Title: One man’s meat is another man’s poison: Reflections on teachers’ and principals’ work lives

Presenters:
Christine Gardner, Jeff Garsed, Marion Myhill, Bruce Pietsch, *Marilyn Pietsch and John Williamson

Institutional Affiliation:
University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania
*Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, New South Wales

AERA Teacher’ Work/Teacher Unions SIG
Roundtable: The Education Worker and Changes in Teaching as Work

AERA Annual Meeting, April30 - May 4 2010, Denver, Colorado, USA.

Contact details:
Christine.Gardner@utas.edu.au
JeffG@aeutas.org.au
Marion.Myhill@utas.edu.au
bpietsch28@gmail.com
mpietsch@csu.edu.au
John.Williamson@utas.edu.au
‘One man’s meat is another man’s poison’: Workplace and teacher influences on work lives

John Williamson
University of Tasmania, Launceston

Introduction
As this AERA presentation is being prepared in Australia the Australian Federal Government [the Australian Labor party] is in conflict with the Australian Education Union (the national teachers’ Union) over the implementation and use of data from national Literacy and Numeracy tests at grades 3, 5, 7 & 9. Today [11th April] the Federal Minister for Education, the Hon Julia Gillard, said that she would invite parents to administer/invigilate the tests if the teachers strike over the matter. This represents a low in the relationship of what would normally be seen as a strong mutual relationship; between a Centre-Left political party and a large Union. While the specific issue in the present situation is national testing and the use of the data, it also has roots in teachers’ perceiving their work lives have diminished and that there are constant, external drivers impacting negatively on the nature of their work.

The series of presentations in the Round Table all relate to the important matter of teachers’ and principals’ work lives and the nature of their work. They relate to the issues identified by Williamson & Myhill (2008), ‘In particular, concerns have been expressed about the intensification of teachers’ work and the negative impact this may have on teachers, their work lives and their work-life balance – and also by extension on the quality of teachers’ work and on their students’ learning experience.’ (p. 25)

Education and School Contexts
The presentations all are based on data from Australian teachers and principals; three involve educators from Tasmania, the smallest of the Australian states and the most rural/regional in terms of population distribution. The remaining two presentations are reports from New South Wales, the most populous of the Australian states but with most of these people residing either in Sydney or in a fairly narrow coastal strip.

The schools, the teachers and the principals reported here are all in the state education systems. While the large majority of Australian children [approx. 70%] are educated in the state (or government) education systems there is a large Roman Catholic and Independent (other religious denominational) system that allows for a degree of parental choice over the preferred option for their children.

While there are commonalities in the school curriculum between Tasmania and New South Wales they are not identical and this ‘gap’ – exposed particularly as parents move from one state to another for employment and find their children are not easily accommodated in their learning activities, etc. – has led the present Australian Federal Government to legislate to provide a more centrally prescribed, common curricula in English, Maths, Science and History. These national curricula will be implemented progressively in the states from 2011.
However, during the course of the studies reported there have been major curricula initiatives implemented (or attempted) and these have impacted on the education system as a whole and, of course, on the individual teachers in the schools. In Tasmania, for example, a major initiative called, ‘Essential Learnings’ was proposed (2001) and implemented (in 2002) and after several years of community and teacher reaction it was withdrawn to be replaced by a new initiative in 2006!

The Studies:

- Research Approach
  All of the studies reported in the presentations have sought to investigate and appreciate how the participants – teachers and principals – have perceived and understood their own work life both within their particular school context but also within the larger state government educational system. The researchers have not been interested in trying to manipulate any school process or context variables to see if this causes and change in student learning, etc. Rather, the researchers have been keen to provide a description of participants’ perceptions at a particular time and context – it is a snapshot.

- Research Methods
  The studies are all qualitative in nature and while the majority use the Case Study method (Stake, 1995) to address their research questions several are studies that attempt to describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given issue of interest, factually and accurately. (Isaac & Michael, 1995)

- Data Gathering Methods
  The studies have utilised a wide variety of data sources, including: policy documents, school records, semi-structured face-to-face interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, observation, and self-report diaries/logs. Not all researchers have used all of the identified methods but they have chosen across the spectrum so as to ensure appropriate reliability and validity of their data.

- Data Analysis Methods
  The data analyses have mirrored the range of data gathering methods and included: content analysis of documents, manual coding of questionnaires, which were reported as basic descriptive statistics, and interviews, which were analysed for common Themes/Issues, and the use of computer programmes such as SPSS and NVivo where numbers of respondents warranted it.

- The Findings
  The researchers will all present unique data from their studies. However, there are some common findings, including:
  1. teachers/principals all report concern at the pace of change required of them and their students
  2. teachers/principals all report feelings of having to juggle more demands and expectations
  3. teachers all report more capacity to adjust to and cope with change if they are involved in the decision-making
Introduction
This aspect of the study considers the work lives of beginning primary school teachers in New South Wales, Australia’s most populous state. In Australia, responsibility for school education rests with State governments and in NSW, the administrative arm of government which carries this responsibility is the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), responsible for the education of 400,000 students.

Background and context
Until the 1980s the education of teachers was the responsibility of teacher training colleges whose graduates were guaranteed work as teachers in public schools. The nexus between teacher training and teacher employment was broken in the late 1980s with the move to university-based teacher education. For the past ten years, it has become increasingly difficult for newly qualified primary teachers to access full-time permanent work within the public education system, traditionally the employer of most beginning teachers.

Employment of classroom teachers until 2008 was the responsibility of a centralised administrative division of the Department which matched vacancies with available teachers listed with the Department and appointed teachers to schools. Some beginning teachers under this system were given priority in employment through a program known as the Graduate Recruit program whereby teachers exiting universities were eligible to apply for priority appointment based on their academic results, a CV, their practicum reports and their performance at interview. Each year approximately 1000 students were “targeted”; in 2003-2005 approximately 400-500 beginning teachers were employed each year.

Key changes in teacher employment
In 2008, the system of employment for classroom teachers changed. In response to demand from principals of schools for greater control of employment of classroom teachers, principals were provided with a number of options to fill a teacher vacancy. Although these options included accepting teachers from a list of beginning teachers only 114 new graduates received appointments through this method. New graduates were able to apply through the interview system as well but in the interview process which decided each position, being able to respond to the interview panel in terms of past experience was a critical feature in securing a position. This put recent graduates at a disadvantage when compared with other applicants who had been working in other schools as permanent or casual teachers or in the same school as casual or temporary teachers.

This has meant that the majority of beginning teachers now anticipate beginning their teaching careers in short-term casual positions, often as substitute teachers in many schools and on many classes. The remainder of this section of the paper considers the effect of this process on the development of teachers’ knowledge of teaching.
Literature on beginning teachers

The literature on the development of beginning teachers revolves around several themes drawn mostly from the experience of teachers outside Australia (Bullough, 1989; Bullough & Baughman, 1995; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992; Veenman, 1984). Over the past twenty years, there has been a proliferation of studies based on qualitative methods of data collection which have considered the experiences of beginning teachers from their own perspective. However, this literature is based on an assumption that beginning teachers develop their knowledge base in the context of security of tenure in a school community and as they teach a class of students. This is the circumstance that no longer accords with the experience of beginning teachers in NSW (and indeed, in other Australian states). There is thus a need to review the contemporary understanding of beginning teaching in order to inform researchers and practitioners of the changing contexts within which beginning teachers learn to teach and of the effect of such contexts on the early career development of beginning teachers.

The current study

A study conducted in 2003-9 (Pietsch & Williamson, 2004, 2007, 2008) used a multi-site, multi-person and multi-method research approach to investigate the way in which beginning teachers’ development was affected by the employment context in which they first began work as qualified teachers. Comparisons were drawn between the experiences of those who commenced teaching in secure, cohesive and ongoing teaching positions as permanent teachers who were responsible for a class of their own and were members of the community of one school and the experiences of their colleagues (who comprised the majority of beginning teachers in the study) who commenced teaching in a range of fragmented, uncertain and short-term teaching positions. The study investigated the way in which teachers variously developed their knowledge base through engaging in the practice of teaching, participating in professional socialisation and negotiating their own professional identity. Each of these processes contributed to the development of personal practical knowledge, knowledge of the context of teaching and knowledge of self-as-teacher and these three “knowledges” formed an extended knowledge base considered in this study as representing the composite of knowledge required for effective teaching.

Sample: Case study participants and survey respondents

The research design comprised a longitudinal collective case study complemented by a postal survey-questionnaire. Case study participants comprised a group of eight self-selected participants, seven of whom were graduates of a regional university and one who was a graduate from a metropolitan university. As these teachers moved into the profession they provided data about beginning teaching over a period of two years. In addition, 241 beginning teachers from across NSW provided a broader point-in-time review of their experiences at the end of the first year of teaching through a postal survey-questionnaire which comprised a total of 102 forced response and open-ended items concerning the experience of beginning teaching.

Data gathering methods

This study utilised qualitative data drawn from semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall based on photographic records of classroom events, document review, classroom observations and teacher-constructed graphic organisers to capture teacher perceptions of the process of learning to teach across the first two years of teaching.
This data was complemented by the quantitative data drawn from the survey-questionnaire.

