In this paper we show how practices of professional learning and practices of leading can be understood as related in ecologies of practices. We will present findings from an international empirical research project which directs us to the connectivity between professional learning and leading practices that emerged as ‘adventitious’, ‘opportune’ and ‘unexpected’ outcomes of long-term professional learning. We will show how practices (like professional learning) which exist in real situations shape other practices (like teaching and leading) when each creates enabling and constraining conditions for the others; they are mutually sustaining when together they form an ecology of practices existing in a dynamic ecological balance. Results build on established literature describing professional learning which customarily describes the characteristics, conditions and outcomes of effective professional development programs. Specifically, our findings add a new dimension to the descriptions of the influences and accomplishments of professional learning, that being the development of teacher leading capacities.

DOI/URLs: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.724439
http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjie20/current

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Abstract

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Key Words: action research, ecologies of practices, facilitating, teacher leading, generating teacher leading capacity
Introduction

The field of teacher continuing professional development is extensive; and one can only notice a slight shift in the meaning of this concept over time. In earlier years the concept was directed more towards the in-service (training) for individual teachers, and later ‘professional development’ or ‘professional learning’ became more prevalent in contemporary descriptions. Furthermore, research in recent decades has seen the emergence of the collective dimension of teacher professional learning by reconceptualising the concept of teacher learning as encompassing notions of ‘professional learning community’ or (PLC). This is evident in the work of Wenger (1998) and Talbert and McLaughlin (2006) for example, who characterise this feature as teachers meeting and discussing student achievement in relation to data. In their descriptions capacity building is crucial, constructing a view that teacher’s individual and collective capacity is linked to the capacity for promoting students’ learning (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006). Contrary to instituting quick solutions, Hargreaves (2002) also emphasises that PLC leads to strong evidence for students’ achievement by its support for sustainable improvement when it builds on both professional knowledge and the schools’ capacity as a whole.

The review of PLC by Stoll et al. (2006) highlights PLC’s, as a social construct, expect three things: first, collaboration as a key to school culture; second, an impact on student learning; and third and more recently, as a school improvement strategy. In their recent article, Nehring & Fitzsimmons (2011, p. 515) present a summary of characteristics for developing PLC; such as developing a shared vision for learning and a shared responsibility for student growth, a guiding ethic of inquiry, the collective examination of teaching practice and related data, a reliance of dialogue, regular opportunities for collaboration, a commitment to learning excellence for all students and a primary focus on teaching and learning. In this vein, Gordon (2008) argues that collaborative action research as an inquiry-based professional learning approach has often been attributed to development of PLC’s.

While the literature identifies professional learning as a means of stimulating change in classroom practice and pedagogy, improvement in student learning outcomes and sometimes connected to the benefits of teacher’s collective learning, it is rare for it to be attributed to the development of teacher leading. This is the focus of this article. This paper centres not on ‘leadership’, in and of itself, but rather how teacher learning is related to teacher leading. Our study shows how this emerges when teachers are involved in programs of professional learning over time when both external and internal conditions are supportive and nourished in practice sites.

Teacher professional learning and leadership are generally separated in research and descriptions about school development. Leadership is mostly connected to managerial aspects, and within a PLC leading is emphasised generally from the principal’s point of view to, among other things, create
opportunities for teachers’ collective work for professional knowledge growth (Nehring & Fitzsimmons, 2011; Stoll, et. al. 2006). Often within leadership literature there is a strong emphasis on distributed leadership, an aspect taken up by Mujis and Harris (2003) who argue that in order to make school development possible, schools as professional communities need to change organisational practices to provide communicative spaces for teachers to be able learn from one another and work together. Furthermore, Smeets and Ponte (2009, p. 190) show how action research impacts practice and describe emerging teacher leadership as being informal, varied, shared among teachers and based on collective learning.

In a recent study Collinson (2012, forthcoming) shows how exemplary teachers who seek specific professional development have a deep desire to learn and create ways to help colleagues by sharing their insights. She reports how these teachers become leaders for other teachers, and as she states, they learn first and become leaders second. However her study is primarily about how teachers lead other teachers by creating ways to share ideas and insights from their own teaching in their own schools. Our study extends this view by showing how the professional learning experience – and the conditions which comprise it - actually generates leading capacities.

In their description of effective PLC, Nehring and Fitzsimmons (2011) strongly suggest that teacher leaders require skilful facilitation and concluded that a short number of ‘training sessions’ provided to facilitators are insufficient to prepare effective facilitators (p. 527). In their study, Nehring and Fitzsimmons described what they viewed as an uneven presence in their findings of connections between effective facilitation and leadership. Although they suggest that educational leaders and institutions that prepare educators and educational leaders should consider featuring facilitation skills prominently in preparation programs and ongoing professional learning initiatives (p. 527), the extent to which these suggestions reach beyond rhetoric in education is questionable. We believe this paper partly addresses this issue by arguing that it is the participation in the programs themselves that create enabling conditions for teacher leading and facilitation practices to emerge.

