UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MIDDLE LEVEL LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING:

Leading teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

A Thesis submitted by

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Abstract

This study explores the problem that teachers, in the Junior School of a P-12 College in Australia, faced in demonstrating their professional growth by using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The teachers had undertaken a professional development opportunity (PDO) and sought to include their growth in their portfolios for their Annual Review. The researcher sought to explore: *How can a middle level leader lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?* This thesis reports on the interactions with teachers in the self-assessment process as well as the researcher's own journey of self-discovery as a leader of learning. The leadership in this study went beyond coaching or mentoring, it was about developing a professional trusted relationship which enabled people to learn about themselves, how they learn, and how they grow professionally, challenging their predispositions, their assumptions and beliefs.

This study was conducted within the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm and the researcher adopted the role of participant observer from the insider position. A three-phased exploratory qualitative case study was conducted to explore the research question. During each phase the researcher, led the participants through the process of self-assessment using a reflection tool based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Phase One involved a Focus Group of ten voluntary teachers from the Junior School of the P-12 College at which the researcher held a middle level leadership position. Phase Two involved three individual interviews with four voluntary teachers, one of whom was a member of the focus group from Phase One. Phase Three provided the researcher with an unexpected opportunity to pursue the study further as two of the participants from Phase Two expressed the desire to undergo the process of self-assessment of professional growth once again. Phase Three involved two individual interviews with each of the two participants.

Two frameworks were developed from the findings of this study: *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth*; and *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leadership for Learning.* In the first of the frameworks self-assessment of professional growth entailed collaborative knowledge building with a trusted other,

utilising the reflection tool. Two processes were identified as necessary to the self-assessment process: *Open the door* and *Enlightenment*. Through dialogic interaction, utilising reflection and questioning, the middle level leader and the teacher *Opened the door* to greater understanding of a professional development opportunity (PDO. Through the process of *Enlightenment,* using the reflection tool, and guided by the middle leader, knowledge gained from the PDO was understood and interpreted by the teachers in terms of their professional growth.

The second of the frameworks, *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leadership for Learning*, comprises three components: Leaders of learning; Collaborative learning and knowledge creation; and Sharing new knowledge and reflection-on-action. The first component focuses on harnessing the power and potential influence of all leaders within a school as leaders of learning. *The Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework is embedded within the second component, as leaders of learning lead each member of a group of teachers to self-assess their professional growth, building a culture of relational trust through collaborative leadership. The third component, Sharing new knowledge and reflection-on-action, suggests that principals and leaders of learning work collaboratively to develop a shared sense of accountability for building capacity for quality teaching and leading for learning. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers purport to promote quality teaching and professionalism, leading to improvements in student outcomes. When used as the criteria for self-assessment of professional growth, leaders of learning can influence improvements to the quality of teaching within schools.

Whilst this is a small-scale study in that it was conducted within one school within Australia, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were used as the criteria for self-assessment of professional growth, the general findings and recommendations have significance for junior and senior schools within Australia and Internationally. Consideration and implementation of the two frameworks, developed from the findings from this study, have the potential to build capacity for school improvement to the quality of teaching and leadership development.

Certification Page

This Thesis is entirely the work of Belinda Tanya Holmes except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Dorothy Andrews

Associate Supervisor: Associate Professor Joan Conway

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

Acknowledgments

I dedicate this thesis to Adam, Denzel and Lincoln and sincerely hope that each of you will be inspired to believe in yourself and to pursue your passion.

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CHAPTER 1: Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the research study documented in this thesis focuses on exploring the role of middle level leaders leading teachers in learning to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) to self-assess their professional growth. The research inquiry was based on concerns in two areas pertinent to teachers and leaders in schools, leadership for learning and the improvement in the quality of teaching. The issues associated with these areas are: how school leaders might contribute to the understanding and adoption of standards for the promotion of quality teaching within their organisations; harnessing middle level leaders as leaders of learning; and professional growth and teacher appraisal systems.

Research by Gurr and Drysdale (2013) suggests when middle level leaders are expected to be leaders who influence teaching and learning they have limited occasions to employ leadership. Leaders make use of openings arising in the workplace to create opportunities for learning (Wallo, 2008). Such an opportunity opened for me within this study as I explored the role I took, as a middle leader in an independent P-12 College in Queensland in leading teachers to learn to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) to self-assess their professional growth. It has been highlighted by Cranston (2009) that there are few reports in the literature of how middle level leaders' roles and responsibilities have evolved. This thesis also reports on my own journey within this research as a leader of learning in terms of the evolution of my role and learnings about leadership to build capacity for quality teaching within the context.

In this introductory chapter, I explain how my interest in the research topic area developed from a problem identified in both educational literature and practice. The research question is presented together with a brief outline of the research approach. In this chapter, I also provide a discussion of my role as researcher. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Background to the Study

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were introduced by the Australian Government as an initiative to improve the quality of teaching. The standards purport to be a "public statement of what constitutes teacher quality" (AITSL, 2011, p. 2). When the first document was published in 2011, Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ, 2011) highlighted that the challenge for teachers would be the adoption of a life-long learning approach that focused on professional growth. There was no current agreement among education stakeholders regarding "how to identify and measure effective teaching" (ISQ, 2011, p. 5). One of the ways in which principals can promote organisational development, suggested by Dufour and Berkey (1995), is to develop a commitment to professional growth. To do this, individual teachers need to be able to understand this concept and how they might go about enhancing their own professional growth.

Leadership in schools has become recognised internationally as critical to school improvement in terms of teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Antoniou, 2013; Barber, Whelan, & Clark, 2010; Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, & Kington, 2009; Fullan, 2001; Hallinger, 2011; Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008; Spillane & Louis, 2002). Increasingly there has been a movement from the individualistic view of leadership (Caldwell, 2006) to collective responsibility for leadership, and as such middle level leaders and teacher leaders have become recognised as playing an important role in teaching and learning in schools. Distributed leadership is more likely to result in improved student outcomes (Silins & Mulford, 2002) and to be most effective when it incorporates collaboration, mutual trust, support and inquiry (Harris, 2002). One of the most influential works in the area of shared or distributed leadership in Australia is that on parallel leadership (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Crowther & Associates, 2011; Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009). This model of leadership emphasises mutual trust, where "leadership acknowledges the professionalism of teachers through its sense of moral purpose, as well as teacher-principal relatedness and its established links to enhanced school outcomes" (Conway & Andrews, 2016, p. 175).

Andrews, Crowther, Hann, and McMaster (2002) developed a 'Teachers as Leaders' framework, defining the leadership of teachers as "behaviour that facilitates principled pedagogical action toward whole school success" (2002, p. 25). Teachers are key to school improvement (Sergiovanni, 2000) and should be encouraged to become active partners in analysing their learning and identifying opportunities for improvement (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013). Leaders in schools need to create an environment in which teachers feel safe to risk and stretch the boundaries of their thinking and practice (Porter-O'Grady, 1994).

The premise behind the formal evaluation of teachers is that the process will have a positive impact on teaching and student learning. According to McColskey and Egelson (1997) a formative evaluation system can help to encourage continual teacher self-evaluation, reflection and individual professional growth in areas of interest to the teacher. However, recent research suggests that many evaluation systems fail in promoting professional learning (Marshall, 2013; Marzano & Toth, 2013). The most effective systems are based on a mutually agreed upon model of good teaching, provide for self-assessment and reflection, and reflect a culture of collaboration and commitment to professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Marshall, 2013). Charlotte Danielson (2016) calls for active engagement in professional learning: "[I]in the context of an evaluation system, this means using observation and evaluation processes that promote active engagement, self-assessment, reflection-on-practice, and professional conversation" (p. 21).

Both cognitive and emotional learning are involved in professional growth (Kohonen, 2002) and Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, and Wubbles (2001) suggest that "reflection supports the development of a growth competence" (p. 47). Darling-Hammond (2009) states that attempts to improve the quality of teaching now focus on ways to assess teacher effectiveness and suggests:

> Initiatives to measure and recognize teacher effectiveness will have the greatest pay-off if they are embedded in systems that also develop greater teacher competence through mentoring and coaching around the standards and through roles for teachers to help their colleagues and their schools improve. (p. 22)

Teacher appraisal and feedback has been shown to significantly improve teachers' understanding of their teaching methods and practices (Hattie, 2009). However, current systems of teacher evaluation are largely seen as time-consuming bureaucratic exercises, and there is little evidence that the process can be linked to teacher development or improved classroom practices (Attinello, Lare, & Waters, 2006; Jensen, 2010; OECD, 2009; Tucker, Stonge, Gareis, & Beers, 2003). An effective appraisal system, according to Darling-Hammond (2007), is one involving teacher collaboration and approval, and valid evidence of teacher effectiveness based on multiple measures using a standards-based evaluation instrument. Many evaluation systems require teachers to provide their own evidence to demonstrate their teaching effectiveness. Often this self-assessment process includes the development of a portfolio of work compiled to demonstrate the teacher's knowledge and skills (Doolittle, 1994), containing evidence that portrays their teaching approach and effectiveness in increasing student outcomes (Oakley, 1998). Tucker et al. (2003) argue that there is little evidence to suggest that self-assessment is a successful means of measuring teacher effectiveness and furthermore, teachers feel that portfolios do not improve nor promote good teaching practices. Conversely, in a study of teachers who had used the portfolio process for a period of four years at schools within a large USA rural/suburban district, the portfolio process "proved to be valuable as a measure of teacher competence and a catalyst for professional growth" (Attinello et al., 2006, p. 150).

1.3 The Research Problem from Practice

At the time of this study, I held a middle level leadership role in an independent P-12 College in Queensland. As Head of Learning Enhancement, I led a team of teachers and teacher aides providing holistic services and case management for Junior School students who were in need of special mentoring, learning support, learning enrichment (gifted and talented), specific skill development, behaviour modification or emotional support. As part of my role, I also was required to identify, design, facilitate and present professional learning opportunities for staff to address the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. In order to achieve this requirement, I facilitated a number of Action Learning Action Research (ALAR) projects funded by Independent Schools

Queensland (ISQ) 'Teachers as Researchers Project'. The primary focus of the projects was improvement to the quality of teaching for diverse learners.

Two leadership teams operated within the College: Senior leadership team and the Junior School executive team. The members of the Junior School executive team were also members of the Senior leadership team. The Principal of the College was highly visible within the Junior School, observing classes, talking with students, becoming involved in their learning during classes.

Academic diversity characterises today's classrooms (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999) and Australian Professional standard 1.5 "Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities" (AITSL, 2011) recognises the importance of catering for diverse learners. As teachers are required to meet the standards, they must demonstrate that they are catering for the academically diverse students within their classrooms.

Jensen and Reichl (2011) suggest that it is important that national standards "are not seen as a template for teacher appraisal and feedback" (p. 11) and that applying the standards in this way would only exacerbate the existing perception of teachers that the appraisal process is bureaucratically burdensome. They draw attention to placing importance on the methods used to assess teachers' performance, which will in turn result in improvements in teaching and learning in schools. Meyer, Gaba, and Colwell (2005) indicate exploring how standards are used is necessary to the understanding of the implications for professionals. Darling-Hammond (2009) argues that there is a lack of time in schools for teachers to collaborate, to observe others' practice, and work with others to reflect on their practice providing mutual feedback. She suggests that what is needed is a culture where this is expected not as a feared evaluation process but as an integral part of professional development.

A priority of the College Principal was the improvement to the quality of teaching within the College. The College had a formal performance appraisal system in place, the Annual Review, which formed part of the overall Teacher Growth and Development Framework (see Appendix 1), and teachers in the Junior School were required to produce an electronic portfolio as part of this system. Teachers were provided with a document which stated the requirements for their portfolios and

incorporated within this document, for teachers' reference, was the Queensland College of Teachers Standards (QCTS), which are aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). This was the first time the College had asked the teachers to firstly, submit an electronic portfolio as part of their annual review process and secondly, to refer to the QCTS and the APST. Upon receipt of this document, during informal meetings, teachers expressed their uncertainty regarding what evidence they should include in their portfolios. They stated that it would be difficult to demonstrate evidence relating to standard 6 "Engage in professional learning", standard 7 "Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community", standard 1 "Know your students and how they learn" and standard 4 "Create and maintain a supportive safe learning environment" (AITSL, 2011)

As part of the introduction to the use of the portfolio in the Annual Review process at the College, a workshop was held after the staff had time to review the document and begin to consider how they were going to demonstrate their adherence to the standards. The workshop was organised in stations with each station focusing on a selection of professional standards from the Queensland College of Teachers. Staff were divided into groups of five and each group moved between stations, so as all teachers were given the opportunity to discuss how they might provide evidence to support achievement of each standard. As a follow-up to the workshop, thoughts from each station were collated and a document was produced and distributed to all Junior School teaching staff. The produced document Portfolio Evidence Workshop Summary (See Appendix 2) as recommended as a reference document which staff may wish to utilise in further developing their portfolio.

As Head of Learning Enhancement, I prepared funding applications for students with disabilities. The process included the provision of data concerning the number of adjustments the teachers made for each child on a daily basis. I found the process so much more effective if I observed the teachers within their classrooms and then discussed the adjustments instead of having the teachers gather and produce the data themselves. The reason for this was that predominately the teachers were not aware of the extent to which they actually made adjustments for a child, since it had become an innate part of their practice. I reflected upon this apparent difficulty teachers had in making their tacit knowledge about their practice explicit. This led me to question how

relevant this might be to how teachers might demonstrate meeting the APST and how they might provide evidence of their professionalism and classroom practice.

In turn, these reflections led me to also question how school leadership (be it middle or senior leaders within a school) might support teachers to take ownership of their own professional development and ongoing learning using the APST. Within the Junior School, the APST appeared to be viewed as a checking tool rather than as an empowering tool for teachers. Some teachers had informed me that they had difficulty in understanding how they might demonstrate their knowledge and skill levels and provide appropriate evidence of their own teaching practice. Consequentially, I identified the need to be able to develop a process, together with a supporting document, which would enable teachers to develop the capability to effectively self-assess their professional growth. It was important for teachers to be able to identify the extent to which active engagement and enhanced knowledge, skills and/or practice took place when they participated in a professional development opportunity.

An exploration of the associated processes, such as those identified by Darling Hammond, which might support the self-assessment process and the identification of the use of, and the types of, supporting evidence of teacher performance is important as this has been identified by Marshall, Cole, and Zbar (2012) as a particular weakness in current processes. It was the intention then, in this study, to explore whether teaching standards can capture teachers' experiences of professional learning such that teachers are able to learn to self-assess their professional growth.

1.4 The Research Question

This research sought to explore: How can a middle level leader lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers? The response to the overarching question was explored through the sub-questions:

1. How do teachers engage in the process of self-assessing their own professional learning?
2. What processes can be put in place to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the standards?

3. What forms of evidence do teachers find most effective in self-assessing their professional growth?

4. What role can a middle level leader take in leading teachers to self-assess their professional growth?

1.5 The Role of the Researcher

In this study, I adopted the role of participant observer from the "insider" position. My own involvement in this study became a powerful research instrument (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) in that the forms of interaction generated between the teacher participants and myself provided the basis for co-construction of meaning and knowledge. I adopted Adler and Adler's (1987) active membership researcher role in this study. As such, I was involved in the central activities of the group of participants: leading teachers to self-assess their professional growth. As mentioned in section 1.3, I was a staff member at the research site in the role of Head of Learning Enhancement for the Junior School. During my time in this role, I established relationships of trust, mutual respect, fairness, confidentiality and accountability with the staff at the research site from which participants of this study were drawn. Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong (2007) suggest that improved access to information and increased participant disclosure may result from this level of rapport between the researcher and the participants.

However, Kahuha (2000) points out that the objectivity and authenticity of a research project may be questioned because "one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied" (Kanuha, 2000, p. 444). I was aware that my participation might influence events which I observed. I was also aware that in my dual role as researcher and participant there was a risk that I might not respond to the teacher participants or analyse the data from the perspective of researcher (Asselin, 2003). How I addressed this risk is discussed in the research design.

1.6 The Research Design

The interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm was used to frame the research inquiry. Within this paradigm I have drawn upon the concept of "lived experience" from phenomenology (Husserl, 1970) in terms of interpreting the participants' "lived

experiences" through dialogue in choosing to conduct an exploratory three-phased qualitative case study (Yin, 1994) to explore the research question. The case study participants were 13 teachers from the Junior School of the P-12 College at which I held the position of Head of Learning Enhancement, and myself as a middle leader. The teachers had undertaken professional development opportunities (PDOs). I had developed a reflection tool, the Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide, for use in this study to guide the teachers to critically examine, understand, and make meaning of their experiences in terms of their professional growth. Consequently, I have relied upon the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8) and recognised and made explicit, in Chapter 3, how my role as participant observer, and my own background and experiences may have impacted the research.

Phase One of the case study involved a focus group session with ten voluntary participant teachers. The session aimed to explore teachers' experiences in using the reflection tool in learning how the APST could be used to self-assess their own professional growth. Phase Two was an in-depth study with four teachers, one of whom had taken part in Phase One. A significant event in the research process took place one month after the completion of Phase Two providing me with the opportunity to pursue the study further into Phase Three with two participants from Phase Two.

