

Chapter 10

Shaping Professional Development of Educators: The Role of School Leaders



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Abstract This chapter focuses on the influence of principal leadership on practising teachers' continuous professional learning. It adopts a qualitative methodology and reviews the findings and recommendations of recently published peer-reviewed journal articles and the occasional international policy report, which explicitly refer to principal leadership and its role in teacher professional learning to enhance student learning. The results of this systematic review suggest that leadership is a crucial element in impactful teacher professional learning. The chapter provides a list of strategies that school leaders can employ to increase the likelihood of more effective teacher professional learning in their schools. Some considerations for principals include adopting a blend of transformational and instructional leadership approaches; building trust and credibility; making the learning of teachers, as well as students, their focused priority and providing a range of support mechanisms to ensure that allocated professional learning delivers improvements in teaching quality and practices that will result in increased student learning outcomes. This chapter adds to the research knowledge that suggests that leadership has an indirect impact on student learning and that teachers' continuous professional learning must become more effective if it is to deliver the necessary positive growth in student learning.

Keywords Education policy · Educational leadership · Instructional leadership · Professional development of educators · Transformational leadership

10.1 Introduction

As we are now in the third decade of the twenty-first century, it is timely to reflect on some matters dominating the educational debate of the past two decades. These decades have seen a demand for educational change and improvement high on the list of policy and research agenda items. A consistent chorus of demand for improvement in the quality of schools, and especially the quality of teachers, can be heard from

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policymakers as well as the media (Mockler, 2015). Educational leadership has also received a great deal of attention in recent years as research has confirmed the impact that effective leadership has on student learning and outcomes.

The ability of high-performing principals to develop not only the children in their organisations, but also the adults is essential. It is also essential that principals have high expectations of both students and teachers (Gurr, 2015). Developing ‘teaching expertise, developing assessment of student learning that informs the teaching program, developing greater student ownership of their learning, utilising current learning technologies, and ensuring learning spaces are inviting and conducive to good teaching’ (Gurr, 2015, p. 144) is an imperative in the current educational climate.

The oft-repeated claim that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning has focused attention on leaders at both the school and system levels. Drawing on the ever-increasing body of quantitative impact studies, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2019) revised their original (2008) claim regarding the impact of school leadership to read

School leadership has a significant effect on features of the school organisation which positively influences the quality of teaching and learning. While moderate in size, this leadership effect is vital to the success of most school improvement efforts (p. 2).

Although these authors focused on the responsibility of all levels of distributed leadership to create the necessary enabling conditions to promote highly effective teaching that translates into improved learning outcomes, the focus of this chapter is directly on the ‘vital’ role of the principal. So, what is the precise role of the principal, particularly in improving the programme of instruction?

Educational leaders are increasingly asked to be transformational leaders, leading change in organisations and systems as the gathering pace of economic and social change is requiring schools to equip students to participate in a rapidly changing workforce. As such, the leadership repertoire of effective leaders has grown from 14 identified specific practices to 22 since 2008 (Leithwood et al., 2019). This growing set of skills adds to the workload of school principals. Yet, unequivocally, ‘school leadership matters greatly in securing better organisational and learner outcomes’ (Leithwood et al., 2019, p. 12).

To engage in continuous improvement, we need a well-informed teaching force, which clearly understands the nature of learning. We need a learning teaching force. The current focus on the quality of teachers already in the profession necessitates an improvement of effectiveness through professional learning and the evaluation of practices (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The most recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) report in 2018 found that 90% of teachers and principals attended at least one continuous professional activity per year (OECD, 2019). In Australia, due to the mandatory requirement for professional learning for teacher registration, this percentage climbs to 99% of practising teachers who participate in professional learning. Yet, anecdotally at least, ‘many educators feel a sense of empty ritual in professional development

sessions, as well as a general apathy toward educational research' (Ferrero, 2005, p. 426).

This failure of staff development to fulfil its promise, Ferrero (2005, p. 420) claimed, can be attributed, in part, to the general tendency to underestimate the 'degree of organization, energy, skill, and endurance' needed to introduce new practices into classrooms and to sustain collegial relations among teachers. Thus, the focus for educational leadership should be on teacher and student learning, instruction and curriculum (Brooks & Normore, 2015).

Each year worldwide, billions of dollars are spent on professional development programmes. Although figures on actual spending for teacher development are difficult to locate one report commissioned by The New Teacher Project study three large districts in the United States and then extrapolated its findings across the 50 largest districts and concluded that resources allocated to professional development teacher improvement to cost a combined \$8 billion in those districts alone, every year on teacher development for the years 2011–2012 (Jacob & McGovern, 2015). Teacher professional learning across the world is resource intensive. Yet despite the spending, these programmes are often, woefully inadequate, fragmented, intellectually superficial (Borko 2004) and often aren't effective in enabling change (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). They often ignore what is known about how teachers learn. In addition, professional development experiences generally fail to combine the teaching of the theoretical principles of learning with the practical classroom demonstrations that display implementation of high standards (Cannon, 2006).

The Australian media is highly critical of, and dissatisfied with, the nation's education system (Davis, Wilson, & Dalton, 2018). The education sector's remarkable vulnerability to public opinion and political pressure has placed criticism on teacher preparation and quality (Cohen & Mehta, 2017). Increasingly, the literature is reflecting the impact of globalisation and the focus on national student test scores as competition dominates. The policy desire to lift student learning outcomes has created a demand for leaders who can achieve this improvement (Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018).

Thus, much of the discourse regarding lifting student performance argues for an improvement in teacher quality. The assumption that teachers are critical to lifting student achievement as measured by test scores (Cochran-Smith, 2016) is driving policy and, to some extent, educational research. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has resulted in 'proof' that the quality of education in Australia is below policymaker, as well as public, expectations and international best practice. The need for change and the drive for improvement are constants in both the educational research literature and the popular press (Baroutsis, & Lingard, 2017). The imperative to be amongst the top-performing nations in this increasingly globalised environment, so that Australia's civil and economic wealth is guaranteed, is gaining ascendancy in thinking. Indeed, it is the PISA media discussion that is both integral and ever-present, continually focusing public, and quite often academic, discussion on education. Usually, the topic of teacher quality emerges as the cause of the malaise and teacher effectiveness is now at the top of the policy agenda (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). As accountability and systems have increased

the demand for real growth evidence of student learning, there is also a demand for increased teacher capacity building, which largely happens through professional learning. Excellence sits alongside equity in Australia's premier education policy—the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). The framing of the Melbourne Declaration resulted in the creation of the federally funded agency, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, with a remit for developing a Principal Standard (AITSL, 2014), Teacher Standards (AITSL, 2011) and a Charter for Professional Learning (AITSL, 2012), all instruments for facilitating developing excellence.

