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**The Place of Professional Learning Groups in the
Induction of In-Service Teacher Educators.**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Education
in
Adult Education**

**at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.**

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ABSTRACT

In New Zealand In-service Teacher Educators (ISTEs) provide professional development for teachers, principals and management in Early Childhood Centres and Schools. ISTEs have been teachers or principals themselves. However, the role of ISTE is different to that of a teacher or principal. There are varied practices throughout New Zealand relating to the induction of ISTEs. The research of Trowler and Knight (1999) concluded that educators required support in gaining explicit knowledge about their new professional role and a process was required to enable this learning to take place.

This study investigated how the use of professional learning groups (PLGs) supported the professional learning of five new ISTEs and also examined the perspectives of three members of the team responsible for implementing the PLGs. A mixed-methods approach was taken with predominantly qualitative and some quantitative information gathered from on-line surveys and semi-structured interviews.

Broadly, the study's findings suggested that ISTEs do find the transition into their new role difficult and that the PLGs were a relevant structure to support their professional learning and induction. The findings also identified factors related to the broader area of induction of ISTEs. These were collaboration, observation and feedback related to ISTE practice and the leadership and facilitation of the PLG.

This study's findings support research that concluded PLGs had the potential to strengthen professional learning and that there were conditions that were necessary for this to occur. The first was the purpose of the PLG related to the PLG as part of a larger induction structure. The second was what occurred in the PLG including the

composition of the PLG and the environment that was necessary within the PLGs for them to be effective.

Finally, the findings are presented relating to the ISTE's' and the Implementation Team's perspective on the continuation of the PLGs to support the professional learning of new ISTE's.

The findings support research that proposed the transition into new professional roles was stressful and that an induction process that met educators' needs was vital to positively support the transition.

The findings culminate in five recommendations and three suggestions for further research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the background to and reasons for this study. The chapter is divided into nine sections; the introduction, focus of the study, the rationale for the study, myself as a researcher, the research question, an outline of the induction process at University of X School Support Services (XSSS) to the end of 2007, clarification about the terms ‘problem of practice’ and ‘professional learning progressions’ used in this study, and finally an outline of the thesis structure.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

For over thirty years the Ministry of Education (MOE) in New Zealand has funded the continuing professional development of graduated teachers, known as in-service teachers, primarily through School Support Services that are located within universities throughout New Zealand.

The support is delivered by In-service Teacher Educators (ISTEs), traditionally called Advisors or Facilitators. ISTEs support teachers, principals and management in Early Childhood Centres and schools to critically reflect on and improve their practice, where necessary.

While ISTEs have been educational practitioners themselves, the role they adopt as an ISTE is different to that of teacher or principal. For example the age groups that teachers and ISTEs work with are different. Teachers work mainly with children and adolescents, while ISTEs work primarily with adults. Another example of difference is the setting that each group works in. Teachers generally work within one physical location and one institutional culture. They also focus on

the same group of learners as do the other colleagues in the school. On the other hand ISTE's work in many different physical locations and institutional cultures. ISTE's and their colleagues will not necessarily be focussing on the same group of learners.

“ISTEs in New Zealand work in a complex and rapidly changing environment. Within this dynamic setting, ISTE’s fundamental purpose remains constant: to support teachers to learn and improve their practice in ways that will lead to improved student outcomes” (MOE, 2008, p. 13).

FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

The focus of this study was to explore how well a professional learning group (PLG) structure supported ISTE's to transition into their new role when they joined University of X School Support Services (XSSS). The PLGs were used as a framework for all ISTE's in XSSS to critically reflect on their practice. The research focus was on five new ISTE's and their experiences of being members of a professional learning group. In addition to the new ISTE's' perspectives, I also investigated the perspectives of three members of the Implementation Team responsible for the implementation of the PLGs.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

There were two perspectives that provided the rationale for this study; the national perspective and local perspective.

National perspective

“Recent research indicates that what teachers know and do is the important influence on what students learn ... [therefore]... professional development [for teachers] is moving to centre stage as the primary vehicle for enhancing student learning outcomes”

(Ingvarson, 2003, p.1). Ingvarson (2003) proposed that an important element for improving student learning outcomes is to invest in teacher knowledge and skill. These points are supported by New Zealand research, for example Alton-Lee (2003), and Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, and Richardson (2003). This research indicates that teacher knowledge and skill need to be developed in several areas. Examples of these areas are; content knowledge, that is, the 'what' to teach, pedagogical knowledge, that is, the 'how' to teach it, and the relationships that are necessary for teachers to establish with students and families or whānau. It follows that if the professional development for teachers is to be effective it must be of a high quality and delivered by skilled facilitators or ISTE's. Piggot-Irvine (2007) identified that ISTE's need to be continually reflecting upon, evaluating and improving the professional development programmes that they facilitate, to ensure that these programmes are effective in building the capability of in-service teachers.

However when an educator becomes an ISTE, training for their new role varies considerably from one institution to another. At the time of writing, 2008, there were some national approaches to ISTE induction in certain learning areas, but not across all School Support Services for all ISTE's. Viskovic (2003) identified that few new tertiary educators, as ISTE's are, received training for their role and mainly learnt 'on-the-job.'

These were the factors at a national level that influenced this study, but there were also local factors that had influence. These are discussed in the following section.

Local perspective

I have been an ISTE for over five years. The need for evidence in the area of supporting the professional learning of new ISTE's was apparent to me in 2005 when I became involved in planning and

implementing the 'Induction Programme' for new ISTEes within XSSS. In 2006 I participated in In-service Teacher Education Practice Project (INSTEP). This was a MOE "... research and development project about the learning and practice of advisers, facilitators, resource teachers, and other in-service teacher educators" MOE (2006). For me, INSTEP highlighted the importance of professional learning for ISTEes.

The overall aim of the XSSS INSTEP project was to "... raise the quality of teaching and therefore student achievement by improving the quality of ISTE practice" (Pym, 2007, p.5). There were two main components to this research. The first was the use of PLGs, or pods as they were termed, as a "structure to enhance the sustainability of an ISTE professional learning community within [XSSS]" (Pym, 2007, p.5). The second component was the "...use of professional learning progressions to support the professional practice of ISTEes and to guide an individual's professional learning..." (Pym, 2007, p.5).

In 2007 I was privileged to be a PLG leader and as the year progressed I began to see new ISTEes undertaking professional learning in a way that I had not previously seen. Consequently, I became interested in how well the PLG structure supported the professional learning and induction of new ISTEes.

As a result of being involved in INSTEP and a PLG leader, I realised there was an opportunity to add to the body of knowledge related to supporting ISTE professional learning and induction. This research has the potential to be of benefit to a number of groups. The first groups are XSSS and MOE, because it provides evidence of the effectiveness of PLGs in relation to the professional learning and induction of new ISTEes. Therefore it has the potential to inform future policies and practices within XSSS and MOE. A second benefit is for future ISTEes within XSSS because the findings of this research may be used to inform induction and professional learning

programmes to meet ISTE needs. A final potential benefit was to the ISTEes in this research because it was an opportunity for them to reflect on and learn from their experiences.

MYSELF AS A RESEARCHER

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that we view the world through our own lenses of “language, gender, class, race and ethnicity” (p.24). Therefore the experiences that we have influence the choice of topic for research and how the findings are interpreted (Mutch, 2005), hence the need for the researcher to be open and transparent about their experiences and clarify the values that are held as a result of those experiences.

I am a 52 year old, middle class, married, pakeha woman with no children. I was born in New Zealand. My mother was born in New Zealand and my father had emigrated from England with his family when he was a boy. My paternal grandmother, who was born in England, had a considerable influence on me when I was growing up.

Even though I grew up in a working class family, the ‘family friends’ came from a variety of walks of life and ‘class,’ ranging from doctors to coalminers. This, along with strong Labour political views in the household and parents that were accepting of everyone, established a strong sense of all people being equal, a belief that I strongly hold today. I also have the belief that if everyone is equal, then so too are their views and perspectives, with no one perspective being able to be judged more right or wrong than the other. I believe that it is important to acknowledge that there are always a variety of views and perspectives on any given situation. This belief was fundamental in my choice of research methods.

Vocationally I have been involved in education for 33 years, with 23 of those as a primary school teacher. While I was a ‘generalist’ teacher, that is a teacher of all subjects, it was Social Studies and Health that were my passion. People and relationships are at the core of both of these areas.

I have been an ISTE with XSSS since 1998, with the majority of this time being involved in delivering professional development to teachers in the areas of Social Studies, Health and Student Wellbeing. Again, these areas are very people and relationship orientated.

These life and vocational experiences have influenced my choice of research question and methods.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Due to the lack of New Zealand based research relating to new ISTE professional learning, my own observations of ISTE’s transitioning into XSSS, my involvement in INSTEP and the ISTE induction programme in XSSS the following research question was developed.

Research question: How well do the structures of the professional learning groups used by XSSS support the learning needs of new In-service Teacher Educators?

The structures explored were:

- Peer observation and feedback of ISTE practice
- Sharing of philosophy of practice and elements of practice within the learning groups
- Facilitation of the group, including activities used within the groups.

The question was designed to fulfil the aims of the research. These were to investigate the research question and to use the findings to inform future professional development programmes for ISTE's within XSSS.

INDUCTION PROCESS TO 2007

Historically there have been induction processes within the wider institution of University X for a number of years. These have been for all new staff, regardless of the department that they belong to. Generally these have focussed on new employees gaining operational knowledge relating to the institution, for example employment agreements, ethical behaviour and information about the institution's identity. The length of these sessions have varied from an hour to a day. Depending on when a new employee started, this option may not have been available to them and they may have had to rely on information in a handbook, on the intranet, people around them or finding out for themselves.

Since 2005, XSSS had been endeavouring to implement an induction programme that focused primarily on ISTE practice, but also included opportunities for the operational knowledge required by ISTE's to be gained. Prior to 2007, there was an induction day at the beginning of the year for new ISTE's before all XSSS ISTE's met for two days. During the year the group of new ISTE's met on two to three additional occasions and were joined by any new ISTE's that may have been employed since the beginning of the year.

In 2007, as well as being part of the induction programme, new ISTE's were also members of the XSSS PLG's focussing on ISTE practice and using professional learning progressions designed to map shifts in ISTE practice. "[The professional learning progressions] allowed the ISTE's, with the [PLG leader] and other ISTE's, to identify gaps in

knowledge and practice in order to identify next learning steps” (Pym, 2007, p.16). To focus on their practice ISTE were required to select an element of their practice that they wanted to investigate more closely. This was termed their ‘problem of practice’. The terms ‘problem of practice’ and ‘professional learning progressions’ are clarified in the following section.

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRESSIONS

The term ‘problem of practice’ was first used in XSSS in relation to the INSTEP research. A problem of practice is something that the ISTE is interested in finding out more about in relation to their practice. It does not necessarily have to be a problem. “Looking at practice in this way helps teachers or ISTE to surface the assumptions underlying their decisions and can lead to improved practice” (MOE, 2008, p.28).

The professional learning progressions were developed within XSSS and were designed to map shifts in ISTE knowledge and practice and identify their next professional learning steps (Pym, 2007). The professional learning progressions related to the principles of ISTE practice within the INSTEP material and were a series of progressive statements, with indicators, to describe what ISTE practice might be like at each stage. At the time of writing the professional learning progressions had not been used outside of XSSS and were confidential to the institution.

Having introduced the study, the research is structured in a series of Chapters followed by Appendices and References.

THESIS STRUCTURE

Chapter One – Introduction

It has introduced the background to and the reasons for this study as well as my position as a researcher.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

It presents a review of relevant New Zealand and international research to identify training or induction processes that have supported the transition of educators into higher education institutes. This chapter is presented in four sections. The first is research and literature around the experience of individuals transitioning into higher education institutes. The second section focuses on the induction processes in relation to the professional learning of educators in higher education institutes. The third section examines the place of professional learning communities within the induction process. The final section is a chapter summary.

Chapter Three – Research Design

This chapter explores how the research question, relevant theories and my own world view drove the research process. It is presented in six sections. The first section places this study within Social Science Research. The second section presents the research framework underpinning this study, with each stage explored in detail. Then the ethical considerations are presented followed by data gathering, analysis methods and limitations of the research. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Chapter Four – Findings

The chapter begins with an introduction section, followed by the findings. The first part of the findings section relates to the experience of the ISTE's transitioning into XSSS. The second part develops the themes that emerged from the research related to the

induction of new ISTE's. The third part explores the findings related specifically to the PLGs.

Chapter Five – Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the findings of this research related to PLGs and aligns it with relevant literature, considers the implications of the findings, makes recommendations for further action or research and draws the study to a conclusion.

Appendices

Appendices of relevant documentation are included.

References

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER

The purpose of this literature review of relevant New Zealand and international research is to identify training or induction processes that have supported the transition of educators into tertiary or higher education institutes. Research relating to this group is relevant to this study because tertiary educators are entering a higher education institute to work with adults, in the same way as ISTEes.

Murray (2008) states that new teacher educators are an “under-researched and poorly understood occupational group ... whose complex needs during induction have yet to be fully explored” (p.118). The tertiary educators that Murray refers to here are involved in the education of pre-service teachers. I suggest that In-service Teacher Educators (ISTEes) are another group of professionals that are also under-researched and poorly understood, especially within New Zealand. The literature presented in this review is the most recent and relevant that I was able to locate.

This review is presented in four sections. The first considers research relating to the experience of individuals transitioning into higher education institutes. The second section focuses on the induction processes in relation to the professional learning of educators in higher education institutes. The third section examines the place of professional learning communities within the induction process and the final section is a chapter summary.

TRANSITIONING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES

Starting new employment is well known to be a major event in a person's life and career, especially when it involves a change of role and institution. Trowler and Knight's (2000) research shows that when individuals begin a new job in a higher education institute the experience is complex and demanding. Murray (2008) agrees that the transition into higher education work is challenging and stressful. This section explores some of the issues surrounding this transition.

The work of Staniforth and Harland (2006) identifies that the new tertiary educator is endeavouring to find their place in a new institution that is often markedly different to the setting they have just left. For example if the new tertiary educator is coming from a school setting it is likely that they have been relating to small numbers of colleagues on a daily basis. When they move into a higher education institute this interaction may increase dramatically. As a result the new tertiary educator endeavours to find their place within the new institution while maintaining their individualism, autonomy and co-operating with new colleagues. During this initial time Staniforth and Harland (2006) found that the new tertiary educator did not always fully understand what the new institution expected of them which created uncertainty and stress in their new role.

These findings align with initial indications from Harrison and McKeon's (2008) longitudinal study of five beginning teacher educators. They have found that for a new teacher transitioning into a higher education institute it was much more complex than moving into a new school. Four out of the five teacher educators in the study identified that they were unfamiliar with the operation of the new institution. All five identified that they were unsure of ways to work with adult students, having been used to working with children.

Murray (2008) supports Harrison and McKeon's (2008) initial findings. She contends that the transition to higher education work is challenging and stressful for three reasons. Firstly the new educator is unsure of their role (Wilson, 1990). Secondly the new teacher educators were challenged to adjust to working with adult learners and gain the necessary pedagogical skills to do this (Murray, 2005). Finally the new teacher educators had concerns over their own knowledge base (Murray, 2005). This last point meant some new teacher educators doubted their abilities and felt as though they were 'impostors' in the institution because they were yet to build an identity relating to their new role (Murray, 2005, 2008).

Murray (2008) found that, prior to entering the higher education setting, many of the new tertiary educators had built their professional credibility and identity as school teachers. These identities were based on a strong commitment to students, with teaching as the anchor to their professional identity. On entering the higher education setting, this foundation was shaken and a new one had to be established. Harrison and McKeon (2008) refer to this as a need to create an 'academic' identity as a teacher or tertiary educator. Harrison and McKeon's research identified that the building of this new identity created emotional turmoil as the new tertiary educator encountered unhelpful colleagues, obscure networks and an expectation from colleagues that they would be self-reliant. Harrison and McKeon (2008) argue that researchers need to know more about how new tertiary educators negotiate and enact membership in particular communities to develop identities that sustain their positive self-esteem. They suggest developing a sense of self is more motivating than simply considering ways of working. While research on tertiary educator identities and their development is limited (Murray, 2008), there is some research that indicates that one way that a new tertiary educator may build a new academic identity is through being mentored.

Spiller (2002, cited in MOE, 2008) proposes that when new tertiary educators in higher education institutes are mentored, the professional conversations undertaken as part of the mentoring process provide an opportunity for the new tertiary educators to come to terms with their role, thus supporting them in developing a new identity within the new institution and its culture.

Staniforth and Harland (2006) found that stress may be created during transition because the knowledge and skills that the new tertiary educator brings are not always transferable to the new setting. Murray (2008) cites a variety of studies that have shown that there is an assumption that new tertiary educators can simply transfer their existing knowledge and skills into a higher education institute setting with few problems, however Murray argues this may not be the case. New tertiary educators in Murray's (2008) research felt people in higher education institutes often had the unrealistic expectation that they would rapidly transition from a new tertiary educator to a fully functioning team member. Murray's (2008) research shows this did not happen and that it took time and support from colleagues and the institution to become a fully functioning team member.

While the new tertiary educator will have considerable professional knowledge, often discipline specific (Murray, 2008), Trowler and Knight (1999) argue that the new tertiary educator also needs tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is institutional knowledge, the knowledge of how things are done and knowledge of people in the institution. This type of knowledge is difficult to induct because it is often hidden or partially concealed, but Trowler and Knight (1999) contend that through induction, awareness at least may be raised and at best the tacit made explicit.

If new tertiary educators are expected to be fully functioning in their new role as quickly as possible they require an induction process that

allows this to happen as effectively as possible (Trowler & Knight, 1999).

INDUCTION

This review uses Trowler and Knight's (1999) definition of induction to be "... professional practices designed to facilitate the entry of new recruits to an organisation and equip them to operate effectively within it" (p.178). In this chapter the term 'new recruits' relates to new tertiary educators.

The research used in this section is focused on the induction of academic staff into higher education institutions nationally and internationally. The majority of this research used an interpretive method involving qualitative data, usually gathered through interviews with participants, with one study being a longitudinal study over a period of five years. The four consistent findings that emerged from the research related to:

- induction at an organisational level
- variation in the approach to professional development
- the need for induction to be ongoing
- identifiable structures and conditions within the induction process.

While these findings are presented here as separate entities it should be noted that they are interlinked and impact on each other.

Induction at an organisational level

All higher education institutes in the research had an induction process at an 'organisational' level, that is, concerned with the everyday functioning of the institution or department. The report of Trowler and Knight (1999) and the research of Boice (1991), Murray (2005), Staniforth and Harland (2006) and Viskovic (2003) identified that higher education institutes use induction processes that are based on a

structural and functional approach to transitioning new tertiary educators. This approach is focused on the operational part of the position, for example health and safety requirements, and not on the professional learning of the new tertiary educator.

The conclusions of Boice (1991), Murray (2005), Staniforth and Harland (2006), and Viskovic (2003) are consistent with Trowler and Knight's (1999) findings about induction processes in higher education institutes. The first is that new tertiary educators are treated as a group with little attention being paid to their individual experiences or needs. Secondly higher education institutions prefer formal, planned and sequenced induction structures over informal encounters to ensure consistency and efficiency in transmitting the knowledge that the institutions deems is necessary. However, the research of Haigh (2005) shows that while the institution may perceive the formal induction process to be the most valuable, new tertiary educators also value informal collegial interactions as part of their induction process. The third finding is that higher education institutions prefer to have a fixed time period for induction as opposed to a flexible approach. However, the initial research findings of Harrison and McKeon's (2008) study show that a flexible approach to induction is vital in supporting the transition of new tertiary educators into higher education settings. A fourth finding is that the culture of the institution is passed on by senior staff, with some senior staff perceiving that this was their role in the induction process. Finally, the research concluded that there was no value put on experiences that new tertiary educators brought to the culture of the institute. This meant that the existing culture could not be subverted.

All of these points culminate in the protection of the status quo as much as possible with an emphasis on the new tertiary educator being 'moulded' to fit into the institutional setting. This one-way process means that the new tertiary educator is expected to assimilate into the institution (Trowler & Knight, 1999).