Therefore, in this article we aim to draw out a further outcome of focused professional learning – following improvement in teaching, student learning and school improvement – perhaps as an accidental hero, is the generation of teacher leading capacities. This feature of professional learning could be expressed by the phrase learning for leading with the focus not exclusively on student growth, but on teacher’s learning as adults to develop a meta-awareness of their learning processes; which in our study became the foundation stone for the development of leading practices. We aim to show how practices of teacher leading are ecologically-dependent on other practices (professional learning) with which they connect. To do so we will present the findings of a study conducted in
Australia and Sweden investigating the way that leading practices are ecologically dependent on professional learning practices.

**An ecologies of practices perspective**

In recent years, a new line of enquiry in practice theory offers a new way of thinking about and understanding issues concerning practice. Among others, Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) and Schatzki (1996, 2002, 2010) have sought to show how practices – like practices of professional learning, leadership and teaching – are held in place by preconditions which enable and constrain some kinds of action at the expense of others. Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) use the term ‘practice architectures’ to describe these preconditions which include the pre-existing cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements that make particular practices possible. Practices are dependent upon the existence of the arrangements that make them possible and thus ‘hang together’ in what Schatzki (2010) describes as “practice-arrangement bundles”.

In this paper, practice is viewed as *situated* in the particular circumstances and conditions of particular site ontologies; taking form in, and being formed by “the site of the social” (Schatzki, 2002). They come into being through the interconnected web of *sayings*, *doings* and *relatings* (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) enacted by the members of the site in particular ‘social projects’ (such as professional development or teaching) - the ‘project’ of the practice being the overall purpose that gives it meaning and coherence (even if it also contains contradictions) (Schatzki, 2002). According to Kemmis & Grootenboer (2008), practices shape and are shaped by the distinctive ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ that together compose particular practices that occur in the sites. Figure 1 below depicts the relationship between practices and the preconditions that make them possible – how these arrangements furnish the substance for the sayings, doings and relatings which constitute a practice and make it comprehensible to those who enter and inhabit it. On this view, understanding a practice requires understanding the conditions and circumstances that make it possible, and that support it so it can develop, endure or be sustained in the *realities of the everyday happening-ness* in the social sites in which they exist.
Figure 1: Practice Architectures (after Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008)

Practice-arrangement bundles, or practices and the practice architectures that support them, do not exist in isolation. Practices relate to one another in ‘ecologies of educational practices’ (Kemmis, XXXX, Wilkinson, & Hardy, in press) within and across practices. That is, some practices – particular practices – exist in relationships of interdependence, in which the outcomes of one practice are inputs to other practices – in the way that the practices of teaching and learning in classrooms can sometimes be dependent on one another, or in the way in which a particular practice of professional learning might be dependent on a particular practice of leadership in a school or school district. In this article, we use the theory of ‘ecologies of practices’ (Kemmis, XXXX, Wilkinson & Hardy, Lloyd, 2010) to explore questions, issues and challenges in cases of professional development we have studied in Sweden and Australia. We draw on this theory as a way to understand how practices like professional learning and leading, relate to one another in activity time-space (Schatzki, 2010) and over (historical) time. It draws our attention to the interdependence among particular clusters of practices, and the ways
particular practices interact with and influence each other, so that one practice produces outcomes or products that are taken up in other practices.

The following table presents a summarised description of practices as they explicitly align with Capra’s (2005) eight principles of ecology to demonstrate how they can be understood as relating to one another within ecologies of practices.

Table 1: Ecological principles (Kemmis, XXXX, Wilkinson & Hardy, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological principles</th>
<th>If practices are living things and ecologies of practices are living systems, then …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>Practices derive their essential properties and their existence from their relationships with other practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nested systems</td>
<td>Different levels and networks of practice are nested within one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Practices are dependent on one another in ecology of practices as are ecologies of practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>An ecology of practices includes many different practices with overlapping ecological functions that can partially replace one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycles</td>
<td>Some (particular) kinds of matter (or in education – practice architectures, activities, orders or arrangements) cycle through practices or ecologies of practices – for example, as in a food chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flows</td>
<td>Energy flows through an ecology of practices and the practices within it, being transformed from one kind of energy to another (in the way that solar energy is converted into chemical energy by photosynthesis) and eventually being dissipated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Practices and ecologies of practices develop through stages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic balance</td>
<td>An ecology of practices regulates itself through processes of self-organisation, and (up to breaking point) maintains its continuity in relation to internal and outside pressures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Kemmis et. al. (2010), from an ecologies of practices perspective, when the external or internal conditions in sites of practice are not hospitable (supportive or nourishing) then the other parts of the complex of practices may be threatened and the changing of practices may not be sustainable or even possible. So, understanding the principles of ecologies of practices is important for this study because when one practice in an ecology of practices becomes developed and strengthened – for example professional learning – the other parts of the complex of practices may also be developed and strengthened for example as we will show - leading. This is important for this study because the connectivity between long-term professional learning and teacher leading emerges as a significant outcome.

