

# Chapter 11

## Teacher Decision Making: Teacher Learning

**Abstract** This chapter provides insights into the nature of teacher learning, in particular the thinking and actions that characterise teacher self-directed learning. The chapter illustrates that when teachers are supported to work as self-directed learners, they are allowed to work in very different ways to accepted PD experiences. In these conditions, it becomes possible to capture changes in teacher thinking and actions over time revealing the tacit knowledge of practice that teachers use everyday. This knowledge becomes explicit in ways which illustrate how such thinking shapes teachers' practice and how they make sense of their experiences to construct professional knowledge.

### Introduction

As evident in previous chapters, the teacher participants of the *LSiS* programme made decisions about the value of ideas and experiences they encountered in the programme. They also determined how they would translate new thinking into appropriate professional practice and made decisions about the relationship between personal values and expertise. The results of this study demonstrate that because participants were able to effectively engage with the experiences in the programme, these experiences influenced their decision making and produced deeply considered and valued learning outcomes in the form of new knowledge about, and new perspectives on, current practice and school operations. Interestingly, what became frustrating for these teachers was the lack of opportunity to position this knowledge in ways that could improve school practice and enhance learning outcomes. A school's perceived failure to capitalise on the potential contribution of their teachers' professional knowledge appeared related to the (previously noted) embedded cultural assumptions about PD programmes, in particular the potential operational benefits derived from personal professional learning. It is important to explore the nature of teacher self-directed learning and the challenges participants faced as they attempted to contextualise their learning because if schools and education systems could grasp these challenges, it could lead to a reconsideration of the potential contribution of teacher learning to school improvement.

## Attempting to Understand the Real Potential of Teacher Learning

In an educational climate of intense accountability, change in teacher practice, particularly sustained change, has become valued as a key indicator of effective and worthwhile teacher learning and development. Studies designed to determine the empirical relationships between teacher professional development, instructional practice and student achievement have largely predicated judgements based on behavioural objectives, i.e. what teachers do (Huffman et al. 2003; McBer 2001; Timperley et al. 2008, pp. 127–128). Utilising observable behaviours as a source of evaluation reflects a movement to create tangible operational definitions to bridge the often intangible and inaccessible divide between thinking and behaviour. Given the difficulty of directly observing people's thinking, observing behaviour is seen as providing an indirect expression of knowledge (Shakouri and Mirzaee 2014).

It would be fair to suggest that the underlying assumption related to the ideas (noted above) is that an easily definable relationship exists between behaviour and knowledge (Shakouri and Mirzaee 2014). As learning is a complex phenomenon, it is unreasonable to assert that behavioural objectives alone efficiently capture or enable the process of learning in an absolute sense. As outlined by Richards (2001), there are major criticisms of such movements including the reduction of teaching to a technical activity with a focus on efficiency, i.e. the most efficient means to an end is justified. The product-oriented nature of behavioural objectives trivialises the complexity of teaching practice and as a consequence trivialises teaching in the process. Behavioural objectives may be suitable for describing the mastery of skills, yet observations of behaviour alone do not capture the reasoning and critical thinking which informs and determines teachers' actual practice.

Another assumption that could be posited as underpinning such approaches is that the nature of learning is linear and uncomplicated, something ordered and sequential, 'made' or 'created' as a result of something else. Opfer and Pedder (2011) argued that using a process product model for teacher learning reduced the practice of teaching to a technical activity which conveniently enables the empirical to 'be' teacher learning; however, such observations provide very little insight into how teachers make sense of, and engage with, new information. What teachers actually learn, why this matters and how they determine the most effective ways to position new approaches within their practice, is often held as tacit knowledge bound up in the decision making and thinking that teachers engage in on a daily basis (Loughran 2010). The findings of this study have demonstrated that teacher thinking is complex, nuanced and fluid, and the process of capturing evidence of teacher learning in their actions alone provides an incomplete picture of this complex process.