Data were collected in this study through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, direct observation, focus group interview, my reflective journal, informal interviews/conversations, and documentation review. My level of personal involvement in this study as participant observer filtered how I perceived, documented and collected the data (Adler & Adler, 1987). Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently and the analysis from each phase of the case study informed the next. The approach taken in this study involved close collaboration between myself and the participants, while enabling the participants to recount their own stories. I was able to comprehend the participants' actions by describing their views of reality through their stories (Robottom & Hart, 1993), which can be considered an advantage, particularly if the researcher's position within the research is that of "insider".

As an interpretivist researcher I was required to reflect on my research experience, decisions and interpretations, my own involvement and effect on the research process, and the way in which this shaped the research outcomes, based upon the premise that

"knowledge cannot be separated from the knower" (Steedman, 1991, p. 53). To that end, I practised reflexivity throughout this research study. I attempted to establish credibility by keeping a reflective research journal, recording my "personal thoughts that relate to the insights, hunches, broad ideas or themes that emerge during the observation" (Creswell, 2012, p. 217), explaining my own reactions and reflections, and providing insights into my own thoughts. My own reflections also became significant sources of data. As I moved between observer (researcher collecting data through observation) and researcher as work colleague/middle level leader (participant in process and co-construction of meaning and collecting data in that role) each role was constructed and developed within the research context. Reflexivity was used in the writing of the findings, combining personal experience and self-reflection with careful observation, demonstrating my awareness of how I affected the research and the extent to which I was part of the research process.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter One establishes the purpose and nature of the research. The chapter outlines the importance of leadership for learning in action at levels other than the principal with the aim of improving the quality of teaching in schools. The research question is introduced together with the research approach and methodology I adopted to conduct the study. Also highlighted is the significance of my role as participant observer from the position of "insider".

Chapter Two contextualises the study in the relevant literature and presents the theoretical framework on which this study is based. I have formulated the theoretical framework for this study by firstly exploring the notion of quality teaching and what this means in terms of teacher evaluation and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Insights into teachers' ways of knowing are gained from linking theorists' views of learning to adult learning, reflection and reflective practice, self-assessment and collaborative learning and knowledge-building.

In Chapter Three my research approach and methodology are discussed in detail. I identify my research assumptions and justify my selection of the relevant paradigm under which the study was conducted. I expand extensively on my position within this research and my use of reflexivity. I justify my selection of interpretive case study and

describe each of the three phases within the case. The reasons for using each data collection method are identified and discussed in terms of their relevance to the study.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the first phase of the case study, the Focus Group Session. The middle level leader was able to connect the teachers' learning from their participation in the professional development opportunity to a requirement of the College's Annual Review process, that is, demonstration of professional growth within their portfolio. However, the focus group session revealed that the process supporting the completion of the reflection tool, PGSA Guide, as a means of self-assessment, was individualised and multifaceted, requiring further exploration.

Chapter Five presents the findings from the second and third phases of the case study. The teachers needed to talk through their PDO experiences in order to make meaning of them in terms of their professional growth. The guiding questions on the tool were useful but it was the dialogue with myself, as the middle level leader, that contributed to teacher understanding. Through their experience of our interaction and my use of prompting questions they came to reflect upon their practice and set goals as a means of moving forward in their professional learning journey.

Chapter Six brings together the findings presented in chapters 4 and 5 as I answer the first three research sub-questions and discuss the findings in terms of the theoretical framework and research literature. The *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework, developed from the findings from the study, is presented in this chapter. The framework provides a supportive, educative and challenging learning experience for both teachers and leaders, promoting professional learning and empowering teachers to take ownership of their professional growth.

I have related the story of my own growth as a leader of learning in Chapter Seven, providing my insights into the role of middle level leaders as leaders of learning within a school context in answer to the fourth research sub-question. Finally, in Chapter Eight the overarching research question is answered through the presentation of the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning* conceptual framework developed from the findings and my critical reflections on my learnings from this study. Four recommendations, reflections on the research methodology, and the limitations and suggestions for future research are also discussed in Chapter 8.

1.8 Conclusion

This study explores the problem teachers, in the Junior School of a P-12 College in Australia, faced in demonstrating their professional growth in using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The teachers had undertaken a PDO and sought to include their growth in their portfolios for their Annual Review. I sought to explore how a middle level leader can lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. This study was conducted within the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm and I adopted the role of participant observer from the insider position. This chapter has outlined the thesis in readiness for an exploration of relevant literature in Chapter 2 and attention to the research questions in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review is structured in terms of the interconnected theories pertinent to the formation of the conceptual framework guiding this study shown in Figure 2.4. I have sought to explore how a middle level leader can lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011). A search of studies concerning the use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) revealed little empirical research. Despite the change in the discourse from teaching to teacher quality during development and implementation of the APST (Mockler, 2012), and the emphasis placed upon the standards as a regulatory scheme, Loughland and Ellis (2016) suggest that they may have their place as an explicit framework for teaching for use in self-assessment.

I have sought to explore teachers' ways of knowing related to the understanding of teachers' professional growth, and of relevance to the educational context are the important contributions to learning theory made by Argyris and Schon (1978) with their concepts of 'single loop' and 'double loop' learning and the notion of 'the reflective practitioner' from Schon (1983). Harris (1998) has linked reflection and continuous professional growth to effective practice. Within the cognitive and constructivist perspectives of learning, the significance of understanding the process of learning from the learner's viewpoint is emphasised. When learners are given opportunities to question, interpret and encode information in their own words and engage in critical reflection, a deeper level of learning is fostered (Briggs, 1988). Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981) or significant learning (Rogers, 1959) implies "changes in the organisation of self and only takes place in particular situations significant to the learner" (Illeris, 2009, p. 2).

I began this review by discussing the notion of quality teaching and what this means in terms of teacher evaluation and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Professional standards development has focused on improving the quality of teaching, and associated with this, is the concept of professional growth. It is important to acknowledge the fundamental principles of learning and understand teachers' ways of

knowing in order to understand the teachers' learning in this study. Consequently, I elaborate on some principles from educational research: theories of learning, 'reflection' and 'reflective practice', 'self-assessment' and 'collaborative learning'. Finally, I briefly explore the literature relating to middle level leadership found to be relevant to this study. A graphical representation of the structure of this chapter is shown in Figure 2.1.

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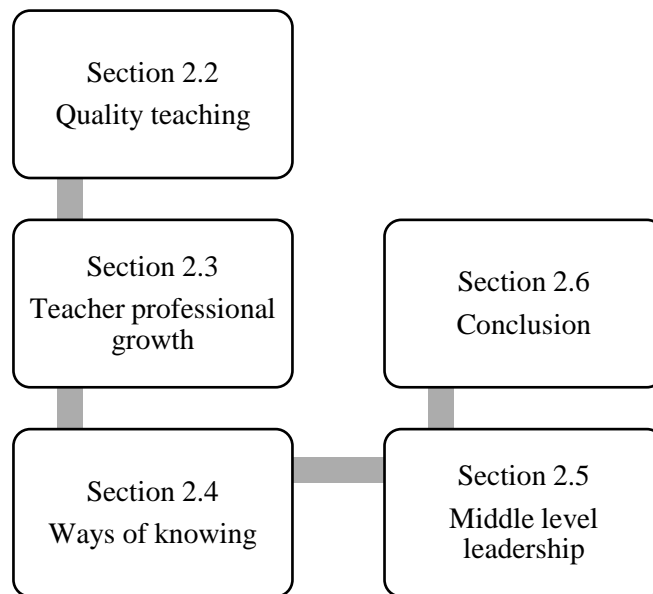
Figure 2.1. Chapter Structure

2.2 Quality Teaching

This section of the literature review focuses on: what it means to be a professional in teaching; the notion of quality teaching; forms of teacher evaluation; and the introduction of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers as a means of promoting quality teaching in Australian schools.

2.2.1 Teacher as professional.

Becoming a professional, according to Trede (2009), involves the practice of continuous learning, understanding and integrating different ways of knowing, practising learning and talking about practice, as individuals extend their professional identify and expertise. "Professional practice requires competence in the professional's knowledge (knowing what), practice skills (knowing how), and reflexivity (knowing why)" (Trede, 2009, p. 2). Sachs (2005) contends that

"professional identity is at the core of the teaching profession" (p. 15), providing teachers with a framework within which they can formulate their own ideas of themselves and their work, negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (Sachs, 2005).

2.2.2 The notion of quality teaching.

A recent report by the Australian Council for Educational Research (Bahr & Mellor, 2016) suggests that the voices of teachers and teacher educators are noticeably absent from the public rhetoric about what comprises quality in teaching, and, that the concept itself is not well understood. Darling-Hammond (2009) distinguishes between the notions of teacher quality and quality teaching. Teacher quality refers to a set of attributes: "skills and understandings an individual brings to teaching, including dispositions to behave in certain ways" (p. 2). Whereas "teaching quality has to do with strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn… [and] …strong teacher quality may heighten the probability of strong teaching quality, but does not guarantee it" (p. 3).

Improving the effectiveness of teachers focuses on enhancing knowledge and skills, and achieving change to teaching practice, resulting in improvements in education more than any other factor (Sanders, Wright, & Horn, 1997). This view is supported by Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008) who found that after an extensive review of the literature "the impact on the learning of some of our most underserved students can be accelerated by 2 to 3 years in the period of a year through professional development" (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008, p. 31). From his synthesis of 500 research studies of the effects on student achievement, Hattie (2003) was able to attribute 30% of achievement variance to teachers in terms of what they know, what they do, and what they care about. He differentiates between what he terms the "expert" teacher and the "experienced" teacher, suggesting that there is a need to "direct attention to higher quality teaching". Alton-Lee (2003) emphasises the importance of quality teaching with respect to its impact on student outcomes for diverse learners. She found evidence, from her own synthesis of studies from the literature, to suggest that 59% of "variance in student performance is attributable to differences between teachers and classes" (p. 2).

2.2.3 Teacher evaluation.

Attempts to improve quality of teaching focus on ways to assess teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2013). The landscape of teacher evaluation has changed to centre on sustained change and a lifelong learning approach focused on professional growth (Coggshall, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton, & Jacques, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2013; Marshall, 2013). Teacher appraisal and feedback significantly improve teachers' understanding of their methods and practices (Hattie, 2009). Jensen and Reichl (2011) place importance on the methods used to assess teachers' performance, which they suggest, will in turn, result in improvements in teaching and learning in schools. The most effective evaluation systems are based on a mutually agreed upon model of good teaching, provide for self-assessment and reflection, and reflect a culture of collaboration and commitment to professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Marshall, 2013). Improved teaching and student achievement takes place when evaluation systems involve meaningful feedback, provide opportunities for professional growth and promote teacher collaboration (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

The premise behind the formal evaluation of teachers is that this process will have a positive impact on teaching and student learning. However, recent research suggests that many evaluation systems fail in promoting professional learning (Marshall, 2013; Marzano & Toth, 2013). According to Curtis and Weiner (2012) more meaningful learning experiences for teachers involve feedback from evaluations; however, the feedback may not always be useful. Teacher evaluations may not be based on specific expectations nor inform decisions about teachers' professional growth. "Professionals take charge of their own growth and development by constantly seeking to strengthen teaching effectiveness and the quality of their teaching and that of their colleagues" (Coggshall et al., 2012, p. 14). Teachers should be encouraged to become active partners in analysing their learning and identifying opportunities for improvement (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013). The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011), discussed in the following section, have been suggested as a means to support this process.

2.2.4 Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

At the time of the identification of the research problem addressed by this study, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) had been recently introduced by the Australian Government as an initiative to improve the quality of teaching in schools. "Divergent views as to what constitutes the 'good' teacher underpin many of the tensions associated with the field of professional experience" (Bloomfield, 2009, p. 27). Following on from the work of Lawrence Ingvarson (1998) in recognising teacher quality, work began in Australia in 2003, on the definition and promotion of quality teaching through standards development (National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching, 2003, p. 5) culminating in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011). The intent of the standards is to be a "public statement of what constitutes teacher quality" (AITSL, 2011, p. 2). There are seven standards in all, grouped into three areas of action: 'professional knowledge', 'professional practice', and 'professional engagement'. The three areas of action are divided across four career stages: 'graduate, proficient, highly accomplished' and 'lead' (AITSL, 2011 p. 2).

The terms teaching and teacher quality appear to be utilised interchangeably within the rhetoric of professional standards development; teacher quality focused on the knowledge, skills, commitments and values held by a teacher throughout their career (Leonard, 2012). Quality of teaching, on the other hand, relates to the link between what a teacher is able to do within a particular context to improve the outcomes of all his or her students. The context will be dependent upon school leadership, resources, and as Cumming and Jasman (2003) suggest, amongst other factors, the degree of parental support, the nature of the curriculum and the school and community culture.

Carter (1990) claims teachers' knowledge cannot "be formalized into a set of specific skills or preset answers to specific problems. Rather it is experiential, procedural, situational, and particularistic" (p. 307). Professional teaching standards have been criticised for:
- being overly defined and specified abstract lists of competence statements (Stronach, 2010, p. 121);
- being frequently 'vague' standard descriptions (Clarke & Moore, 2013);

- not incorporating the emotional dimensions of teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1998);
- not requiring teachers to make links between knowledge to professional practice (Bahr & Mellor, 2016; Leonard, 2012; Loughland & Ellis, 2016); and
- being seen as a means of de-professionalising teaching, "that individualises, immobilises and isolates teachers …" (Larsen, 2010, p. 209).

Whilst Clarke and Moore (2013) critique the frequently 'vague' standard descriptions, Loughland and Eliis (2016) suggest that the 'standard descriptors' within the APST might assist early career teachers in understanding what is required from each standard. There was a change in the discourse about teaching and teacher quality during the course of the development and implementation of the APST (Mockler, 2012), placing the APST as a regulatory rather than developmental scheme (Loughland & Ellis, 2016).

A recent report by the Australian Council for Educational Research (Bahr & Mellor, 2016) suggests that there is "no essence of quality" within the professional practice area of action within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Teachers can meet the knowledge requirements of a standard, "but there is no requirement that they demonstrate that they know how, or that they are able to promote student learning or deliver in that area" (p. 17). Furthermore, the authors suggest that the set of characteristics identified within the professional engagement area "do not directly map to the job of teaching" (p. 17).

There is a scarcity of empirical work regarding the use of the standards in the literature, and Loughland and Ellis (2016) provide an excellent review of the existing empirical studies, together with reports from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Loughland and Ellis (2016) suggest that their own study prompted them as educators to "re-examine the pedagogical potential of the teacher standards as an explicit framework of teaching for use in self-assessment and critical reflection … on professional experience" (p. 66). According to Mulcahy (2011), standards "do not simply describe pre-existing realities such as accomplished teaching practice or accomplished teachers; they actively produce them" (p. 96). Teachers must learn, according to Gannon (2012), to portray their "teacher identities through the framework

of the standards as they engage in self- and peer-assessment, compile and critique evidence portfolios …" (p. 61) to meet the performance management processes of schools.

What has unfolded from the review of the literature in this section is that the move towards teacher professionalism has prompted the development of professional teaching standards as an attempt to improve the quality of teaching. Despite the critiques discussed here, overall there is indication from the literature that the Australian Professional Standards for teachers may be utilised by teachers themselves as a guide to self-assess their professional growth, prompting my exploration of the latter concept in the following section.

2.3 Teacher Professional Growth

Professional growth requires teachers to focus on improving their teaching practice, the ability to reflect upon and self-criticise their beliefs and actions, and a willingness to engage in change (Nias, Southworth, & Campbell, 1992). Teachers' beliefs and understandings about learning and teaching will potentially increase student' learning outcomes (McKenzie & Turbill, 1999). In this section, I have discussed professional learning and identified its relationship to teacher professional growth.

2.3.1 Professional learning and professional development.

Although the terms professional development and professional learning appear interchangeably in the literature, Loughran (2010) makes a distinction between the two. Loughran (2010) suggests that professional development is "often linked to some form of educational change by doing something *to* teachers, that is telling us about the change and expecting it to then be carried out" (p. 200). Professional learning, on the other hand, "assumes that we have some commitment to the change. ... is more about the learning that occurs through the process and how that learning is then applied to our practice" (p. 201).

Teacher participation in professional development activities is assumed to enhance skills, knowledge and teaching practice. Reflection on practice has been shown to be an important component of any professional learning opportunity (Ferraro, 2000) and, can lead to 'self-generative change' (Pritchard & McDiarmid, 2006). There has been

disagreement in the literature regarding the order in which the change sequence occurs in teacher learning and whether and how changes in knowledge, beliefs and attitudes can be linked to changes to practice (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986; Huberman, 1995; Yoon & Birdman, 2002). For example, Guskey (1986) proposed a linear model of teacher change. The focus has been on change to teachers' beliefs, attitudes and perceptions with the presumption that there will be resultant changes to teaching practice. This model of change has been shown to be erroneous (Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Huberman & Crandall, 1983) since Huberman (1983, 1995) contends that the change process is cyclic in nature, and change according to Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) can begin at any point in the cycle.