The Empirical study

The study presented in this paper was developed from an initial pilot study conducted in Sweden (XXXX, 2010). As researchers from two different parts of the world, we recognised that we had both
been actively involved in similar professional learning programs for teachers within our own countries. The two programs were structured similarly as action research programs conducted over 12 months and included eight to ten sessions of group meetings. Groups comprised of between 8-12 participants and were facilitated by an academic or professional consultant (at least 22 groups since 1999). Sessions were conducted with an emphasis on 'collaborative analytic dialogue' (XXXX, 2002) as a medium to challenge ‘taken for granted’ practices and assumptions. Teacher learning was specifically emphasised and reflected upon as a way to develop a meta-awareness of learning processes and practices (not simply being a matter of developing content knowledge). Added to the group meetings were professional reading and conducting a self-designed case study. In both countries we recognised that many teachers participating in these action research programs had taken on leading roles as teacher leaders facilitating the learning of other teachers within their own schools, municipalities or districts.

The interviewed participants, who after participating in their own program of long term professional development, acted as teacher facilitators in their own schools and/or districts from 1999 in Australia and from 2004 in Sweden (XXXX, 2008). Common among the participants was that they participated in the 12 month action research project and continued on after their initial project in roles as teacher leaders facilitating teacher learning in their own sites (in schools, municipalities or district). They had become ‘drivers’ of system change and continued to lead teacher learning in local contexts often in preference to taking on more formal leadership positions (e.g. principal or other specific leadership roles) even if sought after.

The pilot study was translated into English and formed the basis of a new questionnaire used in the joint study in the two countries. Semi-structured interviews ranging from 60-90 minutes (audiotaped and transcribed) were conducted with 14 teacher facilitators across the two sites (the Riverina region in NSW, Australia and Western Sweden). The first interviews and initial analysis were conducted in Australia in 2010. The remaining interviews were conducted separately in each country by the ‘home’ researcher. Joint analysis of interview data to elicit main themes was conducted mainly during cross-institutional visits. A cross-examination of emerging categories to discern relevant themes using direct interpretation of the data was conducted; this involved looking at each case and drawing meaning from it using categorical aggregation. A collection of instances from across the corpus of data was sought with the view that issue-relevant meaning would emerge as they recurred in the data (Creswell, 1998).

**Findings and Discussion**

As participants recounted experiences of how their participation in their respective professional learning programs influenced their learning and leading practices after they completed the year long course, and specifically reflected on how they perceived the conditions which enabled and constrained
practices, their lived experiences were central. Participants drew directly upon their own experiences both in the program as a learner, and since the program completion as a teacher leader facilitating professional learning in their own contexts (schools, municipalities or districts), with widespread agreement emerging among the participants about the conditions enabling and constraining their practices. The section is presented in two main parts: firstly, the distinctiveness of conditions and circumstances of teacher learning practices; and secondly, the distinctiveness of conditions and circumstances for enabling the development of teacher leading practices. Excerpts from interview transcripts provide explanatory material to exemplify the key points raised. All names are pseudonyms.

**Distinctiveness of conditions and circumstances of teacher learning practices**

When looking across the experiences recounted by participants, we found several overarching themes. In particular, as participants described their experiences, many of the characteristics highlighted aligned strongly with findings reported in other research literature describing the influences of long-term professional learning. For example, in their accounts participants identified the importance of ‘practising of practices’ in their own classroom context and at their own pace, focused on their own issues, and participating over an extended time as key conditions enabling or supporting teacher learning. The excerpts below are typical of how participants highlighted space, pace and time as key characteristics of their learning experiences:

*For me it was for my personal learning so that I could continue to work on my skills in my own way in my classroom and in a way at my own pace – so a lot of it was about the kids firstly, but also a lot of it was about me and the way that I went about my teaching; and it was also to challenge me because I was kind of at the stage in my career where I had finished studying and so I wanted something else that could actually keep me learning so that I didn’t just stand still, I was ready for something more.* (Annemaree)

*There’s a desire to learn something new, to have to challenge myself and gain more skills; that was what attracted me.* (Christina)

*It was over time, so we had time to digest in between.* (Birgitta)

*There’s an innate searching to always do a better job for the kids, to add a bit of zest to my teaching and their learning.... It works because you know it gets in your belly because you have got the time you need to make things happen. It gives you time to really deepen understandings over time, you get time to make mistakes, you get time to experiment, you get time to learn something, to play with something and then reinterpret it, deepen it, come back into a group of colleagues who are also playing with it and experiencing it.* (Rachel)

Annemaree, Christina, Birgitta and Rachel, like the other participants, identified both external conditions [physical context or space, design, focus and pace of the program] and internal conditions [desire, readiness, stage of career] as necessary for their ‘successful experience’ as a teacher learner. In one way as teachers participated in the program of professional learning that focused on improving practices in their own classroom space, they were engaged in a process of subjective meaning making
designed to develop a deeper comprehensibility of their practices, as articulated by Carrie in this next extract.