To understand the nature of teacher learning requires a move away from the more traditional view of behavioural objectives to incorporate the processes of teacher decision making as another determinant of learning.

The professional knowledge and expertise that emerged from these teachers' decision making was related to key considerations that they worked through to construct new understandings, and the data showed, such thinking could be tracked across the programme. The outcome being that the documented learning could potentially add value to school operations and student learning outcomes despite the fact that through the project, this learning often remained unexplored at the school level.

## **Understanding the Fluid and Nuanced Nature of Professional Practice**

In the programme, which was the focus of this study, teachers worked as self-directed learners, and they were supported to value and explore their teaching as a rich context for personal learning. They were also required to embrace the tacit knowledge that is so deeply embedded in their everyday practice. Teacher participants articulated and clarified their ideas and thinking to engage in the social construction of professional knowledge. As facilitator I worked strategically to capture and share the emerging understandings across the cohort and mirror these back to participants for critical analysis. Doing so was difficult work for the teachers and myself; however, the process enabled the explication of how their knowledge of practice informed their teaching. In so doing, programme content became less about effective teaching actions and more about the important role of critical reflection in understanding and enhancing practice. Opportunities for differentiated learning emerged as teachers interrogated and articulated the relevance of proposed ideas and viewpoints in relation to the contextual reality of their teaching situation. Participants considered new ideas in light of their personal professional knowledge and determined contextually relevant actions as a consequence. As they did so, they began to distil and articulate what could well be described as essential principles about their professional practice.

The previous chapters demonstrated that one aspect of the PL process that was problematic for teachers was the realisation that their practice was not fixed or predictable but rather nuanced and fluid as they responded to changing needs and situations. This study has characterised teachers' practice as being intrinsically related to their individual professional knowledge, shaped by the complex and changing context in which they work. Engaging in self-directed professional learning created opportunities for teachers to grapple with new information which, in some instances, created uncertainty and unanticipated tensions between thinking and action.

The data illustrates well the intellectual rigour teachers engaged in as they struggled with decisions about how to determine the value of new ideas, position new ideas within current practice, recognise the interconnectedness of contexts and practice and articulate personal principles of action. In so doing, participants confronted the problematic nature of practice and recognised that through the many

dilemmas they consistently managed, they made judgements about that which they considered to be appropriate action in response to varying pedagogical situations.

As the data consistently demonstrated, teacher thinking and personal learning was evident through exploring the how and why of adjustments in their practice in a constant process of seeking to align developing understandings of needs and demands within the constraints and opportunities in teaching. The relationship between the approaches they adopted and adapted in their practice, and their deeply held personal principles about effective professional practice, became increasingly evident. Over time, amidst the ongoing fluctuations of teaching realities and changing teacher confidence about personal professional practice, participants clarified their principles and articulated that which mattered to them as professional educators. Participants did not arrive at this point at the same time or by following the same path.

## **Teacher Decision Making and Teacher Learning**

Personal self-directed learning required a high level of intellectual engagement. Teachers attended to a number of key considerations which focused their decisions about what mattered for their learning. How teachers attended to these considerations became key determinants of teacher learning, in particular how they:

- determined the value of ideas and experiences;
- worked to understand and manage the complexity of translating new thinking into appropriate professional practice; and,
- identified the important values underpinning practice.

As teachers continually attended to these considerations, their level of intellectual engagement appeared to deepen. Thinking moved from initial concerns around the technical aspects of practice to more complex interconnections between the realities of their work context and how that shaped their thinking and the options they chose to explore and implement in their practice. When teachers attended to these considerations they talked about their practice in ways which revealed interesting insights about their learning, they were able to articulate the thinking that characterised their learning.

How teachers attended to each consideration will now be discussed in terms of the distinguishing characteristics learning.