This study has sought to explore teachers' self-assessment of professional growth as a result of undertaking professional development opportunities. Consequently, a model proposed for teachers' professional growth, which is relevant to this study, is the Interconnected Model of Teacher Professional Growth (IMTPG) developed by Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002). The model is shown in Figure 2.2. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) suggest that teacher growth is a process of building content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge by individual teachers from their participation in professional development programs and their involvement in their classrooms.
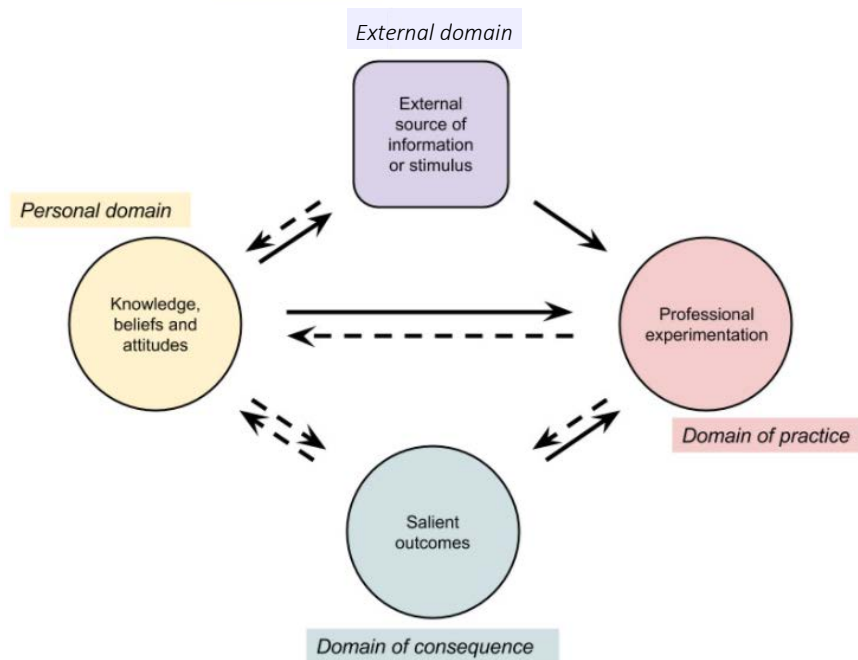
Figure 2.2. The Interconnected Model of Teacher Professional Growth. Reproduced from "Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth" by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*(8), p. 951. Copyright 2002 by Elsevier Science Ltd.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) propose that by focusing on teacher knowledge, through the process of reflection, the construction of knowledge from participation in professional development experiences and classroom practices will result in professional growth. The IMTPG encompasses four domains: 1) personal containing teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes; 2) external containing external sources of information or stimuli; 3) domain of practice involving professional experimentation; and 4) domain of consequence, which contains salient outcomes related to classroom practice. The authors contend that a change in one domain results in a change in another of the domains through the processes of 'enactment' or 'reflection'.

The IMPTG (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) has been proposed for use as an analytical, predictive and interrogatory tool. There a number of accounts in the literature of the use of the model, particularly as an analytical tool. Justi and Van Driel (2006) found the model was useful in enabling the understanding of the reciprocal relationships between domains. Perry and Boylan (2014) researched the model's use in analysing professional development facilitators' learning. Critical reflection for deep professional learning has been emphasised by Mezirow and Taylor (2009). However, the usefulness of the IMTPG in promoting deep learning, 'double-loop' learning (Agryris, 1976) is unclear in the literature. It is the reflective and enactment

basis of this model that has been used to guide my study in terms of the research design.

When teachers actively engage in professional learning, teacher change occurs through complex and interconnected processes (Avalos, 2011; Opfer & Pedder, 2013). Avalos's (2011) review of teacher professional development suggests that there is still a question as to how widespread or sustainable teacher change is in schools. Teacher professionals manage their own growth and development "by constantly seeking to strengthen teaching effectiveness and the quality of their teaching and that of their colleagues" (Coggshall et al., 2012, p. 14). Five factors that contribute to a climate of professional learning and continued professional growth have been identified by Danielson and McGreal (2000): reflection on practice; collaboration; self-assessment and self-directed inquiry; community of learners; and formative assessment. The latter, the authors suggest, should include specific teacher feedback about strengthening practice, be non-judgemental and focused on continued professional growth.

Carlisle, Cortina, and Katz (2011) suggest that in addition to teaching teachers to evaluate their practices, providing them with opportunities for support to select and implement improved practices may improve teaching quality. As reflective practitioners, teachers should be active participants in a "perpetual growth process requiring ongoing critical reflection on classroom practices …. fusing personal beliefs and values into a professional identity" (Larivee, 2000, p. 306). What was beginning to unfold in this review of the literature was that improvements to the quality of teaching are achieved through reflection on professional learning and teaching practice, which in turn, promotes professional growth. This understanding prompted me to explore teachers' ways of knowing.

2.4 Ways of Knowing

Reflection, critical reflection, and models of exploring experience and knowledge lead to ways of knowing (Zichner, 1996). According to Darling-Hammond (1998): "Teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see" (p. 8). Self-evaluation can promote learning (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001;

MacGilchrist, Myers, & Reed, 2004) and research in this area aligns to that of teacher knowledge development (Hollingsworth, 1999). Carter (1990) contends teachers' knowledge cannot "be formalized into a set of specific skills or preset answers to specific problems. Rather it is experiential, procedural, situational, and particularistic" (p. 307). Since his view of learning embodies more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills, I have adopted Illeris' (2007) definition for the concept of learning in this study: "any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or aging" (p. 3). Theories relevant to adult learning, reflection and reflective practice, self-assessment, collaborative learning and collective knowledge building are discussed in the following section.

2.4.1 Theories of learning.

According to Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 28) the behaviourist orientation to learning underpins much educational practice, including adult learning. Spillane (2002) posits that "behaviorists are concerned with actions (behavior) as the sites of knowing, teaching, and learning" (p. 380). Focusing on skills development and behaviour change, behaviourist theory presents learning in short manageable blocks that build on previously learned behaviours (Kearsley, 1994), associated with the one-off workshop professional development approach. Concepts from both the behaviourist and cognitive perspectives are included in Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Relevant to professional development is Bandura's concept of cognitive apprenticeship to teaching, which involves modelling, coaching, scaffolding, articulating, reflecting and exploring.

The cognitive and constructivist perspective of adult learning places emphasis on the importance of understanding the process of learning from the learner's own perspective. The "constructivist stance maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 260). Constructivist learning theory is associated with andragogy (Knowles, 1968) not early learning as discussed by Piaget or Vygotsky. The traditional focus of this theory has been expanded to focus on the collaborative and social dimensions of learning. Merriman and Caffarella (1999) distinguish between two aspects of this learning theory: the cognitive constructivist view of Jean Piaget, where learning is considered to be a personal process through which new ideas are created

based on current and previous knowledge, and the social constructivist view (Vygotsky, 1978) where learning is constructed through social interaction and discourse.

Two learning theories that are also highly relevant to this study are the humanist approach and transformational learning. Freedom, choice, creativity and self-realisation are necessary to meaningful learning according to the humanist approach. This perspective suggests that learning is a process of personal growth and development. The basis for the humanist approach lies in the work of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers and links can be made to the work of Knowles (1980) and Mezirow (1981). Knowles' (1968) five andragogic assumptions of the adult learner can be associated with three aspects of transformational learning: experience, critical reflection and development.

Mezirow (1991), considered to be the major theorist for transformational learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), suggests that critical reflection is central to transforming our learning from experience. "Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Mezirow (2009) further contends:

> Transformative learning is a rational, metacognitive process of reassessing reasons that support problematic meaning perspectives or frames of reference, … It is the process by which adults learn how to think critically for themselves rather than take assumptions supporting a point of view for granted. (p. 103)

Mezirow (2009) acknowledges that there have been critiques aimed at his conceptualisation of transformation theory by adult educators: 'the need for clarification and emphasis on the role played by emotions, intuition and imagination in the process of transformation'; 'the emphasis made on a concept of rationality that fails to deal directly with context (ideology, culture, power and race-class-gender differences)'; and 'de-emphasis of social action'. For a reasoned discussion of his responses to the critiques, see Mezirow (2009, pp. 95-97).

Similar to Mezirow's theory is Freire's (1970) theory of adult learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Freire focuses more on the social changes with transformative

learning, as opposed to Mezirow's individual person's transformation. Transformative learning involves deep level changes to a person's existing values, beliefs and actions and "discourse becomes central to making meaning" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10). In engaging in dialogue, learners critically reflect on their own assumptions and those of others. Taylor's (1998) study shows that not all learners are predisposed to engage in transformative learning and Cranton (1996) suggests that transformative learning should not be the only goal of education. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) according to Illeris (2009) implies "changes in the organisation of self… [and] …only occurs in very special situations of profound significance to the learner" (p. 2). As Kegan (2009) contends, changes to teachers' knowledge, confidence and self-perception as a learner, "one's motives in learning, one's self-esteem … could all occur within the existing form or frame of reference" (p. 43) without any transformation.

Senge's (1990) notion of 'generative-adaptive learning' and Fiol and Lyles' (1985) 'higher and lower level learning' are similar to Argyris and Schon's (1978) typology of learning, 'single loop, double loop and deutero learning'. 'Double loop learning' involves the modification of personal objectives and strategies and "questioning the role of the framing and learning systems which underlie actual goals and strategies" (Usher & Bryant, 1989, p. 87). 'Deutero learning' focuses on learning how to learn (Agyris and Schon, 1978).

Relevant to education, and in particular my research, is Kohonen's (2002) list of properties of transformative learning drawn from the literature of Edge (1992), Cranston (1996), Darling-Hammond (1998) and Askew and Carnell (1998):

1. Realising the significance of *professional interaction* for growth.
2. Developing an *open, critical stance to professional work* and seeing oneself as a continuous learner.
3. Developing a *reflective attitude as a basic habit of mind,* involving reflection on educational practices and their philosophical underpinnings.
4. Developing *new self-understandings* in concrete situations.
5. Reflecting on *critical events or incidents* in life history and learning from the personal insights.

6. Conscious *risk-taking:* acting in new ways in classes and in the work community.

7. *Ambiguity tolerance:* learning to live with uncertainty concerning the decisions to be made.

2.4.2 Reflection and reflective practice.

Within the literature 'reflection' and 'reflective practice' are often used interchangeably to refer to a learning process that leads to new comprehension of a learning experience that informs future learning development (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Gibbs, 1988; Johns, 1995; Kolb, 1984; Loughran, 1996; Platzer, Blake, & Snelling, 1997; Schon, 1983). Derived from the work of Dewey (1933) and Goodman (1984), Loughran (1996) defines reflection as "the deliberate and purposeful act of thinking which centres on ways of responding to problem situations" (p. 14). From observations of how practitioners think in action, Schon (1983) extended Dewey's (1933) notions on reflection, and coined the term 'reflective practice' as a basis for developing a learning theory in professions. The two forms of reflective thinking, according to Schon (1983) are 'reflection-in action' and 'reflection-on-action'.

'Reflection-in-action' can be described as the ability of a practitioner to 'think on their feet', otherwise known as 'self-knowing' (Walkerden, 2005). The suggestion is that when faced with a professional issue, a practitioner usually connects with their feelings, emotions and prior experiences to deal with the situation directly. If the results of an action are different to what was expected, through single-loop learning (Argyris, 1976), the practitioner will observe the results, consider the feedback and try a different approach to the issue. Through reflection, teachers are able to bring to the surface their tacit understanding to contend with "situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict" (Schön, 1983, p. 50). Knowledge is necessary for reflection to be effective, yet reflection builds or expands knowledge (Korthagen et al., 2001).

According to Fien and Rawling (1996), Schön's 'reflection-in-action' assists teachers in making the professional knowledge that they gain from their experience in the classroom an explicit part of their decision-making. Conversely, reflection-on-action

is the idea that after dealing with the professional issue a practitioner analyses their reaction to the situation, and explores the reasons for, and the consequences of, their actions, usually though a documented reflection of the situation (Schon, 1983). The literature identifies different learning theories that may develop deeper understanding and this re-evaluation and reframing of goals and beliefs is a deeper process, the concept of double-loop learning (Argyris, 1976). Critical reflection, "merges critical inquiry, the conscious consideration of the ethical implications and consequences of teaching practice, with self-reflection, deep examination of personal beliefs, and assumptions about human potential and learning" (Larrivee, 2000, p. 293). When teachers engage in critical reflection, their commonly held beliefs are brought into question (Brookfield, 1995) and through self-reflection teachers critically challenge self-imposed limitations (Larrivee, 2000). This is the most effective means of engaging with an experience, making informed decisions about the way we shape and implement our actions (Argyris, 1976).

Platzer et al. (1997) identified that an understanding of the models or frameworks that support a structured approach to guiding reflection will result in effective learning. Kolb's (1984) reflective model highlights the concept of experimental learning and focuses on the transformation of information into knowledge. "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Within Kolb's (1984) model a practitioner tests their understanding gained from observation and reflection on an experience of a new situation. Rogers (1996) contends that "learning includes goals, purposes, intentions, choice and decision-making, and it is not at all clear where these elements fit into the learning cycle [of Kolb's model]" (p. 108). Boyd and Fales (1983) suggest that Kolb's model pays insufficient attention to the process of reflection.

Relevant to adult education is Gibbs' (1988) model, which promotes a clear account of the situation, analysis of feelings, assessment and analysis of the experience, and examination of what could be done in the event of re-occurrence of the situation. Johns' (1995) model of structured reflection, developed for nursing, supports the conversion of experience into learnt knowledge through partnership with a colleague or mentor and the use of a reflective diary. Similar to Gibbs (1988), Johns' (1995) proposes a 'look in on the situation', a focus on thoughts and emotions, and then a

'look out of the situation'. A strength of Johns' model, identified by Platzer et al. (1997), is that it refers to the development of the epistemological basis of reflections. This is achieved by using Carper's (1978) four ways of knowing, aesthetics, personal, ethics and empirics, supported by Johns' addition of 'reflexivity'.

Within their model of the metacognitive processes of reflection, McAlpine and Weston (2002) conceptualise "reflection as an essential mechanism since it is a process for making sense of experience and for developing one's own knowledge and later having a richer source of knowledge to draw on during action" (p. 379). Founded on the notion that reflection supports the development of a growth competence, the ALACT model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) presents a structured process of reflection and, as the researchers suggest, is used extensively for systematic reflection in teacher education. Although the researchers posit that teachers who possess a growth competence will be able to progress through the various phases of the model independently, Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) do acknowledge that in practice, support and/or intervention from a supervisor or colleague is often necessary. An alternative to Kolb's model is the Dialogical Experiential Learning Model (DEL) proposed by Desmond and Jowitt (2012). The main differences in the two models are that the DEL occurs in context, and offers rich learning conversations.

Reflective practice involves evaluation of teaching and learning processes and analysis of experiences in order to learn from them, initiating change when and where required. Through reflection, people recapture their experience and evaluate it (Boud et al., 1985). Larrivee (2000) argues that reflective practice moves teachers from their knowledge base of distinct skills to a stage in their careers where they are able to modify their skills to suit specific contexts and situations, and eventually to invent new strategies. According to Larrivee (2000), to become a reflective practitioner, teachers must make time for solitary reflection, become a continual problem solver, and question the status quo. Through reflection, teachers integrate their beliefs and assumptions, their knowledge of teaching and their practice experiences into 'experiential understanding' (Edge, 1992), potentially developing a critical understanding of their professionalism. There is a distinct relationship between reflection and self-assessment (Sobral, 1997) and the following section explores the

current understanding of teacher self-assessment and its potential connection with teacher learning.

2.4.3 Teacher self-assessment.

Airasian and Gullickson (1994) define self-assessment as "the process of making judgments about the appropriateness or effectiveness of one's own knowledge, performance, beliefs, products, or effects, so that they can be improved or refined" (p. 6). Crooks (1988) argues that a teacher's capacity to self-monitor is encouraged and, according to Boud (2013), self-assessment prepares teachers for life-long learning. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the suggestion that self-assessment has the potential to be an effective tool for teacher learning (Ross & Bruce, 2007) and Grant (2014) calls for more research into the purpose and practice of teacher self-assessment in terms of teacher learning. The assumption has been made in the literature that teachers are skilled at self-assessment (Kahraman, 2014, Ross & Bruce, 2007); however, van Diggelen (2013) suggests that teachers need to learn how to use self and peer assessment. The self-assessment tools developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to support the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers do not rely on any prior skill set for teachers' use (Grant, 2014). Although peer and expert feedback is helpful to teacher self-assessment (Kremer-Hayon, 1993; Ross & Bruce, 2007), the process itself is largely viewed as an individual, internalised practice (Airasian & Gullickson, 1994).