The type of organisational induction outlined above frequently includes the use of handbooks. Barlow and Antoniou (2007) found that handbooks have a role to play in supporting the new tertiary educator to become aware of the operational running of the institution. However Trowler and Knight (1999) contend that the handbooks may not be as useful as the institution thinks because anyone reading the handbook requires a shared understanding of the language and concepts used in it. Generally, the handbooks are distributed without any such development (Viskovic, 2003), therefore it is difficult to ensure the consistency of understanding that the institute expects.

Induction processes based on an organisational approach, as outlined previously, do not address the complex and deeper issues of the new tertiary educators role (Trowler & Knight, 1999). The deeper issues are centred around the need for new tertiary educators to build a new professional identity (Haigh, 2005; Harrison & McKeon, 2008; Murray, 2008) and examine the 'how' to teach as opposed to the 'what' to teach.

Trowler and Knight (1999) and Viskovic (2003) found that induction programmes in the higher education institutes they studied were based on the acquisition of theory and discipline knowledge, not the methods of teaching adults. The 'what' had a greater focus than the 'how'. Boice (1991) also found this to be true and yet by the end of his research the new tertiary educators identified that what they needed to know was the 'how' to teach. Participants in Harrison and McKeon's (2008) research also identified that they needed to know 'how' to work with adults as an early requirement of induction. If the induction needs of new tertiary educators, that is, the need to create a new identity and gain the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil their new role, including the 'how' to work with adults, are to be met alternative approaches to induction other than the organisational induction process are required.

Alternative approaches emphasising the agency of the new tertiary educator and a recognition of the importance of their identity and role are proposed by Trowler and Knight (1999). These approaches recognise that higher education institutions are complex places. In summary the approach that Trowler and Knight (1999) propose has five elements. The first is that the induction process must meet the identified needs of new tertiary educators and that they are the best source for information about their needs. The work of Boice (1991) and Trowler and Knight (1999) suggests that new tertiary educators require a number of opportunities to ‘present’ their needs as they become more aware themselves of who they are in this role. The second element is that mentoring, when it is done well, is important in creating new tertiary educator’s identity. The third element is that new tertiary educators need lots of opportunities to interact with colleagues to acquire tacit knowledge, therefore collegial collaboration is important. The fourth element is that new tertiary educators need to be able to co-construct the culture of the institution. To achieve this, the institution and new tertiary educator need to be explicit about the vision and values of the institution. The final element is that the responsibility for induction under this approach relies on ‘local’ academic leaders, for example Heads of Departments or Teaching Team Leaders. Their role in induction may be important, but Trowler and Knight (1999) also note that in reality the increasing demands made on academic staff in higher education institutes has meant that people have become less communal and more privatised resulting in less opportunity for management to be involved in the new tertiary educator’s acquisition of tacit knowledge and identity creation. These have been highlighted as important in the effective induction of new tertiary educators.

Trowler and Knight (1999, 2000) are not alone in identifying these as viable approaches to the induction of new tertiary educators. The research findings of Anderson (2002), Boice (1991), Murray (2005,

2008), Staniforth and Harland (2006), and Viskovic (2003), all support this approach to induction. Each of these studies show higher education institutes endeavouring to move away from purely an organisational level induction approach to an approach that better meets the needs of the inductees that aligned with Trowler and Knights' (1999) recommendations.

Variation in the approach to professional development

The professional development practices, that is the way that new tertiary educators were supported in their professional learning, in relation to induction, varied considerably not only from institution to institution, as would be expected, but also from department to department within an institution (Boice, 1991; Murray, 2005; Staniforth & Harland, 2006; and Trowler & Knight, 2000).

Trowler and Knight (2000) found that it was not what the institution did, but what happened within the systems and culture that were created at a department level that impacted on the induction of new tertiary educators. In their literature they refer to communities of practice that new tertiary educators participate in. The community of practice is considered to be the group that the new inductee is a member of and where they take part in communal activities with others as part of their role and learn from these (Wenger, 1998).

Like Trowler and Knight (2000), Murray (2008) concluded that the most significant induction of new tertiary educators took place in the micro-levels of the teaching teams or communities of practice, where the new tertiary educator worked. One reason given for the importance of induction at this level was that because it was work based it focused on the needs of the new tertiary educator, a factor highlighted previously as a major feature in the successful induction of new tertiary educators.

The need for induction to be ongoing

Any induction programme needs to be ongoing (Murray, 2005; Staniforth & Harland, 2006). As highlighted previously the induction needs of new tertiary educators change over time and that it is important to monitor and respond to them, hence induction needs to be a flexible and ongoing process (Harrison & McKeon, 2008; Murray, 2005; Trowler & Knight, 1999). Murray's (2005) research suggests a period of at least two years.

Identifiable structures and conditions within the induction process

Research, for example, Boice (1991), Murray (2005, 2008) and Trowler and Knight (1999) shows that there are identifiable structures and conditions that support the induction of academic staff into higher education institutes. These are collaboration, feedback about practice, leadership and communities of practice. While these components are examined here as separate entities, they are closely aligned with each other and what happens in one area influences the effectiveness of another. For example it would be extremely difficult to have effective collaboration without conversations.

Collaboration

Research examined in this literature review has shown that collaboration with colleagues, or collegial collaboration, supports the induction of new tertiary educators in a number of ways. These are: sharing information, lessening professional isolation, collegial conversations, sharing of practice, mentoring and storytelling.

Sharing information

Firstly, Baker and McNicoll (2006), Clark (2001), Haigh (2005), Lindqvist and Reeves (2007) and Murray's (2008) research all concluded that collaboration is invaluable for the sharing of information to create explicit and tacit knowledge. The importance of knowledge sharing, especially tacit knowledge, has been highlighted previously as a vital element of a successful induction process for new tertiary educators.

Lessening professional isolation

Secondly, collaboration lessens professional isolation (Baker & McNicoll, 2006; Clark, 2001; Lindqvist & Reeves, 2007; Murray, 2008). These studies consistently found that the stronger the professional collaboration was, the more supported and less isolated the new tertiary educators felt. They had an increased sense of being part of a team (Lindqvist & Reeves, 2007; Murray, 2008). Harrison and McKeon (2008) concluded new tertiary educators valued highly collegial collaboration and noted the importance of the interaction between expert and novice educator.

Collegial conversations

Thirdly, collaboration provides the opportunity for collegial conversations. Haigh (2005), Foley and Stead (2002), Reid (2004), Senge (1994) and Zeldin (1998) identify the importance of collegial conversations, or 'learningful' conversations (Senge, 1994) in supporting the critical reflection and deep professional learning of educators. Deep learning has an opportunity to take place when educators examine their mental models, reflect on them and subject them to rigorous scrutiny by themselves and their colleagues. Mental models "are deeply held ingrained assumptions, generalisations or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action." (Senge, 1990, p.8).

Sharing of practice

Fourthly, collegial collaboration, especially through learningful conversations, provides the opportunity for the deprivatisation, or sharing of practice. For deep learning to occur, participants in the learningful conversation must explore and critique the assumptions that underpin their mental models. Brookfield (1995) proposes this can be achieved by exploring assumptions through four perspectives or lenses. They are the learner's own lens, a colleague's lens, the 'student's' lens and the lens of literature. This examination promotes critical reflection about professional practice (Brookfield, 1995; Reid, 2004; Senge, 1990) and that "Talking to colleagues about what we do unravels the shroud of silence in which our own practice is wrapped" (Brookfield, 1995, p.35). The unwrapping or exposing of educators' practice is commonly termed deprivatisation of practice (Boice, 1991; Du Four, 2004; Murray, 2005; Trowler & Knight, 1999, 2000).

Deprivatisation of practice may surface uncomfortable feelings and create dissonance when the conversations are focussed on examining the educators' espoused theories, what they say they do, and theories in use, what they actually do (Argyris & Schön, 1974). It is possible that the espoused theory matches the educator's mental model, but there may not be alignment with an educator's espoused theory and theory in use. Confronting this gap may create stress and a loss of esteem for educators. However the dissonance created by examining espoused theories and theories in use, can cause people to change their practice to more closely align with their espoused theory (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). To do this effectively the educator must have or develop the ability to be a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983). "A Reflective Practitioner is a person who can think critically about their own practice, plan change and observe the effects of the modifications in action" (Boud, 1995, cited in Baker & McNicoll, 2006, p.28).

Mentoring

The fifth point is that collaboration provides the opportunity for mentoring of new tertiary educators. This literature review uses Tomlinson's (1995) broad definition of mentoring. "... assisting student-teachers to learn how to teach in school-based settings" (p.7). In the context of this review the student-teacher is the new tertiary educator and the school-based setting is the higher education institution. In relation to the term mentor St. Clair (1994; cited in Katz & Coleman, 2001) suggests that "Most professionals consider a mentor to be an experienced person who provides the mentee with support, encouragement and knowledge. In return, the relationship is also likely to foster the mentor's professional activity and growth" (p.224). "The intention of mentoring is to be a supportive and enabling process that has as its primary goal the professional development in order to sustain and grow high quality professional practice" (Baker & McNicoll 2006, p.29). Baker and McNicoll (2006) argue that peer mentoring is "... synonymous with critical reflection and promotes a most effective professional development tool to support being a reflective practitioner" (p.28). The research of Harrison and McKeon (2008), Moir and Gless (2001), Murray (2005), Staniforth and Harland (2006), and Trowler and Knight (1999) support Baker and McNicoll when they identify the importance of peer mentoring to enable educators to critically reflect on their practice.

Peer mentoring differs from traditional forms of mentoring because there is an absence of an identified expert and the peer group are colleagues of equal status with no-one having power over the others (Baker & McNicoll, 2006).

Baker and McNicoll (2006) propose that peer mentoring can take place in a variety of forms, for example with an experienced colleague on an individual basis, meeting with a manager or meeting with a peer group. Trowler and Knight (1999) contend that peer mentoring is best

undertaken with a number of people being involved. The strength of having a group involved in peer mentoring to support professional learning is also identified by Baker and McNicoll (2006) because it “... draws on the notion that collectively within a group there is a pool of skills, experience and resources that can be used to support educators as they review their work experiences in order to develop their professional skills and competencies – ‘no-one knows as much as all of us’” (p.28). This view is supported by Austin (2002) who argues that there is growing evidence of the important role that peer groups have in the development of professionals.

Baker and McNicoll’s (2006) research also identified that group based mentoring has the potential to go wrong and suggest the following areas as common pitfalls. They contend that mentoring sessions may become gossip and gripe sessions and that initially the group may begin with commitment, but this can lessen as other demands on the member’s time takes priority. There may not be enough time given to address everyone’s mentoring needs and that it is possible that group members do not feel safe to their share ideas, problems and experiences or too much advice or criticism may be given or the session becomes too focussed on solutions. Personalities or group dynamics may mean that individuals dominate the group. It may be that confidentiality within the group is not adhered to and information that might compromise other group members is shared. Finally, the group could lose objectivity because members become too familiar with each others’ work.

To avoid the pitfalls outlined above, Baker and McNicoll (2006) present the following guidelines for peer mentoring within a group to promote critical reflection. A supportive culture is required that recognises that people are doing what they can with the resources they have, and recognises that it is ‘ok to make mistakes.’ The mentoring sessions need a structure that has a clear format and uses specific tools to set direction and boundaries. There needs to be a high value placed

on attending the sessions, with members displaying commitment and making the peer mentoring a priority. The mentoring needs to be of high quality so that people leave with a feeling of time well spent. Participation within the group should be voluntary with individuals being free to choose to attend and how they participate. It is important that once an issue is dealt with it isn't revisited and that there are high levels of confidentiality within the group. Ultimately there needs to be a respect for diversity within the group.

Storytelling

Finally, collaboration provides the opportunity for reflection on practice through storytelling. The work of McDury and Alterio (2002, cited in Haigh, 2005) indicated that storytelling by an individual had the potential to promote reflection and dialogue with colleagues to achieve deep learning. However to go deeply into what the story is actually about, McDury and Alterio argue that there needs to be effective facilitation and challenging questions asked of the story teller, relying on effective leadership of the group and a commitment to the process by colleagues. McDury and Alterio also warn that it is important that another colleague does not interrupt with their own story and distract from the original. If this occurs it is likely that there will be little or no opportunity for learningful conversations in relation to the original story.

Collaborative considerations

Collegial conversations may be formal or informal, planned or unplanned and still have impact and worth for participants (Haigh, 2005). What is necessary if expectations and assumptions are to be challenged is that the conversations occur in an environment of trust and respect and that time and effort be given to ensure valuable conversations take place (Foley & Stead, 2002; Sutton, 2005; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). There must be trust in the purpose of the collaboration if there is to be effective collaboration (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

While research has identified that collaboration is a vital part of an induction process for new tertiary educators, Harrison and McKeon's (2008) initial research findings show that at times collaboration with colleagues was not helpful. Some research participants identified that on occasions they received conflicting advice or view points from colleagues, resulting in confusion and lack of clarity. However diversity of viewpoint and ideas were considered by Baker and McNicoll (2006) to be important elements of professional learning for tertiary educators.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) warn against expecting individuals to over collaborate. They argue that it is necessary to achieve a balance between an individual's opportunities to collaborate and their opportunities to have time to themselves to consider and develop their own beliefs, values and viewpoints.

Feedback about practice

Receiving feedback about their practice was identified by new tertiary educators as an important part of their induction programme, along with the opportunity to observe the practice of others (Baker & McNicoll 2006; Boice, 1991; Harrison & McKeon, 2008; McNally, 2002; Murray, 2005). Participants in Boice's (1991) study specifically noted that they would have found it beneficial to have had good teaching practice modelled or be able to co-teach with another lecturer, so that they were able to see what good practice looked like. The work of McNally (2002) is also consistent with Boice's findings of the importance of observing others.

If the practices of new tertiary educators are not deprivatised by being observed and receiving feedback there is a danger that any inappropriate practices may remain undetected and mean that the new tertiary educators are not being as effective as they may be

(Brookfield, 1995). Being observed and receiving feedback reduces the risk of the educators becoming professionally isolated and provides the opportunity for collegial conversations that supports new tertiary educators to critically reflect on their practice (Brookfield, 1995).

Observing others and work shadowing, is also important in making the tacit knowledge related to the new tertiary educator's position become more explicit (Trowler & Knight, 1999). Gaining this knowledge is an important part of building their new identity as tertiary educators (Trowler & Knight, 1999; 2000).

However while research participants identified that observation of others and feedback on their own practice would support their induction, very few of the new tertiary educators in Boice's (1991) and Murray's (2005) research arranged this for themselves. If observation and feedback was not part of the pre-arranged induction process new tertiary educators were not proactive in arranging it because they were unsure if observing the practice of others was acceptable within the institution. As new staff members they did not want to be seen doing something that may be unacceptable (Boice, 1991; Murray, 2005; Staniforth & Harland, 2006).

Leadership

There are two aspects of leadership that literature in this review has identified as impacting on the induction of new tertiary educators. They are leadership that is hierarchical within the institution, for example Heads of Departments (HODs), and leadership of a smaller collegial group that the new tertiary educator may belong to, which is not necessarily hierarchical in nature (Boice, 1991; Lindqvist & Reeves, 2007; Perry, 1985; Staniforth & Harland, 2006; Trowler & Knight, 1999).

In relation to the hierarchal leadership within the institution, the role of the HOD was found to be pivotal in the induction of new tertiary educators (Murray, 2005; Perry 1985; Staniforth & Harland, 2006; Trowler & Knight, 1999). Trowler and Knight (2000) strongly state that it is departmental leadership that is the key to successful induction and not the institution's central leadership. This importance is attributed to the HOD's ability to promote and support the practices to create, or not, a learning culture within the department. A departmental culture that promotes an open learning community provides a positive context for new tertiary educators' professional development (Trowler & Knight, 2000).

Although HODs play a significant role in the induction of new tertiary educators, there is variability amongst HODs in higher education institutes of how they see their role and also how new tertiary educators perceive the role of the HOD in their induction (Boice, 1991; Staniforth & Harland, 2006). Staniforth and Harland (2006) proposed that HODs had limited understanding of the potential of their role in induction.

New tertiary educators had a mixed understanding of the role of the HOD in induction (Staniforth & Harland, 2006). Some perceived that the HOD was too busy and didn't want to bother them. Others felt that the HOD held the power in the relationship making the new tertiary educator hesitant to approach them (Staniforth & Harland, 2006). Boice's (1991) study identified that a number of new tertiary educators felt that they had been given limited support by their HOD as part of their induction. HODs needed to be clear in their role in induction and new tertiary educators also needed to be aware of what this role was (Staniforth & Harland, 2006).

An important part of the role of the HOD is to evaluate the effectiveness of the induction process within their department, including the head's contribution to this process. This would promote

clarity of roles within the department (Staniforth & Harland, 2006; Trowler & Knight, 2000).

The second type of leadership impacting on the induction of new tertiary educators was the leadership of peer groups that promoted critical reflection on the professional practice of group members. Leadership of this group is a complex and demanding position requiring a wide range of attributes, for example, humour, empathy and enthusiasm for the task (Lindqvist & Reeves, 2007). Fullan (2001) supports the importance of these types of attributes in leaders that are leading change, as the leaders that Lindqvist and Reeves (2007) refer to are doing. The leader's role is to challenge educators to critically reflect on their practice, while encouraging them to do so and commit to changes that may be necessary (Fullan, 2001). To do this the leader needs to be in tune with their own and others' feelings and be able to guide the group in the right direction (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Communities of Practice

There is an abundance of research and literature pertaining to communities of practice (CoPs). In this literature review I have examined material that had the closest relevance to how CoPs support the induction of new tertiary educators into their role within higher education institutes.

“Community of practice” is a term used to describe a community or group that is informally bound by participating in communal activities and learning from these activities (Wenger, 1998). This view is supported by Stein and Coburn (2005) who define a community of practice as “... a group of individuals who, through the pursuit of a jointly defined enterprise, have developed shared practices, historical and social resources, and common perspectives” (p.17).

An individual may be a member of more than one CoP. These CoPs have the potential to support the induction of new tertiary educators in a positive manner depending on the leadership of the community (Boice, 1991; Lindqvist & Reeves, 2007; Perry, 1985; Staniforth & Harland, 2006; Trowler & Knight, 1999).

The CoPs that new tertiary educators participate in have considerable impact on their induction into a new environment (Murray, 2005, 2008; Staniforth & Harland, 2006; Trowler & Knight, 1999, 2000). Trowler and Knight (2000) contend that CoPs are important because these are the conduit between the institution and the individual. They argue that we need to treat "... communities of practice as important sites in the acquisition, enactment and creation of culture and knowledgability, and to reflect upon the processes involved in identity construction" (Trowler & Knight, 2000, p.28). Therefore CoPs offer a framework that allows professional learning to occur by providing opportunities for collegial collaboration as previously outlined.

Harrison and McKeon (2008) warn that there needs to be more consideration given to the power structures that may be present in CoPs. They contend that how members of a CoP participate within that community can impact on the professional learning that takes place. Their research indicated that in some instances CoPs did not operate so that the new tertiary educator gained an understanding of their new role. Some colleagues were not helpful and at times the new tertiary educator received conflicting advice (Harrison & McKeon, 2008).

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

It is relevant to examine the concept of a professional learning community (PLC) because while there are commonalities with CoPs there are also differences.

As presented earlier, the definition of a CoP used in this literature review is Wengers' (1998) definition that CoP is a term used to describe a community or group that is informally bound by participating in communal activities and learning from these activities. The definition used for a PLC within this literature review is: "... an inclusive group of people motivated by a shared learning vision, who support and work with each other, finding ways, inside and outside their immediate community, to enquire on their practice and together learn new and better approaches that will enhance all learning" (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Thomas, Wallace, Greenwood, & Hawkey, 2005, p.1). This definition is supported by the work of Anderson (2002), Du Four (2004) and Ingvarson (2003).

From these two definitions it is clear that CoPs and PLCs both involve members of the group participating together in group activities and learning from them. However a CoP is an informal group while a PLC is a more formal structure with a specific vision and focus on learning that includes group members enquiring into their practice through critical reflection. It is the specific purpose of enquiring into the group members' practice and focus on learning of the PLC that differentiates it from a CoP.