Althaus (2015) contends that any professional learning intending to positively impact student achievement should 'focus on how to improve content and pedagogical knowledge, teach best practices, and redirect teachers' attitudes to students' learning requirements' (p. 210). 'We need to ensure that this greatest influence i.e. *the teacher*, is optimised to have powerful and sensorially positive effects on the learner' (Hattie, 2003, p. 3).

In Australia, much of the recent activity around improving teacher quality has focused on ITE and improving the quality of teachers entering the profession. ITE should be seen as 'providing the foundation for ongoing learning rather than producing ready-made professionals' (Schleicher, 2016, p. 42). This policy shift to teachers already in the profession has regulatory authorities requiring evidence of individual teacher professional learning for the continuing certification of teachers.

Thus, to deliver worthwhile outcomes in schools, the quality of teaching is now a key focal point in the profession and largely guides the Charter for Professional Learning, both organisationally and individually. The teaching challenges created by higher expectations for learning, as well as the greater diversity of learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), mean that ever-increasing levels of expertise are required of teachers (and leaders) in areas of assessment, feedback and classroom management, which requires ongoing professional learning. Darling-Hammond, Wei, Altha, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) emphasise that the quality of education provided to students is dependent on teachers continuously supplementing their own knowledge and skills. This is indeed a heavy responsibility placed on the teaching profession. The current focus on school reforms, that seems to centre on educating and developing teachers, necessitates the provision and accessibility of continuing, relevant and engaging professional learning for teachers. Yet, just how much change and renewal realistically can be expected of teachers and how can leadership best facilitate the professional learning needed to support change and renewal?

An understanding of some of the factors conducive to, or hindering, professional learning is needed if we are to provide principals with strategies to foster meaningful professional learning that is conducive to student learning improvements and ameliorate barriers to professional development. Policymakers emphasise that excellence in teaching and teacher education is a critical characteristic of modern education (De Wever, Vanderlinde, Tuytens, & Aelterman, 2016). Capacity building is one of three teacher level predictor variables in Mulford and Silins' (2011) model and the only one that impacts on all three student outcomes of academic achievement, social development and empowerment. The drive to improve learning in schools has

turned the lens on teacher quality, therefore, building teacher capacity is seen as non-negotiable. Schoolwide professional learning is one approach employed to improve teacher quality, yet as already stated the track record has been far from spectacular. Previous research has focused on understanding why professional learning is far from productive, with this chapter endeavouring to draw on the findings of research that has explored the contribution of leadership to effective teacher professional learning and to bring together strategies that school leaders can employ to gain from professional learning and better support teacher learning. The significance of this study is that it brings together the recommendations of recent scholarly endeavours to explore best practice leadership for ensuring meaningful teacher professional learning. It is hoped that the practice of school leaders can be supported by perusing the effective strategies referred to in this text.

The challenge for those in the profession, and those leading the profession, is to articulate what is excellence in teaching and how do we become excellent? Policy-makers, the media and the general population are all demanding excellent schools with excellent teachers. Society expects that leaders, in particular, should be across the evidence for improvement of student academic achievement (Zierer & Hattie, 2018).

10.2 Objectives of Study and Research Questions

This chapter accepts the premise that strong professional learning positively develops teachers' classroom practices that then translate into higher student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). It contends that principals remain the central driving force in schools despite the emphasis now on distributed, shared and teacher leadership. It focuses on the role of school leadership for ensuring effective professional learning for teachers to increase teacher capacity. It explores the ability of leaders to foster continual, meaningful learning for all teachers to maximise teacher influence on student learning.

The aim of this chapter was to promote the strategies that leaders can employ in the provision of professional learning for teachers and to provide evidence-based suggestions for practising school leaders keen to ensure positive learning outcomes for their students. This chapter aimed to bring together the powerful nature of leadership and the positive potential of effective professional learning to influence the learning of students in our schools. It explored the literature on teacher professional learning and the role of leadership in promoting that learning. It synthesised what effective leaders do and how they do it. The intention was to focus predominantly on formal teaching professional learning within a school setting.

Few teachers expect to change their teaching practices as a result of participating either voluntarily or reluctantly in professional development (Timperley, 2011). Does the research literature on professional learning show that we have made any progress in the past few years? If education is to change, then transformation largely hinges on teachers changing their practice. If teachers are reportedly not engaging in change

(Twyford, Le Fevre, & Timperley 2017) and not really benefiting from professional learning, how can school leaders remedy the situation? While there may not yet be definitive frameworks for highly effective professional learning, this chapter concludes with the provision of possibilities for school principals to explore so that they maximise the teacher professional learning in their institutions.

The following research questions were examined in the present study:

- Research Question 1:** How can school leaders ensure that schools have a learning teaching force?
- Research Question 2:** What does contemporary research find to be the most effective strategies for change leaders to employ to support school-based teacher professional learning to maximise the impact on student learning outcomes?

10.3 Defining Teacher Professional Learning and Educational/School Leadership

The sense with which the term professional learning is used interchangeably with professional development is that of learning or developing knowledge, skills and understanding of teachers to enable enhanced teaching practice that will positively influence student learning. Professional learning is the professional acquisition of new knowledge, skills and understanding by teachers already in the profession to implement high-quality practices to improve student learning. The desired outcome for all students is at least one year's growth as a result of one year's instruction in a school, year on year. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined all effective professional learning as structured learning changing teacher practices that lead to improved student outcomes. This professional learning has seven identifiable features. The learning is content focused, active, supports collaboration, provides models of effective practice, utilises coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, and is of a sustained duration. Whatever the definition, it is desirable that the end goal of teacher professional learning be a measurable improvement in student learning.

The term school leadership as used in this chapter refers to the appointed school leader, usually referred to as the principal. Building on Hargreaves' (2010) notion of self-improving schools, in the context of this chapter the term school leader implies a school leader committed to improvement in the education of students and teachers in a school setting. While there is an increasing body of research that explains the influence of leadership, as well as strategies, to be enacted to attain an influence on student learning (Hitt & Tucker, 2016), the leadership strategy under consideration in this chapter is its influence on the professional learning of teachers. Although accepting that educational leadership is a broader concept, this chapter chose to focus on the person with formal authority—the school principal—and the direct activities of practices the principal may enact to maximise the effectiveness of teacher professional learning.

10.4 Conceptual Framework

The intent of this chapter was to support school leaders to be effective leaders of teacher learning. The focus was to specifically explore the research literature on the influence of school leadership on teachers' professional learning; thus, it adopted a qualitative approach focusing on research content analysis and synthesis to explore and understand successful strategies for school leaders to ensure that professional learning can lead to improvement in teaching strategies and learning outcomes resulting in positive change. It follows the process of

- formulating the problem and consideration of the questions that directed the study
- deciding the focus search of peer-reviewed journals and reports from 2014 to 2019
- searching the literature
- analysing and synthesising the information gleaned from the literature
- evaluating the research findings of previous research projects
- presenting an overview of the results (Cooper, Hedges, & Valentine, 2019).