Data analysis
Data from the case study were entered into NVivo 1.3 (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2000) in order to analyse the themes arising from the data and to facilitate cross-case and within-case analysis. Data from the survey were analysed by means of descriptive statistical procedures utilising SPSS Version 16 (SPSS Inc, 2007). In addition, there was opportunity for comparison across these data sets.

Findings
The study resulted in several key findings:
(1) In the first year of teaching, beginning teachers focused almost exclusively on developing their personal practical knowledge of teaching as they engaged in a trial-and-error process of reflection on classroom events. Planning and programming were initially of greatest concern and were only replaced by ongoing concerns with inclusivity and with developing effective teacher-student relationships as teachers became more adept at programming for learning.

(2) A number of professional circumstances appeared to have a strong relationship to the attainment of personal practical knowledge. These included the number of schools in which a teacher worked, (whether one school or many); the extent of a teacher’s experience in teaching one (or many) classes and the teacher’s employment status which was linked to their employment certainty and the capacity make substantial gains in professional knowledge and skills within the first two years of teaching.

(3) Teachers who were in cohesive, permanent, ongoing positions, who had continuing responsibility for a class of students and who had access to the facilities for teacher learning available through school- and system-based induction programs, formal and informal school-based mentoring programs and school- and system-provided professional development activities made substantial gains in professional knowledge and in the second year were demonstrating significant levels of competency as classroom teachers.

(4) Teachers who remained in fragmented, uncertain positions throughout the initial two years of teaching, not only failed to make similar gains in knowledge, but reported a loss of skills and knowledge especially in content knowledge (through lack of ongoing professional development); in programming and in relating to parents (through lack of opportunity); and in assessing student learning and evaluating teaching through lack of ongoing opportunity to develop case knowledge or to know the students they were teaching in any other than a superficial way.

(5) Although casual teaching may (as the DET maintains) be a lifestyle choice for many experienced teachers, this study suggests that it is not an effective way to begin a teaching career. Teachers who lacked access to the professional socialisation provided by school membership were less able to develop personal practical knowledge and were also subject to a diminution in their commitment to teaching and their understanding of themselves as teachers. Their professional identity remained fragile and was disrupted by issues of classroom management, by disappointment at having no relationship with students and by career and personal uncertainty.
Conclusion

The professional activities of engaging in the practice of teaching, participating in professional socialisation and negotiating professional identity formed an interactive web of activities which were all necessary for the development of teaching skills. Simply teaching for two years was not an effective way to gain knowledge; experience-in-context was required in order to develop the requisite knowledge and skills to approach competency within the first two years of teaching.

There is a need to reconsider the concept of context in teaching and to take account of the experience of Australian teachers for whom the influence on teaching competency of context is more than a differentiated school experience (Berliner, 2001; Bullough & Baughman, 1995). The context of employment is of prior importance in teacher development in Australia. There is a need for those responsible for the induction, mentoring and accreditation of beginning teachers to take account of both casual and permanent employees in order to ensure that those entering the teaching service are not significantly disadvantaged by differentiated experience prior to permanent employment.

References


QSR International Pty Ltd. (2000). NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Version 1.3): QSR International Pty Ltd.


One man’s meat is another man’s poison? Workplace and teacher influences on worklives
Christine Gardner & John Williamson
University of Tasmania, Launceston

Outline
This paper draws on data and analyses undertaken for a workloads study commissioned by the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Education Union (AEU) (Gardner & Williamson, 2004). The workloads study looked at qualitative and quantitative aspects of the workloads of teachers and principals and associated professional, e.g., school psychologists and paraprofessional workers, e.g., laboratory technicians. The four teachers’ accounts initially presented in this paper were selected because they provided sufficient description of teachers’ workplaces to obtain a sense of each of the teachers’ perceptions and experiences and because they presented two positive and two negative reports about their professional experiences. Additional brief comments made by other teachers are used to enlarge upon the main ideas that emerged from the initial accounts.

Perspective(s) or theoretical framework
This focus on a “close-up” (Hamilton, 1976, p. 39) view in order to identify, in part, “the practices, perspectives and preoccupations of teachers (Hamilton, 1976, p. 288) enabled an exploration of aspects of teachers’ work that may be viewed in a positive light by some teachers and in a negative light by others and possible explanations for the variations in perspectives. Denial of teachers’ perspectives rejects their key role in the implementation of policy, change or curriculum (Goodson, 2003).

It would not have been realistic to gather the kind of data needed for a study of this type other than directly from the participants. It was the participants’ perspectives of their workloads that mattered in relation to implementation and that influenced their view of their work.

Methods, techniques, or modes of enquiry
Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Focus groups and individual interviews were used to seek rich data about themes that arose from the data analysis of the questionnaire surveys. Participants were invited to complete a three-part survey questionnaire: first, to provide demographic data; second, by completing a seven-day diary (7 consecutive days, i.e. including a Saturday and a Sunday) to identify components of their work-related lives and the times spent on each of these; and finally, to identify the ways in which participants viewed their professional roles, aspects of their workplaces that either assisted or hindered them in performing their roles and suggestions they made for improving their worklives.

Data Sources/Evidence
The workloads study gathered data from 178 teachers (Kinder to Year 12 and Technical and Further Education colleges (TAFEs)). An additional 75 responses were gathered from principal, special education and professional and support staff,
Results

Overall, the data revealed that a clear majority of teachers, professional support staff and principals (staff employed under the Awards for Teaching Service, Professional Employees and TAFE teachers) typically worked between 40 hours and 59 hours during the week they kept their diaries with approximately half the participants working 40-49 hours and half working 50-59 hours. Fourteen participants worked at least 60 hours. Themes that arose from the data included: (1) intensification; (2) implementing policy and associated requirements, including accountability, and increasing time spent on non-teaching tasks; (3) support, resources and procedures typically expressed in negative terms, for example, insufficient resources, insufficient staff, and so on; (4) student needs, including specific reference to the Inclusion policy; (5) support from workplace colleagues; (6) communication and consultation; and, (7) recognition, understanding and trust. The last three themes typically included comments by participants about the positive influences when these three attributes occurred, and, the negative effects in the absence of these features.

Overall it was evident that many teachers and professional staff who were working “long hours” or “very long” hours (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003) and that a balance between a workload and ‘a life’ was not being achieved by a sizeable number of participants. Furthermore, many concerns were expressed by some participants who appeared to be near or at ‘breaking point’ (Myhill, 2009; Williamson & Myhill, 2008).

It was possible, however, to find reports from some teachers articulated their experiences and perceptions in positive terms despite the concerns about political influences and workplace problems being expressed by many of the teachers.

The two comments that follow and that were made by two teachers provide contrasting reports of aspects of their worklives.

I really value and am appreciative that I work in such a positive and supportive environment. …. We all strive to do our best and feel very accountable for everything we do but we don’t feel threatened or put down in the process in my school. I work harder now than I have ever done, probably because I find the more I learn about teaching the more I can see that needs to be done, but, just as importantly, my principal leads by example…works really hard, is encouraging and positive with all staff and always supportive. I truly believe from my experience that a good principal equals a good school. [Teacher 1, female, 11-15 years’ experience, emphases in the original]

There is constant bombardment with pedagogy and [curriculum] documents: “you would be doing this”…implying what you were doing before is not right…staff morale is low…. What’s it for? I’ve had experience of putting in
time on learning new things, e.g., [computerised student assessment software] and then we haven’t used it. [Teacher 2, female, focus group]

What characteristics did these two teachers share and what were the common features of the contexts in which they practised? These teachers were both female and had at least 10 years’ experience. Both teachers worked in government schools in Tasmania that were implementing a now out-dated curriculum as a result of the increasing trend towards politically inspired curriculum change (Bates, 2008; Churchill & Williamson, 2004; Melleuish, 2000). This Australian trend reflects trends elsewhere (Boreham, Gray & Blake, 2006; Galton & MacBeath, 2008; Poppleton & Williamson, 2004; Stevenson, 2007).

The differences in how the teachers viewed their work are marked.

Teacher 1 wrote about being valued, being encouraged, and working hard to do her best work. Her use of the word “we” suggested that she believed that she was not alone in her observations. She described her school in terms of an environment that was a positive and supportive one in which to work. Teacher 1 attributed her willingness to work harder, than she had done in any previous school, to her principal who led “by example” and she concluded these comments with her statement that positive leadership was crucial to the success of her school.

Teacher 2 spoke of a barrage of changes that resulted in her developing the belief that her years of previous work were not valued. Not only did Teacher 2 believe that her morale and that of her colleagues was dwindling, she also spoke of learning that was never able to be implemented before new learning had to occur.

Another pair of statements will now be considered with respect to similarities and contrasts.

