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Introduction/research context
Recent research into teacher professional learning in Victoria found that teachers who undertake professional development activities do not necessarily change their practice, however positive their learning experience. Evidence showed that,

... enhancements to teacher expertise may not necessarily lead to changes in teaching practice. While almost all Victorian teachers in the survey indicated that they have modified their teaching to some extent as the result of their professional development, almost as many said that they have only done so ‘occasionally’ (43%) as have done so ‘frequently’ (49%) (Victorian Parliament, 2009, p. 10).

Teacher professional learning is regarded as a priority area in education, locally, (Victorian Parliament, 2009, p. 1) and internationally (Yates, 2007, p. 1) as a growing body of research confirms teacher quality as one of the most important factors influencing student achievement; it has become more important than class size and school size (see Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2003; Lovat, 2003).
In the past decade there has been a growth in knowledge about what constitute quality professional learning, many of which are encapsulated in the “Guidelines for quality professional learning’ (Doecke, et al, 2008). Work-embeddedness, differentiation, collegial collaboration and partnerships and teacher inquiry are recurring themes within the report.
These guidelines find resonance with international research which views teacher learning as a growth in teacher expertise, a qualitative change (Education and Training Committee Report, 2009); as something that teachers do for themselves and in which they actively participate (Easton, 2008); and as a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth in the profession; through inquiry in what Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2001) call a ‘new paradigm’.

Professional development-learning:

• is something teachers do for themselves and actively participate in (Easton, 2008)
• is long-term with regular, systematically planned experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2011)
• promotes growth in the profession
• engages teachers in inquiry which constitutes a ‘new paradigm’ (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001)
Within this broader context, the Catholic Education Melbourne introduced the Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities (CLLC) a new two-year professional learning project first offered in mid 2009-2011 to middle years literacy leaders and teams. While the CLLC was designed to complement and build on other literacy professional learning programs, its design is built on the research and experience of the Networked Learning Communities program implemented by the National College for School Leadership across England (2002–2006). The CLLC offers innovative, differentiated professional learning by combining the concept of a collaborative learning community with structures of distributed leadership and processes of inquiry learning.

These three ‘big ideas’ – learning communities, distributed leadership and inquiry learning – combine to build literacy leaders’ and teachers’ capacities. Specific aims include:
• to create a professional learning culture within and between school teams:
• to generate coherence and continuity of literacy teaching through new knowledge and shared language to describe literacy learning and teaching; and
• to improve middle years students’ literacy outcomes.

The following ‘big ideas’, found to be effective in teacher professional learning,
Research design
Deakin University Language and Literacy Education academic Dr Anne Cloonan was engaged by the Catholic Education Office to collaboratively design and implement the CLLC program with three Literacy Project Officers from the CEOM. The team oversaw selection of the first intake of approximately 50 literacy leaders and teachers drawn from 11 schools – four secondary and 7 primary. The 2011 program consisted of four offsite days for teachers and five offsite days for literacy leaders; school visits form CEOM staff; a dedicated socially networked online site and the option of undertaking accredited units of study in a masters program through Deakin University.
Deakin University was also engaged to undertake research into the experiences of teachers participating in the first intake of the Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities program. The research was undertaken during the 2011 school year. The aims of the research reported on in this PowerPoint presentation were two-fold:

• to investigate the impact of features of the CLLC on participating teachers’ learning; and

• to gain evidence of the relationship between teachers’ engagement in professional learning, subsequent changes to their literacy pedagogies, and the impact on student learning.
Evidence of impact of the CLLC on teacher and student learning was gained through a mixed methodological research design. Quantitative data was collected through the administration of two surveys of the cohort of literacy leaders and teachers involved in the 2011 CLLC program (see appendix). Qualitative data was collected through the survey and through case studies into the impact on the learning of literacy leaders, teachers and students from three participating school teams (see accompanying case studies).
Teachers who participated in the CLLC in 2011 were invited to undertake two online surveys which asked them to rate the impact of their participation in the CLLC on their own learning and on student learning. These questions included five-point Likert scaled items were used consisting of statements which required the teachers to rate (e.g., from strongly agree to strongly disagree). The surveys were implemented in March and November 2011. XX responses were received from a total cohort of XX.
Further data was collected from teachers from three school-based teaching teams who responded to an invitation to participate case studies. Initially these focused on the teaching team and then narrowed to particular teachers over the course of the research. Case study data included responses to open-ended questions asked in teacher interviews; teacher reflection in the online CLLC wiki; researcher observation during professional learning days and in situ in their Professional Learning Team (PLT) and classrooms; through interview with Literacy Leaders and Principals; and through document analysis of meeting agendas, minutes and planning documentation.