This qualitative approach and an examination of the data allowed for questions to emerge through an inductive analysis of contemporary research literature. A thorough search of recent research began by accessing general databases including Google Scholar and ProQuest, and then progressed to more specific academic databases including ERIC to access recently published and relevant literature. This resulted in 64 articles being reviewed. The selection was confined to peer-reviewed journal articles and major international reports, specifically the OECD's TALIS reports of 20,164 (OECD 2014, 2019). Books and book chapters were excluded. Papers on educational leadership with a focus on broader leadership such as middle leadership, executive team leadership, system leadership and teacher leadership were excluded, as was literature not focused on teacher professional learning to improve student academic outcomes. It is acknowledged that teachers access a range of learning that is not all focused on student learning to assist with the roles that teachers have in schools.

To a large extent, the search was self-selecting as the emphasis was on recently published, peer-reviewed articles on teacher professional learning that also included references to the contribution of leadership to teacher professional learning, or articles on educational leadership focused on school leadership incorporating school professional learning. The selection was further narrowed by choosing only studies that focused on school leaders within school settings and the direct connection with student academic outcomes. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative studies, including studies of teacher attitudes towards professional learning, examination of principals to teacher improvement as well as previous systematic reviews of professional learning research, was drawn upon based on the relevance and strength of the findings and recommendations.

The review of the available literature was contextualised and references some seminal studies from an early period in the twenty-first century. While much of the

current literature on professional learning focuses on professional learning communities and networked approaches to professional learning, this chapter limited its focus to individual teacher professional learning within the school context. The survey and consequent filtering of the literature were to identify approaches to professional learning at an individual teacher and school level to identify possible suitable approaches to teacher professional learning that could be adopted by school principals. All studies and articles had to make an explicit connection between the two concepts of school leadership and in-service teacher professional learning. There is a growing interest in research on leadership (Gumus et al., 2018), hence the concentration on the literature of mainly the past 5–6 years.

Full, careful reading and analysis of the selected articles to elicit evidence-based strategies, practices and approaches to be consolidated resulted in the recommendations in this chapter. This literature review approach brought together the findings and conclusions and these were analysed and synthesised to provide evidence of effective leadership practices that positively contribute to teacher and student learning. The evidence provided a range of practical strategies to enable principals to capitalise on the professional learning undertaken by their teaching staff to maximise student learning and enact continuous school improvement. The concentration was specifically on what does make a difference to suggest the most influential pathway for school leaders to influence the learning in their schools.

10.5 Discussion

Educational leadership has long been a recognised genre and the scholarship is voluminous in output. The literature consistently focused on the role of leadership in educational improvement at a school and system level. Yet the field is not without criticism. Brooks and Normore (2015) remarked that ‘put simply, many studies ostensibly focused on educational leadership are indeed not studies of educational leadership at all. As a field the scholarship is tended to be very strong on leadership and very weak on education’ (p. 802).

It could be the case that marked improvement in education and assistance level may require an emphasis on between school rather than in-school improvement (Prenger, Poortman, & Handelzalts, 2017). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) remarked that the conceptualisation of ongoing professional learning that is part of a collective effort, rather than an individual undertaking, was the ‘next emerging horizon for teacher learning’ (p. 304). However, this chapter maintained a focus on the within-school professional learning and performance enhancement. While recognising that much teacher learning is informal (Kyndt, Gijbels, Grosemans, & Donche, 2016), the focus also remained on more formal forms of professional development, which is organised, time-bound professional development usually at the school level.

There are significant gaps in the literature. In searching for interrelated themes emerging from the discussion and recommendations of this review of the largely recent literature, it was evident that there was still work required to investigate the

role of principal leadership in promoting and advancing effective teacher professional learning. Much of the recent scholarly endeavour in this area has looked at the potential of networked leadership, networked professional learning and increasingly the role of system leaders. This reflects the contemporary emphasis on achieving large-scale improvement across jurisdictions and nations. Thus, a gap in exploring what is currently happening at the individual school level becoming evident.

Nevertheless, the discussion that follows presents the ways in which principals can enhance student learning outcomes through their leadership of teacher professional learning. It considers the practise of instructional and transformative leadership, ensuring positive teacher perception of leadership for learning, creating a learning culture and promoting professional learning communities within the school. Principals leading the school's professional learning agenda, connecting professional evaluation with professional learning, dismantling barriers to effective professional learning providing research-informed school-based professional learning and encouraging reflective practices and action research are also considered.

10.5.1 Leadership Impacting Student Learning Through Teacher Professional Learning

Since the 2008 study by Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, the role of leadership and the potential influence of leadership on student outcomes has become the baseline for consideration of the contribution of leadership to school improvement. Much effort is being made in the realm of educational leadership, to identify exactly what are the effective leadership characteristics required to meet the complex needs of a rapidly changing world (Sun, Chen, & Zhang, 2017). Professional learning can be judged effective if it improves teaching (Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016). If school leadership plays such a strong contributing role towards improving teaching and continuous professional learning has the potential to increase student performance, then bringing these two contributing factors together should multiply the benefits. While it is common practice to allocate the lion's share of resources for teacher professional learning at the pre-service education level, lifelong learning is the key in this rapidly changing world (Schleicher, 2016).

The diversity of the contemporary student population, rapid advances in the use of technology, and the complexities of teaching to visible, public professional standards, as well as increased levels of accountability, demands the need for, indeed the mandated requirement for, teachers to engage in ongoing professional learning. Yet this begs the question as to whose responsibility is it to ensure the teaching staff and individual schools use professional learning to inform improved teaching practices to ensure continuous improvement of student learning? While there is professional responsibility on the part of the individual teacher, the collective needs of an institution would suggest that a fair degree of responsibility lies with individual school leadership. Given the advances in research in both educational leadership and the

potential of teacher professional learning to influence improved teaching strategies, contemporary research, while limited, supports the notion that the principal has a major role to play in enhancing the benefits of targeted in-school professional learning.

The school leader is the champion of the profession at the individual school level. The current tendency to assume that if schooling is not delivering the outcomes deemed optimal by the policymakers then the teachers are the problem creates an atmosphere of despondency within the profession. Shifting the focus from teachers being the problem to teachers holding the solution may make a difference. The school leader can lead teacher learning by allowing teachers to explore new ways of meeting the everyday challenges of their individual classrooms so that a measurable difference to student learning is more likely (Timperley, 2015). However, the principal cannot simply provide the opportunities but must actively participate in continuous professional learning at the school level. While media and policy focus echoes ‘teacher quality’, energies should be directed towards leaders and their role in ensuring quality through the provision of outstanding professional learning.