The work I’ve been able to do…it’s been challenging, varied, I’ve been given opportunities, it’s a very supportive school. If you have personal stresses…the staff and the senior staff support you. It’s not a school where you feel isolated at all…. I’m lucky because I really enjoy what I do…. [Teacher 3, female, 21+ years’ experience]

I would like to be noticed as a human being, valued for my input and rewarded from time to time. I would like to be offered incentives rather than threatened should I transgress. I would like to be treated as a professional person. Sadly I feel I will retire without experiencing such a workplace even though it has the care of human beings and their nurturing as its core business, [It] would be quite funny if it weren’t so serious. [Teacher 4, male, 21+ years’ experience]

These two teachers had both taught for more than 20 years. Again their reports were provided in the same broad context of continual change and politically inspired imperatives (as the reports from Teacher 1 and Teacher 2).
Differences between the accounts of Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 emerged in areas not dissimilar to those described by Teacher 1 and Teacher 2. Teacher 3 described the importance to her of being supported, as had Teacher 1. Teacher 3 specified this support was occurring at both professional and personal levels. As did Teacher 1, Teacher 3 indicated that support was important but that other conditions existed that contributed towards the positive environment in her school. Teacher 3 also noted the significance of an inclusive school culture in which meeting challenges, dealing with variety and the presentation of opportunities occurred.

Teacher 4’s report highlighted the importance of feeling valued; however, it was the lack of valuing of and recognition of people, their professionalism and their inputs were concerns he identified. For Teacher 4 schools existed, at least in part, to care for and nurture the whole school community, students, parents and teachers; however, he reported an ironical observation that there was a lack of support for and encouragement of teachers.

These teachers highlighted the importance for them of being valued and supported, the positive influences of positive leadership, leading by example, collegiality and a sense of professional autonomy. For these teachers their views about their capacity to identify the presence or absence of these qualities in their workplaces constituted noteworthy contributions to responses.

Regarding perceptions of feeling valued, temporary and fixed-term teachers believed that their temporary status affected their confidence in offering opinions, particularly when their views differed from the majority or from the school’s leadership group. One teacher expressed his concerns pithily:

As a temporary teacher I am disposable. [Male, 4-10 years’ experience, questionnaire]

Another teacher wrote about decision-making in his school:

I have little or no say in any decisions made; there are no formal procedures for ordinary teachers and staff to influence decisions. [Male, more than 21 years’ experience, questionnaire]

Even when there were procedures for teachers’ input in decision-making, participation was not necessarily guaranteed. In the words of one teacher:

There appear to be structures enabling teacher to participate but many decisions are imposed from above, i.e., by the hierarchy. [Female, more than 21 years’ experience, questionnaire]

On the topic of collegial support another teacher referred to the confidence she had been able to develop after a period away from teaching:

You need support from everyone… for each other. Support from the principal, senior staff… from all colleagues during the low times is really
good. It’s helped ease me back in after a period of leave…given me confidence. [Female, more than 10 years’ experience, individual interview]

A different teacher wrote about the way in which the influence of collegiality outweighed the inferior physical environment:

I currently work in a school were the best interests of the students are paramount. However, we work in old, sub-standard buildings with, in some areas, aging equipment and insufficient funds. Despite this our students do have all the advantages of a caring and friendly staff and many are very successful. [Female, more than 10 years’ experience, questionnaire]

With respect to leadership, a different teacher’s observations highlighted the effects of leadership, and the role luck played in whether the principal’s leadership was positive or negative:

Teacher success and stress is very much related to senior staff support. I am fortunate to have a principal that I get on with…gives me room to move…I hear horror stories from teaching friends. I have decided to resign if I ever have to be transferred to one [particular] principal’s school. [Female, questionnaire]

It is acknowledged that only a small amount of the data gathered from a limited number of participants has been used in this brief analysis. In addition, the researchers have no knowledge of any of the schools at which the teachers worked.

Furthermore it must be recognised that it is not solely the school context and culture that determines a teacher’s response to change and whatever is happening in the school. Some teachers, more so that others, have the capacity to proactively mediate their work (Goodson, 2003; Helsby, 1999).

Teachers in the workloads study (Gardner & Williamson, 2004) identified a variety of strategies they used to manage their workloads. For example one teacher commented about time and work:

Time is limited in anything. I try to make a list. I have come to terms with the fact that I can only do what I can do. I’m a fairly good manager of time [Teacher, more than 21 years’ experience, individual interview]

Another teacher described how she took control of her professional life and the benefits of doing this on her personal life:

When I started teaching I did hours of preparation and marking night after night, year after year. After seven or eight years I decided I could not continue working day and night. I no longer existed as a social person. My family life was greatly diminished. So I decided not to take work home [as a rule]. Work (the place is for work (the activity). Home is home! I had to change the way I teach; I have up aspirations of promotion…. I believe that
my teaching has been improved [by the changes I have made] I have more energy, better health, I’m more child-centred and I am a more interesting person. [Teacher, more than 21 years’ experience, questionnaire, emphases in original]

In this study, reports of this nature, that is, of teachers’ efforts to take control of their workloads were few.

Quantitative data from the workloads study (Gardner & Williamson, 2004) indicated that a theme of “support, resources and procedures…[including] …relevant professional learning opportunities and proactive schools, supportive programs and environments” (p. 54) emerged throughout participants’ responses regarding changes in their work, factors that either support or hinder their work, involvement in decision-making and their suggestions for improving their workloads. Notably, participants’ comments were more often offered from a perspective of aspects of hindrance of their work and suggesting improvements to their workloads than the more positive angle of being factors that assisted their current work. Teachers’ involvement in role-related decision-making and access to good quality information underpinned their perceptions of being trusted and empowered (Gardner & Williamson, 2004).

In another study (Gardner & Williamson, 2005) one teacher-participant described the circumstances in which implementation of a new initiative appeared to have been particularly successful. His report touched on collegiality, networking and receiving support and encouragement from the school leadership team:

It’s important to set up some sort of steering committee…if the work is not supported you less the chances of school and community change. Once a month I met with the principal, a parent representative and another teacher… Networking is still occurring…with teachers I met [five years ago at our training sessions]… the principal and assistant principal were really supportive. They saw an opportunity to train someone and delegate. Not once was I hassled about being out of the school. [Key teacher, male, less than 10 years’ experience]

Links to the literature
With respect to professional autonomy, in the UK Galton and MacBeath (2002) found that external sources exert control on schools to attain goals within specified time-frames and that these forces reduce the sense of control that teachers have over their work and their professional relationships. Helsby (1999) wrote about teachers’ “professional confidence” (p. 173) comprising “a strong belief not only in their capacity but also in their authority to make important decisions about the conduct of their work”. Helsby continued by identifying the need for teachers “to feel ‘in control’ of the work situation” (p. 173). In the case of the four teachers whose comments are reported in this paper, the contexts in which Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 work are more likely, than the contexts in which Teacher 2 and Teacher 4 work, to support the development of the trust, respect and care that boost each
teacher’s level of professional confidence as described by Helsby. The comments made by the four teachers mirror Helsby’s conclusion that the workplace in which a teacher works, in particular the extent to which a collaborative culture exists, is the crucial factor in determining the extent to which teachers are dispirited and display apathy or the extent to which their professionalism is reinvigorated as they emerge from change processes.

MacBeath et al. (2007) write about “a quality of school leadership…directed to building a culture in which learning is safe, adventurous and significant to the learner” (p. 19) be it teacher or student. The Australian Government Senate inquiry into the status of the teaching profession (Parliament of Australia, 1998) found that increasing control by external agencies reduces teachers’ control over the scope of school operations—including decisions about what to teach and how to teach—and ultimately influences teachers’ professional standing and teachers’ view of their work.

Findings from the Australian component of a 10-country study in which this paper’s authors are members of the research team (Collet, 2004, 2009; Menlo & Hurley, 2008) reveal that principals support teachers’ involvement in five aspects of school decision-making, in increasing order, that is: Administration, Human Relations, Teacher Support, and Classroom Learning and Evaluation. In addition to indicating decision-making related to student learning and assessment, pedagogy, classroom processes and resources, the Tasmanian Department of Education teacher position description lists professional learning and relevant committee and whole-school involvement. These responsibilities include aspects of teacher support, classroom learning and evaluation. Being entrusted with these responsibilities lies at the heart of feelings of being valued and supported. Committee work and while-school involvement invoke collegiality.

Williamson and colleagues (Collet, 2004, 2009; Gardner & Williamson, 2004; Gardner & Williamson, 2005; Menlo & Hurley, 2008; Williamson & Myhill, 2008; Williamson & Poppleton, 2004) have reported on their research about teachers’ worklives and teachers’ perspectives. In part, these reports raise an extensive variety of concerns about the effects of change and external demands on teachers. By paying particular attention to the detail of teachers’ reports of their perspectives and experiences, however, it becomes clear that individual workplaces play a central role in teachers’ levels of professional confidence and teachers’ capacity to exert control of their work.

Conclusion
Within one school sector in this case the government sector, at any one time and while similar political and social broad issues exist, some teachers’ reports indicated that they had identified the ‘meat’ in their work and felt nourished and nurtured, while other teachers described ‘poison’ that had sapped their confidence and professionalism. The role of first, school contexts and cultures, second, teachers’ own capacity, and, finally, external influences in creating the ‘meat’ or the ‘poison’ are deserving of further attention.
References


Teacher Autonomy and Control in the School Context

Jeff Garsed,
University of Tasmania

Outline
A case study in two Tasmanian schools of teachers’ perceptions of their professional autonomy and control, this study looks at those factors which enhance professional autonomy and control and key school-based issues which impact on these dimensions of teachers’ professional identities.