Du Four (2004) observes that the term PLC has been used to "... describe every imaginable combination of individuals with an interest in education ..." (p.1). Du Four comments that PLCs are currently in 'vogue' and Hargreaves (2007) argues that PLCs have become fashionable and that as, with all fashion, the focus on PLCs will subside. While I acknowledge this viewpoint, it would not serve any purpose to pursue these views in this review because it does not relate to the research questions of this study. This review accepts PLCs as a framework or structure for professional learning. It is with this understanding that PLCs and their implications for new tertiary educators are explored.

As evident in Stoll et al.'s (2005) definition, shared learning vision is a key element of a PLC. The shared learning vision must be established collaboratively with all members of the group so that there is a common understanding amongst group members as to the purpose and practices of the group (Fullan 2001; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Robinson, 2004). Fullan (2001) emphasises that the vision must be focussed on the 'right things' or it is possible that the group may end up focussing on the wrong things and perpetuate bad practice. The right things include a focus on professional learning and should have clear outcomes that can be measured as the PLC progresses towards the outcomes. To ensure that the vision is focussed on the outcomes leadership of the PLC will be crucial (Fullan, 2001).

Membership and purpose of PLC

Trowler and Knight (1999) identify the construction of knowledge by new tertiary educators to be an important purpose of a PLC. The type of knowledge that is required to be constructed will define the purpose of the PLC and therefore influence the membership of the group.

If the purpose of the PLC is to share, discuss and build content or discipline specific knowledge it would be inappropriate for the group to be made up of members outside of this discipline or subject (Tozer, personal conversation, 2008). Tozer found that when inducting new numeracy in-service teacher educators it was important that the purpose of the PLC be a focus on gaining discipline and content knowledge. This is a clear example of when it would be entirely inappropriate for membership of the PLC to be cross-disciplinary.

However if the focus is on developing knowledge of the generic professional practice of the new tertiary educator, cross-disciplinary membership of the PLC is beneficial. Barlow and Antoniou (2007) found that cross-disciplinary discussions promoted an openness and

exchange of ideas across subject boundaries. Lindqvist and Reeves (2007) also support the notion of cross-disciplinary membership and found that such membership promoted better practice and improved inter-professional relationships. In these instances the purpose of the PLC was related to the 'how' of the new tertiary educators' role.

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) state that it is likely that we learn more from people who are different to us than we do from people who are the same. Baker and McNicoll (2006) agree when they suggest that groups should "Be alert to and respect differences in culture, gender, professional orientation etc, that may show up through differing opinions, viewpoints or ways of working. All perspectives are useful starting points for reflection. 'You don't get harmony if everyone sings the same note'" (p.32). Harrison and McKeon (2008) noted the importance of having diversity of experience within a PLC. They found it was particularly important to the professional learning of the teachers to have interaction between expert and novice teachers. The work of Austin (2002) concluded that including diverse membership in PLCs contributed to the professional learning of new tertiary educators.

Therefore the type of 'knowledge' making needed will influence the purpose of the PLC and guide the membership and composition of the group.

PLCs also provide a structure that has the potential to support a group process to promote critical reflection and effective peer mentoring (Baker & McNicoll, 2006). As discussed previously, when peer mentoring is undertaken as part of collaborative learning, the new tertiary educator has an opportunity to critically reflect on their practice and make meaning from their experience. Fullan (2001) argues that to make sense of change it is important the people can relate it to their own setting. This critical reflection in turn has the

potential to profoundly influence their behaviour and practice (Baker & McNicoll, 2006; Brookfield 1995).

There is clear indication that PLCs provide a framework for the collaboration to occur that has been acknowledged as vital to the successful induction of new tertiary educators.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has examined research related to the induction of educators into higher education institutes. It has revealed that the transition into the higher education institute is potentially stressful for new tertiary educators as they endeavour to find where they 'fit' into the new institution and create their new identity. The induction processes that an institution implements to support this transition are important and research has demonstrated that there are components, including the structure of PLCs, of an induction process that meet the needs of new tertiary educators.

The next chapter presents the research design of this study in relation to the research question.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design of this study. This is achieved by examining the theoretical underpinnings and mixed method approach taken in this research to investigate the primary research question of how well professional learning groups (PLGs) supported the induction of new In-service Teacher Educators (ISTEs). The research design allowed the experiences and realities of the participants to emerge.

The chapter discusses how the research questions, relevant theories and my own world view drove the research process. It is presented in six sections. The first section is the introduction that places this study within Social Science Research. The second section presents the research framework underpinning this study, with each stage explored in detail. Then the ethical considerations are presented followed by data gathering, analysis methods and limitations of the research. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

INTRODUCTION

This research is located within the broad category of Social Science research “because it focuses on people, organisations and interactions” (Mutch, 2005, p.18), with a focus on people in a social setting and aligns with Social Science Research (Sarantakos, 1995). Within the category of Social Science Research is Educational Research. Mutch (2005) describes Educational Research as having a focus on “people, places and processes broadly related to teaching and learning” (p.18), with the purpose of improving “teaching and learning systems and practices...” (p.18). This study was focused on the experiences of a

group of people within PLGs with the purpose of using their experiences to inform and improve future professional learning for new ISTEs.

THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research design for this study was based on Mutch's (2005) research framework. When designing the study, I chose the theoretical framework and methodologies, as defined by Mutch (2005) to be the "overarching research method that links clearly to a theoretical framework" (p.221) best suited to answering my research question. Davidson and Tolich (1999), Mutch (2005) and Sarantakos (1995) all support this approach when they suggest that the purpose of research design is to provide a framework to guide how the study is conducted to best answer the research question, in this case:

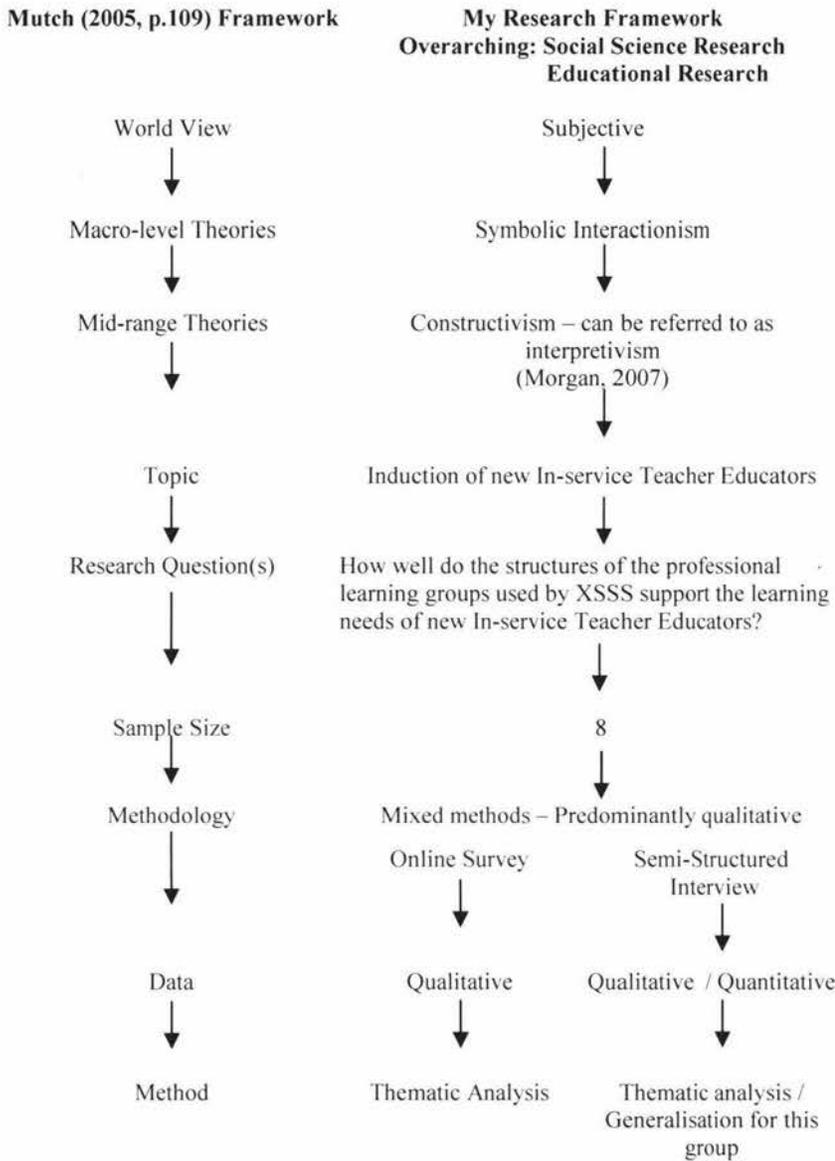
How well do the structures of the professional learning groups used by XSSS support the learning needs of new In-service Teacher Educators?

The frameworks presented in Figure 1 (p.37) illustrate how my own world view and research theories have driven the research process (Mutch, 2005). My research framework is presented parallel to Mutch's framework to make explicit the theories, methodologies and methods used in this research.

World View

As presented in Chapter One, I value people, their experiences and their stories. I believe that people construct their own realities based on their experiences and social interactions and that therefore there is no right knowledge or reality. Because I believe that individuals create their own reality, this research is based on a subjective world view (Mutch, 2005). Some writers, for example Fox, Martin and Green (2007), also term a subjective world view as a social world

Figure 1: Research Frameworks



view. Both of these terms describe the belief that individual’s construct common understanding and meanings about the world. Individual’s experiences and social interactions mean that there can be a range of realities constructed that enable individuals to make sense of their world (Fox, et al., 2007; Mutch, 2005). Research conducted through a subjective world view is aimed at identifying the reality that individuals or groups hold and then make sense of it (Mutch, 2005). The purpose of this study was to investigate how ISTE’s perceived their own world and reality in relation to professional learning groups

and induction. The world views and realities would be different for each individual.

The alternative world view to subjectivism is objectivism.

Objectivism considers there is universal 'knowledge' and 'reality' to be uncovered and that researchers are impartial and detached from the participants (Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Fox et al., 2007; Mutch, 2005). This world view is not relevant to this study because I do not believe there is a universal knowledge of reality in this situation and I am not impartial and detached from the participants as I have close collegial relationships with them.

Macro-level theory

Having considered the world view, Mutch (2005) presents macro-level theories as the next stage in linking theories, research questions and methodologies. The purpose of a macro-level theory is to endeavour to give an explanation of how societies and social systems function and underpins much educational research (Mutch, 2005). A relevant macro-level theory for this research and one that is used by most qualitative researchers, is symbolic interactionism (Sarantakos, 1995). Blumer (1969, cited in Flick, 2005) presents three premises about the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism:

“The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis that the things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified, through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters” (p.27).

It is the social interaction of individuals, and the intertwining of these actions and experiences that make up reality for individuals. There

are three elements of symbolic interactionism related to this study. They are, firstly, that people interact on the basis of how they have experienced their world or their reality. Secondly, that data and the interpretation of it, is primarily relevant to the context that it was gathered in and finally that meanings are developed through social interaction (Sarantakos, 1995). Therefore symbolic interactionism is an important foundation theory to this research, because the structure of the professional learning groups is based on social interaction. It was through social interaction with members of the learning groups that new ISTE's were supported in making the transition from their role in an education setting to being an ISTE.

Mid-range theories

This chapter has considered the world view and the macro-level theory related to this research. These are both overarching frameworks and are 'big-picture thinking'. The theories that are discussed more in everyday educational settings are mid-range theories (Mutch, 2005). Two key theories here are at the opposite ends of the objectivist – subjectivist world view continuum. They are behaviourism and constructivism respectively (Mutch, 2005). Behaviourism sees the world as defined and controllable with outcomes being predictable when specific steps are followed, sitting most comfortably with an objectivist world view. On the other hand constructivism, as outlined below, relates to the world view of subjectivism. Therefore, it is constructivism that underpins this study.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that constructivism theory has three components. The first is that there are multiple social realities that are relevant to individuals and that these realities may change depending on their experiences. In turn, these experiences will influence and be influenced by an individual's beliefs and values about the world. A second component is that the understandings or findings of the research are reconstructed by the researcher and the

research participants as the research progresses. There is not a definitive truth to be discovered and replicated. The final component relies on the researcher and the research participant distilling information to reconstruct the understanding of the participant's reality. Creed, Freeman, Robinson and Woodley (2004) support this view when they summarise constructivism theory as knowledge being created about a social situation by the people involved, again reinforcing the concept that there is no one reality.

This study constructed knowledge relating to PLGs and induction from the experiences and perspectives of new ISTE's and members of the Implementation Team and therefore relates directly to constructivism theory because knowledge is being constructed by those involved. I believe that each person experiences situations differently depending on their own world view and that it was important, in this study, that each research participant was able to present their own view and interpretation of the situation to describe their 'reality' as experienced by them. I was then able to reconstruct the ISTE's and the Implementation Team's understanding of reality in the PLGs and interpret their views to construct a shared reality of those experiences for that group of ISTE's.

Research Question and Sample Size

To continue to follow Mutch's (2005) framework, the research question and sample size were influenced by my world view. Firstly the main research question was framed in such a way that it elicited subjective responses from ISTE's and the Implementation Team. The main research question and sub questions were open-ended and allowed participants to present their thoughts, which is a constructivist approach to research.

Secondly the sample size was influenced by a subjective world view, in that different people have different experiences of the same

situation and as a result may form differing realities, each of which is valid. Therefore a constructivist approach was relevant because more than one ISTE's experience was required to be able to construct a shared reality. The shared reality was constructed by identifying emerging themes from ISTE's and members of the Implementation Team's perceptions allowing for triangulation, validity and reliability of data to be established. Because of the need for a variety of perspectives I chose the maximum number of ISTE's that fitted the criteria for selection. That is, new to XSSS and not a member of my PLG. This meant that five new ISTE's were invited to participate. The three members of the Implementation Team invited to participate had had the most involvement in implementing the PLG approach to professional learning and were therefore able to bring an informed perspective to the study. This made a sample size of eight.

Methodology

To continue to follow the research framework, the methodology and data collection stages are explored. As earlier defined in this chapter, methodology is "an overarching research method that links clearly to a theoretical framework" (Mutch, 2005, p.221). Data is defined here as "information gathered during the research process that can be analysed and presented in order to answer a research question" (Mutch, 2005, p.317). This section explores these together.

When designing a study there are two major approaches of methodological options (Davidson and Tolich, 1999; Mutch, 2005). These are quantitative research and qualitative research. Each is based on a different set of assumptions and beliefs about the purpose of research. Moore (2006), defines quantitative research as aiming "... to show you what is happening" (p.141) and qualitative research aims "... to show you why it is happening" (p.141).

Davidson and Tolich (1999) differentiate between the two in that quantitative research is concerned with hard data that is able to be quantified and counted, whereas “qualitative research focuses on reflecting the quality of something” (p.19). Following these definitions the outcome of quantitative research tends to be tangible and hopefully conclusive, whereas the outcome of qualitative research is subjective. Hence qualitative research tends to explore contexts, as in this study, rather than measure and quantify them (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches are closely aligned to the positivist and interpretivist paradigms respectively with the terms often being used synonymously (Mutch, 2005). Put simply, the positivist paradigm sits within a behaviourist theory and objectivist world view, while the interpretive paradigm sits within a constructivist theory and a subjectivist world view. The positivist paradigm is based on a scientific approach to research that involves incorporating deductive logic where the observation of behaviour is used to discover or confirm a set of probable laws (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Conversely the interpretivist paradigm can be described as the “systematic analysis of socially meaningful action...to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p.26), allowing individual participants’ realities and truths to be explored. It should be noted that while this research is driven by a subjectivist world view and therefore related more closely to the interpretive paradigm, there are elements of the positivist paradigm evident in this research and therefore the study relates to a mixed method approach. This is explored further in a later section of this chapter.

Davidson and Tolich (1999) suggest that there are five key areas within the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. They are; the nature of social reality, the place of values, when is an explanation true, the nature of human beings and society and good evidence.

The following section explores and contrasts these five areas in relation to the positivist and interpretive paradigms. Following the exploration of each of the paradigms, connections to the relevant paradigms and this research are drawn to provide clarity of where this study sits in relation to the positivist and interpretivist paradigms.

Nature of social reality

Within this area, a positivist paradigm uses a reductionist approach with elements of the social world being reduced and examined in isolation. The assumption is that the elements will remain the same when combined with the whole. An interpretive paradigm, however, sees relationships between elements as being key and cannot be isolated. The whole context must be considered because the elements are connected and when separate elements are combined they may function differently as a whole than they did in isolation (Davison & Tolich, 1999).

Therefore the interpretivist paradigm is most relevant to this study because the aim was to establish how the elements or structures of the PLGs had supported the induction of ISTES. The structures were interrelated and could not be separated out without affecting the total functioning of the group. When considering ISTES as an important element of the PLG, it would not be possible to consider their behaviour in isolation. The PLGs were based on interaction.

The place of values

In positivist research, consistency of data gathering is valued above all else. To this end quantitative data gathering is the basis of positivist research and the values of the researcher are not evident (Davidson & Tolich, 1999), with the researcher remaining neutral so as not to contaminate the data. Sarantakos (1995) suggests that this neutrality or objectivity is considered to be one of the most important parts of

social science research. In an endeavour to ensure objectivity, quantitative data gathering is used, for example surveys or questionnaires where identical questions can be asked of all participants and there is no deviating from these questions.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that in fact value free research is a myth and that a positivist 'purist' does not acknowledge that the researcher makes decisions throughout the entire research process based on values. They list the following as examples of the type of value laden decisions that a researcher makes:

“...deciding what to study (i.e. what are important problems?), developing instruments that are believed to measure what the researcher views as being the target construct, choosing the specific tests and items for measurement, making score interpretations ... drawing conclusions and interpretations based on data collected, deciding what elements of data to emphasise or publish, and deciding what findings are particularly significant” (p.16).

In contrast, an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledges values as influencing the decisions that researchers make about the research. Flexibility of data gathering is valued more highly in an interpretive approach than in a positivist paradigm. For example there may be a basic set of questions planned to guide the data gathering process, but these may not be the only questions that the researcher asks and not all of the research participants may be asked the exact same questions. In some cases additional questions may be added during the collection of data (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

The interpretivist paradigm is most relevant to this study because the research is not value free. For example I decided who I would research, that is whose world view I valued and the methods that would allow me to gather the information relating to their world view.

In relation to data collection, this research reflects elements of both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. There was a positivist influence, in that I endeavoured to have consistency by using a Likert scale for some questions and by using the same questions as the basis for the semi-structured interview. However there was an interpretivist influence during the interviews in that I asked different questions for clarification during the interviews depending on the participants' answers.

When is an explanation true?

In a positivist paradigm the emphasis is on reliability. Here reliability refers to being able to replicate the study by others to produce the same results. In an interpretivist paradigm, reliability is not the goal and it is not important that the results can be replicated. In fact, because it is the reality for group of participants being researched, the study cannot be replicated as a different group will have a different reality (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

However, validity of data is important in an interpretive paradigm. Validity here refers firstly to the questions being asked in the study and secondly to the themes drawn from the data. That is, do the questions or tools that the researcher uses reflect the concepts that the researcher is exploring and can the findings of the research be categorised into reoccurring themes? (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the how participating in PLGs supported professional learning for this group of ISTE's. It was their reality that was important and therefore it would not be possible to replicate the research to produce the same results as each ISTE's experience was unique to them, and another group may have different experiences and opinions. Validity of information in this study was important. A key design feature of this research was to ensure that

there was triangulation of data by using many sources of information. Davidson and Tolich (1999) explain that “Essentially if different sources of information are saying the same things then the social researcher can have greater confidence that the findings are valid” (p.34). The importance of triangulation of data to ensure validity is supported by a number of writers and researchers for example Cresswell, (2003); Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004); Mutch, (2005); Sarantakos, (1995). To gain information from more than one source, I asked five new ISTE’s for their perspectives and three of the team that were managing the implementation of the PLGs, making a total of eight in the sample group, therefore providing eight different sources of information.