*It was just that whole having to look at my practice. Look at, really reflect on what I was doing and why? And what was the basis for it? Was I just doing it because I’d always done it or I was just doing it because it was easy or I just knew what I was doing so I just kept doing that? So it really made me look at what I was doing to make sense of it and I knew I had to change.* (Carrie)

In another way participants identified that it was also their own ‘innate searching to understand and improve their practices’ which drove their learning, that is to develop a meta-awareness of their own practices. Moreover, it was evident that the teachers’ learning was valued and supported when they went back to their school sites (both during and after the course). This was demonstrated by both principal or system support and other teachers in their schools becoming involved in collegial learning arrangements they established (for example, staff reflection and sharing circles or Pedagogical Monday’s - which refers to a Swedish example whereby weekly staff meetings were re-organised to focus on issues concerning pedagogy and learning). How both the external and internal conditions are mutually nourished and enabled simultaneously attributes to the accomplishment of transformation is illustrated in this next extract.

*I’m not exactly sure how I kept on going but it was something to do with Marilyn [the principal] I don’t know why, she was so supportive and encouraging me all the way even giving me some extra time to prepare so I could share my learning with the staff. I found it really hard because it was a little bit confronting at first, I remember the first few sessions I just came back and I said to Marilyn [the principal], “Oh no I don’t think I can do this Marilyn.” She said, “Oh don’t be ridiculous of course you can, I know you can do it.”... But at the same time the system gave us the days, the time to attend the ten sessions without that it would have been impossible. You as the facilitator too helped me to keep seeing that I could do this and meet the challenges along the way. It was this as well as knowing I need to be developing. And so this really made me look at what I was doing and I knew I had to change, but I also wanted then to keep on with this to help other teachers as I knew this worked.* (Melanie)

This example highlights how practices shape other practices when each creates enabling and constraining conditions for the others; similarly to studies conducted by Louis and Kruse (1995) and Boyd (1992), for these teachers it was both the external conditions (eg. the support from the principal, the system and the facilitator) and the internal conditions (eg. the desire to help others) which were supportive, nourishing and mutually sustaining. It seems that it is not sufficient for example, to have a supportive principal (as an external condition) or a desire for change (as an internal condition). From their accounts, it was evident participants encountered hospitable internal *and* external conditions which were perceived as being equally important for taking up new practices in their own site.
‘Collegiality’ emerged as a key theme, as one would expect from an understanding of literature describing the influence of longer term professional development. According to the views of participants (who initially worked as learners in professional development programs and then ‘teamed-up’ to work with one or more teachers to facilitate their own professional learning groups), working in groups, teams and communities created conditions for development. In some instances these arrangements provoked a sense of agency and solidarity enabling them to become advocates with power to argue for making learning available to other teachers in their schools or districts with principals and district leaders; as illustrated following:

_We are this small inner circle, we strengthen each other. ...We had each other and discussed together, and helped each other with the case studies, we read a lot, read all the books included. I thought it was great to meet in peer groups, it was of course very supportive and you saw the link to your own work very, very clearly. I think that was because we were three together who got along well and that we had this discussion while the course was going on. We learned what was possible in the course, and then when we discussed it together, raised the idea that we're going to take this further and we talked to our managers [to develop a new facilitator team for our school]. First it was mostly me who was doing it but eventually became my whole department involved... The project was kept alive for a long time and I think to this day I tell others about it. (Birgitta)_

_From our team we get legitimacy. (Anette)_

_Developing, sustaining and transforming practice into leadership comes back to voice that comes from working with your peers in groups, having that deep understanding about things, having deep and focused conversations that are not in a vacuum but based on real things and a deep belief in it... all those experiences you get through participating in programs over time with your colleagues. You not only gain the words to put forward your thinking about education that stuns everyone, they follow you. Voice doesn’t mean necessarily words; it’s much deeper than the words; it’s strength, courage, belief, conviction, no compromising with those things when you take up your position with the district. Teachers wanted support long term so I designed the program in response to what the teachers were saying and pushing for, ... from them I got the power to do the crying and the screaming and the ranting to the office to get the program approved; then it came to be. (Rachel)_

In these excerpts Birgitta, Anette and Rachel strongly suggest that through teacher collectivity and working democratically by collaborating and making decisions with colleagues, individual and collective action is strengthened. These social practices of teachers participating actively (with initiative, conviction, confidence) and working collaboratively in groups do not simply reveal traces of being shaped by previous experiences in professional development practices, they suggest that these practices (professional learning, teacher leading and facilitating) are both strengthened and connected to one another in the _networks_ of practices observed across as well as within particular sites of practice.