### ***How Teachers Determined the Value of Ideas and Experiences***

Unlike many other professional learning opportunities, this programme did not pre-determine for teachers a value or application for any of the ideas and experiences explored in the programme sessions. Each teacher was required to actively

determine if and how they would engage with the information being presented. Teachers were supported by purposeful and strategic critical reflection and were encouraged to talk about why and how they each engaged with ideas and experiences. The data illustrates that over time, teacher thinking shifted from initially valuing information in terms of strategic approaches to enhance existing teaching to a personal commitment to ideas as principles of practice. This change indicated a deeper consideration about the complex nature of their professional work, and considerations of teaching in this way became an indicator of teacher learning.

Initial reasons teachers engaged with new ideas and experiences generally related to what could be described as 'obvious' links, i.e. teachers recognised and responded to information that immediately connected to their teaching. Such connection was based on similarity or meeting a need, e.g. if teachers found immediate application of ideas in their teaching or they could recognise a strategy to enhance their existing professional practice, they then engaged with the information.

Over time participants began to describe personal challenges in their practice and a desire to draw on new ideas as a means of developing alternative ways of working. That changing mindset about the nature of their professional practice, recognition of both the problematic nature of teaching and the important role they played as decision makers, illustrated a change in understanding about practice. Teachers began to see a need to examine deeply embedded issues within their own practice and engage with information to think differently about everyday problems or issues. They recognised a need to personally adapt and respond to the changing nature of their teaching context. Engaging with programme information provided an opportunity for participants to examine alternative perspectives, and those experiences enabled them to delve into some deeper underlying issues.

Participants began to see ideas and experiences beyond the technical application and became more focused on understanding the interconnectedness of the personal, interpersonal and contextual dimensions of practice. These shifts in teacher thinking together with the range of diverse actions they came to recognise and develop, became indicators of teacher learning.

Maree demonstrated such a change in thinking. While initially focused on learning about how to use the flip camera as a way of assessing student learning, her thinking moved beyond that to exploring bigger issues around the contextual dilemmas of leadership within her school as the following quotations demonstrate.

My excitement came from the idea I had that I could actually use a camera to help with my assessment particularly in relation to practical skills that when you are running a really busy classroom if you could record it in some way, it would be easier to see what students were actually doing for more of the time. I also thought it would be useful to record demonstrations that were difficult to set up or that were one offs so that students who were absent would actually not miss out and also so that it could be reviewed to think about ideas and concepts that we were trying to develop. (Data Source: Free Talk. Maree)

Overtime Maree became engaged with other issues in the programme, in particular ideas around leadership and the role of effective relationships. Her contributions to discussions indicated a shift in focus from a technical perspective, i.e. the use of the flip camera in the classroom, to exploring the interpersonal and contextual

dimensions of leadership within her teaching context. Through these new perspectives, aspects of professional practice became problematic and illustrated to her that there were no easy solutions.

Maree: As we sit here and talk about all of these leadership things I think about the school where Keith and I are at and our leadership team. We have this massive school and I just think defining what makes leaders good with nearly 1500 (students) on one campus and over 2000 on two campuses that our principal is in charge of. How can he build relationships? I would never want to be a leader of a school that big because the relationship thing is important. (Data Source: Transcript 4 final session, p. 4)

Towards the final stages of the programme, Maree articulated a shift in her values, ideas and experiences within the programme. While she still held the use of the camera as a valuable teaching tool, she explained that ‘thinking about thinking’ and making her digital story required her to contemplate many aspects of her practice and determine what she valued.

Maree: So it makes me sort of think well maybe I can do this and I think one of the things I value the most about any kind of PD though still is about getting things that can be used in a classroom and so that’s my focus and I’ve been able to identify more things about myself than I ever have before so I think that’s the thinking about thinking. Doing this film forced me to do that even more than just being on the days that we’ve had because I’ve really had to select things and make decisions about what I thought was important to me in the end and what wasn’t. (Data Source: Transcript 5 final session, p. 1)

This data (above) illustrates the type of shift in thinking that was evident among many teachers in the programme. Initially reasons for engagement with new ideas and experiences were driven by an immediate and obvious connection to teaching. With time and support, teachers became more focused on understanding the interconnectedness of the personal, interpersonal and contextual aspects of practice and drew on new ideas as a means of developing alternative ways of working.