This meant the common themes that emerged had greater validity and credibility than had only one research participant been interviewed (Mutch, 2005). While common themes could be drawn from the data, in reality these themes only reflect the views and experiences of this group of participants, therefore it was important that the findings presented in this study accurately represent the opinions of the participants (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

Using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather the data also supported the triangulation process (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Quantitative data was gathered in the semi-structured interviews by way of a Likert scale. The scale was used for two reasons. The first was that it allowed participants to sum up how they felt overall about the PLGs. The second reason was that they have a high degree of validity and reliability (Sarantakos, 1995). However the Likert scale would only give an overall response and would not allow participants to present their diverse views in-depth, therefore a qualitative method was also used. Qualitative data was gathered using two methods; accessing participants’ responses to two on-line surveys and a face to face semi-structured interview. Using these two different sources of information from participants allowed each

participant's responses to be compared to see if there were commonalities in an individual's response to the on-line surveys and the semi-structured interview to ensure individuals were not giving conflicting information. This allowed triangulation of data and ensured its reliability and validity. The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is aligned to a mixed-method approach.

Nature of human beings and society

The positivist view of human beings and society is influenced by natural science and argues that there is a truth that is developed by using a scientific method to research that allows the findings to be replicated time and again. Historically the scientific method was promoted as the only pure research method. This idea has been challenged over the last century as research becomes more socially and culturally situated and constructed (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

Interpretivists argue that "social researchers provide ... *appropriate* and *useful* insights into social situations – not the one and only right view, but a collection of valuable ones none the less" (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p.35). The idea that there is more than one view or one truth reinforces the need for triangulation of data so that the themes identified for that social grouping reflects their truth.

This study was focussed on exploring individual truths and realities for this particular group of research participants. It is their world view that determines what is valid and true as they experienced it.

Therefore the research is very much socially and culturally located and sits within an interpretive paradigm.

Good evidence

The sampling method used to gather data in a positivist approach is probability sampling. Probability sampling is used to reduce researcher bias and to “extrapolate from the findings to the wider population” (Mutch, 2005, p.49). Alternatively in an interpretive approach non-probability sampling is used, with the sample being “chosen for specific reasons to expand our understanding of the phenomena ...” (Mutch, 2005, p.50). Purposive sampling is an example of non-probability sampling and is used to ensure that participants meet the purpose of the research (Mutch, 2005).

Non-probability sampling, and in particular a purposive sampling technique was used in this study, with the research participants chosen because they met the purpose, that is, they were new ISTEes, having joined XSSS between January 2006 and June 2007 or were members of the Implementation Team. These participants were invited because they were able to indicate how well the structures of the professional learning group supported new ISTEes’ learning. Probability sampling would not have been appropriate to use in this study because it may have meant that the ISTEes chosen were not new to XSSS and therefore they would not have been the best group to answer the research question.

Purposive sampling was also used within the new ISTEes’ group in that only new ISTEes outside of my own PLG were asked to participate in the study. New ISTEes in my PLG were not included to address the ethical issue of researching participants with whom I had direct contact. By not including new ISTEes from my PLG it was hoped that the research participants would respond honestly and openly about their experiences, which may not have been the case had they been in my group. Three members of the Implementation Team, who had been involved in the establishment and implementation of the PLGs, were invited to participate so that their perspective on how well the

professional learning groups had supported the induction of new ISTE's could be presented.

The above analysis of the five key areas of positivist and interpretivist paradigms suggests that research fits neatly into either of the two paradigms. That is it is either a positivist paradigm (quantitative) or interpretivist paradigm (qualitative), in reality this is not the case.

Mixed methodology

Combining paradigms, for example positivist and interpretivist, and qualitative and quantitative methods may be referred to as mixed methodology (Mutch, 2005). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) agree with this when they define mixed methods research "... as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (p.17). Mixed methods research may also be referred to as mixed research (Cresswell, 2003). This study combines predominantly qualitative with some quantitative methods and reflects the definition of mixed method research. The mixed method approach was chosen to ensure reliability and validity of data, which is more likely to happen when multiple sources of information, theories, methods and techniques are used (Neuman, 2003).

Researchers such as Creswell (2003); Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004); Morgan (2007); and Viadero (2005) identify a number of advantages using this approach. The first is that when multiple approaches are implemented it uses the strengths of each approach. By utilising the strengths of the approaches, it offsets the weaknesses in the other approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creed et al., 2004).

The second advantage is that a mixed method approach provides richer and more comprehensive answers to the research question

(Creed et al., 2004; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which “frequently results in superior research” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14). Answers to the research question can be seen from a number of perspectives and gives the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the question (Creed et al., 2004). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest that this deeper understanding might be missed if only one research method is used. Elliot (2004, cited in Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) agrees with this viewpoint and notes that if only method is used there may be an “over simplification and misunderstandings of phenomena being studied” (p.21).

A third advantage is that a mixed method approach may add greater credibility to the study as opposed to using a single method (Creed et al., 2004). Their reasoning for this is that if the research findings are to be accepted by the intended audience they need to be assured “about the rigor and authenticity of research [because they will make judgements about the research] based on their own backgrounds and predispositions of what constitutes valid research” (Creed, et al., 2004, p.48). Therefore by using a mixed method approach some research purists may be more likely to accept findings that are using methods from their own research backgrounds.

The fourth advantage is that mixed method research can allow for the triangulation of data (Creed et al., 2004; Cresswell, 2003). This occurs when data from one method confirms or corroborates the evidence from another method used within a study. As highlighted previously, triangulation of data is vital for the reliability, validity and credibility of the research findings being presented in this study.

There are also disadvantages, or weaknesses, to mixed method research. Firstly a researcher has to be familiar with more than one type of research method (Creed et al., 2004; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and requires the skills to conduct the research using more than one method (Creed et al., 2004). A second possible weakness is that

the researcher must know how to mix the methods appropriately (Creed et al., 2004) otherwise there are implications for the reliability, validity and credibility of the findings. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) identify a third possible weakness which methodological purists may perceive as being true and that is a researcher should always work within only a qualitative or quantitative paradigm.

Having considered these advantages and weaknesses, for me the most important reason for using a mixed method approach is summed up by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) when they conclude that “what is most fundamental is the research question – research methods should *follow* research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers. Many research questions and combinations of questions are best and most fully answered through mixed research solutions” (p.17). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, using the best methods to provide answers to the research questions is what research is about (Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Mutch, 2005; Sarantakos, 1995). A mixed method approach allowed for the triangulation of data, adding to the validity and reliability of the findings (Davidson & Tolich 1999; Mutch, 2005; Neuman, 2003). This was because the quantitative data collected identified how likely they were to recommend the continuation of the PLGs. I considered it was important to gauge this because it added depth to the qualitative data.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers have a powerful and privileged position (Mutch, 2005; Sarantakos, 1995) and enter the lives of their participants, no matter how briefly, to gain valid information. It is vital that this power and privilege is not abused and respondents are treated with respect and ethical issues are adhered to. Ethics are considered to be the codes of practice that are important within academic disciplines (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) and influence the way that research is conducted within

these disciplines. Punch (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) suggests that in qualitative research, the basis of this study, “most concern [of the safety of participants in the research] revolves around issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality of data” (p.88).

This study obtained ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, covering the issues of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality of data and harm minimisation for participants. Ethics approval was also gained from University X as it was their staff who were to be research participants. While confidentiality of participants is required, Davidson and Tolich (1999) identify that this can be difficult in a small population such as New Zealand. In an endeavour to protect the identity of the participants in this study, each person was assigned a gender neutral name with s/he and his/her being used throughout and the institution is not named. Permission to access the on-line surveys was gained from the Ministry of Education.

In relation to harm minimisation, if the ISTE’s experiences hadn’t been positive, asking them to reflect on their experience of being in the PLG, may have caused them emotional discomfort and possible harm. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) pose the question, “When can research be said to be ‘harming’ people?” (p.89) and who decides this? In the context of this study, the research participants were able to decide and they were free to withdraw from the research at any time. Support people were identified should emotional harm have occurred. The XSSS provided a counselling service and kaumatua who were readily accessible to participants. Participants were aware of how to contact these people anonymously, should they need to.

Selection of participants

The method of selecting participants was purposive sampling to ensure breadth and depth of information and has been outlined previously in this chapter.

Initial contact and informed consent

A researcher cannot demand that identified people participate in research (Bell, 1999). Sales and Folkman (2000) argue that it is not enough for people to agree to take part and sign a consent form, they also need to be clearly informed of what the purpose of the research is and how the findings will be used. In this study initial contact was made with each research participant via a letter (refer Appendix 1) that explained the research, contained an information sheet (refer Appendices 2 and 6) and invited them to participate. It also contained a consent form for them to return to me if they wished to participate (refer Appendice 3). When consent to participate was given, I made personal contact to clarify any questions that the participant may have had and to arrange a suitable interview time and venue. At the start of the interview participants were given a further opportunity to ask questions about the research and their part in it.

Voluntary participation

Davidson and Tolich (1999) and Mutch (2005) emphasise that participation in research must be voluntary, with the right to withdraw without penalty. Participation in the research was purely voluntary. At no time were participants coerced to take part in any way. To ensure that participants did not feel pressured to take part, initial contact was made via a letter (refer Appendix 1) and any following contact was made in a friendly tone with conversations about participation being open ended. Everyone invited to participate did so. All participants had the right to withdraw prior to the analysis of the data without fear of consequence and were reminded of this prior

to the interview. None of the participants did withdraw from the study.

DATA GATHERING

As outlined previously, data was gathered by accessing participants' on-line surveys (refer Appendix 10) and face to face semi-structured interviews (refer Appendices 4 and 7) using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method allowed a generalisation to be made of how likely participants would be to recommend the continuation of PLGs. A qualitative method was used to allow participants to present their 'reality' of their experience and tell their story in their own way, allowing the opportunity to gather 'rich' information (Mutch, 2005).

The on-line surveys were developed as part of the INSTEP research project undertaken by XSSS and developed by a researcher employed by XSSS. The face to face semi-structured interview used a Likert scale and open ended questions that gave structure to the interviews, but also allowed the freedom for the interviewee to pursue matters relevant to them around the topic (Denzin and Lincoln, 1999; Flick, 2005; Sarantakos, 1995).

Flick (2005) highlights a potential difficulty with this approach. It is that the interviewer has to decide as the interview progresses what points they will ask for in greater detail and when to refocus the interviewee if they are digressing. To address this Flick (2005) proposes that the interviewer needs to be sensitive to the interviewee and the course of the interview.

Interview process

Participants were given a copy of the questions (refer Appendices 4 and 7) for discussion prior to the individual face to face interview. In

an endeavour to ensure participants felt comfortable and lessen any feelings that I was in the position of power (Mutch, 2005) individuals chose the time and venue for the interview. Prior to starting the interview, each participant was reminded of the focus of the research and that they were free to withdraw up to the data analysis stage. At the end of the interview, the participant was given a reflection sheet (refer Appendices 5 and 8) to forward to me if they had additional information to add after the interview. None of the participants chose to use the sheet.

Each semi-structured interview was recorded and transcribed to provide an accurate record of participants' responses. I also wrote field notes during each interview. The recordings were transcribed by someone other than myself. They were required to sign a confidentiality agreement before beginning the transcripts (refer Appendix 9). All participants were offered the opportunity to check their transcription for accuracy, however none chose to do so.

ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION

This section describes the process used to code and analyse the information. Initially I had planned to use quantitative data contained in the two on-line surveys as well as the qualitative data. However once I received the information from the online surveys (refer Appendix 10) it was evident that the research participants' data could not be disaggregated from all of the quantitative data and therefore became unusable. In the face-to-face interviews quantitative information was gathered to the question of how likely they would be to recommend the continuation of the PLGs. This was gathered on a three point likert scale. The three ratings on the scale were: Not likely, Likely and Extremely likely to recommend the continuation of PLGs. The responses were used to form a generalisation relevant only to this group of participants.

The qualitative information gathered from the online surveys and the face to face interviews was analysed using a thematic approach to identify common themes emerging from the findings (Mutch, 2005). The process used in this study is consistent with Mutch's (2005) approach to thematic analysis. To begin I skim read the interview transcripts and on-line survey responses to get an overall impression of the information. The on-line survey responses were important to provide the triangulation of data. I checked to see if any of the participants had changed their views between the online survey and the face to face interview. There was consistency, had there not been I would have approached the individual to discuss the changed views.

After skim reading the data, I reviewed the information highlighting repeated words, concepts and noting any contradiction in the views presented. From there it was possible to code the key words and themes, writing them beside the relevant sections in the data. Examples of the key words at this stage were; group activities, facilitation, impact on practice and transition. These key words were then grouped into larger themes, for example; leadership, transitioning and collaboration. At this stage of the analysis I revisited the original data to check that the themes that had emerged were consistent with participants' responses, selecting relevant quotes that represented various perspectives. To conclude the thematic analysis, the findings were discussed, implications considered, propositions developed and recommendations for future action made.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research must be treated with caution. It is a small scale predominantly qualitative study. The findings are valid for this group of participants, but can not be generalised to a wider group.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the research design of this study. The study used a mixed methods approach that was predominantly qualitative, because it provided rich information that best answered the research question and provided triangulation of data to increase reliability and validity of the information.

The next chapter presents the findings and multiple realities and truths that emerged from the study for this group of participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER

The purpose of this chapter is to present the perspectives of ISTEes and three members of the Implementation Team in relation to the research question and their thoughts on the induction of new ISTEes into XSSS.

The chapter begins with an introduction section, followed by the findings. The findings section is presented in three parts and follows the structure of the Literature Review. The first relates to the experience of the ISTEes transitioning into XSSS. The second part develops the themes that emerged from the research related to the induction of new ISTEes. The third part explores the findings related specifically to the PLGs. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study was to examine how well the (PLGs) of XSSS supported the learning needs of new ISTEes. The term PLG is used here instead of Professional Learning Community (PLC) because it was the term given to the professional development group structure in XSSS. For this study the term PLG is consistent with the definition and concept of the PLC explored in the literature review, as is the term 'peer mentoring'.

ISTEes' and the Implementation Teams' perspectives were gathered from one interview and two on-line surveys that they completed during 2007. The interview was the prime source of data. The surveys provided triangulation of data to verify the validity of the interview information.

The participants were Chris, Brad, Dale, Nic and Sandy who were new ISTE's and Addison, Rowan and Jamie who were three members of the Implementation Team. Participants were given a name that was gender neutral, to protect their identity. Although not grammatically correct, the terms s/he, his/her and him/herself are used to protect the gender identity of participants. Participant's quotes, surveys, survey question numbers, interviews and interview page numbers have been assigned identifying codes as in Table 1:

Table 1: Identifying codes used in this research.

Source	Code
Chris	C
Addison	Ad
Brad	B
Dale	D
Nic	N
Sandy	S
Rowan	R
Jamie	J
On-line Survey One: Early 2007	S1
On-line Survey Two: Mid 2007	S2
Survey Question Number	Q
Interview	I
Interview transcript page number	p

The findings are presented in isolation, but ISTE's and the Implementation Team discussed them as being interrelated. Therefore these findings should be viewed as a whole with each section relating to and impacting on the others.

FINDINGS

Transitioning from teacher to ISTE

The findings revealed that consideration should be given to people transitioning into the role of an ISTE. Prior to joining XSSS, ISTEes had been involved in education in either the primary or secondary sector. The environment of XSSS was completely different to what they had been used to, creating an initial feeling of uncertainty. *“I guess one of the apprehensions you have when you come into this job is that you’ve actually got no idea of what it means to be an [ISTE]”* (N, I, p.1).

Three ISTEes identified that being an ISTE was completely different to being a classroom teacher. One difference noted was that the knowledge and skills ISTEes needed were not always the same as needed to be a teacher. ISTEes considered that they needed to know how XSSS operated, how to facilitate the learning of adults and establish professional working relationships with educators quickly. For example, because ISTEes may work with educators for a short period of time, they need to gauge and respond to needs promptly unlike in a classroom where the teacher gets to know students over a longer time span. Nic noted *“... it was certainly a challenge establishing where teachers are at and trying to do that reasonably quickly ... that’s quite different from teaching students”* (N, I, p.5).

Chris identified a perceived change in expectations as a second example of how being an ISTE was differed to being a teacher. She considered there was a greater emphasis on professional reading than there had been as a teacher. *“... at this level we should be reading more research, ... just expanding what we know and what we do”* (C, I, p.2).

The Implementation Team supported the ISTE's views, noting that it could be difficult for new ISTE's to understand and come to terms with their new role. *"When X came in and sat down in January and was all bright eyed and bushy tailed and saying 'well, so what do I do next?' The answer was not to grab a car and go and find a school and see what you can do, it was actually to talk to somebody about what the job might look like..."* (Ad, I, p.8).

The Implementation Team considered that the PLGs provided one way to support the transition of ISTE's into XSSSS. Rowan noted that the PLGs were *"part of the bigger structure around professional learning opportunities [for ISTE's]..."* (R, I, p.1). Addison and Jamie agreed that the PLG was an important part of broader system addressing the induction of new ISTE's.

Induction

This section explores the three themes that emerged from the research findings relating to the PLG and induction. These were collaboration, observation and feedback related to ISTE practice and the leadership and facilitation of the PLG.

Collaboration

Everyone strongly agreed that collaboration was the key to the success of the PLGs supporting ISTE professional learning. Six reasons emerged for this success. These were providing the opportunities for: knowledge to be gained, lessened feelings of isolation, collegial conversations that supported critical reflection, sharing philosophy of practice, peer mentoring and telling stories. This section explores each of these reasons and considers the impact on ISTE practice. Then the tools that facilitated collaboration are presented. Finally the negative elements of collaboration are considered.

Knowledge to be gained

Firstly, ISTE and the Implementation Team identified that collaboration in the PLGs provided opportunities to gain the tacit and explicit knowledge that new ISTE required. One type of knowledge centred on ISTE practice or the 'how' to do their job. All of the ISTE noted that, through the discussions about practice in their respective PLGs, they were able to build an understanding of what their role looked like and how they might carry it out. *"...every so often someone gave you a beautiful pearler of a sentence that you could think 'oh that's how I'm going to ask that hard question' or 'that's how I can diffuse that' so I found that really, really useful"* (C, I, p.2).

The other type of knowledge gained was institutional knowledge about ISTE's roles within XSSS. Sandy's comment encapsulates ISTE's thoughts. *"...there was definitely an opportunity for someone to say 'oh, hey, let's go and do...' ... 'could you help me work on this'"* (S, I, p.5). Had they not collaborated in a PLG all ISTE felt that they would have been unlikely to gain this knowledge so quickly.

Another example of the institutional knowledge gained, was the tacit knowledge about schools in the region. Chris noted that other PLG members were *"... able to give [me] the culture feedback very, very quickly. So if there's anything I need to know [about the school] I found that really, really valuable"* (C, I, p.6). Chris felt that by having access to this information s/he was better prepared for working in schools that s/he knew little about.

All ISTE noted that the willingness of everyone to share knowledge meant that they could confidently approach any member outside of the PLG sessions for assistance, especially the PLG leader. *"...you got to know [the others in the PLG] and you knew you could go and ask them a question later on by themselves if you wanted to or email them...it was just really nice..."* (S, I, p.4). Addison also saw this as

strength of the PLGs because there were not always easily identifiable people for new ISTE's to go to for information in the first instance.

Brad's comment is indicative of the ISTE's' opinions. *"It has been interesting to learn about the organisation and what it is that we do as a whole. Some of what we have discussed has been useful for my practice"* (B, S2, q.25).

Lessened feelings of isolation

Secondly, most of the ISTE's and Implementation Team considered that collaboration lessened the feeling of ISTE professional and/or geographical isolation. ISTE's acknowledged that being in a PLG allowed them to feel part of a team and gave them a feeling of connection to the group. This was particularly evident for the three ISTE's that had no other ISTE working with them. Sandy, noted that because ISTE's, including him/herself, were frequently out of the XSSS buildings visiting schools and early childhood centres, it was possible to not see colleagues for some time. For Sandy this had the potential to create a sense of professional isolation that was lessened by having regular contact with other ISTE's at PLG sessions. *"I just think because the job is so in and out and everyone's all over the place, it's really great having that facilitator you can go to and the people in your group ..."* (S, I, p.11).

