4:**

How does/doesn't the school model, Learning Walks build teacher dialogue on your teaching practice?

**Question 5:**

Given the direction of AITSL and now the local diocese in terms of teacher performance, how do you think Learning Walks fit in to developing the quality of teaching in the school?

**Question 6:**

Does the feedback from the Learning Walk itself change what you do as a teacher and if so how?

**Question 7:**

What would change, if you could, to make the Learning Walks a better model for teacher professional development?

**Prompts:**

I would like to know more about ...

Do you mean when you say "..."

What is an example of that?

Is this your perception?

Is it be right to say that you think/believe/know ....