Leadership has the potential to improve teaching and learning through setting objectives and influencing classroom practice (Hopkins, 2015). Hitt and Tucker’s (2016) thorough synthesis identified in their systematic review of key leader practices influencing student achievement provides a summary of what empirical research has reported are effective leadership practices. These include what they refer to as five domains of

- a. establishing conveying the vision
- b. facilitating high-quality student learning experiences
- c. building professional capacity
- d. creating a supportive organisation for learning
- e. connecting with external partners (p. 542).

This chapter concentrates on domains c and d. While there may not yet be definitive frameworks for highly effective professional learning, Hitt and Tucker’s (2016) analysis of the capacity of the three frameworks they studied, the Ontario leadership framework, the learning-centred leadership framework and the essential supports framework indicate that all three emphasise providing opportunities to learn for principal and teachers, creating communities of practice, and ensuring a responsibility for learning as contributing to positive transformation.

Hopkins’ (2015, p. 17) framework provides further direction and suggests that principals can lead by

- Establishing structures for scaffolding teacher development
- Making peer coaching ubiquitous
- Creating protocols for both teaching and learning
- Incentivising teacher teams
- Ensuring that observations are non-judgemental.

The most common form of leadership researched since 2005 has been distributed/collaborative and teacher leadership; however, the focus has remained on

the principal to support distributed leadership collaborative leadership and teacher leadership (Gumus et al., 2018). The focus is on how to improve teacher professional learning, as much of the research on educational leadership models has emerged since 1980.

The underlying assumption is that effective professional learning will result in more effective teaching, and thus more effective learning. Past research has concentrated on exactly what is effective professional learning (Guskey, 2000) and how teachers best learn (Putnam & Borko, 1997; Putnam & Borko, 2000) and under what conditions (Cordingley, 2015). Often, the purpose of professional learning is to have teachers implement ‘someone else’s great ideas, preferably with high levels of fidelity’ (Timperley, 2015, p. 6). Opfer and Pedder (2011) concluded that the influence of professional learning was often lessened because schools generally did not adopt a coherent, well-coordinated approach to learning. These problems must be addressed by the school leader so that professional learning for teachers is cumulative and widespread, and measurably influences student learning progress.

Timperley (2015) presents a challenge for leaders to create the conditions for learning to empower teachers so that they have a strong sense of responsibility for their own and whole school learning. The AITSL’s (2011) *APSP* advises that principals should place learning at the centre of strategic planning and refers to the ‘learning leader’ as one who, amongst other attributes, establishes, ‘...an environment that provides opportunities for all staff to learn and improve together’ (p. 8).

This chapter contends that learning leaders need to do much more than establish an environment and provide opportunities. Wilkinson and Kemmis’ (2015) case study of leadership as leading confirmed the positivity of adopting an enquiry approach to learning, which was modelled in subsequent professional learning opportunities. Leveraging research as professional learning is one way that forward-thinking principals who are focused on leading educational change can be proactive. Promoting a culture of enquiry and learning, or what Leithwood et al. (2019) identified as stimulating growth in the professional capacities of staff, along with building trusting relationships and providing instructional support is a good beginning. Defining school leadership as leadership for powerful learning reminds us that the challenge for principals is to keep the focus on learning and not to be distracted by competing demands. The markers for experienced teachers’ professional development must coincide with the markers for continuous whole school improvement. Hopkins (2015) claimed that the ‘overwhelming importance of leadership in the pursuit of realising our collective moral purpose—the enhancement of student leadership and potential’ is non-negotiable (p. 19).

Two leadership models frequently referred to in educational leadership research that has the potential to improve teacher learning are transformational leadership and instructional leadership.

10.5.2 Principals can be Transformational Leaders

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) confirmed that leaders do influence teachers' willingness to learn to improve. This is most apparent in transformational leadership, which appears to influence the motivation of teachers to learn and potentially change their practice. However, there are too few studies available to be confident that this form of leadership is the correct approach (Eliophotou-Menon & Ioannou, 2016). There is growing evidence of the power of transformational educational leadership in many nations (Sun & Leithwood, 2015; Sun et al., 2017). One aspect of transformational leadership is creating trust. Trust is related to the level of teacher engagement in professional learning based on Timperley's (2011) work. Learning from others and exposing current teaching practices to colleagues and leaders is possible if a relationship of trust mitigates the risk. Replacing what many feel are tried and tested practices with untried, yet potentially beneficial, teaching strategies, requires trust and permission to risk failure. Acknowledging that collaborative school-based learning requires trust between the leader and teachers as well as among others this trust is security teachers perceive agency by principles involving teachers in the decision-making and then active participation in the learning. Trust in leadership is essential. Equally essential is the role of the principal in maintaining a strong culture of expectation and support for the development of teacher capacity building with a specific focus on the use of student learning data to drive teacher decision-making that can enhance teacher quality and student learning (Johnston & George, 2018, p. 697). Twyford et al.'s (2016) case study research of 21 teachers across three schools found only three teachers experienced little or no perceptions of risk and vulnerability in their professional learning and developmental experience. While this was only a small study, a replication of this would most likely result in similar findings. Furthermore, these authors reported that the risk and vulnerability influenced the teacher's capacity to learn. Thus, how can school leaders reduce risk anxiety and create an environment where teachers learn why and how to change teaching practices in line with the transformational needs of the school? One way is for school leaders to ask the 'how we are travelling' and 'where to next' questions in a non-blaming way, which grants permission to teachers to learn what is needed for progress (Timperley, 2015). Another way is by learning with teachers, which provides principals with the information into what is needed to support teachers during the implementation of new practices (Hallinger et al., 2017).

Through building and sharing a sense of purpose, encouraging greater effort and inspiring higher values, progress is possible (Sun et al., 2017). A transformational leader who listens and understands the values and goals of an individual teacher and provides timely and positive feedback can potentially meet the learning needs of students by meeting the learning needs of teachers (Sun et al., 2017). Leithwood and Sun's (2018) quantitative exploration confirmed that transformational leadership practices where the leader was open, amendable, supportive, established high expectations, and was aware of the bureaucratic demands placed on the teaching staff were to be encouraged. These transformational characteristics when combined

with instructional leadership practices that encourage teachers to focus on optimising instructional time, promoting a culture centred on academic excellence, and where teachers are encouraged and supported to improve the classroom instruction have a relatively direct influence on lifting outcomes. It is this simultaneous integration of instructional and transformational leadership that has the greatest potential for leaders to increase their indirect impact on student learning (Leithwood & Sun, 2018). Supportive leadership is integral to school reform and the capacity building of teachers. Transformational and instructional leadership dominates the leadership literature, although increasingly the focus in leadership is broader than the principal (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