Hollingsworth (1999) emphasises the need for a teacher to articulate the knowledge used during self-assessment to ascertain what improvements need to be made to their practice. The act of self-assessment is an intrinsically difficult task, and self-assessments of skill are often flawed in terms of the degree to which individuals are able to reflect upon and assess their own effectiveness without bias (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). In addition, one of the most difficult aspects of self-assessment is determining the criteria against which the assessment is made (Sluijsmans, Dochy, & Moerkerke, 1999). The criteria should specify the area to be assessed, the goals and standards to be reached (Boud, 1995) and assist teachers to focus attention on new aspects of their practice (Seidel, Stürmer, Blomberg, Kobarg, & Schwindt, 2011).

Schools should define what effective teaching means in their context and define the criteria against which teacher performance is assessed (Jensen & Reichl, 2011). Teachers should have ownership over any criteria or standards used in a self-assessment process (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). The National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching, Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce (Taskforce EL & Education M.C.O., 2003) emphasised that teacher quality is a contextual and multi-faceted personal construct dependent upon the views of the teacher, arguing that teacher quality and teacher professionalism must come from the teachers themselves and not be imposed from outside by policy makers.

Overall, according to Arbizu, Olalde, and Del Castillo (1998), "impressive insights into the whole range of teaching evaluation procedures that are aimed at ensuring the improvement of teaching" (p. 351), can be gained from self-assessment. Teacher self-assessment has been proposed by Ross and Bruce (2007) as a mechanism to facilitate professional growth. The authors suggest that what is important in the process of self-assessment is the teacher's interpretation of experience and the contribution the process makes to goal setting by directing attention to particular dimensions of their practice. Self-assessment within their model of Teacher Self-assessment as a Model for Teacher Change is the integration of the following three processes:

1. Self-observation;
2. Self-judgements "in which they [teachers] determine how well their general and specific goals are met" (p. 4); and
3. "Self-reactions, interpretations of the degree of goal attainment that expresses how satisfied teachers are with the result of their actions" (p. 4).

The authors state that self-assessment "may occur in the moment as reflection-in-action or retrospectively as reflection-on-action" (p. 4), which aligns with Schon's concepts as discussed earlier. From the findings of their study exploring self-assessment together with the supporting strategies of peer coaching, and observation by external change agents, Ross and Bruce (2007) revised their original conceptual model (see Figure 2.3). The most significant changes that are relevant to this study are: their discovery that firstly "both peers and researchers contributed to knowledge of innovative instruction; … [and secondly their recognition that] … the self-

assessment needed to identify deficiencies in present practice, … otherwise there was no reason for teachers to change" (pp. 19-20).
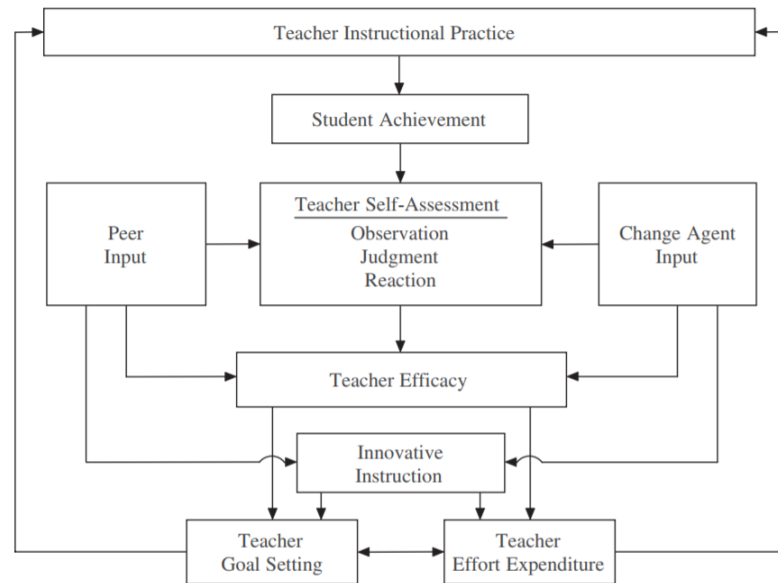
Figure 2.3. Refined Model of Teacher Self-assessment as a Mechanism for Teacher Change. Adapted from "Teacher self-assessment: A mechanism for facilitating professional growth" by J. A. Ross and C. D. Bruce, 2007, *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*(2), p. 147. Copyright 2006 by Elsevier Ltd.

Ross and Bruce (2007) suggest that their explanatory case demonstrates their model can contribute to professional growth. "Self-assessment is a mechanism for professional growth that provides avenues for peers and change agents to influence teacher practice" (p. 1). The authors suggest there is a lack of empirical evidence in the literature to support the potential of self-assessment as a means for teacher learning and teacher change. Recently, Kahraman (2014) used Ross and Bruce's (2007) model as the theoretical framework to investigate the relationship between self-assessment and self-efficacy of pre-service science teachers. The student teachers in the study found self-assessment useful; however, no clear relationship between self-assessment and self-efficacy could be determined from Kahraman's study.

Focusing on self-assessment as a means to promote teachers' learning, the design of van Diggelen's (2013) study involved: a) teachers' use of a tool (developed by the researcher based on a set of criteria and standards) to self-assess their coaching competencies; b) feedback from peers' independent use of the same tool; c) a teacher reflection report; and d) feedback from peers regarding the teachers' reflections. The participants in the study found the tool to be useful in fostering their learning; however, the researcher suggests that further research should be conducted to further extend the

knowledge of self-assessment for teacher learning, particularly the role of feedback in the process.

2.4.4 Collaborative learning and collective knowledge building.

The changing ways of knowing and working in schools, according to Drago-Stevenson (2006) is embodied in the dialogue of 'pedagogical leadership' and 'collaborative planning and reflection' practices. The literature on collaborative learning and collaborative knowledge creation is predominantly found in studies of learning communities. Teacher collaboration and the effect of teacher learning on teaching practice within learning communities has been explored in many studies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Lytle, 1996). Not only can teachers possess knowledge, they can also create knowledge. The notion that collaborative inquiry can generate collaborative knowledge construction (Huberman, 1995; Nonaka, 1994) suggests teachers can construct knowledge of their own teaching practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

Collaboration is important to teacher learning and change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Richardson & Anders, 1994). Crucial to the adult learning process is an interactive learning environment (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) in which the facilitator of learning provides a support system, decreasing over time so as the learner achieves a sense of autonomy. By encouraging group discussion and collaboration, Knowles (1980) suggests, the learners' experiences are an important resource for the learners themselves and the facilitators.

Collaborative knowledge building requires knowledge-building discourse, which is more than knowledge sharing (Scardamalia, 2002), in which participants construct, refine and transform knowledge (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2008). Three types of 'discourse moves' are suggested by Hmelo-Silver and Barrows (2008) as significant in enabling knowledge-building discourse: questioning designed to promote and guide dialogue; statements which can be a new view, reformulation or elaboration of an idea; and regulatory statements directed at collaboration and learning processes.

My research explored the role of middle level leaders leading teachers in learning to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) to self-assess

their professional growth. The final area of the literature examined in this chapter was the role of leadership in schools.

2.5 Middle Level Leadership

Increasingly there has been a movement from the individualistic view of leadership to collective responsibility for leadership (Elmore, 2000; Harris, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Leadership in schools is distributed between both positional and informal leaders (Elmore, 2000; Harris, 2002; Spillane et al., 2001). Middle level leaders who lead teachers associated with their areas of responsibility have found to be underutilised in schools (Carter, 2016). Andrews et al. (2002) define the leadership of teachers as: "behaviour that facilitates principled pedagogical action toward whole school success. It derives from the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth and adults. It contributes to enhanced quality of community life in the long term" (p. 25). Lambert (1998) contends that the nature and purpose of leadership is "the ability of those within a school to work together, constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (p. 5). This is the premise behind the concept of distributed leadership (Elmore, 2000; Lambert, 1998; Spillane et al., 2001) as it suggests that all teachers can be leaders and in turn contribute to school improvement.

The strong collegial relationships, shared trust, support and focus on enquiry, essential to effective school improvement and change must be embodied within the distributed leadership across the school (Harris, 2002). Duignan and Bhindi (1997) contend "the quality of relationships greatly influences everything else that happens in organisations, including the quality of leadership" (p. 201). The notion of parallel leadership (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Crowther & Associates, 2011; Crowther et al., 2009) emphasises that principals work together with teacher leaders to build school capacity.

Bredson (2000) suggests that hierarchical school structures have largely excluded teachers' voices in decisions about their professional learning and improvement. Elmore (2000) contends that underpinning his model of distributed leadership for whole-school improvement are the following five key principles:

1. The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of the role;

2. Instructional improvement requires continuous learning;

3. Learning requires modelling;

4. The role and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement; and

5. The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity. (pp. 20-21)

Distributed leadership implies that senior leaders must create a culture in which individual expertise is recognised and individuals feel empowered to take on middle level leadership roles within a school, promoting learning and leadership capacity (Grint, 2005). Difficulties have been identified with defining the term middle level leader (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Weller, 2001), principally with reference to specific roles and titles (De Nobile & Ridden, 2014).

There is an extensive body of literature concerning teachers as leaders (for example, see review by Lieberman & Miller, 2005), and particularly so with respect to school improvement (Andrews et al., 2002; Crowther et al., 2009; Sullivan & Glanz, 2013). According to the Ofsted (2003) report, the role of middle level leaders is crucial to sustained improvement in schools in terms of raising standards and improving quality in education. The report suggested that more empirical studies needed to be carried out to explore the influence of middle leaders, whose responsibility is not primarily concerned with subject leadership, on teaching and learning. Although middle level leaders have become recognised as playing an important role in teaching and learning in schools (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013) there is limited research focused on the suggestion from the Ofsted (2003) report in the literature.

According to Harris and Jones (2017) the focus of earlier research into the role of middle leaders in schools was largely placed on subject leaders and heads of department. The authors point out that although the literature now incorporates empirical studies of a diversity of "middle leadership roles, positions and perspectives" (p. 213), the "context in which they [middle leaders] work is radically different" (p. 215), suggesting that research into middle leadership is timely and important.

2.5.1 Defining middle level leadership

A line-management definition from the organisational literature on middle leadership suggests that middle leaders comprise the middle level of an organisation's positions of authority and responsibility (Samson & Daft, 2012). School middle management has been described by Fleming (2000) as the level of management between senior leadership and staff members who are not in positions of particular responsibility. The changing landscape of educational leadership has resulted in the augmentation of various additional roles to the traditional management roles previously observed in schools. Middle leaders may engage in the development and improvement of educational programs and oversee the performance of staff within their areas of responsibility (Brooks & Cavanagh; Koh, Gurr, Drysdale & Ang, 2011), and create the optimal conditions for influence and change (Ridden & De Nobile 2012). Fleming (2014) refers to middle level leaders as "the engine house of school improvement" (p. 20).

In reviewing empirical studies focused on the role of middle leaders in implementing school policies and introducing change, Bennett, Newton, Wise, Woods and Economou (2003) identified two key tensions "affecting how middle leaders define and carry out their responsibilities" (p. 4): (1) between senior staff expectations and the middle leader's belief that their loyalty was to their department or area of responsibility; and (2) between a line management culture and a belief in collegiality (p. 4). The authors propose three issues as relevant to these tensions: "collegiality"; "professionalism, accountability and monitoring"; and "authority and expertise" (pp. 4-5). Fullan (2010) also suggests that middle leadership draws pressure from both the top and bottom of the organisation. It has been argued that middle level leaders can likely be the conduit between classroom teachers and senior leadership in schools (Dinham, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2009; Weller, 2001) in terms of adopting a communication role, liaising between the two groups to bring about understanding of policies and processes (Bennett et al., 2003).

The responsibilities of middle level leaders are often not well defined (Brooks & Cavanagh, 2009) and there appears to be a lack of "clarity in the definition and scope of middle leadership positions …" (p. 8). Brooks (2013) found that "a lack of clarity in the definition and scope of middle leadership positions was a concern of middle

leaders" (p. 74) and that "some middle leaders expressed a sense of frustration at having limited authority" (p. 79). The definition of middle level leadership that I have used for the purposes of this study relates to the nature of the role itself, as opposed exclusively to a title or position within the organisation. Not all middle leaders will have a title or be placed in formal positions of responsibility (De Nobile & Ridden, 2014). Therefore, I have drawn my definition for middle level leaders from the National College for Leadership in Schools and Children's Services (2011):

> Middle leaders "lead an aspect of teaching and learning across the school. They monitor and evaluate, set direction, and lead and build teams that implement change. They have an influential role with colleagues, helping to create a focus on learning and contributing to the ethos that supports it." (p. 1).

The quality of middle leadership is profoundly governed by the extent of the middle level leader's "autonomy and responsibility to engage with teachers in supportive and innovative ways" (Harris & Jones, 2017, p. 14). Professional learning communities within schools have been suggested as a means for facilitating knowledge creation and mutual learning within the distributed leadership model (Harris and Spillane, 2008; Harris and Jones, 2010). Expectations have been placed on middle level leaders to participate in whole school policy formation and strategic agendas in secondary schools (Adey, 2000; Poultney, 2007) and to take a leadership role in areas of classroom practice and instructional leadership (Bendikson, Robinson & Hattie, 2012). According to Fullan (2014) the principal's role as learning leader is "to lead the school's teachers in a process of learning to improve their teaching while learning alongside them about what works and what doesn't" (p. 55). The conceptual framework drawn from the literature, Figure 2.4, posits that middle level leaders may also be in a position to adopt this role in schools. As noted earlier, recent research into the role of middle level leadership is limited, particularly with respect to the investigation of their influence on learning in schools.

2.6 Conclusion

This section provides an overview of the concepts that have emerged from my review of the literature that are relevant to answering the research question. These concepts

are synthesised into a conceptual framework, presented diagrammatically in Figure 2.4.

An investigation into how a middle level leader can lead teachers to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional

QUALITY TEACHING

Teacher as professional

Teacher evaluation

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)

Improvements achieved through reflection on professional learning and teaching practice through knowledge building discourse

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Promotes teacher understanding

WAYS OF KNOWING
Theories of Learning

TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT

APST as criteria

REFLECTION AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflection-on-action
Reflection-in-action

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

MIDDLE LEVEL LEADERSHIP

Facilitator of learning

Knowledge building discourse

Figure 2.4. Conceptual Framework from the Literature

As a professional, a teacher reflects on his or her knowledge and practice, engages in continuous learning, understands and integrates different ways of knowing, is autonomous and creative in extending their professional identify and expertise (ATEE, 2006; Trede, 2009). The move toward teacher professionalism prompted the development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) as an attempt to improve the quality of teaching in Australian schools. The significance of my study is teachers learning to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to self-assess their professional growth. There is an assumption in the literature that teachers know how to self-assess. There is a paucity of empirical studies regarding use of the standards (Loughland & Ellis, 2016) by teachers themselves.

Effective evaluations can drive teacher improvement (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011). Coggshall et al. (2012) have defined what they suggest are well-designed evaluation systems suggesting that the process should enhance teacher growth and improve student learning through a cycle that includes self-reflection, pre-observation and classroom observation, dialogue, and individualised professional learning. From the research explored in this chapter, professional growth is conceived to be an individual and collective process of learning in which teachers reflect upon their professional development opportunities, and as a result employ changes to their teaching practices. This literature review has found that there is a link between self-assessment and professional growth; however, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the notion that self-assessment has the potential to be an effective tool for teacher learning (Grant, 2014; Ross & Bruce, 2007).

The other aspect of this study centred on the exploration of how a middle level leader can lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth. It is evident from the extant literature, that when leadership is distributed across a school, middle level leaders are positioned to take a significant role in bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching. Within the conceptual framework, Figure 2.4, a middle leader acts as a facilitator of learning by guiding a teacher through the process of self-assessment. During this process a teacher will reflect upon their professional learning and teaching practice. Through the knowledge building discourse generated between a teacher and the middle leader, the suggestion is then that a teacher will come to know him/herself in terms of their own professional growth.

Together with the background discussion in Chapter 1, the literature review set the conceptual framework for this study, Figure 2.4, by highlighting the interconnectedness of the concepts to be considered. Evidence of further exploration of additional relevant literature in responding to research sub-question 4 and the overarching research question is presented in Chapters 7 and 8.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology – The Design of an Interpretivist Study

3.1 Introduction

This research design was built on the notion of capturing how a middle level leader led teachers to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011). I am aware that my own professional experience and background (as disclosed in Chapter 1) has influenced my topic selection stimulated from my professional practice. This in turn, has had an impact upon the choices I have made regarding the research design, my position as a researcher in the study context, and my interpretation and presentation of the findings.

As participant observer, from the position of 'insider', I accepted a role within the social situation under study, participating as a member of the group whilst observing and reflecting on the outcomes from that participation. According to Harris (2001), not only should the self be disclosed, but oneself may also be used as a source of knowledge. My own active involvement in this study became a powerful research instrument (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) in that the forms of interaction generated between the teachers and myself provided the basis for co-construction of meaning and knowledge.

A review of the literature revealed discussion and debate about a number of theoretical paradigms, such as: positivist (and postpositivist), interpretivist/constructivist, transformative, emancipatory, critical, pragmatism and deconstructivist. Inherent in each approach are epistemological differences, and in some cases, contradictions, such as: the underlying assumptions about reality; the relationship of the knower and the known; the possibility of objectivity; and the possibility of generalisation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Polanyi, 1958).

The interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm (Blumer, 1969) was selected and considered to be appropriate for this study as I wished to understand "the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 36) by exploring the teachers' and my own experiences (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Within this perspective the social world "can

only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 5). Reality is socially constructed and there are multiple realities or interpretations of an event (Merriam, 2009). According to Creswell (2007): "subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically … formed through interaction with others [social constructivism] and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (pp. 20-21).

As a means of advancing theory through collaboration with practice within the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, I chose to conduct a qualitative case study. The case study participants were 13 teachers and myself, a middle level leader, from the Junior School of a P-12 college. The teachers, having undertaken Professional Development Opportunities (PDOs), utilised the Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide as a reflection tool to critically examine, understand, and make meaning of their PDO experiences in terms of their professional growth. I have relied upon the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8) and recognised, and made explicit, how my role as participant observer from the inside, and my own background have had an impact on the research.

The case study consisted of three phases: Phase One – Focus Group session with ten participant teachers; Phase Two – In-depth Study with Four Participant Teachers; and Phase Three – Revisit two of the Phase Two participants. Data were collected in this study through participant observations, my reflective journal, focus group session, individual semi-structured interviews, direct observations, informal interviews, and documentation review.

Figure 3.1 is a graphical representation of the research methodology discussed in this chapter.

Interpretivist/Constructivist Paradigm

Case Study Methodology

Position of the Researcher: 'insider' - Participant

Exploratory Qualitative

Phase 1

Focus Group

Session with 10 participants

Phase 2

In-depth study with four participant teachers

Phase 3

Revisit 2 participant teachers from Phase 2

Data Collection Methods

Focus Group Interview

Semi-structured Interviews

Participant Observation

Direct Observation

Reflective Journal

Documentation Review

Informal Interviews

Figure 3.1. Graphical Representation of Research Methodology

This chapter is structured in accordance with Figure 3.2.

Section 3.2 Theoretical Paradigm	**Section 3.7** Validity	**Section 3.8** Ethical Considerations
Section 3.3 Research Approach	**Section 3.6** Data Analysis	**Section 3.9** Chapter Summary
Section 3.4 Context of the Study and Position of the Researcher in the Reseach	**Section 3.5** Research Design	
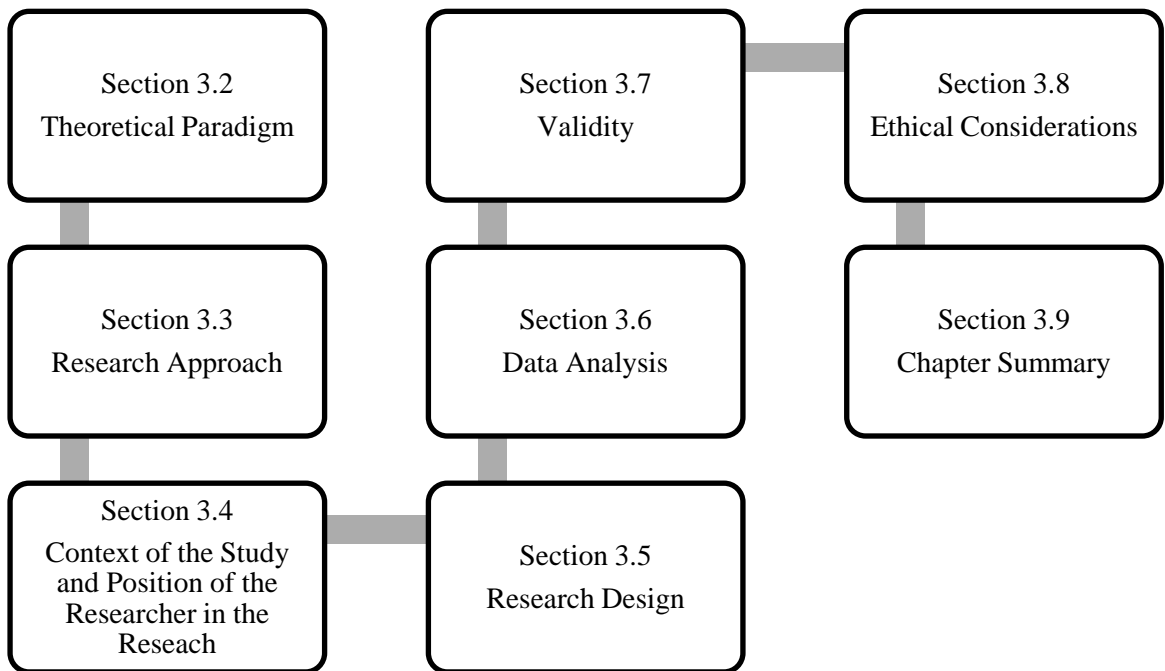
Figure 3.2. Structure of Chapter

3.2 Theoretical Paradigm

In this section, after identifying my research assumptions, I have discussed my selection of the Interpretivist/Constructivist (Blumer, 1969) research paradigm as appropriate to this study.

3.2.1 Research assumptions.

My assumptions about the form and nature of reality (ontological) and my theory of knowledge (epistemological), together with the research questions, influenced the way in which the research topic was studied (Mason, 2002; Holloway, 1997). Ontology, relates to what things, if any, have existence or whether reality is "the product of one's mind" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 1) and concerns "the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 7). Epistemological assumptions relate to "the very base of knowledge - its nature and forms, how it can be acquired and how it can be communicated to human beings" (p. 7). My own assumption was that there was no objective reality and that social reality

was constructed in a social environment through the interaction of individuals. "What can be known is intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110).

My view of the human actors (teacher participants and myself) in this study was aligned to the theoretical perspective of adult learning presented in chapter 2 of this dissertation: voluntaristic, emphasising creativity, reflection and learning. It was my belief that knowledge about how a middle level leader can lead teachers in the use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) for self-assessment of teacher professional growth, would be created through the interaction between teachers and myself within the context of a school. The teachers had undertaken particular PDOs and I sought to understand how they made meaning of their experiences of: firstly, the professional development experiences themselves; and secondly, the reconstruction of those experiences in terms of learning how to self-assess teacher professional growth through the use of a reflection tool.

3.2.2 Paradigm selection – Interpretivist/Constructivist.

Thomas Kuhn defines a paradigm as "An integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approaches and tools" (Kuhn, 1962, as cited in Flick, 2009, p. 69). The paradigm or theoretical framework influences the way in which knowledge is studied and interpreted (Mertens, 2005). Guba and Lincoln (1994) draw attention to the "worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105). Further Mertens (2005) claims:

> exact nature of the definition of research is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework [with] theory being used to establish relationships between and among constructs that describe or explain a phenomenon by going beyond the local event and trying to connect it with similar events. (p. 2)

Other relevant meanings attributed to the term 'paradigm' found in the literature include: "a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 22); the philosophical intent or motivation for undertaking a study (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 38); and the

inclusion of three elements "a belief about the nature of knowledge, a methodology and criteria for validity" (MacNaughton, Rolfe, & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001, p. 32).

Positivistism, founded by Auguste Comte during the 19th Century, is concerned with facts and phenomena assuming that an objective reality exists. Within this paradigm, through deductive reasoning, the researcher poses and tests theories to gain an understanding of the world so as to be able to predict and control it. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) the aim of the positivist approach to research is:

> to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities, causal relationships between its constituent elements … [whereas the social world, according to the antipositivist view] … can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied. (p. 5)

Taking an antipositivist approach I chose to adopt the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm since it is intended to provide an understanding of "the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 36), suggesting that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). I explored teachers' perceptions, shared their meanings and developed deep insights about my own observations (Bryman, 2008). As individuals, the teachers interpreted the process of self-assessment through the lens of their own perceived authentic experience.

Furthermore, as I was interested in the values beneath the findings, whilst I understand interpretivist researchers can use deductive methods, the approach I used was inductive. Using an inductive process, I worked from the particular (themes ordered from information gathered from data sources) to the general, from specific raw data to abstract concepts (Merriam, 2009). Myer (2000) suggests that one of the greatest strengths of conducting interpretive research is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions.

My aim has been to attempt to understand multiple dimensions and layers of reality. Interpretivist/Constructivists "generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) throughout the research process. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that within the constructivist paradigm the ontology is relativist and the epistemology is both transactional and subjectivist. Relativism is the view that

there are no absolute truths or values; multiple interpretations (realities) can be applied to the world. "Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible, mental constructions, social and experientially based, local and specific in nature" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111), and there is no "pristine, unmediated grasp of the world as it is" (Eisner, 1991, p. 46).

"The investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). This subjectivist approach emphasises description and understanding, can link between different levels of analysis, providing contextual data and additional insights into processes (Borch & Arthur, 1995). The latter was pertinent to this study in that I wished to explore the processes that might be required to lead teachers in their own process of self-assessment with particular reference to research sub-question 2: What processes can be put in place to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the standards? Guba and Lincoln (1994) highlight paradigm positions on selected practical issues, which relate to this study as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Constructivist Position on Selected Practical Issues

Practical Issue	Constructivist
Inquiry aim	Understanding; reconstruction. The inquirer is cast in the role of participant and facilitator in this process
Nature of knowledge	Individual reconstructions, merging around consensus. "Multiple knowledges" subject to continuous revision.
Knowledge accumulation	More informed and sophisticated reconstructions through the hermeneutical/dialectical process. Vicarious experience.
Goodness or quality criteria	Trustworthiness and authenticity, and misapprehensions.
Voice	"Passionate participant" (Lincoln, 1991) as facilitator or multi-voice reconstruction.

Note. Table 6.2: Paradigm Positions on Selected Practical Issues, from "Competing paradigms in qualitative research" by E. G. Guba and Y. S. Lincoln, 1994, (p. 112), in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 1994 by Sage Publications, Inc.

"The constructivist proceeds in ways that aim to identify the variety of constructions that exist and bring them into as much consensus as possible. This process has two aspects: hermeneutics and dialectics" (Guba, 1990, p. 26). Sense-making is made through hermeneutics, generating "rich and compelling interpretations … a key to producing more rigorous forms of knowledge" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 21). In this study the act of inquiry began with my own concerns and those of the participants, and developed through a "dialectic" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 21) of iteration, analysis, critique, reiteration, reanalysis and continuous reflection leading to a joint (participants and myself), collaborative reconstruction from the multiple realities that existed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Four characteristics essential to understanding any interpretivist approach to research (Merriman, 2009) relevant to this study are: "the focus is on process, understanding

and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive"; and "the product is richly descriptive" (p. 14).

The social, dialogic nature of inquiry associated with Guba and Lincoln's (1989, 1994) view of constructivism, also held by Gergen and Gergen (1991), is what drew me to the use of this paradigm, in that inquiry methodology places emphasis on the inquirer's own self-reflective awareness of her own constructions and to the social construction of participant constructions. Creswell (2003) draws attention to the intimate role the interpretivist researcher plays in data collection and analysis and the impact that the researcher's own background and experience may have on the research. My epistemology has been that my research process and products are co-constructions between myself and the participants in the research: the participants have been active informants (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). This perspective has allowed me to conduct research 'with' rather than 'on' the research participants.

3.3 Research Approach

Of the five major types of interpretive research discussed in the literature, phenomenology (Husserl, 1970) and case study (Yin, 2003) were two approaches that appeared to me to be appropriate to this study.

3.3.1 The "lived experience" from phenomenology.

The origin of phenomenology lies in the disciplines of philosophy and psychology, based in the work of the 20th century philosopher Edmund Husserl, and later developed further by Heidegger. According to Husserl (1970) there are no absolute facts: 'knowledge of essences', the central underlying meaning of the shared experience within different lived experiences, can only be established. The focus of phenomenology is an individual's or a group of persons' experiences gained as they directly interact with a phenomenon, and how they interpret and attach meanings to different actions or ideas and construct new experiences. Understanding is gained from the person's own perspectives. According to Husserl (1970) phenomenological research is about describing rather that explaining, starting with no preconceptions and without interference from the researcher. The researcher 'brackets out', that is,

identifies and holds back any preconceived beliefs and opinions, and taken for granted assumptions held about the phenomenon being researched.

In contrast, Plummer (1983) and Stanley and Wise (1993) suggest it is important to make clear how interpretations and meanings have been placed on findings from a study. Emphasis has also been placed on positioning the researcher in the research as an interested and subjective actor, instead of as an impartial observer, bringing with them preconceptions and bias. This study has not been around the discipline of lived experience. Rather, I have drawn upon this concept from phenomenology. In interpreting participants' lived experiences through dialogue: "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53). According to Ellinor and Gerard (1998), the dialectic process enables an exploration of a wide range of human experience and "at essence is about the search for new meanings" (p. 8). Dialogue is "a discipline of collective thinking and inquiry, a process of transforming the quality of conversation and, in particular, the thinking that lies beneath it" (Isaacs, 1993, p. 95). Relevant to the epistemology in this study is Howe's (1963) view that: "dialogue … is both the relationship between persons and the principle that determines the nature of their communication. The partnership of persons in dialogue is so indispensably important" (p. 67).

Schutz (1970) has argued that meaningfulness does not reside in the lived experience itself, but in the "act of attention… [which brings experiences into our] …intentional gaze" (pp. 71-72) and opens the pathway to meaningfulness. By leading the participants through their reconstruction of their professional development experiences, and asking them to reflect on the meanings made, I have sought to engage the participants in that act of attention that then allowed them to consider the meaning of that lived experience in terms of their own professional growth. I have therefore drawn upon the concept of lived experience from phenomenology in terms of interpreting participants' lived experiences through dialogue in choosing to conduct an exploratory qualitative case study.

3.3.2 Case study.

Yin (1994) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Case study methodology incorporating design logic, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis (Yin, 2003), has been widely used in educational research (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Case studies can have various forms. They have been classified as explanatory, exploratory or descriptive (Yin, 2003), intrinsic, instrumental or collective (Stake, 1995) or, as Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Burns (1997) suggest, case studies might be historical organisational, situational analysis, clinical, life history and multi-case. This research involved a single exploratory case study. The case study "is defined by interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used … [and that] … the object of [case] study is a specific, unique, bounded system" (Stake, 2008, p. 443).

Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) base their approaches to case study on a constructivist paradigm: truth is relative and is dependent on one's perspective (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This paradigm "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject outright some notion of objectivity" (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 10). Yin (2003) uses 'propositions' to guide the research process. On the other hand, Stake (1995) applies "issues … intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in studying cases" (p. 17) and are necessary in case study research as they aid in the development of a conceptual framework to guide the research process and interpret the data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) the conceptual framework has several purposes: "identifying who will and will not be included in the study; describing what relationships may be present based on logic, theory and/or experience"; and "providing the researcher with the opportunity to gather general constructs into intellectual 'bins'''" (p. 18).

As the study progressed development of the framework continued, relationships between the proposed constructs emerged as data were analysed and themes emerged as the framework, initially formed from "issues" (Stake, 1995), was referred to at the

stage of data interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). Case studies provide rich explanatory evidence and the organisational context for the study of the research questions (Mabry, 2008), enabling the researcher to consider how the phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated. "Qualitative case study is valued for its ability to capture complex action, perception and interpretation" (Stake, 2005, p. 3).

3.3.3 Research question and sub-questions.

The research sought to investigate: How can a middle level leader lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers? The response to the overarching question was explored through the sub-questions:

1. How do teachers engage in the process of self-assessing their own professional learning?
2. What processes can be put in place to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the standards?
3. What forms of evidence do teachers find most effective in self-assessing their professional growth?
4. What role can a middle level leader take in leading teachers to self-assess their professional growth?

3.3.4 Reason for adopting case study.

My decision to conduct a qualitative case study was based on the following:
- The need for an exploratory approach: the research questions posed required an exploratory approach. The case study approach is useful when the focus of the study is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions (Yin, 2003);
- Lack of prior research: Little research has been conducted on the use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) for self-assessment of professional growth. As shown in Chapter two, little in-depth research has been conducted on self-assessment of the outcomes from professional development opportunities. Mayer and Greenwood (1980) recommend the use of case study when little prior research has been conducted on the topic.

- Degree of control: I was limited in the degree of control I could or wished to exert over the behavioural events under study (Yin, 2003); and

- Data collection: The degree of focus had been on contemporary events so the case study methodology was the preferred option. Techniques such as direct observation and interviews were able to be used (Yin, 2003), and seen as strengths of the case study methodology (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

A particular advantage of the constructivist paradigm identified by Crabtree and Miller (1999) was relevant to this study. The approach involved close collaboration between myself and the participants, while at the same time enabling participants to recount their own stories. I was able to comprehend the participants' actions by describing their views of reality through their stories (Robottom & Hart, 1993). This aspect can be viewed as a limitation with qualitative case studies in that participants are subject to the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher as the "primary instrument of data collection and analysis" (Merriman, 2009, p. 14). On the other hand, this can be seen as an advantage, particularly if the researcher's position within the research is 'insider'.