Data relating to student performance was collected by teachers as part of their participation in the CLLC and made available to researchers. Student data include the usual informal and formal assessment tasks and work samples undertaken by students as part of their literacy school program including assessments developed as part of the CLLC. Student focus groups – twelve students from each of the three schools were also conducted to enable students to comment directly on the impact they perceived the CLLC to have on their teachers.
### Research timeline within the context of the CLLC program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011</th>
<th>Professional learning</th>
<th>Research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term 1</td>
<td>CLLC Literacy Leaders Offsite Day (16 February)  &lt;br&gt; Leaders/Teachers Offsite Day 1 (10 March)</td>
<td>Approval of Ethics Application by Deakin Ethics Committee and CEOM Research Division  &lt;br&gt; Plain Language Statements and Consent Forms distributed to participants  &lt;br&gt; Selection of three case study schools  &lt;br&gt; Survey 1 implementation  &lt;br&gt; Observation of teams at CLLC Day 1  &lt;br&gt; Field trip 1 to case study schools: PLT and teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Leaders/Teachers Offsite Day 2 (10 May)</td>
<td>Observation of teams at CLLC Day 2  &lt;br&gt; Field trip 2 to case study schools: interviews, observations, focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 3</td>
<td>Leaders/Teachers Offsite Day 3 (9 August)</td>
<td>Observation of teams at CLLC Day 3  &lt;br&gt; Field trip 3 to case study schools: interviews, observations, focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 4</td>
<td>Leaders/Teachers Offsite Day 4 (22 November)</td>
<td>Observation of teams at CLLC Day 4  &lt;br&gt; Field trip 4 to case study schools: interviews, observations, focus groups  &lt;br&gt; Survey 2 implementation</td>
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A multi-faceted approach: ongoing, offsite, online, school-based and academically oriented design with concurrent research.
Teacher and literacy leaders participating in the CLLC program have the option of undertaking accredited units of post-graduate study through a partnership between Deakin University School of Education and the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. The accredited units of tertiary study focus on school-selected issues in literacy education within the context of the CLLC program. In 2011 (Year 1) seven teachers undertook the accredited units.
A snapshot of professional learning in the CLLC
Teacher inquiry (using participatory action research) undertaken by learning communities employing distributed leadership
Face to face, social networking, school visits, intra- and inter-school collaboration, academic studies...
Dedicated socially networked online site

Welcome to the Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities Wiki 2010 & 2011

We encourage you to make contributions to this wiki, add pages, discussion, reflections, items, resources etc. It is basically collaborate. It will also house any exemplary material that you collect as you participate in this action research.

[Diagram showing Learning Communities, Identity Learning, Distributed leadership]
Networking on the wiki

Post it notes - use following url
http://illmitc.users.kcte.net/canvases/Day%202%20CLLC

Day 1 reflections on 27.07.10

I have realised that several other schools in this group have similar issues and concerns. I am looking forward to discussing today’s learning with my peers back at school and I am beginning to see the potential of the wiki.

Yeah, we talked about it yesterday at the Literacy Leaders network

We would like to make our year 7 team into a learning community. Today has given us some ideas for how to get started.