10.5.3 Principals can be Instructional Leaders

Instructional leadership is also a very popular area of study (Gumus et al., 2018). The concept of instructional leadership, or as Bush and Glover (2014) prefer ‘leadership for learning’, which emphasises learning rather than instruction, has gained traction in the past decade (Gumus et al., 2018). The essential focus of instructional leadership is learning, pedagogy and instruction. Instructional leaders demonstrate best practice instruction and the professional conversations leaders have with teachers are concerned with teaching and learning. Thus, instructional leaders are those who spend a sizeable proportion of their time improving the instructional quality of teachers in this form of leadership. The demand-enhanced student assessment practice, special needs pedagogy, cross-curricular activities and student classroom management are all increasing areas of need for teachers as the complexity of the classroom multiplies (OECD, 2019). This form of leadership hinges on the notion of leaders influencing student learning through their capacity to influence teachers (Bush & Glover, 2014). Instructional leadership is the obvious form of school leadership that is most likely to ensure the establishment, development and flourishing of a school’s professional learning platform. Instructional leadership has the potential to transform the business of schooling, that is, teaching and learning. However, as Vanblaere and Devos (2016) reported, the teachers they studied identified their leaders as transformational leaders and only instructional from time to time.

Time spent on curriculum and teaching-related tasks such as developing curriculum, physically teaching, observing teaching, mentoring teachers, designing and organising professional development, and student evaluation are key aspects of instructional leadership that, on average, occupy only 16% of a principal’s time. Yet 70% of current principals reported attending training to become instructional and pedagogical leaders with a particular interest in improving teacher collaboration (OECD, 2019).

To some extent, it is the role of an instructional leader to share their enhanced instructional knowledge and skills with teachers, instructing teachers who then instruct students, and thus potentially transforming learning and teaching. The

accepted wisdom based on Robinson et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis is that principals can influence student learning in their capacity as instructional leaders. One aspect of this form of leadership is teacher development.

Acknowledging that the current thinking around instructional leadership is a more distributed model (Gumus et al., 2018), the role of the principal remains pivotal. Indeed, it is a principal who participates as a learner, who is actively engaged in teacher learning as well as individual learning, who then gains the trust of his or her teachers, further increasing the impact of leadership on learning. In the best evidence synthesis work by Robinson and her colleagues (2008) that distilled the five leading attributes of an effective leader as being:

- setting goals and expectations,
- resourcing strategically,
- ensuring quality teaching,
- leading teacher learning and development, and
- ensuring an orderly and safe environment,

it was the fourth domain of leading teacher learning and development that had the highest effect size on student achievement, which had twice the impact of the other four domains.

Hallinger, Liu, and Piyaman (2019) defined learning-centred leadership as 'a process whereby school leaders motivate, guide and support teacher learning and school improvement' via a four-dimensional approach to leadership comprising building a learning vision and articulating the purpose of teacher learning; motivating teachers by providing inspiration, encouragement, trust, care and respect and providing learning support, managing the learning programme, and modelling.

There is limited literature that explores the possibilities for transformational and instructional leadership to improve student learning. Combining both transformational and instructional leadership strategies appears to hold promise (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). Leadership does matter. It is the visionary and inspirational aspects of transformational leadership, where leaders build structures and cultures, develop people, plan the curriculum and evaluate teaching and teachers to impact positively on student learning when combined with the instructional leadership elements of raising teaching performance expectations of self and students, improving conditions for teaching and learning and using data and research that has the greatest potential for transformation and impact on student learning (Day et al., 2016). Yet Schleicher (2016) is forthright when he states that 'school leaders should be encouraged to focus on instructional leadership' (p. 47).

Instructional leadership, however, is not without its challenges. One of the identified challenges is in a secondary setting where instructional leadership with a content focus becomes more problematic. As principals cannot be expected to possess all content knowledge, some suggest they employ transformational leadership strategies by encouraging and supporting teacher-led professional learning where teachers in a secondary context are provided professional learning by subject department content experts (Valckx, Devos, & Vanderlinde, 2018). The immediate potential of instructional leadership to directly influence teacher performance as it focuses on the

instruction, curriculum and student performance would appear obvious but there is little contemporary research into this potential.

Instructional leadership is sometimes now seen as ‘shared instructional leadership’, where the principal interacts and collaborates with others to improve the school’s instructional programme (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). In this role, the leader is more of a ‘facilitator of continual teacher growth’ (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 534). This chapter strongly argues in agreement with Hitt and Tucker (2016) whereby extending principal expertise and understanding of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, and modelling high levels of curriculum, pedagogical and assessment knowledge, skills, and understanding is more likely to garner a positive response for improving the instructional programme and the quality of teaching because of increased levels of perceived credibility. Principals focusing on instructional leadership, developing themselves so they become expert instructional leaders, even adopting the role of mentor (Althaus, 2015) and then sharing leadership responsibilities for other facets of school management (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016) is one way of strengthening competence. Teachers are then more likely to be willing to learn and work towards improvement.

School leaders should be instructional leaders, which means being involved with teachers and teaching (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). School leaders should actively promote a schoolwide culture with a focus on learning and high achievement (Kraft & Gilmour, 2015). These knowledgeable leaders can provide suggestions and guidance as instructional leaders, and thus support and encourage teachers in transformational practices. Hallinger (1992) claimed that few principals had ‘the instructional leadership capacities needed for meaningful school improvement’ (p. 38). The need is for a reorientation of the principal’s role that requires training and socialisation experiences to help principals and thus develop the necessary knowledge and skills relevant to the role as a learning leader (Hallinger et al., 2017). Yet, school leaders can work towards the acquisition of pedagogical knowledge, skills, and understanding, and thus position themselves as role models of best classroom practice. They can ensure that instructional leadership is the strongest element of their personal leadership practice. As Althaus (2015) outlined, ‘professional development designed to create positive change with student achievement needs to focus on how to improve content and pedagogical knowledge, teach best practices, and redirect teachers’ attitudes to students’ learning requirements’ (p. 210). Transformational, instructional leaders who also practise relational leadership are most likely to maximise the professional improvement of teaching staff and transform their schools. When teachers are supported in and recognised for their efforts, then they are more likely to support endeavours to improve.

10.5.4 Principals can Ensure Positive Teacher Perception of Leadership for Learning

Vanblaere and Devos (2016) explored the perception of leadership by teachers in relation to professional learning communities with teachers in 48 primary schools. Professional learning communities appeared to hold promise for teacher learning. What these authors found was that leaders who exhibited instructional leadership behaviours and when his or her own focus was specifically on instruction encouraged their teachers to likewise focus on instruction. This perception of instructional leaders being in charge of instruction is powerful as it confirms that these leaders model behaviours that are conducive to instructional improvement and that they are publicly demonstrating what they value as a school leader.