Context
The study took place at a time when a major K-10 integrated curriculum initiative called Essential Learnings [ELs] was being implemented in Tasmanian Schools. The changes which were taking place in Tasmanian government primary (K-6), high (7-10) and district high (K-10) schools created a media furore particularly in the Hobart Mercury, Tasmania’s major daily newspaper. The ELs changes not only involved a breaking down of traditional discipline boundaries but emphasised collaborative curriculum planning and delivery for inquiry-based student learning. One of the schools selected for the study were a middle sized rural primary (K-6) school with a new female principal given the pseudonym “Bass Primary”. The other was a larger rural district high (K-10) school with a male principal given the name “Winterbrook District High”. Both schools had until recent times operated using traditional teaching methods and were situated in relatively conservative farming communities. The mean age of the 14 participating teachers at Bass was 38.6 years and at Winterbrook the mean age was 35.1 years. Teachers in the study were on average younger than the state mean age for teachers in 2004 of 46 years.

Perspective/ theoretical framework
As with Huberman (1993), Day et al (2006) in a broad-based study of teachers’ work and lives noted differing levels of engagement and focus of interest as well as a range of motivations in teachers in varying school contexts, across the ages and stages of their careers.

Hargreaves (1993), among others, claims the need to reshape education to serve the knowledge society. Tyack and Cuban (1995) documented the moderate pace of educational change and highlighted the failure of centrally decreed changes and the need to work democratically with teachers to improve teaching and learning.

However, educational reforms frequently generate ‘heat’ as well as ‘light’ (Little, 1990) as tensions arise between educational stakeholders. Achinstein (2002) traced the contemporary view of the micropolitical theory through Blase (1991) and Ball (1987) and demonstrated that such theory is a valuable lens for understanding collaborative reforms in schools, as it is through conflict institutional norms can be challenged and new ideas generated that promote organisational learning (Achinstein, 2002; Fullan 1993, 1999).
Henchey (1999) showed the early success of a teams-based approach to implementing a cross-curricula approach to learning valuing coherence, adaption, participation, flexibility and diversity.

Educational change initiatives mean little unless supported by those who are invited to implement them, as teachers actively decide for themselves what they will take into their classrooms (Churchill, Williamson & Grady, 1997). Churchill, Williamson and Grady found that, for teachers, the negative effects of educational changes were felt most strongly when new practices usurped existing ones, they were externally mandated, multiple and simultaneous innovations or when timelines were short. Extremes of work intensification may well run counter to teacher professional engagement in and control of change initiatives (Williamson & Myhill, 2008).

Hurried or ill-conceived change initiatives fail to allow the school as a learning organisation to move forward as a community of professional learners (Mulford & Edmunds 2010).

Methods, techniques, or modes of enquiry
Interpretive, comparative case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994)) framed this investigation with principals and teachers at each of the two participating schools, comprising the primary unit of analysis. Such an approach was deemed appropriate due to the research questions being about teachers’ perceptions (Yin, 1994) of factors affecting their professional autonomy and control.

Data Sources/Evidence
The participants for this study were two principals and 48 teachers from two rural government schools in Tasmania. The teacher numbers at each site were 36 and 12. Semi-structured interviews of 45 minutes to 90 minutes were the major method of collecting data from all participants and additional information was gleaned by observation, document analysis and participant survey questionnaire. Data gathering took place over the course of a full school year and follow-up interviews extended into the following year.

Key Results
The professional value of working collegially to improve practice was at times out weighed by the stress of burgeoning workload, unpleasant conflict and resultant stress and lack of control. In discussing the results of this study in relation to these aspects of teacher autonomy and control, this section is detailed under the following headings:

- A Shared View of Change
- Conflict Amid Community
- Control of the Change Process
- Workload and Work Intensification

- A Shared View of Change
Teachers at the two schools were at least ten years younger than the average for state school teachers at the time of the study, in 2004. At Winterbrook, 11 of the 33
participating teachers were within 5 years of graduating from their teacher pre service training course.

Based on the experiences of Huberman (1993) and Day et al (2006), by their age and stage of career, younger and mid-career teachers are likely to show greater enthusiasm and receptiveness to change initiatives. At Bass, principal Felicity Marchant showed a preference for younger teachers, even where they were not as educationally competent, when she noted:

…I’m quite prepared to run with the angst that young teachers cause because of enthusiasm or inability – either - but I find it more challenging and difficult to deal with the angst caused by long term teachers who are unable or unwilling, or steeped in tradition or just a bit old fashioned…
(Felicity, Principal, Bass Primary)

Yet, all but one of the older Bass Primary teachers who participated in the study made positive statements about the need for the ELs change.

When principal Bob Merlot was asked what kind of teachers he preferred to have at his school, his response stood in contrast:

…Experienced – I feel at [Winterbrook] we have a lot of young teachers…
(Bob, Principal, Winterbrook District High)

Clearly, both principals wished to achieve the same end – that is, to have a teaching staff successfully implementing the ELs curriculum – yet one principal saw success at this as contingent upon having an enthusiastic yet compliant young teaching staff and the other wanted teachers who had the experience and knowledge of how to teach and deal with the complexities of the school and its students in the context such a major change. He saw appropriate Professional Development (PD) supporting young teachers as key successful curriculum change and that what had been available to teachers was inadequate:

Not anywhere near the amount of PD that is required to implement something as complex as [the ELs implementation]…
(Bob, Principal, Winterbrook District High)

Whilst teachers in both schools saw value in working collegially and generally saw the need for the ELs curriculum change, the staffing and resourcing of the schools made it difficult and highly stressful to put into practice.

There were mandated timeframes imposed by the Department of Education [DoE] for the ELs curriculum change and limited time available for teachers to plan collaboratively and participate in professional learning. All the while, the normal business of the school had to proceed daily.

The level of support for the curriculum change intuitive varied across schools and sectors within schools on a range of aspects of the changes. At both schools, teachers who were in favour of the change to collegial approaches showed their enthusiasm openly.
Specifically, these included both principals and their senior teaching staffs. Across the two schools, there were also teachers who were more ambivalent towards this change, but only three teachers openly expressed criticism of the teams-based approach per se. Three teachers at Bass and four at Winterbook noted they lacked control over the type of professional development they had. Two high school teachers and three early childhood teachers at Winterbook were critical of the cross-curricula nature of the ELs. One early childhood teacher at Bass also noted that in the early years children needed focus on skills acquisition and the inquiry-based learning of the ELs might be more appropriate for upper primary and middle school students. The two specialist teachers (PE and Music) at Bass felt their skills and subject area had been marginalised during the time of the ELs implementation.

All but a handful of teachers in this study spoke positively or acceptingly about the value of planning collegially for their teaching.

“Really important – I don’t know how teachers could work if they just came in and worked on their own – I feel that very strongly”
(Hannah, Teacher, Bass Primary)

“…when you get together and thinking about a learning unit you find you have so much to share”
(Leanne, Advanced Skills Teacher, Winterbrook District High)

“…there’s a move to getting teams of teachers responsible for grades I think it has great potential to be a very good change in terms of teacher collaboration and beneficial for student outcomes but I think for a number of teachers it will be a major challenge…”
(Irene, Science Teacher, Winterbrook District High)

In fact, teachers participating in the study noted that interactions with colleagues and students were satisfying aspects of their work. Teachers took personal responsibility for their learning environment and curriculum delivery; yet, it was through collegial practice that many believed they were extending their professional capabilities beyond what they could, on their own, achieve for their students in terms of learning experiences and outcomes.

- Conflict Amid Community

Observations recorded at the schools showed that teachers working together took a range of forms, from participating in meetings and large group forums, to teachers in a sector of the school planning units of work together down to more incidental aspects such as helping each other with resources, mentoring and advice. Research by Achinstein (2002) specifically addressed the role of conflict and diversity in school communities. Achinstein found that as teachers work collaboratively they frequently encounter conflict over professional beliefs and practice.

Achinstein’s (2002) research drew from literatures on micropolitics and organisations and on the study of two differing schools, explores how teachers embrace or suppress their
differences; how approaches to difference define community borders; and discusses the potential for organisational learning and change.

Teachers at Winterbrook, the larger school in the study, had a strong sense of belonging to a sector – early childhood, primary, middle school or senior high – and many noted that they collaboratively planned or ‘had an understanding’ with a colleague in their part of the school. At the much smaller Bass Primary, teachers had been grouped by the principal into three teams. At least two of these teams experienced tensions and one of these to the point of ceasing to function as a team.

Conflict and disagreement is an inevitable part of working collegially on professional matters, yet it could have lasting emotional outcomes for teachers and it was critical that people knew how to discuss difficult matters productively. One teacher noted that he had to:

…be able to rely on other staff … and naturally build up a level of trust…
(Kyle, Teacher, Bass Primary)

Such trust is build slowly over time, sustained by openness in relationships (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994). In this small school where many teachers had been for some years, two former principals had been suddenly moved by the Department of Education following a breakdown in relationships with staff or parents, so levels of trust between staff and with the principal were only slowly improving.

- Control of the Change Process
Winterbrook had a young teacher, for 0.5 of full time, in the role of Curriculum Consultation Officer (CCO), a kind of formal change leader position. The CCO attended ELs implementation meetings at district level and was a resource within the school for teachers to consult on their ELs curriculum planning and delivery.

A deeply committed teacher of many years standing explained the gap between seeing the need for the ELs changes and knowing how to implement them.