Love using a wiki for networking. Great idea!!
Reflecting on the CLLC blog

Scaffolded learning through Blooms
Posted on August 30, 2011 | 3 Comments

I started the Year with a group of students who relied heavily on me as the provider of all the answers and they were reluctant to take risks with their own learning. Until the introduction of CLLC I had not been big on change or risk taking however since the introduction of specific PLT’s my own practice within the classroom was placed under a microscope and I was able to see a change was necessary for me as well as the children in my class, in order to move forward but also ensure success throughout the year.
Sharing pedagogy on the blog

Through ongoing negotiation with my students they are now at a point where they take ownership for developing effective and varied tasks around Bloom's taxonomy, in order to develop a deeper understanding and knowledge within their Inquiry Unit.

The following example from our Inquiry Unit on Endangered Species is a pyramid created by one student on Pandas. At the evaluating level this student chose to create a text where he would recommend 5 ways we can save Pandas (as shown in the 2nd work sample).

![Image of a pyramid diagram with text]

**Tools**

- Audioshot: A mobile & web platform that allows you to record and upload audio.
- Glitchart: Using technology to create GLOGS – online multimedia posters
- Photomath: Helps you fill better stories online using photos (Wix, PicCollage) you can create a rich slideshow with music, captions, and connections.
- Slide Hide: lets you publish your thinking/learning using photos and other digital content.
- WallSticker: an online notice board – using online post it notes for recording, ideas

**Tags**

- Digital Literacy
- Collaborative
- Contemporary Literacies
- Multimodal Texts
- Participatory
- Action Research
Accredited Masters units
Online learning communities and resources –
Examples of school team research questions

What mechanisms can we use for ALL students to influence the design and implementation of literacy curriculum, pedagogy and assessment?

How can we use assessment to improve student outcomes and engagement in writing as well as increase teacher confidence in teaching writing?

How can we collaborate with students to improve their reading outcomes?

How can the use of digital technology further develop students’ comprehension?
Teachers who participated in the CLLC in 2011 were invited to undertake two online surveys which asked them to rate the impact of their participation in the CLLC on their own learning and on student learning. These questions included five-point Likert scaled items were used consisting of statements which required the teachers to rate (e.g., from strongly agree to strongly disagree). The surveys were implemented in March and November 2011. The quantitative data was collected from responses to nominal questions contained within the surveys.

All 12 schools participating in the CLLC in 2011 were represented in the survey responses. Two of the secondary schools were girls only.
The participants for the quantitative component of this study were 30 of the 49 literacy leaders and teachers participating in the CLLC in 2011. Of these, 88% are female and 12% male. 30% were literacy leaders and the remaining 70% taught classes ranging from Year 4 to Year 12. All taught students in the middle years (Years 5-9).
Respondents’ qualifications included four years of study including Bachelor of Education (46%); Post-graduate diploma (25%); and completed Masters degrees (25%). Two teachers were undertaking a Doctorate in Education.
50% were aged 50 or older and 4% aged less than 30.
Participants’ years of teaching experience ranged from one year acting as a Casual Relief Teacher to 40 years of experience with majority teaching for between 11-25 years (39%) and 26 or more years (39%).

Years of teaching at participants’ current school ranged between 1 month and 27 years with the majority less than 10 years (85%). Their experience in teaching in the middle years ranged from 1 year to 40 years.
The average class size was approximately 25 students. Students were drawn from 17 language backgrounds other than English.
Of the three literacy interest areas offered through the CLLC, 28% of participants focused their work on curriculum literacies; 22% on contemporary literacies; and 50% on assessment for learning.

Note: it was evident through interacting with the cohort that there was overlap in the addressing of these three interest areas. All teachers in some way addressed assessment for learning as part of gathering evidence for their teacher inquiries. Most schools addressed contemporary literacies in some form. All participating secondary schools addressed curriculum literacies.
The influences or reasons for selection of interest areas were varied and often multiple. Most common was school data (83%) and NAPLAN results (78%). Professional interest (55%) and literacy leader recommendation (50%) were also influential.
A five point likert scale was used to rate the usefulness of features of the CLLC in impacting on participants’ professional learning. In the survey undertaken in March 2011, the three ‘big ideas’ underpinning the program (collaboration, distributed leadership and teacher inquiry) and the three literacy teaching and learning interest areas (curriculum literacies, contemporary literacies and assessment for learning) were all seen as useful or highly useful features.