### ***Translating New Thinking into Appropriate Professional Practice***

Teachers made decisions about how new ideas and information influenced their thinking about their existing teaching context. Comments repeatedly highlighted issues about the credibility of approaches based on ‘ease of implementation’. Initially, such talk was technical – essentially about doing things or initiating actions to produce immediate observable, and therefore successful, change. However, over time a growing awareness emerged that illustrated how their actions were situated within and shaped by a number of sometimes complex, contextual factors. They did not work in isolation, and decisions they made became part of the social fabric of their own contextual reality. As they explored ways of positioning new thinking in their practice, they also articulated their ideas about that which mattered in their professional practice. They inevitably experienced tension between the ideas they valued and the accepted culture of school-based practice.

Self-questioning became an indicator that they were working through a learning process marked by a significant shift in how they positioned themselves to be part of the process of school-based change. To understand how that process was evidenced, the following sections of data have been collated to convey the type of learning Joanne experienced as she worked through these learning processes. The data is presented as a ‘joined up’ set through Joanne’s story.

### *Joanne’s Story*

In the early stages of the professional learning programme, Joanne described how she was going to implement immediate and successful action. Joanne talked about the need to break down information into smaller sections and translate ideas into ‘little things’. Her language was technical as evident in the following comments where she talked about appropriate action.

Maybe if I took just one or two little things maybe rather than a massive whole picture. I think that’s the way I look at it. (Data Source: Interview 1, p. 1., Joanne)

A shift in Joanne’s thinking became evident when her talk changed to identifying a new challenge – changing the mindset of her colleagues about the role and importance of science within her school. Joanne’s talk demonstrated a growing awareness that her actions were situated within a greater context of the school-based culture. She tried alternative strategies and appealed to the shared values, which she believed teachers in her school held as important, i.e. the development of student oral language. Joanne recognised a range of contextual elements, including time, curriculum priority and teachers’ attitudes to sharing success, and saw that these were aspects of practice that she needed to consider if she was to attempt to lead change constructively.

Joanne: I think my greatest challenge is having to be a little bit clever about it because the programme is leading science in schools and no one cares about science, that is my role no one does anything about it, so how do we get the others on board? Well I did try a little bit and I did try and use science as the vehicle to show how you could assess hands on learning and that was no good so then I think I just took a step back and went ok I’ll come on board with what you want - oral language. Oral language we’ll just do it the way that you want it so I just went with that a little bit more. Yes I think it’s having to be a little bit clever and try and make what I need to do fit with what they want to do. (Data Source: Interview 1, p. 5)

Joanne acknowledged that a substantial amount of personal energy and commitment was actually required to shift accepted school-based practice, in particular shifting structures she herself had established within the school. The needs that once determined accepted practice within the school had changed, and Joanne began to question the structures that were in place and the purpose they now served in terms of student learning.

To Joanne, achieving meaningful change was not just about finding a successful action to implement; it was about working with others to establish a shared vision

and aligning actions to that clearly stated, shared purpose. Her comments provide evidence that she had reframed and developed her thinking in ways that were personally meaningful. It appeared that her initial confident ideas about affecting change had become less certain.