…I think it’s wonderful and I really like it all but implementing it – getting my head around so I know exactly – in the classroom …that’s hard!…
(Beth, Senior Teacher, Winterbrook District High)

Any profound change like the ELs was going to need scaffolding and steps to ensure it brought this willing teacher along with it.

She noted that she consulted regularly with the CCO.

…she has been able to steer the staff and the school very much into the EL’s…
(Beth, Senior Teacher, Winterbrook District High)

However good or well intended a change initiative is, in the end it is teachers who must make it work. Teachers actively decide for themselves what they will take into their classrooms (Churchill, Williamson & Grady, 1997) and if they can’t assimilate an idea into their practice one can be fairly certain they will not use it.
Workload and Work Intensification
Evidence from a workload study of teachers collected just prior to this study showed that teachers were working an average 49.3 hours per week (Gardner & Williamson, 2004). Coincidentally, fulltime teachers at both Winterbrook District High and Bass Primary reported this exact same average working week. Work intensification resulted when professional development was required for change mandated initiatives and the regular tasks of running classrooms continued. There were mandated timeframes for the implementation of the new curriculum and limited time available for teachers to plan collaboratively and participate in professional learning and all the while, the normal business of the school had to proceed daily.

“… we each do our own thing in our classroom and then find time for ourselves during the week to work on whatever it is we’re doing as the team…”

(Kathy, Teacher, Bass Primary)

Bass Principal, Felicity, was impatient about change and this added to the pressure felt by teachers.

…I just can’t get things to move as fast as I would like to … it’s just taking time…

(Felicity, Principal, Bass Primary).

Felicity’s sense of urgency is supported to some extent by literature on change which suggests that incremental changes do not sustain (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Tyack & Cuban, 1995), however the dangers of teacher burn-out are also well documented.

As recorded in numerous observations by the researcher, teachers at Bass were constantly busy during the school day and with after school meetings the day was frequently a long one. On few occasions did the researcher observe teachers lingering in the staffroom during their non-teaching time or after school. In fact, many participants in the study noted how it was difficult to find the time to complete all their planning and classroom management tasks and how the number and duration of staff meetings cut into this time.

… professional development needs more priority –sometimes at staff meetings we have a little bit but often times we don’t focus on student things…

(Kyle, Classroom Teacher, Bass Primary)

There remain only so many hours in a teacher’s day. Work intensification has been coupled with a corresponding loss of a ‘sense of control’ over teachers’ own ‘planning, decision-making, classroom management and relationships’ (Galton and MacBeath, 2002, p.13). Galton and MacBeath note that there are pressures on teachers from both within the classroom and outside and that these result in both a bigger range of tasks that require fulfilment and the tasks themselves require more work (more is required to be done on an existing range of tasks). One of the broad consequences of intensification is that teachers are ‘changed out’ (Williamson & Myhill, 2008).

Discussion/links to the Literature
Both schools lacked formal mechanisms to facilitate full discussion and dissent in the ways Achinstein (2002) showed were valuable for schools embarking on major change.
At Bass Primary, there was a minority view that collegiality had been contrived. Collaborative (versus contrived) cultures for teacher collective control of their work and educational improvement are discussed by Hargreaves (1994) in his consideration of relevant literature on the changing nature and context of teachers’ work in Britain, USA and Australia in the 1990s. Hargreaves saw that ‘collaborative’ working relationships are compulsory and the form of them imposed, with fixed times and places set for collaboration, for example planning meetings during preparation time, teachers lacked control.

Fullan (2001) outlined the change processes that have been adopted over the past three decades and points to the numerous mistakes that have been made. Many of these mistakes involve a failure to distinguish between “the change” and “the change process”.

Fullan (2001) notes that change is a highly personalised experience. No two people may experience any one change in quite the same way. Teachers look at the rewards and costs of any change initiative before they focus their efforts towards it. They do this using for main criteria.

1. Does it serve a useful purpose?
2. Is it clear how to make the change?
3. What is the cost in time and energy?
4. Will it be rewarding in terms of interaction with peers or others?

Fullan’s analysis is similar to Doyle and Ponder (1977). Through their direct experience and the shared experience of other teachers, they argued, that teachers approach new initiatives from a position of ‘pragmatic skepticism’ which gives rise to a ‘practicality ethic’. The “practicality ethic”, involves three criteria, Doyle and Ponder (1977) developed by listening to teachers respond to various change initiatives.

1. Congruence: Similarity or ‘goodness of fit’ with existing practices
2. Instrumentality: Are effective in getting the job done.
3. Cost/benefit: Effectiveness in relation to time, effort or resources invested

Utilising these criteria, teachers decide whether to adopt new ideas based on capacity for practical application in the classroom rather than on theory or high ideals (Doyle & Ponder 1977); evidence of this pragmatic utilisation can be seen in the teachers’ behaviour at this school. For example, one of the reasons given by teachers for so readily taking on the ELs curriculum was its closeness of fit with their existing practice. Indeed with its interdisciplinary, project-based nature it was seen by this high school teacher as easier for primary and middle school teachers to take on the ELs.

…they are already doing this… pretty well from where I see it, there is a bias towards [the primary] teacher…

(Les, Teacher, Winterbrook District High)

Although teachers are practical professionals who adapt change initiatives to suit their purposes, in the context of multiple educational changes, some changes impact negatively on them particularly where workload is increased. Churchill, Williamson and Grady 1997 found that the negative effects of change were felt most strongly when new practices usurped existing ones, they were externally mandated, multiple and simultaneous.
innovations or when timelines were short. An Australian Education Union commissioned study conducted at that time found that requirements under DoE policy resulted in long hours of work, work intensification, a growing requirement to take on non teaching tasks, lack of articulation between new and emerging approaches, marginalisation of specialist teacher roles, and problems accessing appropriate resources (Gardner & Williamson, 2004).

Conclusion
The teachers in these two rural Tasmanian schools largely supported need for change in educational practice and on the whole saw working collaboratively as enhancing their professional control. Working together to adopt the new ELs curriculum sometimes added to interpersonal tensions and sometimes resulted in conflict. The additional tasks resulted in greater work intensity as engagement with the ELs ideas was taking place while teachers continued to run their classrooms. Teachers could however control the extent to which they would use the new ideas, as Tasmanian teachers retain relatively high classroom autonomy. Having this control may have helped teachers keep faith with the change initiatives. Yet, the largest impediment to teachers taking on the ELs was the lack of resources for the professional learning they needed to ensure teachers could acquire the knowledge and skills to implement new approaches.

References


One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

Devolution of responsibilities to Australian schools: Work lives of principals of isolated schools in outback Australia
Bruce Pietsch, University of Tasmania, Launceston

Introduction
A global trend to decentralisation of public school systems (Bottani, 2000; McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Pascoe & Pascoe, 1998; Sahid, 2004; Sayed, 2002; Wylie, 1995) has been reflected in Australian states and territories (Caldwell, 1997). Reasons provided for this devolution include: reduction of costs and limitations of bureaucracy; increasing the responsiveness of public (government) schools (Scott, 1989) and educational advantages.

In Australia's most populous state (New South Wales), principals of isolated central schools (schools that enrol primary/elementary and secondary aged students) shared their perceptions of the trend to school-based management and effects of this trend on the time they worked. Although principals generally supported the general policy of decentralisation and devolution of decision-making to the school level, they expressed concerns about particular practices within the NSW Department of Education. Findings have pointed to an increase in stress and in hours worked, which has matched findings internationally (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001; Thompson, Blackmore, Sachs, & Tregenza, 2002; University of Bristol & UK Health and Safety Executive, 2000; Whittall, 2003) and in other states in Australia and in New Zealand (Gardner & Williamson, 2004; Hatton, 1995; Sahid, 2004; Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2004).

The study aimed to examine the special perceptions and practices of principals working in remote and declining rural socio-economic environments, with a view to identifying the specific facets of leadership required for these school environments. This research examined the experiences and issues of concern to new principals of isolated central schools in the semi-arid areas of inland New South Wales, which could be nearly 1000 km from the head office in Sydney. In NSW, central schools are located in towns or villages which are not big enough to justify having a separate secondary school. Nearly all government central schools now provide a curriculum for students from their first year of school, Kindergarten, to matriculation year, Year 12.

Research Approach
A mixed-mode [qualitative and quantitative] approach (Burns, 2000) was used. A state-wide survey of central school principals in New South Wales in 2006 and a series of case studies of 12 of these principals (18% of this classification of principal) were conducted. This research focused on the principals’ perceptions of their flexibility in their decision-making and perceived benefits in the quality of teaching and educational outcomes for students. All 64 rural central school principals were invited to complete the survey. Twenty-seven principals returned completed surveys (42% of those sent surveys). Of these 27 principals, 12 accepted the invitation to participate in interviews. The survey was used to seek principal’s perceptions of which of 28 typical tasks performed by principals contributed to their view of the ideal self-managing school and which of these tasks were carried...
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

out to meet department of education expectations. The interviews investigated in
more depth themes that emerged from the survey data.

Findings and Discussion

Early studies and reviews of decentralisation reforms in New South Wales (NSW
Director-General of School Education, 1996; Pietsch, 1993), Victoria (Caldwell, 1998;
Caldwell & Hayward, 1998) and New Zealand (Wylie, 1997) have revealed generally
positive responses from principals and teachers to the decentralisation reforms.