Collaborating with colleagues from teachers’ own schools, was found to be most useful (4.6 rating average in March rising slightly to 4.8 in November). Learning about and using teacher inquiry remained highly influential (4.3 rating in March and 4.4 in November) as did the impact of learning about the three literacy teaching and learning interest areas including curriculum literacies (4.4 in March 4.44 in November), contemporary literacies (4.47 in March and 4.48 in November). The influence of learning about assessment for learning grew slightly over the course of the year (from 4.4 in March to 4.56 in November). Learning about and using distributed leadership with colleagues from their school Professional Learning Team (PLT) also rated highly (4.2 in March and 4.4 in November).

Comparatively speaking, learning about and using distributed leadership with colleagues from other school rated lower than other elements of the CLLC program (3.3 in March and 3.8 in November) as was collaborating with colleagues from other schools (3.8 in March and 3.88 in November)
While the three ‘big ideas’ underpinning the program (collaboration, distributed leadership and teacher inquiry) and the three literacy teaching and learning interest areas (curriculum literacies, contemporary literacies and assessment for learning) were all found to be useful in supporting students’ learning, teachers viewed the impact as less than on teacher learning. Teachers saw the impact on student learning increase as the CLLC program progressed.

In March, collaboration with school colleagues was seen as the most useful aspect of the CLLC in impacting on student learning (3.9 in March and 4.25 in November); learning about teacher inquiry (3.73 in March and 4.08 in November) and learning about using distributed leadership the least useful (3.6 in March and 3.96 in November).

Teacher perceptions of the impact of their learning about the three literacy learning interest areas on student learning also developed over the course of the CLLC program. Learning about contemporary literacies (3.73 in March and 4.38 in November); learning about assessment for learning was seen to impact the most on student learning (3.8 in March increasing to 4.38 in November); learning about curriculum literacies (3.73 in March and 4.29 in November).
In March, the teachers saw their participation in the learnings of CLLC as primarily impacting on their own learning with a lesser impact on their students.
By November, teachers were increasingly seeing the value of CLLC program participation in terms of the impact on student learning as well as teacher learning. While this increased was most evident in the three literacy interest areas, it was evident across the three ‘big ideas’ as well. Data to compare the 6 dot points as they impacted on teacher and student learning.
Impact on teacher learning: Collaboration, inquiry and leadership

Having all teachers on the same page has made a huge difference, all collaborating to improve the written outcomes for students in their classes. We have been trying to achieve this for 6 years – and through the CLLC it happened! The results tell the story.

Having a cross-curricular team was the real benefit of this extremely useful program. It wouldn’t have worked if it was coming from Literacy or English staff alone. Plus, we have also branched out into Assessment for Learning, using rubrics and collaborating with students on the strategies we are trialing, developing strong metacognition skills in our students.

We have found our involvement in this project motivating... to decide on and stay focused on our research question and further our knowledge and understanding of contemporary literacy curriculum. It’s all based on evidence of student achievement. We’re leaders in change – together.

It has been very effective as a focus for our PLT meetings and professional learning as a team. It was very worthwhile as we are now continually looking at our data [assessment for learning] and undertaking professional reading to give us a focus ... it turns out that we have also addressed contemporary literacies.

Broad qualitative data on teacher response to the CLLC program and its impact on teacher and student learning were also gathered from responses to open-ended questions within the teacher survey.

As the sample comments show, participants’ discourse reflects the elements which have underpinned the CLLC program. The elements of collaboration and distributed leadership have fused for some teachers; embedded notions of hierarchical leadership remain however teachers are comfortable in discussing themselves as members of team responsible for change. The sense of themselves as researchers is beginning to permeate their discourse. Changes in the focus of team work including looking at evidence of student learning and engaging in collaborative professional reading are evident.