A strong ‘praxis orientation’ was emphasised by participants in the sense that they described their professional learning as being driven to enact ‘a moral good’. Such a praxis orientation is driven by
“educational action that is morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p.4). From their perspective, ways of working for societal good are aligned with a view that professional learning is not only about responsibility for self but also for the learning and development of others. Such societal understandings means that these teachers do not simply look at their present teaching situation, rather they see themselves as part of a broader democratic education in which their part becomes essential for developing the new generation of ‘good’ citizens, as expressed here:

There was a breeding ground and that makes it grow slowly, you can see changes, you can see the result of an idea like growing plants. I think that action research is suitably aligned with me, when you have a societal perspective, changes occur from a bottom-up perspective, democracy, faith in human capacity; exciting when it falls into place, it appeals to me, makes you happy when you see it works. (Marianne)

This excerpt, and the next, is typical of how the teachers emphasised praxis-oriented internal conditions as being just as important for driving their professional learning as the external conditions which enable practices to be taken up and practised in new sites.

It is a mutuality because I believe that the teachers with whom I work can do this and so I’m going to dig deeper into myself to help them believe in themselves and transform their practices and give them a voice. There’s that lovely saying when you work to bring out the best in others, you’ll bring out the best in yourself, so in that search to help others you also become a better person. (Rachel)

Rachel, like Marianne previously, describes her work in facilitating professional learning in a particular way which clearly involves making morally-informed and committed action [digging deeper to help others, having a broader societal view], reflecting a praxis stance or a praxis orientation (XXXX, 2008; Kemmis & Smith, 2008). Their comments suggest that what drives their actions is the desire to shape social formations and conditions as well as people and their ideas, and their consciousness of their commitment to working well in and for education. These extracts show that for transformation there needs to be a dynamic balance between these external conditions (what one encounters in the practice and the sites of practice) and internal conditions (what one brings to the practice) and reciprocity of a kind which simultaneously merges external and internal conditions for growth and change.

**Distinctiveness of conditions and circumstances for enabling the development of teacher leading practices**

Participation was not sufficient for change on its own. In their accounts, participants identified a number of conditions which enabled them, as teacher learners to emerge as teacher leaders facilitating professional learning. Interestingly, the 14 participants directly credited their emergence as a teacher leader to their participation in the professional development program. As part of an ecology of
practices, *development* occurs when practitioners’ knowledge, skill and responsibility becomes more familiar with a practice and more expert or accomplished in it. The following excerpts are typical illustrations of the critical importance that participating as a teacher learner had for development of leading or facilitating capacities:

*Honestly without that [participating in the program] I probably wouldn’t have gone where I am now. It gave me the leverage, the confidence and courage to continue on with this way of working with other teachers in the system.* (Melanie)

*After my course I wanted to be part of changing the pre-existing culture here at my school. I’m pretty critical of the preschool culture. Not all preschools, of course, but then what I see is so much to improve. And yes, I wanted to help drive that change. Not be that great, huh, supervisor but it was like, that it was the idea of being with and driving that change. We had not really thought about either from the beginning of the course but it was probably something that we saw that in order to continue to spread the good work, we knew someone must be the engine for it and there was nobody else, so it's just that it was up to us to try to grab it. It's like a collective transfer of knowledge to another place; the course gave me that opportunity. I felt I had something to stand on, I had a different knowledge to do it … both of us had read this about how a group develops; therefore, I dared to have a go to try being a discussion leader.* (Marianne)

In fact, Melanie and Marianne, like each of the teacher leaders interviewed, identified that the development of teacher leading or facilitation knowledge and skill actually *hinged* on their participation in the long-term program. For them, it gave them the ‘leverage’, ‘courage’ and ‘inspiration’ required to continue on as teacher leaders. Our findings suggest that it is the participation in the long term professional learning programs themselves – as teachers working through the processes and challenges - that create enabling conditions for development of teacher facilitation practices (skills and knowledge) which for our participants emerged as ‘embodied practices’. We view this point as a critical finding. With these insights, we contend our data addresses the uneven presence in the current literature reported by Nehring and Fitzsimmons (2011) by identifying the development of facilitative skills as a teacher leading attribute directly associated with professional learning.