The Implementation Team considered PLGs to be important because if an ISTE was working in professional isolation they would not have anyone to support them in their inquiry into effective professional practice. *"Because some ISTE's are the only one in a work stream it is not possible to rely on a work stream to support professional learning"* (R, I, p12).

Being part of a PLG lessened the feeling of isolation for Brad allowing him/her to have contact with colleagues more frequently than would otherwise have been likely. *"I certainly did feel quite isolated*

at times, so having the opportunity to come together in those groups regularly...to share ideas...it was a great environment to toss ideas around in” (B, I, p.1).

Collegial Conversations

A third reason for PLG success ISTEes identified was that collaboration provided the opportunity for collegial conversations that supported their critical reflection on practice. All of the ISTEes considered the conversations with colleagues to be vital to their professional learning because it allowed the sharing of explicit knowledge about what the ISTE role involved and how it might be carried out. ISTEes identified a need for this knowledge as they transitioned into their new role. Chris found that the collegial conversations had a direct impact on his/her work, because the conversations gave clarity to the ISTE role. *“I think impacting on my work was that [collegial conversations] certainly gave me a model to work with in the sense of how we present, how we notified schools, how we did all of that contact ... so that was really good” (C, I, p.5).* From this Chris was able to reflect on his/her own practice and modify it accordingly.

With relation to collaboration and conversations, some ISTEes felt that there was as much to be gained professionally from informal conversations as from the formal conversations in the PLG sessions. *“...sometimes it was...the informal conversations or discussions [that were] just as important as the more structured sessions” (C, I, p5).* Nic felt that s/he would have liked more opportunities for informal conversations.

Sharing philosophy of practice

Closely aligned with collegial conversations is the fourth point that collaboration allowed for the sharing of ISTE philosophy and practice. Four ISTEes felt that the PLG was the primary source of this type of discussion for them. For example Chris’ comment was *“...if we didn’t*

have [the PLG] I'm not really quite sure where I would have got [the knowledge about ISTE practice] from" (C, I, p.3).

The sharing of philosophy and practice meant that the practice of the new and experienced ISTE's was deprivatised. As a result, new ISTE's felt they were able to learn from the experience of others. It prompted ISTE's to critically reflect on their own practice in light of what other PLG members shared. *"Sharing the philosophy of practice [by] some of the more experienced [ISTEs] and just hearing the way they thought about things and the way they did things ... made me think about how I could change the way I do things or how I could approach certain aspects of my job" (D, I, p.2).* Nic, however, felt that his/her PLG did not always have the chance to discuss their philosophy and practice in enough depth to support his/her learning. To meet the need for this type of discussion, Nic formed a professional relationship with a colleague outside of the PLG and had discussions with them that challenged his/her thinking.

When ISTE practice was deprivatised, Addison felt that it provided the opportunity to examine the ISTE's espoused theory and their theory in action. In the past Addison had felt that *"...in some cases I suspected that [ISTEs] were talking about what their problem of practice was, but that [it] had nothing much to do with their practice and what was going well and what wasn't going well" (Ad, I, p9).* Addison felt that deprivatisation of practice, particularly through observation and feedback, *"... would be a really good way for [new ISTE's] to get instant feedback about something that could sort out a problem of their practice before it became embedded in what they do" (Ad, I, p.10).*

Dale identified deprivatisation of practice within PLGs as important. S/he felt that by having to share his/her philosophy and thoughts about his/her practice, it made him/her accountable for his/her learning and provided the need for him/her to reflect on his/her practice. *"...having*

a meeting where you have to come and report where you're at and what you're thoughts are, actually makes you do the preparation...I'd read up what I'd written last time and I'd reflect on what I'd done last time" (D, I, p.10). Another element of deprivatisation of practice that impacted on Dale's professional learning was when others commented on what s/he had shared. Dale considered that hearing the thoughts of others contributed to him/her clarifying and, if necessary, changing his/her own ideas. The clarification gave him/her direction to his/her work. "...I found often my thinking changed during [the PLG] session...as the conversation went around ...I developed my thoughts better...It would make more sense to as to what I was actually doing. So that was a really, really valuable process...You get more of a direction as to what you want to do" (D, I, p.11).

Peer mentoring

The fifth point that emerged from the findings was that collaboration provided the opportunity for mentoring, both professionally and pastorally. "... it's that collaboration ... within a group, ... and the mentoring that goes on in both a pastoral sense and professional sense, where people are discussing practice, discussing issues around professional problems or situations, but also checking that that person's coping, that they have the network of people to talk to, that they understand systems and protocols that sit alongside the learning situation" (R, I, p.1-2). Addison, Jamie and the majority of the ISTEes, supported Rowan's view that there was both professional and pastoral mentoring in the PLGs. For Chris the peer mentoring in the PLG was based on the concept of Ako and was very important to him/her. "... peer mentoring / tutoring, it's a real ... aspect of Ako [it's] demonstrated the whole time ... because the facilitators become the learners and the learners become the facilitators at different times during the year" (C, I, p.11). Rowan supported Chris' perception of Ako, commenting that "... Everybody's still learning. Everybody's presenting as learners... and it doesn't matter who the person is, so

it's not always the wisest or oldest person that feeds in the piece of information that's key" (R, I, p.5).

Diversity of the PLG group was considered as positive by the majority of ISTE's and all of the Implementation Team because it allowed a variety of views relating to ISTE practice to be presented during peer mentoring. Addison saw this as an advantage because, prior to PLGs, new ISTE's may have only had one viewpoint presented. *"...in other words if that person has a limited view of what an [ISTE] does then the new person coming in will only get that view, so [the previous process] didn't have the ability to share lots of different perspectives of the work" (Ad, I, p.2).* For Addison it was important to have a variety of perspectives *"...because there's no one way of doing this job" (Ad, I, p.2).*

The diversity of the group had the potential to impact on ISTE practice. Chris considered that the *"... 200 years of experience in our group and different cultural backgrounds ... contributed, I think, to what I was going to deliver at the end of the day...and how I'd deliver it because you could take the strengths ...from everyone else in that group" (C, I, p.12).* However, Nic commented that while s/he considered it valuable overall to have diversity of membership, it may have been useful in the initial stage of mentoring to be in a PLG with ISTE's from the same work stream. *"[The mentor] probably needed to be someone with the same content knowledge [as myself] because ...I was learning as much about [learning area] as I was about advising" (N, I, p.6).* To address this need, Nic found a mentor in the same work stream, outside of his/her PLG.

Nic also felt that there had not been peer mentoring in his/her PLG. Had there been, Nic considered that it would have happened because it 'had to' and would not have occurred naturally. Nic went to a colleague outside of the PLG to be challenged and mentored and found this supported his/her professional learning.

Telling stories

The sixth point in relation to collaboration was that it provided an opportunity for ISTE's to tell their stories. As presented in the section relating to sharing practice, all ISTE's generally saw this as positive, however Chris did note that there were times when the storytelling was too long. When this happened, it seemed to Chris that the person needed to share their thoughts. "... *when the storytelling got a bit long ... that person obviously felt like they needed to be listened to...*" (C, I, p.8). Chris did not comment if this situation was a positive or negative for him/her, but there was a sense of frustration in his/her comment.

Tools

Three tools that facilitated collaboration and critical reflection were identified. These were professional readings, professional learning progressions and learning journals. For Jamie the PLG's provided a structure for ISTE's to share and discuss professional readings and consider the implications for their practice. S/he felt that prior to the establishment of the PLG's, ISTE's were given professional readings with limited opportunity to discuss them and that this did little to develop professional learning for new ISTE's. "*There's no point in handing out readings for the sake of handing out readings. I think that if we think it's important there needs to be a structure around those readings ... In the end it's got to make a difference for people's practice... You want them to be thinking 'well ok so what does that mean for me? How... is that going to change what I'm going to do?' ...rather than just... 'oh, that was interesting reading'"* (J, I, p.5). Chris agreed with Jamie's view because PLG members came from a variety of backgrounds. This meant that there would be a variety of perspectives presented around the same reading. "*It was really nice to really unpack [the reading] and get a decent grasp of...that piece of research...and you could say 'well [what] did you actually think about this' or did you think that perhaps they were doing this'"* (C, I, p.2).

The professional learning progressions were identified by some ISTE's and the Implementation Team as an important tool to support critical reflection and professional learning. All ISTE's were to use the progressions when reflecting on their practice within PLG's. Rowan felt that the progressions allowed new ISTE's to see the pathway for their professional learning and as a result it allowed them to determine where their professional learning needs might be. *"[It] comes back to self-determination. [ISTE's] can set their own pathways"* (R, I, p.10). It was the continual discussion of the progressions in the PLG that Dale found useful. *"[Discussing the progressions] made you really reflect on what you do and the other thing is it makes you see the next steps too"* (D, I, p.3).

Dale found that the learning progressions supported his/her critical reflection not only in the PLG sessions, but any time s/he was reflecting on his/her practice. As a result s/he felt that s/he had become more reflective. *"When I was planning a workshop I [would] think about the things [the PLG] talked about, but then afterwards reflected on how it went. I'd think about where I was on the [on the progressions] and the things I needed to think about...What went well? What didn't go well? and I tried to relate it back to [the professional learning progressions]"* (D, I, p.4).

A learning journal, in which ISTE's kept a record of their learning, including where they placed themselves on the professional learning progressions, was the third tool identified. There was a difference between two ISTE's in the use they made of the journal to support their reflection. Dale used it constantly and found it invaluable as a tool to record the professional learning that had occurred for him/her. Nic, on the other hand, did not like the journal and rarely used it, relying on memory to reflect on his/her learning. The important element for Nic was that the tool used should be a choice and not imposed by the PLG. *"Interestingly ... some people [filled out the journal] religiously and*

some didn't...[The appropriate tool for me] was probably memory, which in hindsight was probably a mistake...If you're made to do something that's not your thing, it's not going to work" (N, I, p.14). Despite this Nic did not feel that having to do the journal made the PLG any less valuable.

Negative elements of collaboration

While most of the ISTE's were positive about collaboration and peer mentoring in the PLG's, they also identified some negative elements. One related to personalities within the groups. At times some ISTE's noted dominant voices in the group, who did not readily allow others to contribute. Chris, who acknowledged that s/he could be a dominant personality, developed a strategy to try and ensure that everyone had a chance to contribute. *"... we had a lot of personalities that were very similar i.e. we all had heaps to say and were willing to share it, but ... there were a couple of people that were very, very quiet ... I became very, very aware of that. So I kind of made, in my own mind, this little contract that whenever the quietest person in our group had spoken then I could contribute, because then I knew they had been listened to"* (C, I, p.1). Chris felt that this worked well and allowed everyone to be heard.

Addison also noted that dominant personalities could be an issue and that as result new ISTE's might take advice from the wrong person because theirs was the loudest voice. *"So the group's dynamics is powerful, but it can work against you if the new advisor [ISTE] is not able to pick up the nuances of the group and recognise that [they] should be listening to her not him"* (Ad, I, p.13). To avoid people dominating, ISTE's and the Implementation Team felt that the facilitation of the PLG was vital.

Chris identified another potential negative relating to personalities in the group and the choice of the problem of practice. S/he felt that if an ISTE's problem of practice affected one of the group members, then

the ISTE would be less likely to share it and therefore lost the opportunity to be mentored. For Chris this meant choosing a problem of practice that did not affect any of the group members, which created a sense of frustration. *"... I couldn't identify [the problem of practice] within my group because it would affect the person that was in my group ... as a new person I found that ... frustrating"* (C, I, p.9-10). Dale also found that there was one personality in his/her PLG that s/he had difficulty with, but did not say if it influenced his/her choice of problem of practice. *"... I enjoyed my [PLG] but there was one person in the [PLG] that annoyed me quite a lot"* (D, I, p.9).

Another negative to mentoring in the PLG that Dale identified was the familiarity that the group developed with one another's problems of practice. There were times when Dale wanted to hear from members in other PLGs. *"... I kept thinking 'I want to hear what that person over there's got to say' in another group. So I was with this [PLG] where I did learn from them, but every now and then I wanted to be hearing what other people were doing too because after the first couple of times you sort of know what the people in your [PLG] are doing"* (D, I, p.9).

Observation and feedback about practice

Observation and feedback was considered to be a vital part of professional learning by all of the new ISTE's and the Implementation Team. The findings indicated that along with the observation of their own practice, most ISTE's considered it important to have opportunities to observe the practice of colleagues.

As a member of the Implementation Team, Rowan considered that the observation of a new ISTE, by an experienced ISTE, was especially important because it had the potential to help the new ISTE identify their problem of practice. Rowan suggested that when a new ISTE joined a PLG, they did not know what ISTE practice looked like. If

the ISTE's self-determine their problem of practice there was no assurance that this was what they should actually be focussing on, unless there was someone to observe their practice and provide feedback (R, I).

All ISTE's considered observation and feedback to have powerful positive effects, whether it was done by their PLG leader or another peer. Three ISTE's identified the process as the single most important part of their learning because the process confirmed whether or not their practice was sound and provided the opportunity for supportive guidance if it wasn't. *"X came and did an observation...that was quite a detailed one and again it was positive and useful. [They] gave me some good feedback on ...things that I did and things that I could have done and it was certainly helpful"* (B, I, p.3).

Not only did the observations and feedback allow ISTE's to know if their practice was appropriate, but, as Addison identified, it also provided the opportunity for the ISTE to reflect on their espoused theory and their theory in use. Nic noted that when s/he received their feedback the observer challenged his/her thinking and practice even though Nic was not ready for the challenge. It made him/her critically reflect on their practice. *"... X would always ask me quite challenging questions and I probably wasn't always ready to answer because I wasn't in the headspace where I was thinking about why I was doing things ... [being challenged] was probably more significant than [just me] reflecting on my own practice. Having conversations with X after and actually even before [observations] about 'what's the specific purpose' and being quite focussed on what [and] why you were there ... was not necessarily something I would have thought about enough until X kept pestering me with all those questions that were quite hard actually... [being challenged] was pretty important"* (N, I, p.7).

For Chris it was important that the feedback was from someone with whom s/he had a positive relationship with and respected. In his/her

case this was the PLG leader. *"I think the most powerful [element of the PLG] was the [PLG leader] observation and the feedback on [my] practice, especially from someone who had been in advisory for a little while and also because we built up ...the respect [for the PLG leader] ...[so] that there was the integrity in the feedback"* (C, I, p.1). Nic agreed with Chris that feedback needed to come from someone who knew about effective ISTE practice because the educators Nic worked with in the field, weren't necessarily able to provide him/her with feedback that would improve his/her practice. Therefore it needed to come from an ISTE. *"...teachers will say 'that's really great' ...and it's extremely positive...but in terms of getting feedback about my practice, they don't know what they're looking for...it needs to be another [ISTE]"* (N, I, p.6).

Most ISTE did not feel that it was necessary for the peer observing them to be in the same work stream. Brad suggested that this was because *"...we [the new ISTE] knew our subject...but the whole facilitation skill was brand spanking new for us in terms of working with adults..."* (B, I, p.3). Therefore it was feedback about the way they facilitated that was important. However Nic felt that if the ISTE did not have strong content knowledge, they would benefit from working with someone in their work stream so that their content knowledge as well as ISTE practice, could be strengthened. *"...[for me] it probably needed to be someone with the same content knowledge because I was learning as much about [learning area] as I was about advising and that's a wee bit different from someone in [another learning area] where the curriculum is well understood"* (N, I, p.6).

Not only did ISTE find it important to be observed and receive feedback, they also found it useful to observe and shadow colleagues. The reason given for this was that ISTE could see what effective ISTE practice looked like, making the tacit knowledge of ISTE practice explicit. *"I found it immensely useful shadowing X and just*

listening to [their] questioning and interacting with [teachers]"

(N, I, p.6). Observing a colleague and being able to ask them questions about their practice challenged Nic's own thinking about ISTE practice, which relates to the importance of critical reflection for ISTE, explored previously in this chapter.

Jamie supported the need for new ISTE, observing or shadowing colleagues and considered that the ISTE gained in three ways. The first was that the ISTE was able to ask the colleague questions, such as 'Why did you do it that way?' The second was that this questioning gave the opportunity for the ISTE to critically reflect on their own practice. The final advantage that Jamie identified was the opportunity for discussion around effective ISTE practice. "... *sharing and looking at improving [ISTE] practice...I think that, done well, there is considerable potential*" (J, I, p.8). To make the most of this opportunity, both Jamie and Addison agreed that any observation or shadowing needed to have a clear purpose. They considered that it was not enough to just observe a colleague. It was important for the ISTE to think "... *'so when I'm shadowing what am I looking for?'*" (Ad, I, p.6).

All ISTE, would have liked more opportunities to observe colleagues, although not necessarily from their PLG, to see what ISTE practice explicitly looked like. Brad felt that s/he would have liked to have observed the experienced ISTE, who had presented the initial induction course at the start of 2007, working with educators. "*I thought that...the first day that Xs did with us [the new ISTE] was just fantastic. I thought that in terms of modelling best practice and being explicit about it, why Xs were doing it ... I got so much out of that day ... The carry on from that would have been to go and observe the actual 'doing' with teachers...*" (B, I, p.4). Brad did not feel that, as a new ISTE, s/he could approach colleagues and ask to observe them. To overcome this, Brad recommended that in the future all ISTE, were made aware of workshops happening in their area so that they

could observe colleagues' facilitation. S/he also suggested that an experienced ISTE invite a new ISTE to observe them in a variety of contexts. Both Nic and Brad concluded that they themselves could have been proactive in arranging observations, but they weren't sure it was appropriate and it was difficult to arrange times to suit both the experienced and new ISTE. Most of the ISTE's noted that the issue of finding a suitable time to observe or be observed was a problem, especially when they were trying to align times for observations with the PLG leader.

Despite the barriers outlined above, ISTE's that did have the opportunity to observe others found it very helpful. For example, Dale used what s/he had observed about relationship building to inform his/her own practice and as a result of the observation, made changes to his/her practice. *"...what I saw was the way these teachers worked with this [ISTE] and the sort of relationships that they had developed. [I] saw that that was a strength of what she was doing and ... the relationship she'd developed [meant] they could talk about anything ... it made me change a wee bit how I worked with teachers..."* (D, I, p.2).

While the Implementation Team identified that observing and shadowing were vital for new ISTE's they concluded that XSSS was just beginning to put this structure in place and that there was more work to be done in this area to embed it in the culture of the department. *"I think the whole point of having somebody to ... shadow is excellent and we should pursue it"* (Ad, I, p.7). Rowan considered *"When we come together as teams, as [PLG's] ... things are great but the commitment of time and effort and appropriateness of people like the [PLG] leader going in and observing or getting someone buddied up and observing, isn't systematic at the moment. We need a wider commitment from a wider range of people to do that sort of thing"* (R, I, p.2). Rowan felt that as the new ISTE's that had positive experiences of observations and shadowing, continued

participating in PLGs, there was an increased likelihood of this practice becoming part of the XSSS culture. S/he considered that this was because the new ISTE's would expect it to be part of what happens in a PLG. As highlighted previously by Jamie, systemic observations and support from the PLG, had funding implications for XSSS.

Leadership and Facilitation

Four themes related to the leadership and facilitation of the PLGs emerged from the findings. The first were the qualities and traits PLG leaders required. The second theme is the impact that the leadership and facilitation had on some ISTE's' practice. The third is the variation of leadership style and facilitation that existed between the PLGs. The final component is related to the support and acknowledgment for the PLGs leaders from the XSSS Management.

Qualities and traits PLG leaders required

The first theme relating to leadership and facilitation of the PLG was the qualities and traits of the PLG leader. ISTE's and Implementation Team highlighted a number of traits of PLG leaders that they perceived supported the effective operation of the group. For example, Jamie identified that "... *the [PLG leader] needs to be confident and well organised*" (J, S2, q.19), if they were to facilitate the group effectively. Related to Jamie's comment are the perspectives of Addison and Dale who agreed that the leader needed to be well organised so that they were clear about the direction the group needed to go in and how they would get there to enhance professional learning. "*[The PLG leader set] a clear direction for the learning of the [PLG] members*" (D, S1, q.18). Dale considered that knowing the direction of the learning in the PLG had a positive impact on his/her professional learning.