A number of strengths and limitations of case study have been identified in the literature. The following table, 3.2, was developed primarily from the summary provided by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001) and shows the relevance of the aspects to this study.

Table 3.2

Strengths and Weaknesses of Case Study Methodology Relevant to this Study

Strength	Limitation	Relevance to this study
Engage with complexity and aim understanding of complex inter-relationships.	The complexity examined is difficult to represent simply.	There were 13 participants in this study. The case study, conducted over three phases, restricted the scope of the study, facilitating the construction of detailed, in-depth understanding of the research topic. The case study provided the means to explore the different needs and interests of the participants, allowing me to write up the research from Phases 2 and 3 through multi-faceted stories of the participants' experiences. The "holistic" case approach provided me with some means of summarising the findings from the three phases of the case study.
Grounded in "lived" reality.	There is too much data for easy analysis.	My role in this study was as participant observer from an insider position. The focus of this study was my own and the teachers' experiences and the case study provided me with the means to explore the "lived" reality. A disciplined approach was taken for recording, storing and analysing the data from the case study in order to minimise any potential difficulties in handling the data. Data collected from each phase were analysed before commencing the next phase.
Can facilitate the exploration of the unexpected and unusual.		This strength was particularly relevant to Phase 1 of the case study in which unexpected findings through the exploration of the perceptions and experiences of the participants led to the redesign of the following phases of the case. The study explored the use of a new way of using the APST.
Can facilitate rich conceptual/theoretical development.	Not generalisable in the conventional sense.	The case study generated rich data which helped me to generate new thinking and new ideas about the research topic, leading to the development of a new theory about learning to self-assess professional growth. Generalisation was not an aim of this study. I had rich knowledge of the context in which the case took place. I sought to minimise subjectivity. This was a qualitative study and as Stake (1994) suggests, researchers who focus on generalisation may risk neglecting important facets that might help to understand the case itself. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001) suggest that the issue is what case studies can tell us about situations beyond the actual case that was studied.
	Raise doubts about "objectivity". Vital to case study approach - researcher expertise, knowledge and intuition.	I have addressed the issue of "objectivity" elsewhere in this chapter. I have attempted to present adequate evidence from the data to support the research reported in this dissertation but a certain amount has to be taken on trust. That is, trust in my disclosure of the impact I have had on the research and my honesty in reporting the findings.

Note. Adapted from "The strengths and limitations of case study research" by P. Hodkinson and H. Hodkinson, 2001.

3.4 Context of the Study and Position of the Researcher in the Research

Since the "knower and the known are inseparable" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37), the research participants should be in a 'natural setting', the context related to the study, in this case the educational institution. The 'case' is defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as, "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25). The case selection was determined by the research question, the theoretical context, and accessibility. The research design was naturalistic (Stake, 1995) and consisted of a single exploratory case (Yin, 2003).

The case study site was the Junior School (P-6) of a P-12 college in Australia at which I held a middle level leader position. Improvement to the quality of teaching at the College was a high priority at the time of the study. Adherence to the APST had recently been introduced and teachers were required to produce an electronic portfolio as part of the Teacher Growth and Development Framework at the College. Junior School teachers had expressed difficulties in demonstrating their knowledge and skill levels and providing appropriate evidence from their own teaching practice within their portfolios. It was from this situation that the research question evolved as discussed in section 1.3 in Chapter 1.

After taking up my position at the school, I had established honest, trusting relationships with the 13 participant teachers in this study, developed primarily through the following situations:

- Facilitator of Professional Development Opportunity (PDO) 1: The ten teachers who took part in the focus group session during Phase One of the study participated in this PLO 1, the Teachers as Researchers project during which a learning community of teachers was developed to explore issues associated with the teaching of diverse learners. I had been working collaboratively with the teachers over a year-long period. An in-depth description of this project is provided in Chapter 4.

- Cone of silence: The name given to my office as a kind of refuge sought by teachers and members of my team to talk out issues, and seek advice without necessarily looking for solutions. I kept all discussions confidential.
- Work colleagues: I worked collaboratively with the participants in this study in the provision of support given to the Junior School by my department. The strong collegial relationships with each of the participants of Phase Two are described in Chapter 5 under their stories.

3.4.1 Position of the researcher in the research.

I adopted the role of participant observer in this study, taking the "insider" position. In this section, I discuss the aspects of the insider/outsider debate that have been relevant to my study and clearly position myself in the research. Specific aspects of the insider position, relevant to this study are highlighted: role confusion and conflict; and the need for reflexivity.

3.4.1.1 Participant observer.

Interpretivist researchers often position themselves as either 'insiders" or 'outsiders' to their research (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Three 'membership roles', peripheral, active and complete, have been identified by Adler and Adler (1987), as being relevant to interpretivist researchers who utilise observational methods. The first relates to researchers who participate in the core activities of group members. Active members are involved in the central activities without fully committing themselves to the group's values and goals. On the other hand, complete members are already members of the group or become fully affiliated during the course of the research. One of four stances a participant observer might take, put forward by Gold (1958), is that the researcher, as a member of and participant in the group under study, observes others and is interested more in observing than participating. Spradley (1980, pp. 58-62) provides an in-depth discussion of the various roles that observers may take in research, and the one most applicable to this study has been his notion of 'complete participation' (activities are observed in the setting with complete participation in the culture). This aligns with Adler and Adler's (1987) "complete member researcher role" (p. 73) which Kanuha (2000, p. 444) terms "insider research", the position I adopted in this study.

As I moved between observer (researcher collecting data through observation) and researcher work colleague/ middle level leader (participant in process and co-construction of meaning, and collecting data in that role) each role was constructed and developed within the research context. Developing and sustaining relationships with the participants based on trust and co-operation was essential to gathering accurate and dependable data. An insider researcher is not necessarily a participant observer. The different researcher roles generated different forms of interaction, largely dependent upon the inter-subjectivity of the researcher participant relationship.

3.4.1.2 *Benefits and disadvantages of the insider role.*

Benefits to the insider role have been identified in the literature (Angrosino, 2005; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000). Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) suggest that the insider provides the researcher with a 'superior understanding' of the group's culture. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest benefits include:

- higher degree of participant acceptance;
- level of participant trust and openness that might not be achieved if the researcher were an "outsider";
- ease of access to participants; and
- an assumption by the participants that the researcher understands and shares their feelings. (pp. 58-59)

However, potential disadvantages can be related to these benefits. Firstly, participants may assume researcher knowledge and understanding to the extent that they do not fully explain their individual experiences. Secondly, the researcher's perceptions may be influenced by her personal experience, and thirdly, loss of 'objectivity' (DeLyser, 2001; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). It could be said that the insider position in this research offered me an advantage with respect to accessibility and to an understanding of the culture of the group. On the other hand, I also had to be aware of potential ethical and methodological dilemmas associated with positioning myself in the research: shared relationships with the participants, and disclosure. The latter was relevant in two ways: firstly, self-disclosure, and secondly, the degree to which I disclosed information to the school executive.

Within the role insider participant observer, I experienced tension as a researcher and as a person about disclosure in terms of balancing the positions of being an advocate for the teachers. I had to build trust and respect in order to lead them in using the reflection tool to self-assess their own professional growth for inclusion in their professional portfolios, whilst maintaining confidentiality. Becker (1967) addresses a key aspect of power relations relevant in this study. He suggests the researcher ask the question 'Whose side are we on?' suggesting that the researcher must choose between subordinates' and superiors' perspectives. In my case, it was more a question of constantly asking: How can I meet both the needs of the school executive and the needs of teachers? Thus, as a middle level leader, in terms of accountability, I felt tension in meeting the requirements of the school's executive.

> For each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied. (Kanuha, 2000, p. 444)

Role confusion and conflict have been identified (Adler & Adler, 1987; Asselin, 2003) as potential problems associated with the insider researcher role. There has also been critique in the literature about the potential for undue influence of the researcher's perspective and the perception on the part of the participants of relative power. As Maykut, Maykut, and Morehouse (1994) posit:

> The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand. (p. 123)

In Phase Two of the case study there was the question of any potentially perceived power relationships which might have influenced the way in which the participants responded during interviews, particularly with respect to Helen's participation in this study. As she was a member of my own team, I was Helen's line manager. However, with respect to her position as Coach in the mentoring project, the PDO chosen by her for the purposes of this study, she was directly responsible to the Head of the Junior

School. Kvale (2002) calls this "the asymmetrical power relations of the research interviewer and the interviewed subject" (p. 3). "Despite the best intentions, the interview situation may be experienced as, and may in fact be, a form of abuse. Practising reflexivity can be one way to minimise such experiences in interview situations" (Alex & Hammarstrom, 2008, p. 170). In this study, I have sought to establish the relationship described by Dwyer and Buckle (2009):

> Disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection on the subjective research process, with a close awareness of one's own personal biases and perspectives, might well reduce the potential concerns associated with insider membership. … we posit that the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience. (p. 59)

Rather than attempting to control researcher values through method or by bracketing assumptions, I adopted the stance of a reflexive researcher. "A reflexive stance informs how the researcher conducts his or her research, relates to the research participants and represents them in written reports" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 189). Reflexivity makes explicit how the researcher herself is a meaningful research tool who moves between multiple, and sometimes conflicting roles, and the implications of this for research relationships and decisions.

3.4.2 Reflexivity.

As an interpretivist researcher I was required to reflect on my research experience, decisions and interpretations, my own involvement, and effect on the research process, and the way in which this shaped the research outcomes, based on the premise that "knowledge cannot be separated from the knower" (Steedman, 1991, p. 53). According to Charmaz (2006) reflexivity brings "the researcher into the process … [and allows] … the reader to assess how and to what extent the researcher's interest, position and assumptions influenced inquiry" (p. 188). This view is supported by Frosh and Emerson (2005) who interpret reflexivity as a process of testing our interpretations, and being accountable for the means by which we arrived at a

particular 'reading' of the data; making explicit the process by which we came to know.

Table 3.3

Levels of Reflexivity

Aspect/Level	Focus
Interaction with empirical matter	Accounts of interviews
	Observations of situations and other empirical materials
Interpretation – does not reflect some reality, instead it is influenced by the assumptions of the researcher doing the research, their values, political position, use of language	Underlying meanings
Critical Interpretation	Ideology, power, social reproduction
Reflection of text production and language use	Own text, claims to authority, selectivity of the voices represented in the text

Note. Reproduced from *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (p. 273), by M. Alvesson and K. Skoldberg, 2009, London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. Copyright 2009 by Mats Alvesson and Kaj Skoldberg.

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) suggest there are two key elements to reflexive research: interpretation and reflection. The authors also propose four levels of reflexivity shown in Table 3.3, (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), stating that "reflection becomes a form of interpretation of the interpretation, and this is what makes the research reflexive" (p. 273). Woolgar (1988) differentiates between reflexivity and reflection, suggesting that reflection is concerned with process and verification, ensuring that participants are represented in their "true" light. Reflexivity, as an explicit evaluation of the self, involves reflecting your thinking back to yourself (Shaw, 2010), "viewing people and the world as interrelated and engaged in a dialogic relationship that constructs multiple versions of reality" (p. 243).

Within this study, I utilised a methodology based upon reflexive epistemology (constructivist), continually questioning the social process of knowledge production. According to Etherington (2004), reflexivity requires a researcher to operate on multiple levels. Reflexivity has been considered at each stage of this research. This began with formation of the research questions, development of the research design,

collection and analysis of data, addressing the research questions, through to the writing of the dissertation, as I have examined and made explicit the decisions I made during the research process.

As stated earlier, within the constructivist paradigm, the researcher is the research instrument, and to understand that is an important part of the reflexive research effort (Watts, 2006). Since within the constructivist paradigm I have been the primary 'instrument' of data collection and analysis, reflexivity was considered essential (Merriam, 1998; Russell & Kelly, 2002; Stake, 1995; Watts, 2006) to this study. Through reflection, I became aware of what allowed me to see, as well as what might have inhibited my seeing (Russell & Kelly, 2002). This entailed careful consideration of: a) the phenomenon under study; and b) the ways in which my own assumptions and behaviour may have had an impact on the research inquiry. In section 3.4.1, I discussed the tensions associated with my dual roles in this study. A reflexive approach involves making power imbalances explicit, potentially revealing problems with the assumption that the researcher is always in a position of power.

Keeping a self-reflective journal is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity. Richardson (2000) refers to writing as "a *method of inquiry*, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic" (p. 923), whilst Ellis and Bochner (2000) state: "personal tale of what went on in the backstage of doing research" (p. 741). In order to foster trustworthiness, transparency and accountability of research, Finlay (2002) suggests that the researcher should use reflexivity, so as to understand her role in the research context and how to use this knowledge.

3.5 Research Design

Frankland and Bloor (1999) argue that initial exploration of the topic provides the qualitative researcher with a "clear definition of the focus of the study" (p. 154). The case study was conducted over three phases as shown in Figure 3.1 and Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Overview of the Case Study Phases

Phase	Data Tools	Number of Participants	Relationship to Research Question
One	Reflection Tool: Professional Growth Self-assessment (P GSA) Guide Focus Group interview Participant Observation field notes Direct observation field notes Documentation review Reflective journal	10 Teachers 2 Executive Team members Middle level leader	This phase of the study relates to the research sub question 1: How do teachers engage in the process of self-assessing their own professional learning?
Two	Reflection Tool: PGSA Guide Semi-Structured interview 1 Semi-Structured Interview 2 Semi Structured Interview 3 Documentation Review Participant Observation field notes Direct observation field notes Reflective journal Informal interviews	In-depth study 4 Teachers Middle-level leader	This phase of the study relates to the research sub questions 2 and 3: What processes can be put in place to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the standards? What forms of evidence do teachers find most effective in self-assessing their professional growth?
Three	Reflection Tool: PGSA Guide Semi-Structured interviews 1 and 2 combined Semi-Structured Interview 3 Documentation Review Participant Observation field notes Direct observation field notes Reflective journal Informal interviews Semi-structured interview	In-depth study Revisit 2 Teachers who participated in Phase 2 Middle-level leader Principal	This phase of the study relates to the research sub questions 2, 3 and 4: RQ2: What processes can be put in place to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the standards? RQ3: What forms of evidence do teachers find most effective in self-assessing their professional growth? RQ 4: What role can a middle level leader take in leading teachers to self-assess their professional growth?

In the next section, the three phases of the case study are described.

3.5.1 Case study phases.

Phase 1: Focus Group Session

The aim of Phase One of the study was to investigate the research participants' experiences in using the reflection tool, Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide, to self-assess their professional growth against the APST. With the use of Merriam's (2009) Reflective Field Notes Guide, and in my role as participant observer I sought to explore: a) the behaviour of the teachers and myself during self-assessment (what happens?); and b) our thought processes, and whether teachers prefer to, or feel comfortable to work individually or collaboratively with others during the process of self-assessment. During Phase One I also sought to explore whether the guiding questions, within the reflection tool used by the participants, were of benefit to the teacher participants in breaking down the criteria into smaller chunks to increase their understanding.

Phase One was carried out with a focus group of myself as middle level leader, ten teachers and two members of the school executive who had taken part in Professional Development Opportunity (PDO) 1: Teachers as Researchers (TAR) Project, a detailed description of which can be found in Chapter 4. Participation in PDO 1 was voluntary and supported by the school executive team. I sought voluntary participation in my research study from the ten teachers who took part in PDO 1 and all ten teachers elected to participate in Phase 1 of my study. I used the interaction between the participants to:

- Draw attention to participants' attitudes, priorities, language and understanding of use of the reflection tool;
- Encourage participants to question each other and develop their own analysis of their common experiences;
- Promote participant communication – drawing out a wide range and form of understanding;
- Identify group norms and cultural values;
- Gain insight into the group social processes in the articulation of knowledge; and

- Illuminate my own perspectives, as participant observer, through the debate within the group (Kitzinger, 1995).

Participants who discussed, debated and/or clarified one another's opinions, beliefs, attitudes and feelings provided insight into issues which influenced their use of the PGSA reflection tool. I was uncertain about the guiding questions in terms of their quality and completeness. Through the focus group session, I was able to trial the procedure I had planned to use as the participants carried out the self-assessment process in Phase Two and Phase Three of the study. In addition, I hoped to identify any issues or practical problems that might have needed to be addressed and modified for Phase Two of the study. The analysis of the data collected from Phase One informed the development of both version 2 of the PGSA reflection tool and the semi-structured interview questionnaire used in Phase Two of the case study.

An additional aim of the focus group session was to investigate research sub-question 3, which focused on identifying appropriate evidence that might be included in the teacher participants' portfolios to support their self-assessment of their professional growth. The focus group session revealed significant findings regarding both the reflection tool itself, the process of self-assessment, and potential issues associated with the identification of appropriate evidence to support the teachers' assessment of their professional growth. The findings, reported in Chapter 4, together with my own reflections on the research process, led me to make changes to my original research design for phases two and three. This involved decisions to firstly modify the guiding questions to produce version two of the reflection tool; and secondly, in Phase Two, I decided to conduct an in-depth study with four participants as I had found that the process of self-assessment required significant support and interaction from myself.