In our data we also recognise the ecological principle of *cycles* in the distinctive way in which the sayings, doings and relatings ‘hang together’ as they cycle through and are reproduced in the leading practices generated by the teachers as they take on facilitating in their own sites. In their accounts participants draw on the practice architectures, or the language (sayings), activities (doings) and relational arrangements (relatings) they had experienced previously to organise and create their own conditions for facilitation; revealing that traces of historical action enter new sites of facilitation in *cycles*. To illustrate, in the interviews many teachers recognise that they take on the same interactive and language structures or physical set-ups as they had experienced in their professional learning, like setting up focused reflection circles, Pedagogical Monday’s, or peer-group class visits, to enact their own facilitation practices.
We used the structure we had for our regular staff meetings to become focused pedagogical meetings called Pedagogical Mondays, but mixed the teachers from all four pre-schools into new groups. In our sessions we used many of the professional dialogue approaches we had experienced with the action research program. (Marianne)

The extract below exemplifies practices taken up by Annemaree:

The high level of discussion, like critical dialogue[sayings]; distributing professional reading, setting up focused reflection circles and peer group visits[doings and relatings] - all of those things seem to mesh together and you seem to do them without actually even realising at the time. It’s only later when you actually become a facilitator that you realise all the bits that are actually important and how they fit together. That was one of Rachel’s [the facilitator] good ones that I now use – making sure that teachers are challenged and questioned – never answering a question – always asking another one in place, I use those kinds of things to ensure that everyone works hard to construct their thoughts and ideas, no one is left off the hook. Also I guess that helps with the building of the community so that you actually have other people who are going through the same challenges, so you are building relationships in that supportive community of people you can talk to. (Annemaree)

In these accounts, Annemaree and Marianne orient to the ways in which the sayings, doings and relatings of professional learning experiences ‘hang together’ in distinctive arrangements and cycle through their own facilitation practices as they reproduced them. For Annemaree, like the other participants, there is evidence that practices become embodied as they lead professional learning in their own sites. It appears the professional learning arrangements, as practice bundles, exist as traces in the particular practice architectures or arrangements of sayings, doings and relatings that the [new] facilitators establish when setting up their own collegial groups. Additionally, the distinctive forms and contents of pedagogical discourse (e.g. Annemarees’ questioning arrangements) and distinctive kinds of professional dialogue and learning arrangements (e.g. focused reflection circles) cycle from one professional learning group to another as she for example engages in professional dialogue. This notion of cycles is important for policy makers considering how to support the development of effective facilitation skills. Further, critical reflexivity through engaging in analytic, critical and sustainable dialogue for these teachers bridged the theory–practice nexus. And what can be observed is that this cultural-discursive dimension of practice has cycled through the dialogue encountered in the practices experienced with the original facilitator to the practices of the new facilitator.

By this we can also identify how particular practices, like energy, flow through practices and practices related to it, in the complex of practices associated with facilitating teacher professional development. We see here that, for example, ideas and practices concerning ‘challenging participants’, designing peer group visits, and developing collaborative relationships flow into new occasions of the practice that secure comprehensibility of, and continuity and connectedness in collegial learning communities for the people involved. As Annemaree highlights, the practices sustain participants so they will stay engaged in the practice and practise the practice in the future. Like Annemaree, Marianne in the next
excerpt identifies the traces of previous practices which have *flowed* into her own facilitation practices.

*You [as the facilitator] as a mentor inspired me and gave me the language about to how to facilitate... I learnt from the demonstrations and you were incredibly unpretentious, it gave both a feeling of a group and allowing all to express ourselves, to come with our own ideas or views or values. It becomes a reflection of it [previous experience], either for my questioning and approaches around it [through setting up Pedagogical Monday’s]. You as the facilitator were probably an example of how to facilitate.* (Marianne)

Such facilitation practices are both enacted by people and orchestrated in the interactions between different people (for example in different roles as a facilitator, teacher leader or participant), and reappear – often with transformations – when they are re-enacted on subsequent occasions. That is, both practices and the relationships between them are reproduced – not as mere as translations – but are evolved and transformed over time. Consequently, as a result of past experiences, teacher leaders (such as Annemaree, Marianne and Melanie) develop ‘new ways of being’ for themselves as they practise new practices in their present sites and circumstances of facilitation. This flexible enactment of specific facilitating practices can be viewed as a process of transformation whereby practices are enacted with variations and responsivity – often at first with contextual variations – then evolved and transformed and practiced as ‘newly embodied practices’.