Listening to the speakers today and listening to the other teachers there I think they've got the passion and they want to make a change and my big change is probably to hand over that science role, not to be the only person in the school that's doing it. I think 6 years ago our rotation programme really met the needs of what we wanted to achieve. We wanted to engage the boys, we had a high population of boys and we wanted to engage them and we wanted to provide hands on learning opportunities. We wanted to have the students in gender groups so it strengthened up their friendships, especially the girls because we felt that they didn't have the numbers in their own class groups, so by putting them together on alternative days we would strengthen their friendships and I think we've done all of that. At times I think that we are just locked into this structure and we keep trying to make things fit to the structure. We started with just Grades 3 to Grade 6 then we moved to whole school and as the schools got bigger and as the staff has changed I think that we've just tried to shove things in and we've moved from that hands on focus to that oral language focus and at times it frustrates me because I don't know if we're just trying to find an outcome to meet a programme that the students and the parents really value. I think in terms of teacher workload it's huge, it's a very different focus to what you plan for the rest of the week for your class and at times that's frustrating. I think originally when we started 6 years ago I'm the only one left of the original teachers that were there, others have retired or become the principal or curriculum coordinator or something like that and a few people have changed subject areas but I haven't changed subject areas. I think that I'm probably ready for a change and to move onto another challenge. (Data Source: Free Talk. Joanne p. 1)

Joanne's story demonstrates that teacher learning was evident when she reconsidered the entrenched and accepted routines of teaching and when she became aware that actions were directly impacted by, and were connected with, the work of others. Her growing awareness of her 'professional self' indicated that she was developing an understanding of the complexity involved in translating new thinking into contextually relevant action in ways that were manageable to achieve the outcomes valued.

### *Identifying the Important Values Underpinning Practice*

As teachers became more aware of the complex contextual connections that shaped their practice, they had to determine that which was 'worth holding on to' and the aspects of their personal thinking that needed to change. That was clearly a challenging task, and participants were encouraged and supported to articulate their thinking in terms of the principles they believed underpinned their practice.

Initially as teachers engaged in thinking about issues in their teaching, they often talked about feeling overwhelmed by the challenges they faced, and the indicators of success became more difficult to describe or achieve. At these times, it was repeatedly observed that many teachers experienced a decline in personal confidence. Their practice, which had previously been certain, became less certain in the

face of influences that appeared to be beyond their control. Part of the tension they experienced appeared to be linked to their personal expectations, i.e. they had expected that the application of new ideas would be easy and would produce sustained and consistent school-based action.

As participants began to understand the fluid and nuanced nature of teaching, it became evident to them (e.g. as in Joanne's story) that they experienced overwhelming frustration along with a realisation that in order to effectively implement new thinking, many contextual elements needed to align and that was often very difficult to achieve. Achieving a personally desired outcome required teachers to take time, think carefully and clarify that which they valued.

A very powerful example of teachers working to identify the values that became important in determining their practice was evident through Claudia and Carol. In a similar vein to Joanne's story (above), Claudia and Carol's stories illustrate the type of teacher learning that emerged when participants worked to articulate their values.

### *Carol and Claudia's Story*

Claudia and Carol worked at the same school and had done so for many years. Both were experienced teachers with established and productive working relationships with previous principals whom they respected enormously. In previous years, both had enjoyed school leadership support and received acknowledgment of their expertise and professionalism. They assumed that under any change of leadership, their work would continue to be valued. When a new principal was appointed to their school midway through the programme, the conditions within the school changed dramatically and these changes created new challenges. The demands they now faced from leadership required them to determine the aspects of their practice which were most valuable, i.e. what was 'worth fighting for'. Both described frustration with the school's communication and support strategies that had been put in place by new leadership, they considered these to be inconsistent and inadequate. The changes that occurred in the school impacted profoundly on their capacity to maintain existing approaches which they valued and/or to implement new ideas as leaders.

- Interviewer: So what do you think has been the biggest issue for you with your leadership within the school?
- Claudia: Having a voice and actually feeling that my voice is valued. That's been a big challenge.
- Interviewer: And that has changed?
- Claudia: Yes that's changed.
- Interviewer: So are there certain conditions that are required in order for you to have that voice? Are these things missing, things that have changed this year?
- Claudia: Yes and then that impacts on how empowered you feel in your role and wanting to go with the flow but also knowing that a lot of things were working well and perhaps they didn't need to change.
- Interviewer: So what role do you think trust has in leadership?