Phase Two: In-depth study with four participant teachers

Four volunteer teacher participants took part in Phase Two: Rebecca, Hannah, Helen and Sally. One participant, Sally, was the only member of the focus group from Phase One who volunteered to take part in Phase 2. The other three were new voluntary participants and as such, had not at that time experienced the use of the reflection tool: the PGSA Guide Version 2. Each participant was asked to identify a recent PDO against which they would like to self-assess their professional growth. During Phase Two, I led the individual teachers through the process of self-assessment using the

reflection tool. This phase also involved three individual in-depth interviews with each participant.

Phase Three: Revisit Phase Two Participants

My original research design did not include a third phase to the case study. I was provided with an unexpected opportunity to pursue the study further as two of the participants from Phase Two expressed their desire to complete the process of self-assessment of professional growth again with another PDO. They stated that they wanted to include a second completed PGSA Guide in their portfolio for their annual review. This was a significant event in the research process as it provided the opportunity for the teachers to delve deeper into their practice, taking the next step in exploring their professional growth in terms of taking ownership of the process of self-assessment. This was an entirely unexpected and unplanned event in the research process itself.

After the decision was made to include this additional phase within the study, I designed the phase such that I might be able to further investigate the practical issues of implementation of the self-assessment process within the school context. For example, I wished to explore whether the number of interviews or the amount of time taken to complete the whole process of self-assessment could, or should, be condensed. Therefore, I designed Phase Three based on the fact that both participants had prior knowledge of the self-assessment process and use of the reflection tool. The design of Phase Three involved combining interviews 1 and 2 from Phase Two into one in-depth interview. This interview was held in conjunction with the participants' use of the reflection tool. Interview 3, focused on exploring the participants' reflections and experiences in using the reflection tool was also included in this phase.

Also, during Phase Three of the study, I came to comprehend that in order to answer research sub-question four and the overarching research question, it was necessary that I gain a greater understanding of the school context in order for this work to contribute to enhancing professional learning and growth within the school thus improving the quality of teaching. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the College Principal to explore his perspectives on the school context.

3.5.2 Data collection tools.

Qualitative data collection methods in educational research include observation, interview, and the review and analysis of documentation generated by the case study site (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 2005). Data were collected in this study through participant observation, direct observation, focus group interview, semi-structured interviews, my reflective journal, informal interviews/conversations, and documentation review. Data collection and analysis were progressive in this study enabling me to gain insights, which were used to improve the case study design, the reflection tool and interview questions. How the tools were used in this study and the relevance of their strengths and weaknesses (as noted by Kawulich, 2005; Kitzinger, 1995; Yin, 1984), are discussed in this section. Extensive use of dialogical material (Isaacs, 1993) has been made in this study. Dialogue was captured through: a) the simultaneous use of field notes and audio recordings of the focus group interview in Phase One; and b) the use of field notes and audio recordings of each individual interview during Phases Two and Three of the study.

3.5.2.1 Documentation review.

Relevant internal school documents were reviewed and analysed, particularly with respect to those associated with the school's adoption and use of teaching standards and staff portfolio requirements (See Appendix 1, Teacher Growth and Development Framework and Appendix 2, Portfolio Evidence Workshop Summary). Copies of relevant documents were available on the school's server for review and field notes were recorded. This form of data collection, according to Yin (1984) can be a good source of background, 'behind the scenes', information gained unobtrusively within an organisation. The participants' completed reflection tools, the PGSA Guides, were also reviewed.

The Reflection Tool

I developed a reflection tool, the Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide, using the APST as the criteria against which the teachers were led to learn to self-assess their professional growth. The teacher participants used the PGSA Guide as a tool to reflect on their learning as I led them through the process of critically examining, understanding, and making meaning of their selected PDO experience.

The aim of the reflection tool was to enable the teachers to undertake the process of self-assessment so as they could comprehend and demonstrate their progression in their professional growth. A separate template (See Appendix 3) was developed for each standard that was used by the teachers to record their professional growth. Table 3.5 is a sample of the template for standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice (AITSL, 2011). In place of the career stage headings shown in the APST (Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead), the first row of the reflection tool provides descriptors from each career stage taken from the APST. The second row provides a set of semi-structured questions, which I developed to guide each participant through the self-assessment process. Evidence to support the self-assessment was placed in the final row of the document.

Table 3.5

Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide: Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) descriptors as criteria	Understand the relevant and appropriate sources of professional learning for teachers.	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.	Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice and offer quality placements for pre-service teachers where applicable.	Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers.
Guiding Questions	What professional learning areas do you think are relevant to a teacher? (e.g. basic literacy skills, ICT, differentiation)	Do you feel that this professional learning addressed you own professional needs? To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning? 1. Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice within your classroom. 2. Increased knowledge about a topic area. 3. Applied the learning to your classroom practice.	How do you identify what professional learning you need? How do you plan targeted professional learning opportunities to improve your practice? How have you applied your learning to your classroom?	Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities? How did you go about it? How have you engaged in research to inform your teaching?
	Evidence …	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*

3.5.2.2 *Participant observation.*

My role as a participant observer in the co-construction of knowledge in this study has been discussed in section 3.3. The view of participant observation as a data collection method, relevant to this study, is that of Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999): "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (p. 91). Participant observation allows the researcher to observe situations that the participants might describe during interviews, identifying any potential distortions or inaccuracies (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This suggests that in providing explanation and context, participant observation has complemented other data collection methods utilised within this study. The literature suggests various reasons for conducting participant observation research and Table 3.6 shows those relevant to this study.

Table 3.6

Reasons for Conducting Participant Observation Research

Reason for conducing participant observation research	Relevance to this study
To identify and guide relationships with participants.	I sought to maintain balanced research relationships with the participants in order to encourage disclosure, trust, and awareness of potential ethical issues. This enabled me to generate a rich source of highly-detailed, high-quality, information about the participants' behaviour.
Can provide information previously unknown to researcher that is crucial for research design, data collection and interpretation of other data.	"Insider" position – previous relationships with participants; however, participant observation allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of the participants.
To provide the researcher with a source of questions to be addressed with participants.	My observation of the teachers as they used the reflection tool provided me with the understanding of what questions would support the teachers' reflection both within the tool and also during the unstructured interview used in Phase Two to guide their self-assessment process. I was able to observe when they struggled with understanding or needed additional information.
The researcher can gain intuitive understanding of the meaning of data through direct experience of the phenomenon under study.	This aspect is particularly relevant to the experience I gained in leading the participants through the use of the reflection tool. I was able to react to events / ideas, follow leads, pursue avenues of research that had not occurred to me. This provided me with a basis upon which I was able to redefine any personal pre-conceptions about a participant's behaviour in light of their experience in the group under study. This was particularly so during Phase One: Focus Group session.
Researchers are able to address problems which might be unavailable through the use of other data collection techniques.	As a participant observer and through my own reflective practice in this role, I came to a greater understanding of the research topic.
Empathy: The researcher can understand the social pressures / influences / group norms etc., that may create particular forms of behaviour.	My position as "insider" in this study provided me with the relevant understanding with respect to my ability to empathise with the participants. However, I also experienced tensions as discussed in section 3.3.3.
To show the researcher what the cultural members deem to be important in manners, leadership, politics, social interaction, and taboos.	My role as the participant-observer in the focus group session needed to recognise and simultaneously be receptive to the flow of professional conversation. This role was an important aspect of the design and facilitation of the focused-reflection session.

Note. Adapted from *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (pp. 142-143) by H. Bernard, 1995, Walnut Creed, CA: AltaMira Press. Copyright 1995 by AltaMiraPress; and *Essential ethnographic methods: Observations, interviews, and questionnaires*, (Vol. 2) by S. L. Schensul, J. J. Schensul, and M. D. LeCompte, 1999, Plymouth, UK: AltaMira Press. Copyright 1999 by AltaMira Press.

As a data collection method, participant observation is considered to be very time consuming leading to the production of a vast amount of data, documentation of which requires diligence and discipline from the researcher (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). More significant however, the literature suggests, are methodological problems in the use of participant observation, such as finding a balance between the two roles, a potential lack of objectivity, and the 'observer effect' in terms of potential bias (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). With respect to role balance, concern is related to the potential influence the researcher may have on the way the study participants behave. There were two aspects to this that have been relevant to this study: firstly, did my prior relationships with the study participants have an influence on the way they behaved?; and secondly, did my own beliefs and perceptions about the relationships influence my own observations of the participants' behaviours?. As I reflected on this issue in carrying out the study, I asked myself: Did my presence produce any level of change in the participants' behaviour?; Were the participants, in some cases eager to please, or in others reluctant to share?; and Did prior relationships influence the interaction (empathy with participants or lack of compassion)?

There are two dimensions to objectivity: personal and methodological. I have attempted to ensure that my personal beliefs and values did not intrude into the research process, so as to avoid influencing the way the participants responded to my questions or behaviours. I have faced the challenges associated with this need to reconcile my own personal experience and views with the detachment traditionally expected of a researcher. Consequently, since participant observation is reliant upon the integrity and honesty of the research, I sought to build relationships during the study based on trust, and collected, analysed and reported the findings so as to gain insight without compromising rigour and objectivity.

Patton (2002) has advised qualitative researchers to document possible observer effects, whereas LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggest that researchers should explicitly seek out evidence of these effects to better understand researcher-induced distortions (Wax, Diamond, & Gearing, 1971). Merriam (1998) points out that the focus should be on how the researcher accounts for those effects in explaining the data, explaining that observation, without participation, may not lend itself to the researcher's entire understanding of the situation.

Monohan and Fisher (2010) argue that "observer effects can and do generate important data and critical insights [through fostering] close ties with others, collaboratively shaping discourses and practices in the field" (p. 357). An aim of my research design in addressing the potential problems associated with participant observation has not been focused on minimising observer effects, as to do so might have restricted my access to rich data. Rather, I have sought to make explicit my role as 'insider' in my interactions with participants in the production of knowledge in this study. As DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) suggest, I have practiced reflexivity, as discussed in section 3.3.2, to help me understand biases that may have interfered with my interpretation of what I observed. Schensul et al. (1999), with reference to how researchers might address potential biases, suggest "the most accurate observations are shaped by formative theoretical frameworks and scrupulous attention to detail" (p. 95).

3.5.2.3 *Direct observation.*

Observation has been defined by Marshall and Rossman (1989) as "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p. 79). Observation provided me opportunities to document the participants' use of the reflection tool, participant behaviours, characteristics and interactions, and the physical environments during each phase of the case study. It was essential that the process be non-intrusive, that my role was clear to the participants and that during direct observation I not be drawn into social interactions. Direct observation was based, during the focus group session, upon non-interference by myself with the participants' normal interaction and use of the reflection tool so as to ensure that I obtained data about its realistic use. This data collection method complemented the use of the focus group interview and participant observation through which I was able to obtain active clarification of what I observed. Extensive reflective and descriptive field notes were taken using Merriam's (2009, pp. 120-121) observation guide. How I implemented both participant and direct observation as data collection methods in this study is shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

Table Participant Direct Observation in this Study

Focus	What was observed	Record
Participants	Who participated, and the number of participants. What roles they played. How the participants organised themselves.	Field notes Non-verbal behaviours – facial expressions, gestures, postures.
Physical environment	Context Kinds of behaviours for which the setting was designed. Space, comfort, suitability. Allocation of space. Presence of objects, resources, technologies. Seating arrangements. Climate for problem-solving, learning	Field notes Potential influences of the environment. Description of context. Expected/Unexpected behaviours. Factors of influence on behaviours. Impact of space. Description of objects, resources, technologies. How they were used, why they were used.
Focus group interview	Verbal behaviours, interactions. Physical behaviours, gestures. Personal space. Level of participation, interest. Power relationships, decision making. Levels of support, co-operation. Participants who stood out.	Field notes, Reflective Journal. Who spoke to whom and for how long. Who initiated interaction. Language, tone of voice. What participants did, who did what Who did not interact. How participants used their bodies What participants' behaviours indicated about their feelings towards one another. What participants' preferences concerning personal space suggested about their relationships. People who stood out: Characteristics What differentiated them from others Whether other participants consulted them or they approached other participants
PGSA Guide – Reflection Tool	Which participants used the tool. Levels of support, co-operation. Sequencing of activities. How the participants interacted with the tool. Decision making processes used by participants.	Field notes Level of engagement with and use of the tool. Reflective Journal

My own behaviour:	In what ways my role as observer and facilitator effected the focus group session. In what ways my role as leader of learning had an effect on the interaction during the individual semi-structured interviews. In what ways I had an effect on the participants' interaction with the reflection tool in my role as leader of learning. What I said, What I did	Reflective Journal: My perceptions My observations of the participants' perceptions. Field Notes: - Observations of non-verbal behaviours and verbal interactions. Reflective Journal My perceptions of: - How this affected the participants. - What the participants' behaviours indicated about their reaction to what I said and did during the focus group session and while they interacted with the reflection tool.

Note. Adapted from *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*, (p. 20), by N. Mack, C. Woodsong, K. M. MacQueens, G. Guest, and E. Namey, 2005, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Copyright 2005 by Family Health International; *Qualitative research: A guide to design and interpretation*, (pp. 120-121), by S. B. Merriam, 2009, San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2009 by Jossey-Bass; and "Qualitative interviewing", in *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, 3rd ed. by M. Q. Patton, 2002, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2002 by Sage Publications, Inc.

3.5.2.4 *Focus group interview.*

Originally used in market research (Morgan & Scannell, 1998), and later used in medical research (for example, Kitzinger's (1994) study), focus groups have been used in social research to gain insight into a specific experience of, or opinion about, a topic under investigation through the interaction between participants. Focus groups can be used at the preliminary or exploratory stages (Morgan & Kreuger, 1988) of a study and complement other methods for triangulation (Morgan & Scannell, 1998). Differences between focus group and group interviews have been discussed by Bryman (2008) and are shown in Table 3.8 together with the reasons for using focus group methodology in this study.

Table 3.8

Group Interview vs Focus Group

Group Interview	Focus Group	Reason for use of Focus Group in this study
May discuss a number of different topics	Will focus and discuss a particular topic in depth	The aim of this study was to explore a particular topic in depth.
Interested in participants' opinions as individuals. Group interviewing involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants.	Concerned with how participants interact with each other as members of the group. Involve more debate among the participants themselves. Moderator.	I was concerned with the exploration of the interaction among participants as they used the reflection tool to self-assess their professional growth. The members of the focus group had completed the same PLO. As such, group interaction and discussion were important in this study to explore the participants' feelings, attitudes, beliefs and reactions to the research topic.
The purpose of group interviews is to collect data from more than one person at the same time, saving time and money.	The aim of focus group interviews is to obtain "high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of others" (Patton, 2002, p. 36).	The teachers volunteered their time to take part in the focus group session, fully aware of the amount of time required. Saving time and money was not an issue. Focus group was chosen as a method of data collection due to the aim expressed by Patton (2002).

Note. Adapted from "Of methods and methodology" by A. Bryman, 2008, *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, 3*(2). Copyright 2008 by Emerald Publishing Ltd.; and *Planning focus groups: Focus group Kit 2* by D. L. Morgan and A. U. Scannell, 1998, London, UK: Sage. Copyright 1998 by Sage Publications, Inc.

Kitzinger's (1995) view of focus groups as organised discussion and interaction has been adopted in this study. She argues that the interaction between the participants enables them to question each other, re-evaluating and reconsidering their own understandings of their specific experiences. The participants in the focus group worked within the same school, took part in the same PDO and often took part in collaborative work within the organisation. This pre-existing work and potential friendship group, where people appeared to feel relatively comfortable with each other (Morgan & Scannell, 1998), provided me with the opportunity to explore interpersonal communication, which Kitzinger (1994) suggests, approximates to naturally occurring data.

Format of the Focus Group Session

Prior to conducting the focus group session, I had sought volunteer participants from the learning community of teachers established during the year-long Teachers as Researchers TAR project, of which I was facilitator. Teachers were informed of the aim of the session. The session, during which the teachers completed the reflection tool, PGSA Guide, took place over a one hour and fifteen-minute period in the College Boardroom at the conclusion of the (TAR) final workshop. An unstructured interview format was used to guide the dialogue, making provision for participants to formulate answers in their own terms. Interactions between myself and the participants allowed me to probe issues in depth, address new issues as they arose, and to request participants to elaborate on their responses. Participants were encouraged to voice their own personal opinions of the reflection tool and its use for self-assessment, to dialogue with each other and myself as participant observer. At the beginning of the session, I explained to the teachers how the reflection tool was able to be used. During this process, I provided an example from my own experience of a professional development opportunity, showing how I would answer one of the questions as a result of participating in PDO 1. However, when they themselves were undertaking the process of completing the reflection tool, the teachers were not given any direction as to whether they should complete it individually or in a small group situation, or to interact with the tool at all. This was a deliberate decision on my part as I wished to observe the interactions that took place within the focus group as the teachers used the reflection tool to self-assess their professional growth.

Following a review of the literature I identified key advantages to conducting focus groups, shown in Table 3.9 respect to their relevance to this study. Morgan and Scannell (1998) suggests that some limitations of focus group can be overcome by careful planning and moderating. Weaknesses and disadvantages associated with the focus group technique found in the literature are discussed in Table 3.10 terms of their relevance to this study.