In the participant’s accounts, the ‘role of the facilitator for enabling agency’ is recognised as an integral factor for generating leading capacities. Agency is highlighted in each of the following excerpts as a supportive external condition for enabling the development of teacher leading:

*It’s through [the facilitator] guidance I actually began to believe in myself and have the courage to try new things, I have become stronger in my profession, but above all, to dare to believe in myself, it has given me strength [to work with other teachers].*(Christina)

*I’ve been there a few times myself as a teacher so I can sympathise with them and they know that we [the facilitators] are there for them; there seems to be a connection because they know I have been there myself, it’s like they really believe me and believe in me because of it.* (Melanie)

*She taught me, I think through demonstration, to never compromise on what my beliefs are and I am now so passionate about empowering other people to become the leader around me and to take control, that’s something that really drives me enormously and now I want to be able to step back and to know that I’ve given them their wings as we aim to ensure teachers all have opportunities to take the lead throughout the program.* (Leonie)

Belief, courage, empowerment and strength of conviction, among others, are features of leading which emerged as a response to nourishing conditions established by the facilitator. In each of the cases the facilitator action [for example *giving all teachers opportunities to take the lead* and *empowering other people to become the leader and take control*] contributed to the development of leading practices.
Within an ‘ecologies of practices’ perspective, practices are strengthened when both the external and internal conditions are hospitable, and it seems in this case that the internal conditions [described by teacher leaders] are directly influenced by the external conditions [created by the facilitator and supported by the principal], making new practices possible. Despite participants experiencing conditions which supported their learning and development in their own contexts, each of the participants also experienced external and internal conflict, reticence, resistance and tension [as they stood against the system, argued their case, pushed for change with the directors and principals, struggled with the challenges of their case studies]. It might well be the case that the supportive conditions – and attributes described above - mobilised these teachers forward even against resistance and contestation as they ‘dared to believe’ and ‘did not compromise their knowledge and beliefs’.

For these teachers it was recognised the level of ‘accountability and challenge’ they experienced acted as a change agent; in their programs ‘change was not an option’, as acknowledged here by Barbara and Rachel:

...it’s the challenge and it’s like climbing a mountain and that’s when you get the charge forward is when you do actually confront the challenge and you get the words together to articulate your views, ... to go over that hurdle that deepens it and there’s no growth unless there’s challenge. (Barbara)

It’s just not sweetness and light and fluffy, sometimes people just fluff around and do not take it seriously but if you build the challenge in with all teachers knowing that change is an integral part of participation and that there is an expectation that you will change, it’s not an option. This is because the facilitator isn’t frightened of putting the challenge there but knows how to help the person rise up over time to be able to articulate through the challenge barrier.

I think one of the things that I’ve experienced is that nobody’s left me off the hook when the challenge is there, no-one has come in and said ‘there, there dear don’t worry, you’ll be fine, I just pass’ - like in reflection circle time pass them never bother coming back to that person. It’s the job of the leader to be able to keep the challenge high, and that’s why I think that belief in your participants is so vital for growth. (Rachel)

Barbara and Rachel, identify ‘challenge’ as a feature of the professional learning endeavour which is inextricably linked to growth, change and transformation. For them building in high expectations about participant change – along with the focused learning agenda - is crucial for learning. We believe the ‘support-challenge-growth nexus’ illustrated above is an influential feature of the generative nature of the professional learning experience. A further layer of accountability was encountered in both the Swedish and Australian cases as participants were required to work on a self designed case study which was to be presented in a seminar to the principal and other colleagues in the district, and in the Australian case also presented to the district director, other consultants and external academics.

Because you’re actually doing a case study means that you actually have to show how you’re making a difference to children within your class. So there was no choice, you had to actually go back and trial it and prove that you were making a difference to those children. I think the
fact that it’s not the one off in-service, just a bag of ideas that you go and grab, take back to your classroom and forget in a week and going “That’s a good idea” and moving on. This case study idea kept us focused in our learning and in one way forced us to look more deeply which means it was not an optional extra, it was about actually making it part of your practice. (Carrie)

In this extract Carrie describes how the accountability connected to the case study, challenged her practices to work towards focused change beyond ‘a grab bag of ideas’ which emerged as ‘a part of her embodied practice’. We view these aspects of the professional learning experience acted as a springboard for growth on two levels: firstly the teacher’s own pedagogical practices; and secondly, their development as teacher leaders who developed confidence-in-action coming from deep learning and understanding of content (knowledge) and practices.

**Generating teacher leading practices: Implications for practice**

The complexity of the nature and effect of professional learning practices cannot be understated. However, the ecologies of practices perspective offer us a way to capture the complexities of the practices of professional learning and teacher leading as described in this paper and provide new insights into these key educational practices. Our data is a compelling account of professional learning which extends the literature describing the influence of participating in long-term professional learning programs showing that interdependent ecological relationships exist between different practices, in this case participating in longer-term focused professional learning programs and the generation of teacher leading practices.