Findings to date suggest that principals’ concerns include: matching mandates from state
office with quality teaching in their schools, fostering parent awareness of the value of
quality education, difficulties in finding and securing trained teachers in secondary
specialist areas and providing in-school professional development for both newly trained
teachers and teachers teaching additional subjects outside their area of training. Principals
also were concerned that teachers needed professional development to provide for
students coming from poor and declining rural communities. Principals experienced
professional, personal and social isolation in dealing with these issues.

The collection of data from current central school principals was intended to clarify those
aspects of decentralisation which were favoured by principals as current stakeholders and
those which were their concerns. The decentralisation reforms appear to have succeeded
in the aims of controlling state education expenditures and some aspects of teacher
satisfaction, but the indicators for student achievement are much more complex and
researchers have been less confident about any findings of measurable improvement in
student achievement. Caldwell (1997) reported that “research on school-based
management continues … to reveal little or no impact on student learning” (p. 1).

Overseas research, such as Latham (2004) on New Zealand teachers’ and principals’
perceptions of school leadership after 14 years of decentralised school-based
management, has found some common results. While principals have appreciated the
increased autonomy in their work, there has been an intensification of the workload of
principals and staff and an uncertainty about whether the reforms have resulted in
improved teaching and educational outcomes for students.

It would be plausible to expect that the improved responsiveness to local needs would be
most evident in schools which served communities that were different because of
distinguishing socio-economic, cultural, ethnic or geographical factors. In this study of
principals of remote schools, not only was remoteness a distinctive issue, but many of the
principals also had to deal with significant and distinctive socio-economic, cultural or
ethnic factors in their school communities.

Typically, principals in NSW government central schools lived and worked in towns and
villages which had gradually declined to a few hundred people. The typical central school
principal of a central school was found to be male, secondary-trained, taking up his first
principal appointment in the last decade of his career and supervising a school in a
remote inland area with between 100 and 300 Kindergarten to Year 12 students. Often
principals were relocated long distances from their families while they learnt the essential
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

Skills for survival as a beginning principal in a low socio-economic community. During the rural decline and prolonged drought, younger people had left to find work and they had been partly replaced by unemployed people who were attracted by the very cheap housing.

- Characterisation of education system, flexibility in school decision-making
  Survey respondents had definite views either agreeing or disagreeing that the current education system could be characterised as school-based management. A slight majority (56%) disagreed with the proposition and very few chose the neutral option. Large majorities (74%, 85% and 78%) agreed with the statements that the school had flexibility respectively in student discipline, student welfare and teaching the core curriculum. However, a large majority (70%) disagreed with the statement that the school had flexibility in properties and maintenance. This contrasted with the teaching and learning areas where they reported that they had improved levels of school-based decision-making.

- Benefits of current level of school-based management
  Principals were evenly divided about agreeing or disagreeing on the benefits of the current system for efficient management of resources, staff morale, student achievement and encouraging teachers to think and act as professionals. A small majority (59%) of the central school principals disagreed with the proposition that the current structures had benefits in staffing of schools. The terms ‘staff’ or ‘staffing’ include the tasks of securing permanent or casual staff and supervision of staff. In subsequent interviews principals raised the issue of staffing in their schools as being one of their biggest concerns.

  To sum up the role of principal, it’s interesting, this is the most difficult job I’ve done, and in a school this size the biggest problem that I have is staff, and staff issues. They would be taking 95% of my time (Principal T1).

- Benefits of mandatory testing and accountability
  Around three quarters of principals (74% and 78% respectively) agreed that the mandated school management plan was school-based and was a useful guide in school planning. Respondents had definite views about whether the mandated standardised tests were a benefit for students. Very few chose the neutral option with most indicating strong agreement or strong disagreement. Survey responses indicated a high level of disagreement (30% disagreed and 30% strongly disagreed) with the proposition that the mandated school self evaluation process and annual school report were useful for the school and its community. The annual school report is in a standard format with prescribed sections for principals to complete. Interviewees also referred to the preparation of the annual school report as a time-consuming chore, which did not improve outcomes for the school or the students.

- Intensification and hours of work
  In the survey questionnaire, principals were asked two questions about each of 28 typical tasks performed by principals. The first question asked them about their perception of an ideal self-managing school and whether they should spend less, the same or more time on
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

Each task. For most of the tasks, a high percentage of the principals had a self-perception that they should be spending more time on the task concerned. For each of the typical tasks the principals also were asked their perceptions of how much time the DET expected principals to spend on the task. Again high percentages of principals perceived that the DET expected them to spend more time on nearly all of the typical tasks. Further, the percentages of principals perceiving that the DET expected them to spend more time were even higher than the percentages of principals thinking that in an ideal self-managing school more time should be spent on the typical tasks.

Table  Principal’s perception of how much time they thought; A) they should spend in an ideal self-managing school, and B) the DET expected them to spend on the specified task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal task</th>
<th>Princips’ ideal</th>
<th>DET expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less time</td>
<td>Same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student welfare</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of school curriculum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of teaching/learning programs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of student assessment procedures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of reporting to parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of and mentoring of staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development at school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development off-site</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s professional development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. These tasks are a selection of the 28 tasks listed in the questionnaire. For nearly all tasks a majority of principals thought more time or at least the same time should be spent on the task. The percentages may not add to 100 because original percentages have been rounded off.

The questionnaire responses indicate that principals’ self-perceptions of their duties combined with the principals’ perceptions of the DET’s expectations would combine to create pressure on principals to work significantly longer hours.

Interviewed principals talked about working for 70 to 80 hours a week as if this were the norm and commented on the intensification of their work. While some referred to having health regime strategies to maintain their physical and mental fitness to cope with their workload, others mentioned taking periods of long service leave as a way to recover and restore their energy levels.

Several principals expressed appreciation for the opportunity to talk about their issues during the interviews and said that central schools were often overlooked because they were few in number (66 out of over 2200 government schools in NSW) and remote from state and regional offices. Despite the perceived lack of interest shown by some DET officers, the central school principals commented about the heavy workload of providing documentation to the DET for both primary and secondary departments. Often they would be supplying double the documentation required of their primary or secondary school colleagues.
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

Specific issues raised in interviews
There were big variations in the specific issues raised by principals. Most had big losses in enrolment because of the drought affecting local families with school-age children while a few, usually nearer large provincial cities, were unaffected. Some had massive social welfare issues, e.g. drug and sexual abuse affecting large numbers of students. One principal (Principal S4) of a medium-sized central school expressed the fear that every child in the school had suffered from sexual abuse. In contrast, others enjoyed the serenity of relatively problem-free student cohorts. Some despaired in suffering on their own with threats and attacks including violence by parents.

I bought a house and had my house torched last year, and I’ve had threats issued and it just happens to be one of our parents and I think, “Am I going to have the house torched again if I report [a suspected paedophile]” … [The staff] know it’s quite life threatening at the moment (Principal S3).

The worry is the volatility of the community … and the extreme violence … even more extreme that what we’d been used to (Principal W1).

I can remember going home at Recess one day scared that this guy was going to come around to my house …. In a small town you don’t have the luxury of going elsewhere, he knows where you live, your phone number and everything about you (Principal T1).

While some described their supervisors’ support as being excellent, others felt that the senior officers of the DET undermined their positions.

You are by yourself and the pressures are coming from the bottom and the pressures are coming from the top, and you are in the middle. I have a basic philosophy that I think that central schools are the most appallingly treated schools within the department (Principal T1).

It is fair to say that the last two principals here were essentially forced out… [In response to local complaints] most of the important people in the “department” visited this school once and did not come back (Principal S5).

Principals raised issues related to rurality and living in declining rural communities and sometimes talked about how isolated they felt in their current position. Some wished they still enjoyed the collegiality they experienced as curriculum/subject head teachers. Some expressed the disappointment that because they were subject to more direct influence by the DET and the local community, they now had much less autonomy in decision-making as principals than they had when they were curriculum/subject head teachers. Older principals were less positive in their responses when asked whether state office policies resulted in positive outcomes in staffing, quality of teaching and student achievement.
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

- Professional isolation of the principals
  Isolation, both professional and personal, was the most commonly raised issue. … Many of the secondary-trained principals did not have even relieving principal experience before starting in substantive positions as principal of a central school.

  I am extremely worried about the number of central school principals in New South Wales who are doing it tough, and one of my beliefs is that going from a [subject] head teacher into the principal’s role does not give you the experience of dealing with the range of attitudes of parents and the different attitudes of primary and secondary staff (Principal T1).

Secondary-trained principals expressed some doubt about their future prospects of transfer to a more favourable location or a promotion to principal of a bigger school. They had no rights of automatic transfer to principalship of a high school and some expressed the perception that selection panels in larger centres did not value the principalship skills they had developed in a remote area school.

- Family and social isolation
  Interviewees discussed the family and social isolation of their position in a small township. Most of the secondary-trained principals had moved considerable distances in their relocation to the position of principal of the central school. Usually their previous appointment would have been in a high school in a larger population centre. For some, relocation of their families over long distances to a small township with limited employment opportunities for their spouse also was a concern. For some principals, the solution to this problem was to live on their own in small townships hundreds of kilometres from their family.