Leadership in high-performing schools as reported by teachers is more focused on teaching and learning and is seen to be an instructional resource for teachers, and leaders are more active participants in, and leaders of, teacher learning and development (Robinson et al., 2008). The presence of instructionally focused leadership influences the effectiveness of professional learning (Schleicher, 2016). The more that teachers note that the principal is fully participating in active teacher learning and development, the higher the student outcomes' (Robinson et al., 2008). Little wonder then that the leadership dimension that is most strongly associated with positive student outcomes is the one that has leaders promoting as well as participating in teacher learning and development (Robinson et al., 2008).

To be successful, leaders can focus on developing their personal leadership capacity in motivating and coaching teachers who create opportunities for instructional and content coaching (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Valckx et al., 2018). While there is an expectation on school leadership to stimulate professional learning, there is little research exploring the potential of leaders to achieve more if they lead and actively participate in the learning and then follow-up this learning.

Acknowledging the limitations of teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership, leaders whose behaviours are both demonstrative of instructional leadership and transformational leadership are inspirational in affecting change in teacher practices and beliefs (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Ross and Cozzens' (2016) study of 375 teachers in Tennessee, USA found that teacher perception of leadership qualities deemed to be successful in promoting better teaching and learning were ones where successful leaders exhibited high-level capacity in professionalism, curriculum, instruction, respect for diversity, collaboration and assessment.

Hallinger et al.'s (2017) study focusing on teacher professional learning in China and Thailand provides a refreshingly non-Western perspective on this topic as does Zheng et al.'s (2017) study on the impact of principal leadership on student outcomes in China. The claim that improvement needs school leadership as the driver for change (Bryk, 2010) holds as true in non-Western settings as it does in Western settings. Leaders should be highly visible, especially with their own and the school's professional learning. Other people notice their actions and the fact that these actions reflect what they expected their teachers then change is more likely (Hitt & Tucker,

2016). Leaders need to develop their own curriculum, pedagogical and assessment knowledge as well as develop that knowledge in those they lead. This not only furthers their reputation as an instructional leader but it also ‘better equips the principal to be a source of knowledge and assistance’ (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 548). This modelling behaviour emphasises the centrality of learning, including teacher learning. School leaders’ visible participation in strategically aligned professional learning demonstrates to all teachers what is a priority for the school (Valckx et al., 2018) and has a high impact. Furthermore, the trust engendered by this visible participation is invaluable.

10.5.5 Principals can Create a Learning Culture and Promote Professional Learning Communities Within the School

Leading change by garnering a collaborative, team oriented, whole of school approach focused on working towards excellence provides principals with the opportunity of furthering their indirect influence on student learning (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The concept of site-specific professional learning communities was a major step forward in a renewed focus on the influence of professional learning and its role in assisting teachers to promote increased student learning outcomes. There has been much exploration of the role of these professional learning communities and their potential to improve the quality of classroom practice (Dufour & Eaker, 2009). The literature is replete with ideas on how to establish and run effective professional learning communities. It is an expectation that professional learning communities exist in schools (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). The efficacy of these communities is enhanced by effective leadership.

Purposely developing communities of practice for adult learning as well as creating regular job-embedded learning opportunities encouraging and expecting professional dialogue and examination of student work is the role of leaders (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Owen (2016) maintained that leadership support together with distributed leadership and a focus on teacher improvement were the crucial elements for high functioning professional learning communities. Future research could focus on the role of a school leader with the professional learning community model of professional learning. The creation and maintenance of a positive whole of school culture require principals to set high-performance standards for teachers as well as providing them with the necessary structure and support for collaborative capacity building (Johnston & George, 2018).

The potential of school leadership to foster a culture of collaboration, which seems to be a factor conducive to teacher learning, motivating teachers to work interdependently rather than dependently, is worth consideration (Tam, 2015a, b). Teacher collaborative approaches expand the potential of professional learning to improve teacher practices (Lynch, Madden, & Knight, 2014). Although suggested

in the context of networks, Munby and Fullan's (2016) directive that we move from collaboration to co-responsibility to a position of shared professional accountability appears to be sound advice. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) acknowledged that principals can create a learning culture and establish the optimal conditions for learning; however, they cannot guarantee that a school's professional learning programme will flourish. This statement needs challenging. It is the role of the school leader to ensure that a professional learning programme will flourish. Just how can a school leader convince all teachers, not just those who are highly motivated, to fully engage in professional learning that meets the practice needs of the individual teacher and the improvement goals of the whole school? It is the principal who provides the strategic alignment between the needs of the teacher and the school and articulates both. When teachers perceive the clarity of purpose among professional development, individual practice improvement, student practice and whole school improvement, progress is more likely (Schleicher, 2016).

Teachers are intrinsically motivated to participate in learning to better cater to students (OECD, 2019). This learning can range from highly structured right through to informal including peer collaboration as well as professional reading. Principals can create an environment where, as Kools & Stoll (2016) note

- Teachers want and dare to experiment and innovate in their practice
- The school supports and recognises staff for taking initiative and risks
- Staff engage in forms of inquiry to investigate and extend their practice
- Inquiry is used to establish and maintain a rhythm of learning, change and innovation
- Staff have open minds towards doing things differently
- Problems and mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning
- Students are actively engaged in inquiry (p. 45).

Creating a learning culture begins with high expectations of teacher learning and subsequent teacher performance. Principals follow this up by creating and stimulating opportunities for high-level teacher debate, and an expectation of and resources for collegial learning, all of which can change teacher beliefs and thus classroom practices (Owen, 2016).

This learning culture can be supported by ensuring that professional learning is grounded in the day-to-day teaching practices, it occurs regularly, and takes place within the school environment (Lynch et al., 2014). Providing opportunities for, and encouragement of, active learning and collaborative learning with teachers who are co-constructors of their own learning is powerful professional learning. The identification of teacher needs is also paramount in terms of subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and competencies in teaching (OECD, 2019).

Professional learning cultures that are supported and sustained by pedagogical leadership of principals who themselves have learned how to create, lead and sustain the learning culture foster effective teacher professional development that has an impact on the instructional practices of teachers. By identifying the patterns of professional learning that are conducive to the establishment of professional learning communities, thus increasing professional conversations, collaboration and

collegiality, principals can strategically position the school's professional learning programme to meet the changing needs of the individual school.

10.5.6 Principals can Connect Professional Evaluation and Professional Learning

The notion that teacher learning needs can be identified through appraisal and evaluation is not new (Kraft, & Gilmour, 2016). Indeed, there are consistent calls for strengthening the links between teacher appraisal and professional development (Schleicher, 2016). Leaders can assist individual teachers via an alignment of teacher appraisal and professional learning. Principal directed evaluation can be successful if the focus remains on areas for improvement (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Principals can actively and regularly evaluate the teachers functioning at schools with an emphasis on performance appraisal whose intention is developmental as it seems to be the most effective in influencing improvement of classroom teacher quality (Valckx et al., 2018).