The three literacy interest areas, while all seen as very useful, have not really acted as discrete areas of inquiry and focus for teachers. Rather, teachers have all focused on assessment for literacy learning as part of the evidence-gathering aspect of their team inquiries. Many, if not most of the teams have adopted aspects of contemporary literacies, both as a means of engaging students in traditional literacies (such as comprehension and report writing) but also as an end in themselves in preparing students to live, work and study in the 21st century. Curriculum literacies have been a focus of all the participating secondary schools as teachers see the
The intersection of teacher learning and changes in pedagogy was noted by most teachers. Engagement in participatory action research, changes were seen in teacher pedagogies. Challenges to teachers’ understandings through a focus on professional reading and use of evidence of student learning (including assessment for learning) resulted in reflection and shifts in teachers’ pedagogical thinking and behaviour. Teachers noted the impact of assessment information as an ongoing guide to literacy pedagogy. They also noted the impact of broader and deeper understanding of what constitutes literacy which also had a pedagogical impact, for example with teachers incorporating a range of multimodal texts - including web-based, digital and print texts - as study foci and designing tasks which involved students in multimodal text creation.

Teachers felt that project involvement ‘opened my eyes’; ‘caused me to go out of my comfort zone’; and ‘has given me the tools to teach in a way that is more interesting, interactive [and] hands-on’. Following 18 months in the program, teachers had begun to see the inquiry approach as ‘a regular and normal part of my teaching approach’ indicating that in some cases lasting change had occurred.
Many teachers were adamant that their learning through participation in the CLLC program had impacted on their pedagogies in such a way as to impact positively on their students’ literacy learning. Changes were seen in areas such as essay writing, reading comprehension, use of vocabulary, developed higher order thinking, improved knowledge of texts, greater independence and increased criticality.

Other teachers – particularly teachers from some secondary schools - responded that further time was required to be able to judge whether program participation impacted on student learning.
Case study results
(see accompanying case studies)
Nazareth College

Add link to Nazareth College case study
St Andrew's Primary School

Add link to St Andrew's Primary School case study
St Francis Xavier Primary School

Add link to St Francis Xavier Primary School case study
Professional learning can influence pedagogical change

My participation has changed the way I work as a teacher. I used be ‘stand up and deliver’. I am not that person any more. I listen to student voice and negotiate their work. We are all responsible for learning. We look at the curriculum together and their assessments and set learning goals. If I don’t know something, I’m like ‘let’s find out together’. It’s completely different and I couldn’t go back. (CLLC Teacher, 2011)

If being an educator in the 21st century... involves the capacity to inquire into professional practice, then the notion of inquiry is not a project or the latest fad. It is a way of professional being... if the task of educators is to develop in [students] the learning dispositions and capacities to think critically, flexibly and creatively, then educators too must possess and model these capacities (Reid, 2004).

Qualitative data from teachers in the case studies show that participation in the CLLC program has led to teacher learning and changes in teacher identity and pedagogical practices.
Examples gleaned from case studies show that teacher learning appeared to impact on student learning as demonstrated by both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, in one case study student comprehension levels the percentage of students in all four Year 5/6 grades considered to be achieving below the expected level of comprehension fell from 10% to under 1% between March and September; the number considered at the expected level fell from 41% to 8%; and the number of students considered above the expected level increased from 49% to 90%.
Qualitative examples of impact of teacher learning on student learning

Our work has changed a lot because we used to just do things about a book mainly listening to the teacher... the teachers are doing things that are more interactive... trying to find things that we'd like to put into the work to help us learn... finding new ideas about what to teach us and how to teach us...

It's more involving and satisfying because we are using our imaginations... I am much prouder of my work... we are doing more detailed work now in literacy using technologies if we want to... I spent longer on my work and I'm prouder of my work... the quality of my work is a lot better that it was... (focus group students from case study schools)

I now know how to infer because I like reading contemporary writing like I know not all the answers are in the text, sometimes you've just got to think about the words and they may tell you a little clue but you've got to use your brain skills and work it out yourself.