Most ISTE's commented on the gentle and inclusive facilitation style of their respective PLG leaders making them feel connected to the group and this was considered a positive element of the leader's facilitation. The inclusiveness of facilitation was especially important to Brad. *"...our facilitator, X, is just fantastic and... [has] a lovely, lovely, warm, kind caring manner ... X encouraged everyone to participate... I just tended to sit back and listen, but X always said, 'what about you [Brad], how do you feel?' or 'What's your perspective on that?' X just gently encouraged people to be involved."* (B, I, p.1). Brad explained that X achieved the involvement of the whole group by asking everyone for their view in turn, making each person feel valued. *"The way it was facilitated was that everyone felt valued, like our facilitator was really good at saying ... 'your perspective is from working in X field' ... and ... everyone felt valued, I think, and part of that group"* (B, I, p.4). Brad also commented that the inclusive facilitation used by the leader, defused the potential negative impact of one of the group members. *"... there was one person in the group who could be really quite negative at times and [the PLG leader], in the nicest possible way, tried not to give him/her too much of a platform to bring a negative impact on how people were feeling..."* (B, I, p.1).

Impact of leadership and facilitation

As a second theme, the effective facilitation of the group had the potential to impact on the practice of ISTE's. Some noted that they used strategies that their PLG leader had modelled, in their own practice. In Dale's case the way that the PLG leader had facilitated his/her group had a major impact on his/her practice. His/her PLG leader used relationship building activities within the PLG. Before participating in the PLG, Dale had considered activities like these as unimportant. After experiencing the positive impact that these activities had within the group and in creating a supportive professional learning environment, Dale saw how important they were. As a result s/he incorporated relationship building activities

within his/her own practice, despite finding it difficult. *“The facilitation of the [PLG] was just outstanding. That taught me lots and lots... I know I do go on a bit about all the fluffy stuff, but it’s only [that] I realise how important it is and just how easy X made it for people to contribute and talk to each other. So I’m developing that. When I do it with people I really enjoy doing it, but it’s something I find hard...”* (D, I, p2-3). If Dale becomes a PLG leader in the future, s/he plans to facilitate the group in the way that s/he experienced.

Variation of leadership style and facilitation

In relation to the third theme of the variation in the leadership and facilitation of the PLGs, the responses from ISTE s and the Implementation Team varied depending on their individual experiences and perceptions. While all of the PLGs had as their prime focus the improving of ISTE practice through critical reflection, it appeared that how this was achieved differed considerably between PLGs. Jamie attributed this to the PLG leader. *“I think that what happens in [PLG] can be dependent on the [PLG] leader and that can have quite a bearing on how effective that [PLG] is”* (J, I, p.2). S/he felt that the leadership of the PLG was vital for the group to function effectively. If the PLG was not operating effectively it would impact negatively on the quality of the collegial conversations taking place. Jamie considered that this had particular relevance for new ISTE s because they may be reliant on the PLG as their main source of professional learning and therefore there was a need for the conversations to be of a particularly high quality.

“... I know the [PLG leaders] did spend time planning what they were going to be doing, but there did seem to be quite noticeable differences between [PLGs] as to what was delivered and how”

(J, S2, q.19). ISTE s’ responses supported Jamie’s view. One area of variation identified related to the observations of ISTE s. All PLG leaders were expected to observe the practice of each new ISTE s in their group and give relevant feedback. However, not all of the ISTE s

had an opportunity to be observed and receive feedback from their PLG leader. The three that did have leader observations, found that it was beneficial because it gave them an opportunity to gain ideas about how to improve their practice. “...it was quite useful to just chat through with X afterwards about how to handle [the diverse group of teachers]” (B, I, p.3). As identified previously, Chris also considered the feedback from the PLG leader the most important element of the PLG.

Dale and Nic did not have leader observations. In Dale’s case it had been difficult for him/her and his/her PLG leader, who was not in the same geographical region, to find a time to be able to do this, but s/he did consider that it would have been a valuable experience. Nic did not clarify why the observation had not occurred, but like Dale, s/he thought that it would have been valuable to have had one.

The next area of variation related to the PLG leaders meeting individually with new ISTE’s in their group. All PLG leaders were expected to have at least one meeting to discuss each ISTE’s problem of practice and support them in locating themselves on the professional learning progressions. The findings show that all of the ISTE’s had individual meetings with their PLG leader, but there was a variation as to when the meetings occurred and how useful they had been. Most ISTE’s had their individual meeting early in 2007 and, as highlighted previously, during this they found it very useful to discuss the professional learning progressions with the PLG leader. “X was fantastic ... and some of the really valuable things I got from X was when I had a talk with X for the first time...and we looked at where I placed myself on the [professional learning progressions]” (D, I, p.3).

Unlike ISTE’s who had met with their PLG leader early in 2007, Nic met individually with his/her leader late in 2007. Nic considered that it would have been beneficial to have met early in the year to gain guidance in their new role as an ISTE. Nic thought this may not have

been possible because of the demand on the time of the PLG leader. *"...there was only one time when ... we [Nic and the PLG leader] worked together and that was late in the year... I think every new [ISTE] needs sort of a mentor early on where you spend a bit more time getting...some feedback or getting some ideas"* (N, I, p.6). Nic found a colleague outside of the PLG to fulfil the mentor role and give the guidance that other new ISTE's in this study received, in the first instance, from their PLG leader. Nic's comment that the PLG leader may not have had time to meet with everyone early in the year reinforces Jamie's perspective that PLG leaders need to be allocated the time to fulfil their role in the way that supports their PLG to operate effectively.

Along with clarification about the professional learning progressions, Chris, Brad and Dale considered that the individual meetings were beneficial because they established a relationship with their PLG leader early in the year. While Dale viewed this as positive, because s/he felt that s/he was then able to approach the PLG leader at any time if s/he needed support, s/he commented that s/he would have liked more contact from the leader between sessions to continually develop the connections between PLG members. *"...I developed a relationship with [PLG leader] fairly early and that was really good, but I think it could have been improved a bit...I think that the connection between the [PLG] leader and the [PLG] members is really important and ... an email now and then,... an encouragement or something that they've found out that you may be interested in [would be beneficial]"* (D, I, p.12). Chris also noted the importance of the emails from the PLG leader, commenting that it gave a *"...human aspect. That interpersonal [part] is really, really important"* (C, I, p.12).

While Jamie expressed some concern about the variation within the PLGs, Brad particularly mentioned the flexibility, or variation, in the approach of the leader as being a positive element of facilitation.

Brad thought that being flexible met the diverse needs of the group. *"...X didn't stick to the rules necessarily about what had to be achieved in every session based on the outline that X was given. X kind of let it flow in terms of 'well these are some of the things that we could look at today'"* (B, I, p.1). Brad also valued the fact that the PLG leader kept the session practical and always related the discussion back to *"'What does this mean for you as [ISTEs]?"* (B, I, p.2).

Support and acknowledgement for PLG Leaders

The final theme of support and acknowledgement of PLG leaders was identified as being necessary by two of the Implementation Team. They considered that the XSSS Management had a responsibility to ensure funding was available to support PLG Leaders. This included funding to allow time for PLG leaders to meet as a group with the PLG leader coordinator to plan PLG sessions and develop the leaders' own professional learning related to being a PLG leader. *"...time and funding...that's crucial really... In the end if you think [PLG leaders are] important then you need to staff it and that means funding it ..."* (J, I, p.10). Jamie considered it was important for PLG leaders and the coordinator to have time to meet and plan so that the leaders were well organised and focused for their PLG sessions. *"I think that's been quite important having professional learning group leaders in that role and that they have met with [a PLG coordinator]"* (J, I, p2). Rowan strongly agreed that PLG leaders needed to be supported in their role and that they had learning needs. *"...the [PLG] leaders now are getting to a stage where they're starting to operate at a high level ... but are not all equal, they're all different."* (R, I, p.5). The support that Jamie and Rowan have identified was reliant on the involvement of the wider XSSS Management.

It is evident that while there were different experiences in PLGs, everyone agreed that the activities within and leadership of the PLG

supported the induction of new ISTE's. In the next section the findings relating directly to the PLG structure will be presented.

Professional Learning Groups

This section presents four themes that emerged from the research related to the PLG and the way in which they supported ISTE's' professional learning. The first was the purpose of the PLG and how it related to the PLG as part of a larger induction structure. The second is what happened within the PLG that ISTE's and the Implementation Team perceived supported professional learning, including the composition of the PLG and the environment that was necessary within the PLGs for them to be effective. The third theme relates to the reasons why everyone considered the PLGs were effective. Finally, findings are presented relating to the ISTE's' and the Implementation Team's perspective on the continuation of the PLGs to support the professional learning of new ISTE's.

Purpose and Induction Structure

The Implementation Team and ISTE's were clear about the purpose of the PLG as a structure to support the professional learning and professionalising of new ISTE's focussing on the generic elements of ISTE practice. That is, the 'how' to facilitate, as opposed to the content or 'what' to facilitate. Addison saw the PLGs as a formal "*... structure that makes sure that people are supported in their learning and in ... general, things that are to do with being an [ISTE]. So when a new person comes in, [the PLG is] a ... ready made...set-up to support them*" (Ad, I, p.2), which had not been there in the past. Jamie agreed with Addison when s/he said, "*... I think that the PLG format provides a better sort of structure and a better sort of focus for groups [than in the past for ISTE's] to meet and look at and share their practice*" (J, I, p.3). Rowan agreed and added that the key to the PLGs being effective was that they were part of a larger professional learning and professionalising structure within XSSS to support new

ISTEs. The ISTEs too considered that the PLG focus was on professional learning and professionalisation. For example when Chris was asked if the PLGs did provide the opportunity to explore professionalism of ISTE practice s/he replied, “*Absolutely*” (C, I, p.2).

Rowan stressed that the PLGs had a sound theoretical base that had influenced the development of the groups. “...*the [PLG] is part of the bigger structure around professional learning opportunities, so that when teachers are translating from the profession of being a teacher to ISTE professional practice, ... it is a professionalisation into the service. ... That professionalising is based on sound theory of practice and the opportunity to discuss what practice of an ... ISTE looks like in reality*” (R, I, p.1). Rowan summarised the larger induction structure for new ISTEs, that the PLGs were a part of, as being “... *where [new people] come together as new ISTEs to form a collaborative group around transitioning into ISTE practice and then from there being supported by [PLGs] of a mixture of people who are from a range of backgrounds, work streams, experiences and some who are relatively new ISTEs themselves*” (R, I, p.1).

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the Implementation Team and ISTEs saw the PLG leader as the key person for setting the clear direction of the PLG to support professional learning. Aligned with this, Jamie considered that it was important for ISTEs that the development of the direction and vision for the PLG occurred within the PLG at the beginning of the year. “...*[establishing the PLG's] vision, as far as being in a professional learning group was concerned,... helped set the scene for how the learning groups were to operate*” (J, I, p.3-4).

Within the Professional Learning Group

Having considered the purpose and larger induction structure that the PLGs were a part of in the previous section, this section presents the elements that emerged from the findings related to the internal structure of the PLGs. These were; the opportunities for professional learning, leadership of the PLGs, giving ISTE agency, composition of the PLG and the environment necessary within the PLG to enhance professional learning.

Professional learning opportunities and leadership of Professional Learning Groups

The first element was the opportunity that the PLGs provided for ISTE professional learning. These opportunities for professional learning were provided through collaboration and observation and feedback. The second element was the leadership of the PLGs. Both of these elements have been explored in this chapter and will not be re-examined here.

Giving ISTE agency

The third element was the opportunity for ISTE to have agency. The Implementation Team identified that ISTE were able to self determine their own problem of practice and acknowledged the personalised learning that occurred as a result of this. For example Rowan saw “...*the agency [as] the people within the structure who self-determine professional learning opportunities and progress*” (R, I, p.6). Addison made it clear that s/he thought the PLG structure was positive because it meant other ISTE in the group were able to support the new ISTE in determining their problem of practice. “... *within a PLG you can be far more helpful to help the new [ISTE] identify areas [for improving practice] than if you left them to their own devices ... because in [the PLG] ...it’s talking to the experienced [ISTEs] about what it was like for [them] when [they] started and what things did [they] find [they] needed to know first that might help*

[the new ISTE] identify where [they] should start” (Ad, I, p.11). As discussed previously in the Observation and Feedback section, both Addison and Rowan perceived that while the new ISTE had the agency to identify their problem of practice, the PLG structure provided the opportunity, through observation and feedback, to ensure that ISTE had chosen a relevant problem of practice.

Rowan provided another example of how the PLG structure gave agency to ISTE. S/he felt that when the new ISTE were part of a PLG they could see where they fitted within the institution and how they might influence the institution. As a result, Rowan considered that there was personal learning, group learning and institutional learning each with the potential to influence the other. *“...[PLGs] situate [new ISTE] in an organisation, within professional learning and as an integral part of collaboration that helps the entire group grow because [new ISTE] bring skills and knowledge with them as well... That’s not to be underestimated” (R, I, p.7). The PLG structure meant that new ISTE could influence experienced ISTE and vice versa. “So there’s that ebb and flow of knowledge and wisdom from new ISTE to experienced ISTE and backwards and forwards” (R, I, p.8). “... [the] new ISTE can see where they fit as an individual, as a group and as an institution and how they shape what happens in the institution as opposed to the institution always shaping them” (R, I, p.11).*

Composition of the Professional Learning Groups

The fourth element that emerged was the composition of the PLGs. As indicated previously, most ISTE and all of the Implementation Team considered it was positive having ISTE from a variety of work streams in the PLGs because it allowed the focus to be on ISTE practice, not content and allowed a diverse range of views to be presented. *“The diversity of experiences, strengths, leadership styles and abundance of knowledge has been very insightful and helpful, supportive in my role as a new [ISTE]” (C, S2, q.17). Only Nic*

considered it would have been an advantage for him/her to be in a PLG with ISTE's from the same work stream.

ISTE's commented on the number of people in the PLG. Nic noted that this could range from *"three to four or seven to eight depending on the opportunity to meet"* (N, S2, q.17). Nic felt that four was an ideal number so that it was possible to practice facilitation techniques within the PLG. *"Smaller meetings have been useful at times, e.g. practicing coaching techniques and feeding back"* (N, S2, q.17). Most of the ISTE's were positive about the size of the PLG's. *"Good size and mixture – [I] have learnt a lot from everyone in the group"* (S, S2, q.17).

The size of the group varied depending on the professional commitments of the ISTE's, for example lecturing, attending MOE meetings or if an ISTE was part time they may not attend all PLG sessions. New ISTE's joining part way through the year also meant that the numbers in a PLG may vary. Jamie identified that the variation in the number of ISTE's attending PLG sessions created an issue for the PLG leaders. S/he considered it may be difficult for PLG leaders to plan for sessions and ensure that everyone was up to date with what was discussed. *"The reality is that it's a bit of a challenge, the fact that you've got people coming and going from the groups...You're never ever guaranteed to have eight people in the PLG and the next time we meet I'm going to have eight people as well...When you've got people coming and going... how do you keep people up to date with the stuff that's gone before?..."* (J, I, p.8). Although Jamie saw this variation in the group composition as an issue, s/he still considered the PLG structure to be an advantage.

Environment necessary

The final element was the environment created within the PLGs that allowed professional learning to take place. Jamie thought that the vision and values of the PLG must be formed by the group from the beginning. *"I think the way [the PLGs] are set up at the start... to establish that group relationship...the fact that people are able to talk about what they value in a group, what was important to them as a group, what was the vision as far as being in a professional learning group...helped set the scene for how the learning groups were to operate"* (J, I, p.3). Dale agreed that relationships, and therefore the learning environment, must be developed from the start of the year. S/he felt it was important to establish an environment with a sense of connection to others and a feeling of trust if ISTEes were to participate effectively. *"...the diverse nature of the group and the personalities of some of the people in the group[meant] that we needed something that opened people up...We told people about ourselves a wee bit and it just linked people together and it ... created an environment that you felt you could say what you wanted to say...and [that] developed the trust between...members of the group [to] have a conversation about just about anything"* (D, I, p.15).

From this beginning, three ISTEes and Jamie felt that the environment needed to be non-judgemental so that ISTEes discussed ideas freely. Brad's comment reflected this view. *"It was a great environment just to be able to toss ideas around ...[by] the second or third meeting you started to feel comfortable to just be open and honest and share your ideas without any sense or concern that you were going to be judged or anything like that"* (B, I, p.1).

Reasons why Professional Learning Groups were successful

The third theme that emerged from the findings related to the reasons why ISTEes and the Implementation Team were unanimous that the

PLGs had supported the professional learning of new ISTE's. The reasons included the elements of transitioning, collaboration, observation and feedback and leadership already explored in this chapter, and also identify the dedicated time the PLGs gave to focus on ISTE practice. For example Sandy felt that dedicated time to discuss ISTE practice meant "...two main things. ...Focussing in on what you're meant to be doing is really good and the other one is that reflection...I think that is really, really important, reflecting on how we are as practitioners ... I know as a teacher, often we haven't made time for that..." (S, I, p.6). Chris considered that the PLG structure allowed the time for material presented to the whole of XSSS to be explored in more depth than would have happened had the PLGs not been in place. "I think [PLGs] develop more depth to the [XSSS professional development] sessions and really focus us in. I find [PLG sessions] really useful and lets me gain insights about issues – all good for my practice" (C, S2, q.25). Nic agreed with Chris' view.

The Implementation Team stated that on occasions they considered that there was not enough time given to PLG sessions, creating a sense that the PLGs were not valued. Jamie stated "The one problem I see is the lack of time – on several occasions the time available [to the PLGs] has been reduced because of other sessions going over time. Perhaps we need to say – this [PLG] time is the most important thing of all – 'we will not reduce it'. Something else has to go" (J, S2, q.25). Rowan strongly supported Jamie's view when s/he was looking to the future of the PLGs. "Greater time and priority given on meeting days to focus the work on practice and its improvement as an essential part of our work will be needed" (R, S2, q.26). When time in the PLGs was eroded, Addison expressed a sense of frustration that the potential for supporting the professional learning of ISTE's was not always reached. "We are often just getting going when it is time to stop" (Ad, S2, q.25).

Continuation of Professional Learning Groups

The research findings clearly show that ISTE and the Implementation Team were unanimous in their support of the continuation of PLGs. Table 2 shows the degree to which each group recommended the continuation of PLGs as a framework within XSSS.

Table 2: The likelihood of ISTE and the Implementation Team recommending to XSSS to continue to use the PLG framework for professional learning.

Rating	ISTEs (n=5)	Implementation Team (n=3)
Not likely	0	0
Likely	1	0
Extremely likely	4	3

Nic, the ISTE who said s/he was likely to recommend the continuation had frequently presented a different perspective throughout. However s/he was still positive about his/her experience in the PLG. *“I think it worked. For me it worked reasonably well. I’m just trying to think why I wouldn’t recommend it and I don’t know, I can’t see any good reason not to. If the option was nothing, I think I would be extremely likely to recommend it because ... even experienced [ISTEs] probably need to make sure that they’re not just drifting along and be challenged”* (N, I, p.13).

The remaining ISTE and the Implementation Team, were very positive about the PLGs continuing. Jamie’s comment is an example of their thoughts. *“The chance to have some time for quality conversations around our practice – the [PLG] idea, I believe is one of the most exciting approaches we have taken to improve our practice and growing our professional learning”* (J, S2, q.18).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

From everyone's perspective it is obvious that they perceived that ISTEs may experience difficulty in transitioning into their new role. It is evident that for this group, using PLGs to support their professional learning was most beneficial in easing the transition and supporting the induction process. The reasons given for the effectiveness were the opportunities that the PLGs gave for the sharing of and critical reflection on ISTE practice through a variety of means within a supportive professional learning environment.