Using evaluation to determine individual, or even whole of school, professional learning needs can be challenging for principals. The most obvious challenge is the time commitment owing to the competing demands of all aspects of school leadership. The principal taking primary responsibility for the evaluation of teachers results in less frequent observation and feedback. Another challenge, especially in a secondary setting, is that the principal's field of expertise may not coincide with the teacher's expertise. Providing feedback outside the principal's area of expertise is challenging but expert feedback can focus on broader pedagogy rather than specific. Nevertheless, this lack of perceived expertise can damage principal reputation, trust and respect.

School leaders are encouraged to prioritise those areas where teachers feel they need the most support. School leaders can provide opportunities to focus on areas to meet the learning needs of students in today's world. Principals can provide training opportunities for teachers that build confidence in their capacity and they can assist teachers to participate in the most pertinent training for them.

The research confirms the impact of school leaders in their own schools (Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2008). Yet there is still much work to be done to align individual teacher professional progress with ongoing school improvement. Greater alignment of teacher performance and development may be occurring but, again, this is often at the individual teacher level. By creating opportunities and mechanisms for teachers to share their professional learning goals and outcomes, school leaders can foster collaboration and collegiality as well as achieve the strategic outcomes required for school improvement. Skilled school leaders who foster collegiality and improvement within schools and who purposefully articulate a clear link

with teacher evaluation as well as recognising and rewarding teachers who are innovative, share their learning and work towards helping achieve school improvement goals make a difference (Schleicher, 2016).

Professional learning that is ongoing, collaborative, and collective, and is aligned with the school's commitment to continuous whole school improvement, offers great promise (Johnston & George, 2018). Setting an expectation of performance development by both students and teachers, supplemented with support is likewise conducive to change and school improvement (Johnston & George, 2018).

10.5.7 Principals can Dismantle the Barriers to Effective Professional Learning

The benefits for teachers of effective, continuous professional learning include

- increased content and pedagogical knowledge and skills
- increased willingness to innovate
- increased commitment to continual learning
- increased confidence and application of research to practice (Cordingley, 2015).

Yet effective professional learning is frequently thwarted by barriers. The attitudes of teachers towards professional learning and their associated behaviours are often seen as a barrier to effective professional learning in schools. A lack of trust is a major barrier. The role of leadership in focusing teacher learning on student learning is only one dimension of leadership impact. Teachers' sense of trust can be enhanced by a transformational leader who demonstrates appreciation (Valckx et al., 2018). Even highly engaged, self-motivated teachers may find their individual learning hindered by a lack of support, encouragement and access determined at the school level. Trust colours the willingness of teachers to improve (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). This is a situation well within the power of a principal to rectify (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Conditions for teaching and learning within schools as well as a broader system can influence the effectiveness of teacher professional learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). There are many barriers to effective school professional learning including inadequate resources such as teaching and curriculum resources, as well as ever-increasing demands on teacher time, the lack of a shared vision as to what constitutes high-quality instruction, competing requirements and poor foundational knowledge on the part of teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

School leaders can provide the necessary resourcing and time. There needs to be enough time for learning as well as for application (Althausen, 2015). Conflict with the day-to-day work schedule and insufficient time are the greatest barriers to professional learning identified by teachers (OECD, 2019). Thus, allocating enough time within the normal work schedule and promoting this as an incentive for learning is crucial. Other barriers to professional learning identified by teachers is a lack of material incentive activities, with incentive reimbursement and potential salary

increases seen as incentives to overcome potential barriers. Teachers questioning whether professional learning is for career advancement or simply to fulfil the mandatory requirements of a system or is it really for learning and building capacity are often left unanswered. Many teachers claim that professional learning is too expensive, it lacks relevance, they have little time due to family commitments, they lack employer support or they are not ready for the level of professional learning are other barriers identified in the recent TALIS report (OECD, 2019). Thus, the principal's role is to identify the barriers and then provide support to overcome these barriers. This support can be both the allocation of time and resources and guidance as to the most suitable professional learning that aligns with the learning needs of the individual as well as the learning needs of the school.

Other substantial barriers include the fact that often time is not allocated to teaching curriculum that employs the new knowledge and skills, as well as the need to finish the mandated curriculum and, in many cases, the fact that teachers need to buy their own resources (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Although often embedded in policy, professional learning is frequently fragmented and limited in scope, thus clearly identifying a valid link to teaching profiles and standards may eliminate this barrier (Schleicher, 2016).

Owen's (2016) case study identified principal practices such as providing teachers with the time and funding to attend external conferences, co-locating physical office spaces, and thus promoting opportunities for professional dialogue, providing release time and funding for teams to visit other schools, as well as encouraging opportunities for distributed leadership within professional learning communities and ensuring a focus on professional conversations within professional learning communities as strategies to create effective teacher professional learning.

10.5.8 Principals can Provide Research-Informed School-Based Professional Learning

The professional development research literature indicates that school embedded professional learning is the preferred option (Lynch et al., 2014; Schleicher, 2016). There is a discernible impact if professional learning is school-based and links individual teacher development school improvement needs. If teachers can identify the direct link between professional learning in which they are engaged and improvements in their own practice, student progress, and whole of school improvement, then professional learning is likely to be seen as worthwhile (Schleicher, 2016). Activities that occur in schools and allow teachers to work in collaborative groups on problems of practice do change teachers' instructional practices for the better.

Encouraging schools to develop as learning organisations strengthens the connection between research and practice. Over and again, the research emphasises the school as a learning environment for teachers as well as students. Principals can encourage and provide the learning opportunities and mechanisms for teachers to

interact with their subject peers, within grade peers as well as across grade peers (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). A key leadership practice should be the ‘synthesising, identifying and then defining whole group development opportunities...’ (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 551). Professional learning that takes place in schools creates a culture of improvement and a shared vision of the learning for that school (Jensen et al., 2016).

If the endpoint of teacher professional learning is to influence student learning, why is that, as Timperley (2015) reports, external provisional learning courses attended by teachers have little direct influence on classroom practice and much school-based learning fares little better? Timperley argues that this is because teachers are presented with a school-based challenge that they then are expected to solve by learning how to do better.

Making the bold claim that high-performing systems understand and prioritise the evidence-based professional learning practices that lift teacher and student learning, Jensen et al. (2016) explored how to improve teacher professional learning. While high-performing systems are useful for providing insight, the responsibility of the individual school leader can be sometimes overlooked. In high-performing systems, such as Singapore, much of the professional learning is school-based, ‘led by staff developers who identify teaching-based problems or introduce new practices in a teacher led culture of professional excellence’ (Schleicher, 2016, p. 36).