Student and teacher perceptions of the impact of teacher learning on student learning resonate with the findings from the survey. Student learning in terms of engagement, responsibility for learning, creativity, and the quality of and pride in work produced is evident.
This research sought to investigate the impact of features of the CLLC on participating teachers’ learning; and to gain evidence of the relationship between teachers’ engagement in professional learning, subsequent changes to their literacy pedagogies, and the impact on student learning.
Findings/Conclusion

The opportunity to collaborate with school team members, supported by time and processes of participatory action research and group protocols were seen as highly influential in supporting teacher's intellectual work and changes in pedagogy. Collaboration involved a shift from being a team in name to being a community in nature – being ‘real’, honest and open about strengths and challenges related to teacher and student learning.

Ingrained notions of hierarchical forms of leadership prohibited some teachers from seeing themselves as leaders under a distributed leadership model. They were more comfortable seeing themselves as teams of teachers bringing about/leading change collaboratively.

Intra-school networking was seen as more influential on teacher and student learning than inter-school collaboration due to focus on and action around localised concerns.

In drawing on the survey and case study results as well as the researcher’s observations, a number of findings can be made.

The program’s opportunities for teacher collaboration saw a shift towards valuing the important intellectual work undertaken by by school teams on behalf of students. While there was some collaboration between school groups, it was Intra-school collaboration that was seen as the most valued element in teacher professional learning and the site of teacher renewal. Protocols used by the CLLC project officers assisted development of a culture in which professional trust and openness became a responsibility. For some teams examining habitual practices was clearly exposing; the privatised workplace of the individual teacher was defended. However in many cases, honesty and transparency about the actual performance of students and implementation of pedagogy and assessment characterised professional conversations and teachers united in efforts to make improvements.

For program participants, distributed leadership was viewed more as a culture of contributing to the project effort, perhaps due to ingrained understandings of hierarchical leadership structures. Where distributed leadership was embraced, this energised and empowered school team members to contribute their talents to the project regardless of their designated roles. In terms of a cultural shift to leading one’s own and others’ learning, this was perhaps the most difficult of the three big
Teachers’ intellectual work was supported through an orientation to inquiry; an engagement with participatory action research. The shift to becoming inquiring researchers demanded much of teachers, project officers and academics alike. For project officers and academics, accounting for teachers’ individual work contexts required differentiation. The CLLC program needed to respond to the literacy issues emerging through the work of the school teams. This required support to clarify evidence of student learning through probing questions; knowledge of research and resources to develop insight into the identified areas of literacy education requiring attention.

Teacher-researchers needed to develop knowledge of research methods including what counts as evidence; a way of being that challenged taken-for-granted beliefs; the capacity to tolerate ambiguity when trying something new; and the observational skills to monitor the change and reflective skills to judge impact. In some instances the rigour of action research was not attained – teachers were ‘going through the cycles’. In other cases, where observation and reflection were more highly developed, the principles of action research were more closely adhered to. Those teachers enrolled in accredited Masters units more carefully and thoroughly documented their work and engaged more deeply with professional readings on participatory action research.

Findings/Conclusion

Over time teachers appreciation of the program elements grew in terms of preparedness to undertake research into their own practice, deprivitise and reflect on their practice, work collaboratively with colleagues in their own school and in other schools and act as leaders in curriculum change.

Focus on the literacy interest areas of contemporary literacies, curriculum literacies and assessment for literacy learning were seen as highly influential on teacher and student learning. Teachers appreciated being challenged to interrogate their work through these different lenses and found themselves working across these areas rather than on any one specific area.

Use of social networking and other digital tools both face-to-face and online requires further embedding.
Where support for school teams to participate in the CLLC program days with additional opportunities at school to meet and develop their action research projects was available, and a personal commitment to the program was made by the teacher, an alignment in approaches with students, teachers, project officers and academics emerged. These can be thought about as cultural change relating to shifts in teacher identity.

This cultural change involves ‘shifts’ for teachers. These shifts include becoming researchers of their pedagogical practice; collaborators within and across schools; leaders of one’s own and others’ learning; and embracing a view of literacy as dynamic, plural, social sets of practices which for contemporary students require flexibly working across traditional and new literacies in differing contexts for differing purposes.
References


Easton, L. B. (Ed.) 2004 Powerful Designs for Professional Learning, National Staff Development Council, Oxford, USA.


References (continued)