The next chapter discusses the implications of these findings, with consideration to relevant research and makes recommendations regarding using PLGs to support the induction of new ISTES, as well as opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER

The purpose of this chapter is to address the primary research question of; ‘How well do the structures of the professional learning groups used by XSSS support the learning needs of new ISTE’s?’ The findings related to PLGs and relevant literature are discussed, implications of the findings are considered, and recommendations for further action or research are made. The chapter finishes with a conclusion. The definition used for a PLG within this chapter is Stoll et al.’s (2005) definition presented in the Literature Review Chapter.

INTRODUCTION

The research findings clearly indicate that the ISTE’s and Implementation Team considered that the PLGs were very useful as a structure in supporting their learning needs. Nic and Jamie’s comments are examples of ISTE’s and the Implementation Team’s comments respectively. *“I would be extremely likely to recommend it because ... even experienced [ISTE’s] probably need to make sure that they’re not just drifting along and be challenged”* (N, I, p.13). *“The chance to have some time for quality conversations around our practice – the [PLG] idea, I believe is one of the most exciting approaches we have taken to improve our practice and growing our professional learning”* (J, S2, q.18).

Four propositions emerged from the findings as to why the PLG structure was successful. These are:

Proposition One: The functioning and structure of the PLG support professional learning.

- Proposition Two: Leadership and facilitation of the PLG influence how the group operates.
- Proposition Three: Collaboration is vital for ISTE's to gain the knowledge that they require.
- Proposition Four: Opportunities for observation, feedback and shadowing strengthen ISTE's professional learning.

A fifth proposition that emerged from the research is not directly related to how well the PLGs supported the learning needs of new ISTE's, but is an important finding in relation to the induction of ISTE's.

The proposition is:

- Proposition Five: PLGs are part of a larger induction process for new ISTE's.

This chapter continues with discussions and implications related to each of the five propositions. These are presented separately, but in reality each influenced the other.

PROPOSITIONS

Proposition One

The functioning and structure of the PLG support the professional learning of new ISTE's.

The research findings reveal three elements that support this proposition. These are: the purpose and vision of the group, providing the opportunity for ISTE's to have agency, and the composition of the PLGs. Each of these will be explored in this section and implications from the research presented.

Firstly, ISTEes who identified that the PLG was most effective in supporting their learning also noted that the PLG had a clear vision and focus on learning. They were able to articulate the impact of that learning on their practice. Dale is an example of an ISTE that considered that his/her PLG had a clear vision "*[The PLG leader set] a clear direction for the learning of the [PLG] members*" (D, S1, q.18) and it was Dale who most clearly described the direct impact of the learning on his/her practice. "*The facilitation of the [PLG] was just outstanding. That taught me lots and lots... I know I do go on a bit about all the fluffy stuff, but it's only [that] I realise how important it is and just how easy X made it for people to contribute and talk to each other. So I'm developing that. When I do it with people I really enjoy doing it, but it's something I find hard...*" (D, I, p2-3). The research of Stoll et al. (2005) and Fullan (2001) agree that a learning vision is key to a successful PLG.

Secondly, using problems of practice in PLGs gave ISTEes the agency to define and set their own learning needs, with the professional learning progressions providing the pathway for their learning. For Dale, discussing the professional learning progressions meant that s/he was able to identify his/her own learning needs. "*[Discussing the progressions] made you really reflect on what you do and the other thing is it makes you see the next steps too*" (D, I, p.3). The Implementation Team considered it important for ISTEes to have agency in their professional learning and not have XSSS impose the learning. The findings of Trowler and Knight (1999) and Boice (1991), support the need for new tertiary educators to be given agency and a number of opportunities to present their learning needs to build their new identity as tertiary educators. Despite the importance of meeting individual learning needs, research, for example Anderson (2002), and Murray (2005, 2008), shows that higher education institutes are only beginning to provide these opportunities.

Therefore the findings of this research, that ISTE's require agency to decide on their individual learning needs and have these met over time, has implications for higher education institutes to provide structures to support the professional learning of new tertiary educators in this way. As Jamie identified, this has funding implications for XSSS to provide the dedicated time and personnel for effective professional learning in PLGs.

Finally, the diversity of workstreams, experiences, strengths and knowledge that made up the composition of the PLG was an important contribution to the professional learning of the ISTE's. It meant that ISTE's had more than one perspective presented during professional learning discussions. This was an advantage because as Addison noted, "... *there's no one way of doing this job*" (Ad, I, P.2), and it is likely that we learn more from people who are different to us than from people who are the same as us (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). However, Nic felt that his/her professional learning would have also benefited from the PLG being composed of people from his/her workstream. The reason Nic gave for this was that s/he felt s/he needed more content knowledge and less knowledge about ISTE practice.

Nic's preference for a PLG made up of the same workstream has implications for the composition of PLGs. The majority of the ISTE's, the Implementation Team felt that if critically reflecting on practice was the purpose of the PLG, it was more effective to have mixed workstreams. Research, for example Baker and McNicoll (2006), support this finding. However, if Nic felt that his/her learning needs around content knowledge were not being met, then the mixed work stream PLG will not meet their needs. As a result Baker and McNicoll (2006) argue that s/he may devalue the PLG. One solution is to create PLGs from the same workstream. However this option may create difficulty for ISTE's who are the only one in their work stream. This is highlighted by Sandy and Brad who were the only

ISTEs in their respective workstreams. They commented that they would have felt professionally isolated had they not been in mixed PLGs (B, I; S, I). The option of same workstream PLGs would require careful consideration be given to how and when these PLGs met as some ISTEs are in more than one workstream. Another possibility is to have workstream based PLGs, or a similar grouping, in addition to diverse PLGs so that all ISTEs' needs are met.

These considerations highlight the importance of there being a clear purpose to the PLGs, as this in turn influences the composition of the PLG. Fullan (2001) argues that it is essential that a shared learning vision is developed collaboratively with the group so that the group is aware of the purpose. He saw it as the leader's role to ensure that this occurred, suggesting that the lack of focus on practice is related to the leadership of the PLG.

Proposition Two

Leadership and facilitation of the PLG influences how the group operates.

There are two elements that emerge from the research findings in relation to this proposition. These are; the qualities of leaders and the variation in PLG leadership. Each of these will be explored in this section and implications from this research presented.

Firstly, the findings identified a number of qualities and attributes of effective leaders. Some examples given were the leader being confident, well organised, being able to set a clear direction for the group, and having a gentle and inclusive facilitation style. ISTEs and the Implementation Team considered that these impacted on how the PLG operated and the professional learning of ISTEs. An example of the leadership affecting the group's operation is found in Brad's comment "... *there was one person in the group who could be really quite negative at times and [the PLG leader], in the nicest possible*

way, tried not to give [him/her] too much of a platform to bring a negative impact on how people were feeling..." (B, I p.1). Had the PLG leader not demonstrated the attributes needed to deal with this situation, there would have been a negative impact on the functioning of the group and potentially the ISTE's learning. Fullan (2001) and Lindqvist and Reeves (2007) support the need for the attributes that emerged from the findings for leaders of groups involved in critical reflection. Lindqvist and Reeves (2007) add one other attribute and that is an enthusiasm to do the task. Through my experience as a PLG leader, I suggest that this attribute is vital for a PLG leader.

Secondly, there were variations in the way that leaders facilitated ISTE learning, despite planning sessions together in an effort to maintain consistency in what was to be achieved. The greatest areas of variation were the timing of the interviews ISTE's had with the PLG leader and whether or not the ISTE's were observed. ISTE's who had observations and interviews with their PLG leader, were clear about selecting their problem of practice and using the professional learning progressions. Nic, who met individually with his/her leader mid-way through the year felt that it would have been beneficial to have met earlier and be guided in their new role. Nic did acknowledge that finding suitable time for them both to meet was difficult. Once again this has implications for the staffing and funding of PLGs to ensure that dedicated time is available.

It is evident that the attributes and actions of PLG leaders do influence the groups' effectiveness. Jamie's comment strongly reflects this. *"I think that what happens in a [PLG] can be dependent on the [PLG] leader and that can have quite a bearing on how effective that professional learning group is"* (J, I, p.2). The findings of Boice (1991), Lindqvist and Reeves (2007), Perry (1985), Staniforth and Harland (2006), and Trowler and Knight (1999) support this. They found that the leadership of a community of practice, as the PLGs were, influenced the potential of the group to support the induction of

new tertiary educators. Therefore the choice of PLG leaders is crucial to the success of the PLGs and ISTE professional learning.

There are implications here for selecting PLG leaders and ongoing training. Consideration must be given to the attributes that the prospective leader has or can be strengthened through ongoing training. However, PLG leaders had different learning needs, therefore any ongoing training could not be a 'one size fits all' approach. As Rowan commented "*...the learning group leaders now are getting to a stage where they're starting to operate at a high level ... but are not all equal, they're all different.*" (R, I, p.5). Rowan did not view this positively or negatively, rather it was a factor that needed to be considered endeavouring to meet the learning needs of this group.

The Implementation Team firmly believed that the PLG leaders required ongoing training and support in their role. They recognised that for this to happen support was required from the wider XSSS Management to provide the funding to allow the personnel and dedicated time for this group to continue to grow professionally. The need for wider support is consistent to the findings of Trowler and Knight (2000) who found that the Head of Department was key to promoting and supporting, or not, a learning culture. In terms of XSSS, it needs to be acknowledged that while the equivalent to a Head of Department may promote and support a learning culture, there are also budgetary constraints outside of their control that impacts on the amount of support they may be able to provide. As outlined in the Introductory Chapter, funding for XSSS is from contracts delivered for the MOE. At present the MOE does not provide specific funding for the professional development of ISTE's, deeming it the responsibility of the contracted institution to do so. Therefore there are implications for MOE funding if it does see the professional learning of ISTE as important.

Proposition Three

Collaboration is vital for ISTE's to gain the knowledge that they require.

The findings revealed that collegial collaboration within the PLG was vital for ISTE's as they transitioned into their new role. One aspect of that was that ISTE's were able to have tacit knowledge about XSSS and ISTE practice made explicit. Researchers, for example Trowler and Knight (1999) support this and identified that this is important so that new tertiary educators are able to gain understanding of their new role and create their new identity.

This section begins by exploring the purpose of collaboration and the types of knowledge made explicit through collaboration. Then the important types of collaboration that emerged from the findings are explored, followed by tools that supported collaboration. Finally the negative elements of collaboration are explored. The implications that the findings highlight will be presented as appropriate throughout this section.

Purpose of collaboration and types of knowledge

The purpose of collaboration in the PLGs was for ISTE's to acquire explicit knowledge. Three types of knowledge emerged as being important. The first was organisational knowledge, the second was knowledge about ISTE practice and the third was institutional professional development.

Firstly, while organisational knowledge could be gained outside of the PLG, for example XSSS handbooks containing mainly operational information and administration staff, the PLG provided a place for clarification. Brad's comment that "*It has been interesting to learn about the organisation [in the PLG]*"

(B, S2, q.25) is an example of ISTE's' thoughts. Tacit knowledge about the organisation was made explicit, allowing a greater

consistency of understanding than if new ISTE had simply read organisational material with limited opportunities to clarify. This supported by Trowler and Knight (1999) and Viskovic (2003) when they found that simply handing out material did not necessarily develop the shared understanding that the organisation was hoping for.

The second purpose of collaboration was making knowledge related to ISTE practice explicit. ISTE considered this to be the key to the success of the PLGs. The ‘how’ to facilitate adults as opposed to the ‘what’ was identified as important because it was an area that ISTE did not necessarily have knowledge or skills in. This finding is consistent with the work of Haigh (2005), Harrison and McKeon (2008), Murray (2008), and Trowler and Knight (1999) who all found that new tertiary educators primarily needed knowledge around the ‘how’ and not the ‘what’ of their practice.

Closely aligned with the knowledge about ISTE practice is the third point related to institutional professional development. The PLGs provided a structure that allowed professional development within XSSS to be reflected upon in a way that it was relevant to ISTE and their practice. Brad was a clear example of this. S/he considered that it was a strength of his/her PLG that discussions focussed on ‘So what does this mean for your practice?’ Fullan (2001) agrees that it is important for the learner to relate the learning to their setting. This has implications for the activities that occur within the PLG to allow for links from a variety of professional learning to ISTE practice to be made.

Types of collaboration

Specific types of collaboration facilitated the explicit gaining of knowledge. These were: collegial conversations that supported critical reflection, sharing philosophy of practice and peer mentoring.

First of all ISTE's clearly identified that collegial conversations supported critical reflection and impacted on their practice because it facilitated the explicit sharing of knowledge. For example Chris commented "*I think impacting on my work was that [collegial conversations] certainly gave me a model to work with in the sense of how we present, how we notified schools, how we did all of that contact ... so that was really good*" (C, I, p.5). Foley and Stead (2002), Haigh (2005), Reid (2004), Senge (1994), Zeldin (1998) all strongly reinforce the finding that collegial conversations support critical reflection and allow for deep professional learning to occur.

Secondly, sharing philosophy of practice and deprivatising practice were key elements of collaboration provided by the PLGs. Four of the ISTE's, identified that the PLG was the main place that discussion relating to philosophy of practice occurred. Chris' comment is an example of the ISTE's thoughts. "*...if we didn't have [the PLG] I'm not really quite sure where I would have got [the knowledge about ISTE practice] from*" (C, I, p.3). For Dale, discussions with colleagues meant that s/he became accountable for his/her learning and critically reflected on his/her own theory of practice and as a result changed his/her practice. "*Sharing the philosophy of practice [by] some of the more experienced [ISTEs] and just hearing the way they thought about things and the way they did things ... made me think about how I could change the way I do things or how I could approach certain aspects of my job*" (D, I, p.2). Collegial conversations promoted critical reflection through the 'lens' of colleagues. Brookfield (1995) argues that colleague's perspectives are important to include as part of critical reflection on practice and supports the findings in this study.

The third type of collaboration that was important was peer mentoring, as defined in the Literature Chapter. It enabled ISTE's to gain explicit knowledge relating to quality ISTE practice. A number of researchers, for example Baker and McNicoll (2006), Harrison and

McKeon (2008), Moir and Gless (2001), Murray (2005), Staniforth and Harland (2006), and Trowler and Knight (1999), strongly support the importance of peer mentoring to enable educators to critically reflect on their practice.

Two main reasons emerged from the findings as to why peer mentoring was an important part of collaboration for ISTE's. The first reason was the feeling that everyone in the PLG's were learning together and that each member had something to offer the others, including new ISTE's. As Chris observed "... *peer mentoring / tutoring, it's a real ... aspect of Ako [it's] demonstrated the whole time ... because the facilitators become the learners and the learners become the facilitators at different times during the year*" (C, I, p.11). This is supported by Baker and McNicoll (2006) who concluded the equal status of colleagues in peer mentoring to be a strength. Equal status within the PLG allowed ISTE's to feel connected and valued. If status in peer mentoring is to be equal there are implications for how the PLG is facilitated, including how the inclusive environment is established.

The second reason why peer mentoring was important was it allowed diverse perspectives to be presented. Some advantages of this have been discussed previously in this chapter. While many of the ISTE's mentioned this, Chris captured it in this way. "... *200 years of experience in our group and different cultural backgrounds ... contributed, I think, to what I was going to deliver at the end of the day...and how I'd deliver it because you could take the strengths ...from everyone else in that group*" (C, I, p.12). Austin (2002), Baker and McNicoll (2006) and Trowler and Knight (1999) argue that peer mentoring is most effective when undertaken by a group of peers because there is a "...pool of skills, experience and resources that can be used to support educators as they review their work experiences in order to develop their professional skills and competencies" (Baker & McNicoll, 2006, p.28). The fact that peer mentoring has greater

impact on practice when undertaken in a group has implications the PLG leader, to ensure that opportunities and structures are provided for this to occur.

Tools that supported collaboration

There were specific tools used to support collaboration within PLGs. These were the use of professional readings, professional learning progressions and learning journals.

The first tool is discussing professional readings to facilitate the deep learning of ISTE's. Chris' comment reflects some of the ISTE's' thoughts. *"It was really nice to really unpack [the reading] and get a decent grasp of...that piece of research...and you could say 'well [what] did you actually think about this' or did you think that perhaps they were doing this'"* (C, I, p.2). Discussion about the readings provided ISTE's with perspectives from literature and colleagues. As a result they formed or clarified their own view. Brookfield (1995) supports this approach to critical reflection when he argues that critically reflecting on practice from a variety of perspectives, or lenses, should be part of a meaningful critical reflection process.

A second tool is the professional learning progressions that promoted collegial conversations and critical reflection. The progressions were important because they provided a structure for ISTE's to critically reflect on where they were in their learning and identify the next learning steps. This gave the ISTE's agency to determine their own learning. *"[It] comes back to self-determination. [ISTE's] can set their own pathways"* (R, I, p.10). The importance of which has already been presented in this chapter.

The third tool is a learning journal that includes the professional learning progressions. ISTE's were expected to keep the journal as part of their critical reflection process. Dale found it very useful, while Nic did not use the learning journal, and preferred to rely on memory.

The variation in Dale and Nic's responses has implications for effective collaboration within PLGs. I suggest, through my own experience as a PLG leader, that it was not important how ISTE's physically recorded their learning. What was important was that ISTE's had a common framework or tool because it meant that there was a shared understanding and language around ISTE practice used by the whole group. The professional learning progressions are an example of such a tool.

As outlined above, the findings indicated that specific tools used within the PLGs to support collegial conversations were instrumental in facilitating critical reflection. This is consistent with the findings of Baker and McNicoll (2006) who supported the use of specific tools to aid collaboration and promote critical reflection.

Negative elements of collaboration

While ISTE's were overwhelmingly positive about collegial collaboration within PLGs, some negative elements emerged from the findings. These were the influence of some dominant personalities within the PLGs, the familiarity with colleagues' problem of practice that came from being in the PLG all year, some members who were overly focussed on their own problem of practice and ISTE's feeling that they could not freely discuss problems of practice because it may impact on group members. All of these issues are consistent with and supported by the research of Baker and McNicoll (2006) who found that these were common pitfalls to peer mentoring and collaboration within a group.

The way that these issues were addressed within PLGs varied from the ISTE taking action, for example Chris who chose to contribute only when the quietest person in the group had, to Brad's PLG leader who facilitated in such a way that ensured dominant people did not use excessive time. Ultimately, the impact of any issues came down to the environment within the PLG. If the environment was such that ISTE's

felt supported, perhaps because they felt that they had the agency within the group to act, as Chris did, or because the leader acted and all ISTE's in the PLG felt valued, as Brad did, dominant personalities were not as big a problem that they had the potential to be. Support for these findings can be found in Baker and McNicoll's (2006) guidelines for peer mentoring in a group if it is to promote critical reflection. Among the guidelines was the need for a supportive culture and a respect for diversity. From these findings, Baker and McNicoll's (2006) guidelines and my own experience as a PLG leader, there are implications for the creation of a supportive PLG, established, in the first instance, by the PLG leader. I suggest that it is the way that the PLG leader initially establishes the environment that sets the tone for what is to follow.

While the findings are generally consistent with the Baker and McNicoll's (2006) guidelines for successful peer mentoring, there is one variation. This relates to voluntary participation in peer mentoring and in PLGs. Dale commented that had s/he been able to choose whether or not s/he belonged to a particular PLG s/he probably would have chosen not to. However, in hindsight, s/he had felt that it had been an advantage to be part of the group. Therefore, had Dale been able to opt out of that PLG, s/he may have missed out on valuable learning opportunities. On the other hand Baker and McNicoll's (2006) guidelines argue that participation should be voluntary. There is potential for additional research relating to voluntary participation in PLGs and group peer mentoring.

Fullan (2001) warns of over collaborating in groups. None of the ISTE's in this study identified this to be an issue for them. However, the sample size of this study means that it is not possible to generalise about whether or not over collaboration was an issue within PLGs and therefore will not be developed further here.

In summary, collaboration was central to ISTE's gaining the knowledge that they required in their new role with positives far outweighing any negative aspects. The structure, composition, purpose and leadership of the PLG all had implications for the effectiveness of the collaboration within PLGs reinforcing the way in which all of these components are interrelated.

Proposition Four

Opportunities for observation, feedback and shadowing strengthen ISTE's professional learning.