- Decentralisation: The principal seen as “the Department”
  One aspect of the decentralisation reforms has been a repeated reduction of staffing in State and Regional offices; administrative structures have become flatter [or hollowed out]. In principals’ meetings with Departmental directors, the principals are advised that the principals are the site managers of their schools and principals should regard themselves as being “the Department” in their communities. When a member of the public rings the NSW DET, the answering message advises the caller to contact the principal of their local school if they have any enquiries that need answering.

  I have a big issue with what I call devolution of responsibility and work load. There are not the people in the corporate side to deal with things anymore and it has to be done at the school level so the work load at the school level has increased inordinately (Principal S1).

Interviewees reported to their surprise in discovering some unexpected responsibilities when they started as a principal. In some cases, they described feelings of insecurity when they were not sure when or from where the next unknown and, therefore, unanticipated responsibility would come.
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

While some principals felt confident that their position was secure when they were careful to “follow the book” in every detail of Departmental requirements, other principals were less confident about maintaining the confidence of senior Departmental officials if their decision as principal happened to offend a politically active parent or group of parents.

It’s fair to say that the last two principals here were essentially forced out by the community. One had been here a long time, and fell foul of a particular community group and the other suffered from falsely-based allegations, which created a public scandal (Principal S4).

In very small centres, the school may be the only visible government service in the town and the principal is perceived not only as the spokesperson for the DET but also as a ‘public servant’ representing the government in general. For remote townships dependent almost entirely on the fortunes of the local farming economy, governments based in Sydney are often perceived as being unsympathetic to their interests. During the hardship years of prolonged drought, farming communities can feel some distance from public servants who have guaranteed incomes and relationships between the community and the school principal are frequently strained.

Conclusions - Broad issues of principals’ perceptions
  - Principals as gatekeepers of information
    Most of the principals experienced shock in needing to deal directly with a parent community and to negotiate with the Department of Education to obtain the essential human and physical resources for the school. Some expressed a sense of being overwhelmed by the volume of communications to the various stakeholders. Principals reported they had to be gatekeepers in interpreting and filtering information for staff and parents. With the withdrawal of services from rural villages the local school principal has often become the last remaining representative of “the Government”. In small villages with increasingly high welfare needs, the principal was expected to be a leader in responding to a wide range of community- and school-based crises. In their gatekeeper role, principals in small villages experienced tension in being responsive local leaders and being corporate managers accountable to a central education office. On some issues they had to resolve conflict between local attitudes and the imperatives of government policy, for example in implementing policies for inclusive education. These findings fit with and extend earlier Australian findings (Hatton, 1995; Lake & Williamson, 1986).

  - Principals adopting a ‘heroic’ style instead of distributed leadership
    Nearly all school staff also were beginners in their roles either as teachers or as more senior staff. Principals described their beginning years as ‘survival’ and some noticed a decline in their teaching skills. This confirmed the findings of an earlier Tasmanian study (Cowley, 1999). Principals felt a tension between desiring to implement a version of the distributed leadership that they had experienced in previous career stages, and not creating a burden of new learning for their staffs. They operated in their reported less-preferred style of heroic leadership. Instead of a practising the distributed leadership
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

(Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003) that they had participated in as part of a larger school’s executive team, they elected to make decisions and perform tasks alone as a way of ‘protecting’ their staffs, students and communities. Some UK principals report similar tensions (Oduro, 2004). The Outback principals felt isolated professionally and believed that directors in distant offices lacked an understanding of the distinctive tensions of their principalships.

- Tensions between exogenous and endogenous pressures

The principals reported tensions between competing exogenous and endogenous pressures; exogenous pressures were: finding and securing suitably trained staff; providing on-site professional development for novice teachers and novice executives; providing an adequate curriculum range; and supporting an increasing proportion of students with high support needs.

Principals described endogenous pressures arising from the values and roles they attempted to enact consistent with their self-image as belonging to a caring profession. Although principals accepted the need to respond to exogenous pressures, they repeatedly cited tensions and stress when the principal was the only person available to deal with an urgent local crisis and simultaneously they were required to respond to a Departmental mandate by a specified time.

Principals reported on both external expectations and internalised values that created pressure for them to spend more time on most of the nominated sample of school tasks listed in the survey. They reported an intensification of work resulting in longer working hours and gave indications of high level stress and health problems. These findings extend similar findings in UK reports (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001; University of Bristol & UK Health and Safety Executive, 2000).

Although interviewed principals acknowledged difficulties and dissatisfiers such as coping with professional and social isolation, dealing with social difficulties in their communities and meeting the mandatory policy and accountability requirements of Staff Office, they also conveyed a determined and confident attitude about the effectiveness and achievements of their school. This was in accord with findings summarised in the titles of other reports on principals such as; “The privilege and the price” (Victorian DET, 2007) and “The best job in the world with some of the worst days imaginable” (National Joint Secondary Principals, 2008).

Almost without exception the interviewees described satisfiers such as significant changes they had introduced when they started at their schools and they were optimistic that they could solve school-level problems, maintain high professional standards in teaching and improve the achievement levels of students at their school.
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

References


One man’s meat is another man’s poison?


Abstract
Work intensification has been clearly identified by researchers in a number of countries as a significant feature of current principals’ and teachers’ work lives. In many cases this intensification has been related to major system and/or curriculum change and has led to principals and teachers reporting very high levels of personal stress. In addition they have reported serious professional concerns about the ongoing opportunities for them to provide the quality teaching and optimal student outcomes that they would wish. These findings have raised considerable issues about the overall healthiness of the current work environment of schools.

However, some variability in outcome effects has also been reported by teachers and principals. The differential influences on and the teachers’ and principals’ experiences of their work environments therefore will be examined across a number of studies in an attempt to gain a more nuanced view and also some indicators as to how the negative effects experienced by so many teachers and principals might be more positively moderated.

Introduction
The work lives of teachers and principals have been the subject of considerable research interest, as well as recent broader discussion in the public and political arenas in many countries, including Australia. In some cases teachers have taken industrial action as a means of expressing the seriousness of their concerns about the less positive aspects of their work lives.

Work intensification has been clearly identified by research as a significant feature of current principals’ and teachers’ work lives. In many cases this intensification has been related to major system and/or curriculum changes and has led to the reporting by principals and teachers of very high levels of work intensification and personal stress.

In addition they have reported serious professional concerns about the ongoing opportunities afforded them to provide the quality teaching and optimal student outcomes that they would wish. These findings have raised considerable issues about the overall ‘healthiness’ of the current work environment of schools. This concern has been show to arise partly from the many changes that teachers have been asked, or required, to implement, and also from the general intensification of their work lives. Principals generally share these concerns but often from a different perspective.

In this paper, various perspectives on the work lives of teachers and principals will be drawn from several national and international studies. It will focus on these perspectives around two clearly identified issues: work intensification and change.

Work intensification and change
Research studies of teacher and principal work intensification have been conducted in a number of countries (e.g., Australia, UK). Generally the results have indicated that
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

principals and teachers see their worklives as being increasingly under pressure, often from an increased administrative or non-teaching load. This not only causes pressure from the amount of work to be done, but also from the frustration of not being able to engage in what they see as the professional ‘core business’ of teaching as much as they would wish.

Gardner and Williamson’s (2004) study of teachers, principals and allied educators in one Australian state (ie, Tasmania) showed that all these groups reported experiencing a considerably increased workload; and that this situation both led, and contributed, to certain perceptions of concern:

- Extreme busy-ness – no time for reflection and professional issues;
- Increased tension between ‘teamwork’ and ‘whole school’ policies vs individual decision-making;
- Broadening of the considerations of what constitutes teacher expertise, leading to a downplaying of specialist skills and increasing multi-skilling/generalist skills, with the further result of limited personal and professional empowerment;
- Shifts in accountability (i.e., from professional to external ‘masters’) and decision-making (i.e., away from individual professional decision-making to hierarchical and external decision-making);
- Move towards system- and school-needs based professional development, rather than that based on perceived staff needs;
- Shift from autonomous schools to a more centralised and bureaucratic model, so that working in a school was now considered to be more like working in a government department;
- Increased levels of teacher stress

Teachers and principals remained firmly committed both to their profession and to their students, so these perceptions of concern were expressed largely in relation to their further concerns that they interfered with producing quality work in the professional educational sense. They also identified a work situation of increased complexity and a lack of community recognition at times of this complexity as being contributory factors.

Williamson and Myhill (2008) extended the discussion of these findings and concerns, specifically in relation to work intensification and change. They found that both principals and teachers reported experiencing increased work intensification and identified four particular issues of concern for professional practice at the workplace level that had arisen as a result of work intensification and change:

- Being forced to do planning and decision-making ‘on the run’, as the school day was full;
- Having limited opportunities for quality work time on ‘core’ matters (eg teaching, student pastoral care), compared to the amount of time that was required for administrative tasks or accountability reports;
- Feeling that they were working to unrealistic change implementation timetables; and
- Having change/s generally imposed from outside the school, with little or no consultation
Teacher and principal responses to change
Teachers expressed various approaches to adapting to work intensification and change. While some embraced the new situation as an opportunity, many teachers reported strategies for coping with multiple and complex change in their worklives which were less positive (Williamson & Myhill, 2008, p.41):

- Teacher resistance
- Teacher selective change implementation
- Teacher ‘inertia’ or ‘cynicism’

These differentiated responses to change implementation and work complexity also seem to reflect teachers’ and principals’ personal views and role positions in the school system. While some teachers and principals embraced each new change, many did not. There seems to be some evidence of ‘change fatigue’ especially among the more experienced and longer serving teachers. In Tasmania, for example, longer serving teachers could easily have experienced change overload, given the 80 major policy changes to be implemented over a 5 year period.