On this view, we have illustrated how different practices like the practices of professional learning and teacher leading are dependent upon one another and dependent upon their relationships with the processes and practices of the wider society in which they exist – that is, the external and internal conditions and circumstances which enable them to happen, and to what extent. By organising the participants in the course into groups that regularly met over a period of time with a facilitator, interdependence between networks of practices emerged. Participants had time to develop practices, confidence and capacities for leading and facilitating the learning of others. Teacher leading and professional learning here are mutually accomplished through the practising of practices in sites over time whereby conditions support and nourish change and development (although not always without resistance and contestation).

As was shown it is not sufficient for only external conditions to be supportive of change, nor is an internal motivation, praxis-orientation or desire to change practice. Moreover, professional learning over time is not adequate, nor is participating in site-based or collegial learning activities sufficient on their own. In one way the dynamism between the external and internal challenge, accountability, resistance or tension and the hospitable (supportive or nourishing) conditions experienced by participants drove them to develop capacities to act, to act as a teacher leader (as facilitators). For us,
understanding the principles of ecologies of practices is important because when one practice in an ecology of practices becomes developed and strengthened – for example professional learning in this instance – the other parts of the complex of educational practices may also be developed and strengthened for example as we have shown - leading. For our participants (teacher leaders facilitating professional learning), what was required was both the internal and external conditions to exist in a dynamic balance each strengthening the conditions for the existence, development and sustainability of the other.

In our view the ‘lived experience’ of participating as a teacher learner enabled the generation of leading capacities is a critical aspect of the paper. New ways of “being” (as transformed practitioners living the practice) develop as practitioners become more familiar with the practice and more expert or accomplished in it. Not only do practitioners develop as they become more accomplished in practices, the practices themselves (such as facilitation practices) also evolve and develop - first as translations then as transformations to exist as new ways of being. For teacher leading there appears to be stages of development or translating with traces of previous experiences being taken up in new practices of firstly teaching, as they participate in the program, and secondly teacher leading through facilitating. Teacher leaders develop through enactment (doing), evolution (doing with variations and contextual accommodations), and transformation and embodiment (doing differently as your own).

There is enough evidence to suggest that practices of professional learning and teacher leading exist and develop as interconnected practices connected to one another in the experiences of the participants in our study. Teacher learning and leading practices are not only different practices but are dependent upon one another and dependent upon their relationships with the processes and practices of the professional learning program, the school or system practices in which they exist. In fact, our data shows these practices echo and reflect one another (not always without contradiction or resistance) in activity space time and across historical time with important implications for sustainable systemic change. In summary, the development of teacher leading practices include participating in professional learning which is long term and focused, site-based (own space, own pace, focused and over time); reflects hospitable external conditions from multiple levels (program, collegial, school, system); and responsive and alert to the praxis orientation of teachers. In our view it is the responsibility of management and systems to not only create these conditions but to recognise that teacher leading is an important outcome of such professional learning programs.

**Conclusions**

Our study suggests that reciprocity exists as teacher leaders both create conditions for pedagogical and facilitative development (through aspirations, conviction, and drive to make change in their own circumstances and the circumstances for other teachers) and are created by the external conditions laid
out for them as they experience learning in longer term focused professional learning programs. From this perspective, learning and leading practices take form in, and are formed by living the practice in ‘the site of the social’. In our view, this mutual accomplishment is necessary for generating learning and leading capacities.

According to our participants, the role of the facilitator cannot be taken for granted. In their accounts the development of facilitative practices for leading the learning of teachers was directed attributed to firstly experiencing the program themselves, and secondly taking on the practices modelled by facilitators in their professional learning program as ‘embodied practices’. This finding has strong implications for administration and policy makers who may take up suggestions by Nehring and Fitzsimmons (2011) who advocate that educator preparation programs and ongoing professional learning initiatives include a more prominent external program of facilitation skills. In fact our data shows this is not sufficient. We argue that facilitation and teacher leading practices develop through participation in programs in which both external and internal conditions nourish and support practices in the change endeavour. This implies that placing value on focused teacher learning over time is a key to developing leading capacities for educational change – not simply locating the role of leading with the formal roles of principals or administrators as leaders. We contend that if this feature of professional learning is acknowledged and acted upon the sustainability of learning and leading practices across sites and time will be experienced, developed and sustained.

Whilst much has been written about the impact of longer term professional development our findings suggest there is a strong connection between long-term professional learning and the development of leading capacities; these depend on the conditions which support this development. We show how some teachers when supported over time in their professional learning from a number of levels (program, collegial, school, systemic), somehow these teachers act on the dynamic balance between external conditions and their inner conditions to take on initiatives of leading. This finding of generative leadership through long-term focused professional learning is important for policy makers and school leaders internationally if education in the current climate is to be sustained and re-invigorated with strong teacher leaders. Learning for teacher leading is necessary for a sustainable educational future. As we pointed out in the beginning of this paper very seldom teachers are professional learning practices attributed to the development of leading practices, something this paper has accounted for.

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