The importance of observation, feedback and shadowing emerged from the findings as vital to the professional learning of ISTE's, with three ISTE's identifying them as the single most important component of the PLGs. Observation, feedback and shadowing made tacit knowledge about ISTE practice explicit because it deprivatised the practice, of both new ISTE's and experienced ISTE's. In turn, this allowed for collegial conversations to take place and supported the process of critical reflection. Brookfield, (1995) views this as a key component of critical reflection.

Deprivatisation of practice meant that the practice of new ISTE's could be confirmed or challenged. Because it was possible to see if the ISTE's espoused theory aligned with their theory in action. As Argyris and Schön (1974) note there is not always alignment between the espoused theory and the theory in action and when challenged dissonance can be created. Nic found this to be the case when s/he had his/her practice challenged following an observation creating a feeling of discomfort. "... X would always ask me quite challenging questions and I probably wasn't always ready to answer because I wasn't in the headspace where I was thinking about why I was doing things ... [being challenged] was probably more significant than [just me] reflecting on my own practice. Having conversations with X after and actually even before [observations] about 'what's the specific

purpose' and being quite focussed on what [and] why you were there ... was not necessarily something I would have thought about enough until X kept pestering me with all those questions that were quite hard actually... [being challenged] was pretty important" (N, I, p.7). As a result of the challenges, Nic did make some changes to his/her practice to more closely align with his/her espoused theories. Heifetz and Linsky (2004) agree that as a result of this type of challenge, people can change their practice.

Interestingly Nic considered that the person giving feedback could not be one of the teachers that s/he facilitated as they did not know about ISTE practice. This is in contrast to Brookfield (1995) who suggests that the 'student', in this case the teacher that Nic was working with, could provide another lens through which to view ISTE practice. In my experience as an ISTE who has asked for feedback from teachers I have worked with, their view does provide another perspective to consider when critically reflecting. I agree with Brookfield that viewing through this lens is valuable. This has implications for ISTE's collecting information related to their practice. Specific feedback would need to be requested and the teacher would need to know the purpose that it would be used for.

Shadowing colleagues was considered to be very useful by new ISTE's, because it made the tacit explicit. However, they did not readily initiate opportunities to shadow or observe others. One reason that Brad gave for this was that it was difficult to find suitable times to observe. Another reason suggested by Boice (1991), Murray (2005) and Staniforth and Harland (2006) is that new tertiary educators did not want to be seen to be doing something that was not acceptable within the institution. This has implications for the induction of new ISTE's. I suggest that it is made explicit to ISTE's that this is acceptable practice and that they are entitled to initiate observation or shadowing. Another implication is for experienced ISTE's to be aware of the need to initiate the contact. Careful consideration would need

to be given to ways to ensure that new ISTE's observe and shadow ISTE's whose practice is appropriate.

The Implementation Team have identified that observation, feedback and shadowing are beginning to become systemic in XSSS and note there are opportunities to strengthen this. They have also identified the funding implications that this has for XSSS to ensure that time is given to quality observation and feedback.

Proposition Five

PLGs are part of a larger induction process for new ISTE's.

The Implementation Team felt that PLGs supported ISTE's' to transition into their new role and that the PLGs were "*part of the bigger structure around professional learning opportunities [for ISTE's]...*" (R, I, p.1). To begin this section transitioning into XSSS will be explored followed by the research findings that support this proposition and implications presented.

All five ISTE's found it difficult to transition into their new role. Nic's comment encapsulates the opinions of the ISTE's. "*I guess one of the apprehensions you have when you come into this job is that you've actually got no idea of what it means to be an [ISTE]*" (N, I, p.1). A number of studies, for example Harrison and McKeon (2008), Murray (2008) and Staniforth and Harland (2006) support this finding. They identified that tertiary educators, endeavouring to define their role in the higher education institute found transitioning challenging and stressful. This is consistent with my experience as an ISTE. It is common for new ISTE's to comment that they feel like they are 'impostors' in the job. Murray's (2005, 2008) research participants also expressed this feeling.

ISTEs gave two reasons the difficult transition. The first was that they weren't able to transfer their teaching skills to facilitating adults. The second was that ISTEs perceived XSSS had a greater expectation for them to be familiar with current research and literature than their previous institutions. Trowler and Knight (2000) support the finding that new tertiary educators may not have transferable skills for their new role and there will be different professional expectations.

The need for ISTEs to gain or strengthen adult facilitation skills has implications for the content of induction programmes. Consideration needs to be given to whether or not PLGs provide enough opportunity for these skills to be developed. Nic commented that it would have been valuable to have had more professional development sessions for new ISTEs to discuss issues relevant to them. Having been involved in XSSS induction programme for a number of years I agree that these sessions are worthwhile. I suggest that careful consideration needs to be given to the purpose and frequency of these meetings to ensure there is alignment with the 'big picture' of ISTE professional learning both within and outside of the institution.

ISTEs noted that their understanding of ISTE practice increased over time and their needs changed, which is consistent with the findings of Boice (1991) in relation to the needs of new tertiary educators. For ISTEs, the focus on the problem of practice meant these could be monitored and responded to overtime, something which Harrison and McKeon (2008) and Murray (2005) argued was important for new tertiary educators. However, Nic noted that there was specific knowledge that colleagues had gained in previous years that new ISTEs required. An example s/he gave was the professional development on coaching that ISTEs had undertaken. Nic considered it to be important knowledge to have and queried how following ISTEs would gain this knowledge. I suggest that one approach for the future could be to include topics like these in ongoing sessions for new ISTEs to make explicit knowledge that other ISTEs already have.

If PLGs continued new ISTE's would also see and experience coaching taking place.

Whatever the approach to induction the research findings demonstrate that the institution must have a flexible approach to meeting ISTE needs, by providing formal and informal opportunities for collaboration. Harrison and McKeon (2008) and Trowler and Knight (1999) research support this finding if new tertiary educators are to undertake deep professional learning. As Murray (2008) found, the needs of new tertiary educators during induction are complex and have yet to be fully explored.

SUMMARY

The PLGs are a successful approach to supporting the professional learning of new ISTE's for a number of reasons, all of which are supported by Trowler and Knight's (1999) research that identified an alternative approach to the traditional institutional induction process that is most common in higher education institutes. This section will summarise how the research findings are supported by the work of Trowler and Knight (1999).

The first reason for success is that ISTE's self-determine their problem of practice, giving them agency for their learning and allowing them a number of opportunities to present their learning needs. Trowler and Knight (1999) argue that a successful induction programme provides the new tertiary educator with multiple opportunities to present their needs and have them met. A second reason for success is that peer mentoring in the PLG made tacit knowledge explicit and helped define the role of and ISTE. Mentoring was found to be important by Trowler and Knight (1999) to enable new tertiary educators to create their new identity. The third reason is the component of collegial collaboration in PLGs. This provided opportunities for interaction

with colleagues and the chance to make tacit knowledge explicit. Trowler and Knight (1999) support this as a vital component of an alternative approach to induction. A fourth reason for success is that ISTEes co-constructed the culture of the PLG when they were involved in the development of the group's vision and values. The opportunity for new tertiary educators to co-construct the culture of the institution was argued by Trowler and Knight (1999) to be an important component of induction. Aligned with this was the need for the values and vision of the institution to be made explicit. While the ISTEes were doing this in PLGs and not the whole of XSSS, they were co-constructing the culture of a group within the institution. The fifth and final reason is that the PLG leader and the XSSS Management were key in the induction of these new ISTEes, particularly the PLG leader. Trowler and Knight (1999) support this finding. They argue that the successful induction relies on 'local' academic leaders or team leaders. The findings of Trowler and Knight (1999) are strongly supported by the findings of Anderson (2002), Boice (1991), Murray (2005, 2008), Staniforth and Harland (2006), and Viskovic (2003).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings that have emerged from this study and literature I make the following recommendations.

Recommendation One

XSSS continues to use the PLG as a structure for professional learning of ISTEes with a focus on ISTE practice.

The findings clearly indicate the PLG structure had been successful in supporting the professional learning of new ISTEes.

Recommendation Two

XSSS include observation, feedback and shadowing as a part of the induction process new ISTE's.

Observation, feedback and shadowing are pivotal for ISTE's professional learning and therefore it is vital that they are a planned part of any induction process.

Recommendation Three

XSSS provide support and funding for the ongoing professional learning of PLG leaders.

This would provide PLG leaders with dedicated time to further develop their own facilitation and leadership skills to continually enhance the effective operation of the PLG.

Recommendation Four

MOE provides allocated funding within its contracts for the professional learning of ISTE's related to ISTE practice.

This would allow the continued building of ISTE capability.

Recommendation Five

XSSS explores the wider implications of the induction of new ISTE's and the place of PLG's in this.

This would allow the alignment and strengthening of professional learning opportunities for new ISTE's.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides direction for future possible research opportunities.

Opportunity One

The impact of leadership and facilitation on ISTE professional learning within a PLG.

This study did not set out to focus on the leadership and facilitation of the PLGs. However, this did emerge as a contributing factor to enhancing ISTE professional learning.

Opportunity Two

The experiences of new ISTE's that join XSSS part way through the year.

This study focussed on the experiences of five new ISTE's that had started at the beginning of 2007. ISTE's also join XSSS during the year and, while some needs may be common to both groups, it is not possible to generalise from this study what the needs of the second group may be. Further research is required to ensure that the needs of this group are met.

Opportunity Three

The alignment of all components of current ISTE induction and professional learning opportunities across the sector.

This study focussed on one component of professional learning for new ISTE's in XSSS, that is PLGs, and did not set out to investigate induction systems as a whole, including opportunities outside of XSSS. I suggest this is an area for future research to allow the alignment and strengthening of professional learning opportunities for new ISTE's.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how well the PLG structure supported the professional learning of new ISTEes. While this study was not intended to provide an ultimate solution to how new ISTEes can be supported it does provide a possible approach.

It is important that all higher education institutes consider how new ISTEes may be supported to critically reflect on their practice to ensure that their work with in-service teachers is effective. Piggot – Irvine (2007) argues the importance of this for all ISTEes.

As the MOE recognises, ISTEes have a challenging role to play to support the professional development of teachers and ultimately raise student achievement. “ISTEes in New Zealand work in a complex and rapidly changing environment. Within this dynamic setting, ISTEe’s fundamental purpose remains constant: to support teachers to learn and improve their practice in ways that will lead to improved student outcomes” (MOE, 2008, p.13). How is this achieved? Perhaps the final word should go to Jamie.

“The chance to have some time for quality conversations around our practice – the [PLG] idea, I believe is one of the most exciting approaches we have taken to improve our practice and growing our professional learning” (J, S2, q.18).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Introductory Letter

[Address]

Dear.....

This year I am beginning my thesis through Massey University to complete a Master of Education (Adult Education). My research is titled: Training the Trainers. The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/23.

My research question is:

How well do the structures of the professional learning groups used by University [X] School Support Services support the learning needs of new In-service Teacher Educators?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research as a
.....

Please read the enclosed information sheet and if you are willing to participate complete the attached consent form and return to me. I will contact you to arrange an interview time.

Feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss your involvement further.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/23.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
Doris Lancaster

Doris Lancaster
[Contact Details]

Appendix 2 – Information Sheet for ISTE's

Training the Trainers The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction

Master of Education (Adult Education) Thesis

INFORMATION SHEET for ISTE's

As outlined in the covering letter, I am beginning my thesis through Massey University to complete a Master of Education (Adult Education). My research is titled: Training the Trainers. The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction.

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. We would like to invite you to participate in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

Researcher:
Doris Lancaster
[Contact Details]

Supervisors:
Lynn Tozer [Contact Details] and Dr Linda Leach [Contact Details]

Aim:

General aims of the project:

To:

- Investigate how well the structures of the professional learning groups used by University [X] School Support Services [XSSS] support the learning needs of new In Service Teacher Educators (ISTEs)
- Inform future professional development, including induction, programmes within [XSSS]

Research Question:

How well do the structures of the professional learning groups used by [XSSS] support the learning needs of new ISTE's?

The structures to be explored are:

- Peer observation and feedback of advisor practice
- Sharing of philosophy of practice and elements of practice within the learning groups
- Facilitation of the group, including activities used within the groups.

Participant Recruitment

ISTEs that have joined [XSSS] in 2007 and who are not in the researchers' professional learning group, [and members of the Implementation Team].

Project Procedures

You will be asked to allow the on-line surveys data collected for INSTEP to be released for use in this project. You will also be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview will be taped and transcribed by a [XSSS] word processing staff member.

Your on-line survey data, held by XX Ltd, will have your name removed before it is made available to me. Staff at XX will have a signed a confidentiality agreement before releasing this data.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only myself, Dr Linda Leach and Lynn Tozer will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed except that, as required by Massey University policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

The results of the project will be published. Your name will not be used in the report. You will be assigned a non deplume that will be used through out the report. While yourself and the University [X] will not be named in this report, anonymity can not be guaranteed because there are a small number of ISTEs participating from the University [X] and a small number of School Support Services within New Zealand.

Any material pertaining to you will be checked by you before release in any publication.

You will be sent a summary of the findings of the research and you may also request a copy of the report.

Your involvement

Your involvement will include:

- Completing the on-line surveys that are part of the [XSSS] professional development for 2007

- Participating in an interview for approximately an hour.
- At the end of the interview you will be given a 'Reflection Sheet' in case there may be some further comments that you'd like to make after our discussion. Please feel free to jot down any additional ideas that you have and forward them to me.

Your Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time before data analysis has begun
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the audio to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- review and edit the transcript of the interview tapes

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Doris Lancaster
[Contact Details]

Supervisor:
Dr Linda Leach
[Contact Details]

Supervisor:
Mrs Lynn Tozer
[Contact Details]

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/23. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 3 – Participant Consent Form

Training the Trainers The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the on-line surveys I completed as part of the INSTEP research being used

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped

I wish/do not wish to have my tapes returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I understand that the University [X] and staff will not be named, but that the identity of the University and staff may be able to be recognised by people who read the thesis or articles produced from the research.

I would/would not like a copy of the research report to be sent to me.

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name - printed

Appendix 4 – Interview Questions for ISTE

Training the Trainers The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction

Interview questions for ISTE

1. Which of these structures of the professional learning group supported your professional learning?
 - Peer observation and feedback of your practice
 - Sharing of philosophy of practice and elements of practice within the learning groups
 - The facilitation of the group
2. How did this /these support your learning as a new ISTE?
3. How did this / these impact on your work as an ISTE?
4. Have there been any negative outcomes for you from being part of the professional learning group? If yes – what have they been? How could this have been lessened?
5. Have there been any positive outcomes for you from being part of the professional learning group? If yes – what have they been?
6. How likely would you be to recommend to SSS to continue to use this framework?

Not likely, likely, extremely likely.

What are your reasons for this?

Appendix 5 – Reflection Sheet for ISTE

Training the Trainers The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction

Reflection Sheet for ISTE

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your experience of participating in a professional learning group as a new ISTE.

There may be some further comments that you'd like to make after our discussion. Please feel free to jot down any additional ideas that you have and forward them to me.

Kind regards,
Doris Lancaster
[Contact Details]

Name: _____

Questions. Please feel free to continue on another sheet.

1. Which of these structures of the professional learning group supported your professional learning?
 - Peer observation and feedback of your practice
 - Sharing of philosophy of practice and elements of practice within the learning groups
2. How did this /these support your learning as a new ISTE?
3. How did this / these impact on your work as an ISTE?
4. Have there been any negative outcomes for you from being part of the professional learning group? If yes – what have they been?
How could this have been lessened?
5. Have there been any positive outcomes for you from being part of the professional learning group? If yes – what have they been?

How likely would you be to recommend to [X] SSS to continue to use this framework?

Not likely, likely, extremely likely.

What are your reasons for this?

**Thanks once again.
Kind regards,
Doris Lancaster**

Appendix 6 – Information Sheet for members of Implementation Team

Training the Trainers The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction

Master of Education (Adult Education) Thesis

INFORMATION SHEET for [members of the Implementation Team]

This year I am beginning my thesis through Massey University to complete a Master of Education (Adult Education). My research is titled: Training the Trainers. The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction.

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. We would like to invite you to participate in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

Researcher:
Doris Lancaster
[Contact Details]

Supervisors:
Lynn Tozer [Contact Details] and Dr Linda Leach [Contact Details]

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Research Question:

How well do the structures of the professional learning groups used by [XSSS] support the learning needs of new ISTE's?

The structures to be explored are:

- Peer observation and feedback of advisor practice
- Sharing of philosophy of practice and elements of practice within the learning groups
- Facilitation of the group, including activities used within the groups.

Participant Recruitment

ISTE's that have joined [XSSS] in 2007 and who are not in the researchers' professional learning group, [and members of the Implementation Team].

Project Procedures

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview will be taped and transcribed by a [XSSS] word processing staff member.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only myself, Dr Linda Leach and Lynn Tozer will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed except that, as required by Massey University policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

The results of the project will be published. Your name will not be used in the report. You will be assigned a non deplume that will be used through out the report. While yourself and the University [X] will not be named in this report, anonymity can not be guaranteed because there are a small number of ISTE's participating from the [XSSS] and a small number of [School Support Services] within New Zealand.

Any material pertaining to you will be checked by you before release in any publication.

You will be sent a summary of the findings of the research and you may also request a copy of the report.

Your involvement

Your involvement will include:

- Participating in an interview for approximately an hour.

Your Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time before data analysis has begun
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the audio to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- review and edit the transcript of the interview tapes

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Doris Lancaster
[Contact Details]

Dr Linda Leach
[Contact Details]

Supervisor:
Mrs Lynn Tozer
[Contact Details]

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/23. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

**Appendix 7 – Interview Questions for members of
Implementation Team**

***Training the Trainers
The Place of Professional Learning Groups
in Induction***

Interview questions for [members of Implementation Team]

1. How effective do you perceive the professional learning group as a structure for facilitating or supporting new ISTE's professional learning?

Not effective, minimally effective, moderately effective, very effective

2. In what ways do you think the professional learning group structure was effective in supporting new ISTE's professional learning?

3. In what ways was it not effective?

4. What could be done to make them more effective?

5. How likely would you be to recommend to SSS to continue to use this framework?

Not likely, likely, extremely likely.

What are your reasons for this?

**Appendix 8 – Reflection Sheet for members of
Implementation Team**

***Training the Trainers
The Place of Professional Learning Groups
in Induction***

Reflection Sheet for [members of Implementation Team]

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your experience of participating in a professional learning group as a new ISTE.

There may be some further comments that you'd like to make after our discussion. Please feel free to jot down any additional ideas that you have and forward them to me.

Kind regards,
Doris Lancaster
[Contact Details]

Name: _____

Questions. Please feel free to continue on another sheet.

1. How effective do you perceive the professional learning group as a structure for facilitating or supporting new ISTE's professional learning?

Not effective, minimally effective, moderately effective, very effective

2. In what ways do you think the professional learning group structure was effective in supporting new ISTE's professional learning?

3. In what ways was it not effective?

4. What could be done to make them more effective?

5. How likely would you be to recommend to [X]SSS to continue to use this framework?

Not likely, likely, extremely likely.

What are your reasons for this?

What are your reasons for this?

**Thanks once again.
Kind regards,
Doris Lancaster**

Appendix 9 – Transcriber Confidentiality Form

***Training the Trainers
The Place of Professional Learning Groups
in Induction***

TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I(Full Name -
printed) agree to transcribe the tapes provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make any copies of the transcripts or keep any record of
them, other than those required for the project.

Signature: **Date:**

Appendix 10 – On-line Survey Questions Accessed

Training the Trainers The Place of Professional Learning Groups in Induction

On-line Survey Questions Accessed

- How effective has the professional learning group as a structure for facilitating or supporting your professional learning been?

Please elaborate

- How useful was the interview with the professional learning group leader?

Please elaborate

- How useful was the observation and feedback process?

Please elaborate

- How effective has the pod been in facilitating your professional learning?

Please elaborate and comment on the size and composition of group

- What aspects of the facilitation of the professional learning group enhanced your professional learning?

- What aspects of the facilitation of the professional learning group could be improved to enhance your professional learning?

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