If this is added to work intensification, then there is a tendency for teachers to express frustration and the inability or lack of desire to ‘keep up’. Teachers reported various coping strategies including finding ways to ignore the change (‘I’ve seen it all before’), or at least only minimally comply (‘I just change a few things’). In more extreme responses, teachers reported going part time or leaving the profession altogether.

Principals were also stretched in that they were often regarded as the change leaders; but this had left them somewhat distanced from their staff and their senior managers (‘head office’), and as a result they reported feeling ‘lonely’ in their job. Another consequence was that some teachers, on seeing their principals’ situation and experiences, opted not to seek for themselves the higher positions (e.g., principal) or made the career-retarding decision to going part-time in order to seek a better work-life balance.

In a recent study of ‘successful principalship’, using case studies of working principals in Tasmania, Mulford, John and Edmunds (2009) found that successful school principalship was complex. They identified successful principalship as being where there was ‘an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and, in turn, influences, the context in which it occurs’ (p.22).

This does suggest however, that a collaborative (vs top-down) approach to the leadership process might be vital; and in a related issue, they identified a central role for the principals’ ‘core values and beliefs’ in these successful leadership situations (Mulford et al., 2009, p.22):

‘These values and beliefs inform the Principals’ decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building, and capacity building at the school level, including school culture and structure’.
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

‘The Principal’s core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, feed directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shapes the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling’.

A key issue that is been identified here, from the perspective of both principals and successful principalship, is the importance of the value and beliefs of the principal in the value of shared decision-making and professional practice. This concept of shared vision and practice was similarly identified by teachers in the work lives studies (Gardener & Williamson, 2004, Williamson & Myhill, 2008) through the identified importance of a collaborative team approach to professional work in a context of work intensification and change. In particular, these research studies have identified the important role of the involvement of both teacher and principal in decision-making, especially within a change context. However, this does not always appear to be the case in practice.

Teachers and principals in cross national settings
Survey studies have been conducted on a regular basis by the Consortium for Cross-Cultural Research in Education (CCCRE) in ten national contexts (Australia, Canada, China, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, Singapore, South Africa and USA). Using a standard survey instrument, data on cross-national teacher and principal comparisons have been gathered on a number of teacher and principal variables.

When teacher involvement in change is considered, the main findings from the CCCRE studies (Collet, Menlo & Rosenblatt, 2004; Collet, in press) were:

1. That the active involvement of teachers in change leads to more positive attitudes towards change:
   ‘teachers with more active involvement in a change were more supportive of change, more positive about the process of change and more likely to participate in future change projects’ cited (Collet, in press, p.1)

2. That the amount and type of teacher involvement had differential effects on teacher attitudes and interest in involvement:
   ‘The amount and type of teacher involvement had a strong positive effect on teachers’ ownership feelings toward that project, their interest in and receptiveness toward involvement in future change projects, and their satisfaction with their teaching lives.’ (Collet, in press, p.1)

In general terms, it seemed that involvement in leadership activities (i.e., activities often associated only with principal’s work) was of positive benefit to teachers. Teachers “who become ‘leaders’ experience greater professional satisfaction, reduced isolation and new learning that all improve their teaching effectiveness” (Collet, in press, p.1). This further confirms that a collaborative decision-making model is positive in outcome for both teachers and principals (Mulford et al., 2009).
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

However, there seem to be some barriers to teachers’ involvement in both leadership and collaborative decision-making. It seems, firstly, that not all teachers can expect to rise to leadership roles (if these are formally defined); it has been claimed that only one quarter might expect to rise to a leadership role (Barth, 2001, cited in Collet, 2010, p.1). Secondly, it might be assumed that there would be an *incongruence* between teachers and principals in their attitudes towards teacher involvement, because of their different roles. Thirdly, it might be assumed that there would be a ‘domain of change’ effect, with teachers more likely to be interested in leadership involvement in certain change areas (e.g., those involving curriculum development) than others (e.g., planning and conducting staff meetings).

In the ten country CCCRE study, five survey questions elicited the extent to which principals and teachers were in agreement with each others’ expectations and aspirations of involvement in leadership:

1. How much teacher involvement do principals expect or support, and do they believe teachers aspire or wish to be that involved?
2. How much involvement do teachers actually aspire or wish to have, and do they believe principals will support that amount of involvement?
3. Are principal and teacher attitudes moderated by the targeted domain of change?
4. Are principal and teacher attitudes moderated by their demographic characteristics?
5. Does the country or culture one lives in affect these attitudes above and beyond demographics?

Some of the general findings across all countries (with some exceptions) in relation to these questions were:

- **Aspirations:**
  - Principal estimates of teacher aspirations: principals’ estimates were lower (i.e., ‘principals expected a teacher involvement ‘deficit in every country’).
    The size of deficit differed from country to country from the largest deficit in Hungary (34.2%) to the smallest deficit in Australia, South Africa, and United States.
  - Teacher aspirations: teachers aspired to have more involvement than they thought principals would support.

- **Support:**
  - Principal support for teacher involvement: principals less supportive of teachers being involved in administration (infringement of principal role?)
  - Teacher views of principal support: expected a ‘deficit’ (e.g., Australia, US). On average, teachers expected principal support for their involvement for fewer (7.9%) activities than they wanted to participate in. (However, they also, somewhat paradoxically, thought principals expected them to be involved in too many activities.)
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

The overall implications of the CCCRE findings were that there was a tendency for both principals and teachers to underestimate the amount of involvement that each other supported or wanted. This was termed the Mutual Underestimation (MU) tendency.

Overall, principals underestimated teachers’ aspirations and teachers underestimated principals’ support. There were two clear areas in which this MU was evident: classroom learning and administration. Principals across all countries believed that the deficit in teachers’ aspirations would be larger for classroom learning than administration, while teachers believed that the larger principal support deficit would be for administration than classroom learning. This contradiction suggests a need for greater and clearer communication between principals and teachers.

Summary
Teachers’ and principals’ worklives are clearly changing - and not always in the most positive ways. Both teachers and principals report that they are experiencing the effects of (excessive) change, work intensification, a less conducive and positive professional context and difficult work conditions. It seems that the trend is towards a less professional and collegial approach to decision-making in favour of a more managerial and hierarchical approach. This hierarchical approach also has the effect of separating teachers’ and principals’ work roles and creating difficulties in communication. This is despite the evidence that indicates that a managerial approach is likely to be less effective (and acceptable to teachers and principals) than collegial or team approaches in professional educational settings.

However, the sources of these changes and pressures are also likely to be to a considerable extent outside the area of control of both teachers and principals. So the question might now be framed as: how best might teachers and principals adapt, cope and/or respond to these changes, whilst still maintaining their own professionalism and the provision of a quality education for their students?

In the meantime there are some issues that teachers and principals need to resolve themselves. The CCCRE studies showed that there are some differences between principals and teachers in their mutual expectations and aspirations, especially in relation to each one’s involvement in leadership activities. As this finding does vary in effect size from country to country, it may reflect cultural and system practice differences as well as perceptions of role differences. But further investigation is warranted.

The CCCRE data showed however that Mutual Underestimation (MU) was quite common – that teachers and principals’ perceptions of each other’s aspirations or willingness to take responsibility lacked congruence. Creating awareness of this incongruence however could act as a valuable first step in assessing the extent to which this variation in perception can be moderated. There may also need to examine the defined roles of teachers and principals, especially in relation to leadership accountability. However, the common ground is that principals and teachers routinely support teamwork and collaborative work approaches; so these differences may be an
One man’s meat is another man’s poison?

outcome of communication gaps, as much as inherent role or cultural differences in perception and belief.

Indeed, there is considerable evidence to suggest that a more collaborative approach to professional decisions in the workplace would be beneficial to all staff and may also alleviate some of the negative effects of work intensification and constant change on teachers’ and principals’ worklives. The Mulford et al. (2009) study suggested that there may be some positive ways forward. Where there is autonomy at the school level, for example, then they have shown that principals and teachers can work together to form a shared vision, resulting in benefits for the whole school.

Finally, however, there needs to be some recognition that these more positive conditions will need to be fought for. Teacher and principals alike are caught in wider context than the classroom where there is increased systemic and political influence - even direction – which impacts on their work. Teachers’ work has become politicised. Both politicians and the public have expressed a desire to have teacher performance assessed, national testing, and public reporting of school performance (eg, “My School” website in Australia). This means that the work of teachers and principals is much more in the media and public spotlight that previously. Considerable pressure will therefore need to be exerted by teachers and principals to ensure that the less positive aspects of these changes in the external environment (e.g., high stakes testing, league tables) do not override professional decisions and judgements.

This also indicates that a strong, ongoing and influential role for teacher unions is very important.

References