- Claudia: It's huge, huge. It comes back to that building the relationships so that trust can happen.
- Interviewer: Does that trust empower you?
- Claudia: Definitely, yes definitely. Knowing that someone believes that I can do something makes me want to do it and do it as best as I can. But feeling that perhaps you're not valued you're not trusted you start to reconsider a lot of the decisions that you make. Things that you would have just done automatically knowing that you were working within that environment where you were valued you were trusted, that changes. (Data Source: Interview 1, Claudia, pp. 3–4)

Both teachers described changes in their feelings of personal adequacy working as school leaders; they moved from feeling confident and self-assured to feeling deskilled and inadequate and demonstrated a loss of focus.

- Claudia: The new structures within our school and the new style of leadership has at times inhibited my own confidence in being a leader and made me less sure of my own capabilities and what my colleagues think of me. It's been difficult with such a new staff with a diverse range of experiences and expectations to build the relationships that I would have liked to build with some people but relationships are a two-way street and being part-time is really challenging when trying to build relationships, especially when you're not really put out there by the leaders in the school as someone that new people could go to or contact via email or phone. (Data Source: Free Talk. Claudia)

For both teachers, their efforts to affect the types of school-based change they wanted were continually challenged by specific contextual factors. Frustrations emerged as both expressed the unsettling experience of moving from feeling that aspects of their practice were reliable and certain, i.e. being able to control and direct school-based change and receive acknowledgement and respect from colleagues and leadership, to suddenly feeling that these areas of their practice were now uncertain and unpredictable. The wider circles of influence came into perspective, and the sector expectations and ethos along with the political imperatives of the education system as a whole, appeared to impact their personal values and sense of initiative.

- Claudia: They [the staff] have to live it, they have to live it and there's no one size fits all and we had to place a lot of trust in them [the staff] and we are not there to give them any answers but then there is a push from leadership that we need to make them more accountable for what they are doing. Our documentation needs to be better and then that's kind of taking away their voice in the process. (Data Source: Final day transcript 2, Claudia p. 8)

For both teachers, their views (above) highlighted a realisation that they did not work as sole agents of change; their action was situated within, interconnected with and dependent upon many other factors within their workplace context. As a result of the appointment of a new principal, Claudia and Carol were required to attend to different, and for them uncomfortable, styles of leadership involving principles of practice that were clearly different to their own. Previous conditions had been comfortable and had not required them to explicitly identify that which they valued as essential principles of professional practice, but as a result of intense discomfort and

frustration, both teachers came to see a need to characterise themselves as different to the leadership they were experiencing.

Both teachers began to realise that their ideas about practice were still important, but how they applied their thinking needed to be re-evaluated. The interplay of contextual dynamics caused them to accept that change would take time. Sometimes professional behaviour and actions needed to change depending on the situation, and that was not an indicator of weakness as a leader but rather an indicator of deep understanding about the conditions necessary to produce effective change.

Claudia: Although I have been challenged what it has done for me is strengthen my own beliefs in pedagogy, in student voice, in action that matters, in teacher voice. So although I have been challenged by new structures, new leaders, new relationships it has only strengthened my own personal and professional views and values. So I guess that is something I will take with me after this experience and also to never undermine the relationships in schools and the trust you put in people because when you put that trust in them they will always rise to the occasion and go beyond what you ever thought possible. (Data Source: Free Talk. Claudia, p. 1)

Carol: So if nothing else happens we leave a legacy of something that students of the future will learn an enormous amount from and will gain an insight into the environment and what we have to look after, what we have to be proud of and hopefully it will make better citizens of students as we go along. (Data Source: Free Talk., Carol, p. 1)

The *LSiS* programme intentionally sought to create opportunities for both teachers to reflect upon and articulate the principles which guided their practice. On the final day of the programme, teachers shared their digital story, and together with the group they explored embedded issues.