Knowledge-based school leadership best practice (Schleicher, 2016) includes

- support for in-service professional learning
- in-kind support such as time, monetary and non-monetary support for participation in long-term professional development
- support for practitioner research
- participation in practitioner research
- development of a professional development plan
- participating in network supporting teacher professional learning.

School leaders purposefully selecting the professional and learning programme is one way of articulating what is important to meet the needs of an individual school at a particular point in time and in a particular context.

School leaders and indeed system leaders can peruse the recommendations to assist their endeavours to ensure that within-school professional learning is making a difference to the lives of young people in their schools. Teachers are not only supported in the work that they do in schools and in their professional learning but they are also inspired by the principal (Valckx et al., 2018).

There is potential for transformational leaders to enhance participation and cooperation by allocating dedicated within work time for teachers to meet, discuss and share. Professional learning should be job embedded with learning connected to daily teaching practices and not promoted as an additional task but clearly linked to the content and strategies necessary for doing a high-quality job (Althausser, 2015).

10.5.9 Principals can Lead the School's Professional Learning Agenda

School leaders can promote teacher leadership, shared leadership and distributed leadership for professional learning but importantly remain a major instigator of and contributor to the professional learning programme. Another focus to consider is the development of teacher leaders, particularly through a model of distributed instructional leadership or a hybrid distributed leadership approach that provides teachers with opportunities and enhances professional learning, but the primary driver remains the principal (Bush & Glover, 2014).

School leaders should be accountable for the quality of professional learning within their institutions. They can create a professional development programme that is purposefully aligned to the high expectations for the learning of both staff and students. In line with transformational leadership practice, professional learning is always connected to the whole of school vision articulated by the transformational leader and is also responsive to teacher and school needs.

Principals leading workshops; sharing knowledge gained through external conferences; and initiating, encouraging and modelling schoolwide professional conversations are other avenues of adding value to professional learning programs in schools. Principals can create opportunities for mentoring and peer coaching. They can create time for collective planning, discussion and reflective dialogue with an in-depth focus on teaching (Valckx et al., 2018, p. 49). They can provide teachers with levels of autonomy and an open culture to discuss ideas and decide what needs changing, while continually keeping to the shared vision articulated by their transformational leadership (Parise & Spillane, 2010). Teachers co-creating continuing professional learning in conjunction with principals is another effective practice.

10.5.10 Principals can Encourage Reflective Practices and Action Research

School leaders can demonstrate an explicit interest in and support for research (Cordingley, 2015). Providing opportunities for teachers to research, practice and reflect on a range of professional learning to enhance student achievement falls within the principal's purview. School leaders can promote the use of evidence-based continuing professional learning strategies and create opportunities for, and the expectation that, teachers to be actively engaged in research regarding content and learning as part of their day-to-day professional practice (Cordingley, 2015). Effective teacher engagement with research as professional learning can have flow-on benefits such as creating opportunities for coaching and mentoring. The role of the principal is to provide sustained support for professional learning to enable the embedding of new evidenced-based strategies, as well as supporting the form of time, access to

research, modelling research behaviours and engaging in enquiry-based approaches to growth (Cordingley, 2015).

To achieve strong academic goals, principals should be conducive to innovation, collaboration, reflection, diversity and professionalism (Ross & Cozzens, 2016, p. 171). By endeavouring not to split the ‘sayings’ from the ‘doings’ (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015) principals can journey alongside their teachers on the path to a self-improving school. Collaboratively focusing on teaching aligned with the notion of continuous school improvement and exercising flexibility to achieve this focus pays dividends (Johnston & George, 2018).

10.6 Conclusions

This chapter examined the more recent research and the contribution of school leadership to uncover strategies that school leaders could employ to foster and support more effective professional learning by teachers that has the potential to improve student learning. Improving teaching quality is increasingly seen as the key to student achievement (Schleicher, 2016). The boundaries of this chapter, with its focus on learning-centred leadership of professional learning, did not extend to exploring the direct linking of effective professional learning with student learning. It did not intend to delve into the role of the various theoretical approaches to leadership or what constitutes effective professional learning.

Through a content analysis of the findings and recommendations of the more recent research literature, this chapter synthesised conclusions to guide leaders to focus their professional learning efforts on improvement in the most effective ways. The provision of professional learning is often a high expense item in school budgets. Thus, the chapter purposely directed its attention to principal school leadership to provide principals ready access to evidence-based strategies that they can control and implement in their schools.

Bringing together what is known from recent strong research studies regarding effective leadership practices that are most likely to result in enhanced professional learning thus ensuring that excellence in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment translates into growth learning for all students, this chapter confirmed the crucial role that leadership plays in the school. The direct connection with teachers increases the indirect influence on student achievement. By maintaining a strong focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment, as well as devolving other organisational management features of school leadership, teacher effectiveness can be increased, and thus student outcomes are enhanced (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Professional learning leads to an openness to new ideas and practices as well as the initiatives to put them into practice and assess the results. Intentionally seeking to support school leaders to not only be leaders of student learning but of teacher learning, this chapter through an analysis of the results of recent research showed the contribution of the leader’s role in effective teacher professional learning.

The purpose of this study was to provide effective strategies to assist those principals who wish to maximise the impact of their teachers' professional learning and change their leadership to do so. It is intended that leaders become aware of the potential influence they can have on the learning of teachers and hence students. It accepts Wilkinson and Kemmis' (2015) explanation that the very term leadership implies the notion of transformation and the premise that existing practices of leading can change.

Future research could investigate just how far educational leadership has moved and whether a claim can be made that the majority of principals now have the necessary instructional leadership capacities for meaningful school improvement. Scholarly research continues to provide recommendations to assist leaders to more effectively transform their institutions. An opportunity exists for research scholars to assist leaders to focus on the direct effects of principal leaders on the learning capacity of the teachers in schools. Hallinger et al. (2017) suggested that policy-makers should consider a focus on leadership and that learning is fundamental core business, particularly in those societies that are unfamiliar with leadership being described and designated as such. This review of school-based leadership practices highlights those practices that can make significant, sometimes relatively direct, contributions to student learning.

Future research concentrating on detailed qualitative and quantitative research on leadership, teacher learning and transformative learning is required. The trend line based on PISA results shows a weak but discernible link between teacher professionalism and better student learning outcomes; however, quantitative research is needed in this area. Continuing research on the influence of school-based professional learning communities as well as the contemporary shift to between-schools networked professional learning are further areas for future consideration. An evaluation of the impact of the implementation of the strategies suggested in this chapter and the relationship to more productive teacher professional learning is another area for future study.

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