Claudia: Building relationships is essential. You need to know your team - their strengths, challenges and goals to be able to move them forward. You need to build trust with people to get the best from them. Once you achieve this they will move with you. (Data Source: Final day Transcript 2, p. 8)

The major principle of practice (relationships) Claudia stated (in the above quote) illustrates what she had come to value as important. Her quote powerfully captures her learning in terms of the values underpinning her practice.

### ***Indicators of Low Engagement***

How teachers worked through each key consideration and the thinking and actions that emerged as a consequence became indicators that they were working, often very rigorously, to make sense of information in meaningful ways. However, there was also evidence of low levels of engagement; these included:

- teachers demonstrating a constant and unwavering state of acceptance, certainty, self-assurance and confidence in the validity and value of all new ideas they encountered;

- teachers who continued to perceive their professional practice to be unproblematic;
- teachers who continued to immediately dismiss any new ideas;
- avoidance behaviour, e.g. teachers who did not make themselves available for involvement in programme support strategies, e.g. school- based meetings
- unexplained or repeated absence throughout the programme;
- inability to identify and articulate what mattered in personal professional practice, after investing ongoing time; and,
- generalised statements demonstrating little or no personal perspective.

The list (above) initially reads as quite stark and confronting. However, there was no evidence that any teacher consistently demonstrated all of these behaviours throughout the entire programme. More so, and perhaps as would be expected, nearly every teacher demonstrated some of these characteristics at different times throughout the programme. The list draws attention to the fact that for each teacher levels of engagement shifted across the programme and this sometimes made it difficult to determine the personal commitment they had to the programme experience. The following transcripts, taken from the Facilitator's Journal capture the inconsistency of Anna's behaviour.

3rd November 2010

I just finished an interesting meeting with Anna I find these meetings very thought provoking because she is very good at being 'very good' at meetings, she is always organized and tells me what she's learnt and it's almost like we tick all the boxes but I'm never quite convinced about the depth of learning that is actually happening in her professional practice or her professional thinking. The last time I came out to the school, which was quite a distance to travel, I got there and she was not there, she was absent from school that day and she had unfortunately forgotten to contact me. Then when we had our session together, the day before she contacted me and said she was unable to come to the programme because there were far too many things happening at school. So when I came out to see her today I expected her to be interested in what had taken place and some of the issues and experiences of other people in the group. But it was almost as if she didn't need that workshop to be able to participate in today's meeting. She immediately went on and told me that she had nearly finished making her film, there were issues that had emerged for her, these were the things she was thinking about and I'm not really convinced that they are anything different to what she was thinking about early in the year. So how genuine these conversations are and how much of an impact they have had on her thinking I'm not sure. I am really sceptical and believe that maybe she tells me what she wants me to hear. I'm left with a lot of questions. (Data Source: Facilitator Journal, p. 28)

At the completion of the programme, Anna emailed the facilitator expressing her thanks for a very worthwhile learning experience.

Thanks so much for a fantastic session yesterday. I had a meeting with the curriculum coordinator this morning and showed her my video; she was really impressed and loved what the project and programme was all about.

I'll be showing and talking about the programme at our next curriculum meeting, feeling a little bit nervous about it, but I am looking forward to the opportunity. Again, thanks so much!!! Anna (Data Source: Facilitator Journal, p. 31)

Inconsistency in teacher behaviour and reactions, as illustrated by perceptions of Anna's engagement, made it difficult to track consistent change in every teacher's thinking and therefore learning.

## **Chapter Summary**

If teacher action alone remains the prized outcome of professional learning, then understanding teacher learning will remain focused on the tangible, observable outcomes. However, the *LSiS* programme demonstrated that it is possible to develop new ways of talking about and identifying teacher learning by paying attention to how teachers seek to make sense of information and experiences. Under the programme conditions, teachers demonstrated a capacity to make decisions about a number of key issues for their own learning and began to notice their professional thinking and behaviours in new ways. The experience of professional learning allowed and supported them to be aware of what they were attending to as they developed meaningful and contextually relevant approaches to their practice.