Table 3.9

Strengths of Focus Groups and Relevance to this Study

Strength of Focus Group	Relevance to this study
Interactions between participants during focus groups highlight their view of the world. Focus group allows respondents to react to and build on the responses of other group members (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan & Scannell, 1998)	During the focus group session, the participants were able to share their ideas, whereas in a one-to one interview it would not have been possible to capture the potential multiple views of the topic as the participants interacted with each other as they used the reflection tool.
Focus groups elicit information in a way that allows researchers to find out why an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it (Morgan & Scannell, 1998). As a result, the gap between what people say and what they do can be better understood (Lankshear, 1993).	Multiple understandings and meanings of the use of the reflection tool were revealed by the participants. As participants shared their views through their interaction in the focus group, I was able to explore multiple explanations of their behaviour and attitudes. The focus group and participant observation methods of data collection worked in conjunction with each other to enrich data collection.
Participants can become a forum for change (Gibbs 1997).	This study sought to explore the use of the reflection tool to assess professional growth, exploring a specific new way of using the APST. The focus group participants provided valuable insight into the topic.
Focus groups provide quick results and the cost is relatively low compared with one-to-one interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Morgan, 1997).	I was able to finalise Phase One data collection and analysis in a relatively short time frame. This was particularly beneficial to this study as the findings from Phase One suggested the need to make changes to the research design for Phases Two and Three. The findings also provided insight into issues that needed to be addressed in Phase Two.
Focus groups place people in natural, real life situations as opposed to the controlled experimental situations typical of quantitative studies (Morgan & Krueger, 1998)	An Interpretivist case study has been the methodology used in this study. This approach calls for the study of participants within a natural, real life setting (Yin, 2003).
Focus groups are relatively efficient in comparison to individual interviews (Morgan, 1997).	This advantage was important in Phase One of the study as I sought to gain perceptions from as many participants as possible. Had I conducted individual interviews with ten individual teachers I would not have been able to gain the level of insight, nor perform the data collection within the timeframe. This aspect also relates to the need to explore the interaction between participants, which would also have not been possible using individual interviews.
The format allows the researcher to probe more deeply into the topic (Morgan & Krueger, 1998) than would be possible using a survey. The researcher is also able to observe the participants' actions.	This aspect allowed me to explore unanticipated issues as the participants used the reflection tool.

Table 3.10

Weaknesses/ Disadvantages to Focus Group Interviews and Relevance to this Study

Weakness/Disadvantage of Focus Group	Relevance – How these issues have been addressed in this study
The researcher has less control over the data produced (Morgan, 1987) than in one-to-one interviewing (Gibbs, 1997).	I controlled the time and ensured that the participants remained focused on the topic. Bloor and Wood (2006) confirm that "it is usual for the moderator to specify at the outset time limit contributions, in order to encourage contributors by deadline setting" (p. 90).
Participants may steer discussion in directions not relevant to the research.	I was concerned with the exploration of participant interaction. I was open to exploring participants' views within the frame of reference.
Focus group research is open-ended and cannot be entirely predetermined (Gibbs, 1997).	The focus group was conducted in Phase One of this exploratory case study. The participants used an existing reflection tool and I had formed few notions about how it would be used by the participants prior to conducting Phase One.
	As I allowed the participants to talk freely amongst themselves about the topic, as they completed the reflection tool, new issues about the topic arose that I had not considered in advance.
Focus groups can be difficult to assemble and the groups can vary a great deal (Gibbs, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).	I was able to assemble the focus group from the teachers who had taken part in PDO 1 as all ten teachers volunteered to participate in the research.
Focus groups are not entirely confidential or anonymous, because the material is shared with the others in the group (Gibbs, 1997), raising ethical issues.	This was very relevant to this study. I had hoped that since the focus group members had all experienced PLO 1 that anonymity would not be an issue. However, during the time the focus group session was conducted, teacher participants expressed concern about the presence of members of the executive team at the focus group session.
For some types of topics, the presence of a group will affect what they say and how they say it (Morgan, 1997).	The executive team members had also taken part in PLO 1 and had volunteered to take part in the focus group session for this study. The potential impact of this aspect has been explored in the study.

The result may be biased by one or more dominant members of the group or the participant observer may bias results by providing cues about the type of responses desired. There is an issue of power dynamics in the focus group setting. There is concern that the participant observer, aiming to maintain the focus of the focus group, may influence the group's interactions (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Morgan, 1997).	I attempted to minimise the potential for bias by using additional methods of data collection along with the focus group (triangulation). In the research design, I sought to address the issue of power dynamics and potential bias through reflexivity by recording my own perceptions of the participants' perceptions of the use of the reflection tool and the interaction within the focus group. I attempted to ensure that I did not direct the participants to respond in any particular way.
The real-life and immediate nature of the interaction may lead a researcher to place greater faith in the findings than is actually warranted (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007).	This issue has been addressed through the three-phase research design. Data collection method triangulation and data source triangulation have been incorporated into the research design.
Focus group data can be difficult to analyse (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007; Krueger, 1994).	As Kitzinger (1995) suggests I have drawn together and compared discussions of similar themes, distinguishing between individual opinions expressed, in particular minority opinions. I have ensured that I have identified the impact of the group dynamic in the analysis of the focus group session in ways that take full advantage of the interaction between research participants.

3.5.2.5 Self-reflective journal.

I used my reflective journal to examine "personal assumptions and goals … [and clarify] … individual belief systems and subjectivities" (Ahern, as cited in Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 2). I recorded my own perceptions, observations, interpretations, decisions, choices, thoughts and ideas in conducting the research. Particularly, I recorded my experiences as a middle level leader, and reflections and learning as a participant observer in this study. I detailed how I may have influenced the results of the focus group interview, each individual interview and the process through which the participants completed the reflection tool in my reflective journal. My notes also highlighted my awareness of misconceptions so that I was able to tailor questions for use with particular participants. This helped inform and clarify my understanding of the responses.

The goal was to provide a research trail of gradually altering methodologies and reshaping analysis. In this study, keeping and using a reflective journal enabled me to make my experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings visible and an acknowledged part of the research design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation processes. The journal also assisted me in maintaining a reflexive awareness of my shifting sense of self as I moved between my own roles as a middle level leader participant observer and researcher in this study.

My theoretical assumptions about the research topic were noted in my reflective journal and revisited throughout the research process, taking into consideration how any shifts produced any modifications to the research question(s), focus, research methodology, methods or findings. I also included theoretical material from my reading in the journal. Fieldwork notes of observations, emotions, thoughts, interactions, incidents, conversations and responses were maintained. How my presence or interaction as participant observer might have affected the process was explored through reflecting on all qualitative data collected, and noted in the journal.

Examination of relevant sections from my journal helped me to make links between both the literature on the research topic and research methodology, decisions taken during the study, the process of reflexivity, and my evolving understanding of the complexities of the research topic and of conducting qualitative research. My written

reflections clarified my research aims and approach, the outcomes from each phase of the study, the issues and tensions which arose, and the ways I dealt with these, and modifications that were made to subsequent phases of the study. This reflective examination of my research throughout every aspect provided me with the means to:

- make meaningful connections between theory and practice;
- elicit a depth of learning, particularly with respect to my understanding of the research topic and the way in which my own position in the research affected the study; and
- gain a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a middle level leader within a school context.

This may not have been possible through other methodological means.

3.5.2.6 *Semi-structured and informal interviews.*

Cognisant of the significance of context in this interpretive study I chose to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews during Phases Two and Three of this study. Informal interviews and conversations with participants also took place during Phases One, Two, and Three.

> In order to understand other persons' constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them…and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms…and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of the meanings. (Jones, 1985, as cited in Punch, 2001)

Interviews allow researchers to listen to "participants describe in detail personal information" (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). According to Patton (2002) "the purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341).

In adopting the constructivist perspective, I also recognised, as stated previously, the collaborative qualities of this approach, conscious that:

> the key to successful interviewing is learning how to probe effectively… that is, to stimulate an informant to produce more information… without injecting yourself so much into the interaction that you only get a reflection of yourself in the data. (Bernard, 1995, p. 161)

The cooperative nature of interviews is described by Gomm (2008) as 'fact-producing interaction' suggesting interviewees may describe perceptions they would otherwise

think irrelevant when taking part in dialogue with an engaged researcher (in this case a participant observer).

Interview 1

The first individual interview (see semi-structured interview questionnaire Appendix 4) focused on the PDO chosen by the participant. There were three purposes for this interview:

1. Understanding the PDO: to provide the opportunity for the participant observer and the participant to gain an understanding of the PDO experience through their interaction (What happened? the participants' feelings about what happened);

2. Participant learning: the exploration of what the participant felt they had learnt from their participation in the professional development opportunity (How they felt about the PDO in terms of whether it met their needs? Did they feel they had enhanced their knowledge and/or practice as a result of participation in the PDO? Had they made any changes or implemented, to any extent, best practice in their own teaching?); and

3. Teacher Perceptions of Professional Growth: the exploration of how the teachers self-assessed their professional growth with respect to the PDO.

The interview was designed to take place approximately six weeks after the participants had actively taken part in the PDO. I decided to use this timeframe as it provided the participants with time to reflect upon their experience of the PDO. The timing also gave the participants the opportunity to trial any new interventions, strategies or changes to practice identified and/or developed as a result of their participation in the PDO, and to reflect upon any outcomes from those activities.

Interview 2

The second of the individual interviews took place a week after the first. During this interview, under my guidance, the participants completed version 2 of the reflection tool. The purpose of this unstructured interview was to investigate the overarching research question and, in particular, research sub-question 2. I was able to take advantage of a unique feature of the qualitative interview in that I was able to tailor

the questions to each participant in order to obtain rich, meaningful stories and information, requesting relevant examples or explanations (Clegg & Stevenson, 2013). The decision to schedule this second interview a week after the first also gave me time to reflect on the first interview. The findings from the focus group had suggested that my prior knowledge of the participant's involvement in the PDO was very important to the self-assessment process in terms of the development of appropriate and useful prompting questions used to facilitate the participants' completion of the reflection tool. Therefore, during Phase Two, I developed questions from my understanding of the participants' experiences of their selected PDOs, gained from Interview 1 and my own reflections, for use in this interview. I was able to tailor my prompting questions to each participant's specific PDO. From the participants' perspective, conducting this interview one week after the first provided them with time to reflect on their experience of the first interview. The second interview then gave them the opportunity to address any omissions or ambiguities from the first interview.

Interview 3

After Phases Two and Three were completed each participant of those phases was interviewed (See interview questionnaire Appendix 4). The purpose of this interview was two-fold: firstly, to explore processes that might be put in place to support teachers to self-assess their professional growth; and secondly, to explore the teachers' reflections and experiences of the use of professional standards to self-assess their professional growth.

During the focus group, I had recorded the time taken to complete the reflection tool. In Phase Two, I felt it might have been too overwhelming for the participants to require them to complete the tool at the completion of the first interview due to the time needed and concentration levels required. Participants were encouraged to come and see me over the following week if they had thoughts or concerns about anything else they would like to add from the interview or wished to discuss anything further. Informal dialogue was noted in field notes and my reflective journal.

Interview 4

A semi-structured interview, the questionnaire for which is shown in Appendix 5, was conducted with the College Principal during Phase Three to explore his perspectives on:

1. The degree to which professional learning was aligned to the school's goals and teacher needs;

2. The evaluation of professional learning outcomes within the school from all stakeholder perspectives, including the teacher voice; and

3. The role of middle level leadership within the school.

I reflected on the participants' perceptions, opinions and thoughts through my participant observer's voice. I believe my adoption of a participatory approach in which the prime data (the transcribed interviews) were co-created and evaluated (by allowing participants to comment on my interpretations drawn from the analysis of the data) increased internal validity. The mutual trust and respect developed through the collaborative process of completing the reflection tool, together with face-to-face interviews, also contributed to the strength of this data collection method in this study. As Gomm (2008) states: "only by developing intimate, trusting and empathetic relationships will respondents feel able to disclose the truth" (p. 230). It was also essential that through building and maintaining rapport and trust with the participants, I ensured creation of a non-threatening environment so as to enable participants to feel comfortable in expressing their feelings.

Weaknesses in the interview as a data collection method have been discussed in the literature. For example, Denscombe (2007) points out that people respond differently depending on how they perceive the interviewer, 'the interviewer effect', saying this has "a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal" (p. 184). Participants may describe what they think they should be doing rather than what they actually do. Alternatively, through the process of asking the questions during the process of completing the reflection tool the participants may have thought about their practice in ways they had previously not considered. Additional weaknesses relating to potential bias due to poorly constructed questions and inaccuracies due to poor recall have been identified by Yin (1984). All interviews were recorded and the findings from Phase One of the case study informed the development of the semi-structured questionnaire used to conduct the interviews.

The research methodology adopted in this study was the single holistic case design (Yin, 2009) within the context of the case study site. As such, data from the multiple sources (across Phases One, Two and Three) were converged during Phase Three in

order to facilitate reaching a holistic understanding of self-assessment of professional growth. This process has added strength to the findings of the study.

3.6 Data Analysis

My level of personal involvement in this study as participant observer filtered how I perceived, documented and coded the data (Adler & Adler, 1987), and detailed and structured my field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). A copy of my research questions, research concerns with respect to my own position in the research, and the goals of my study were, as suggested by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), kept in front of me as I examined and coded the data in order to focus my coding decisions. The research approach, methodology, ontological and epistemological issues affect coding decisions (Creswell, 2007; Mason, 2002). A process of pre-coding took place prior to the completion of each phase of the study. The data were analysed in each phase of the study to investigate each research sub-question. A holistic analysis of the case was conducted at the conclusion of Phase Three. The cyclic data analysis and interpretation process is represented diagrammatically in Appendix 6.

Phase One

Permission was sought and gained from the participants to audio record the focus group as they participated in the self-assessment process. Observation data exploring non-verbal and symbolic meanings contributed to understanding the research topic. Data collected from recordings of the focus group and individual interviews were examined to corroborate and augment data collected from the use of the other data collection methods. Where evidence was found contrary to that captured through participant observation and my reflective journal, further inquiry was made into the specific issues through informal interviews.

Phases Two and Three

Working with multiple participants in phases Two and Three, I coded one participant's data first then progressed to the second participant's data. I recorded emergent codes in an electronic file. During each interview I pre-coded the data by circling, highlighting and underlining significant participant quotes or sections that I felt were worthy of attention (Boyatzis, 1998). A process of open coding (Emerson et al., 1995) was used as field notes were read "line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all

ideas, themes, or issues…no matter how varied and disparate" (p. 143). The field notes were then subjected to focused coding whereby "fine-grained, line-by-line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest" (p. 143) took place.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that "coding *is* analysis" (p. 56). However, Basit (2003) attests that "coding and analysis are not synonymous, though coding is a crucial aspect of analysis" (p. 145). In this study, coding was the initial step towards analysis and interpretation of the data. I adopted the view of Richards and Morse (2007), in that coding is a cyclical act: "It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea" (p. 137). Therefore, the data have undergone a number of cycles of recoding, looking for patterns, prior to the generation of categories, themes and concepts and the building of theory in this study. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), a category is a word or phrase that is explicit, "whereas a theme is a phrase or sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes" (p. 282). As Boyatzis (1998) has observed, thematic analysis is "not another qualitative method but a process that can be used with most, if not all, qualitative methods" (p. 4).

According to Patton (1985), "The analysis strives for depth of understanding" (p. 1). In this study I took the viewpoint of Stake (1995) who argues for 'naturalistic' generalisation in which readers of the research make their own interpretations, taking the ideas from the case study into their own experience. I anticipated that this study would produce a rich contextual description of the phenomenon under exploration.

As the data were collected and analysed, I integrated a process of member checking, where the researcher's interpretations of the data were shared with the participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008). During this process, the teacher participants had the opportunity to discuss and clarify my interpretation and contribute new or additional perspectives on the research topic.

3.6.1 Data representation.

Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently and the analysis from each phase of the study informed the next. Chapter 4 provides the findings from Phase One: Focus Group Session. Data from four independent sources (teacher participants) who took part in Phase Two of the study have been reported separately in the form of their stories

in Chapter 5. The findings from Phase Three have also been presented in Chapter 5, where data have been converged in an attempt to understand the overall case or the contributing factors that influence the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Reflexivity has been used in the writing of the findings in Chapters 4 and 5, aiming to make the constructed nature of the research outcomes visible to the reader. The construction "originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 3). In reflexive writing, personal experience is combined with careful observation demonstrating the researcher's awareness of how she is affecting the research and the extent to which she is part of the process (Giltrow, 2005). "If qualitative researchers' writing demonstrates constructed knowing, the reader will be invited into reflectivity – into the worlds of the study and the researcher's thinking and feeling" (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997, p. 48).

3.7 Trustworthiness of the Research

In qualitative research credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) are considered important research outcomes. In order to address the potential problems associated with the 'insider' position and to maximise research rigour I have incorporated the following features within the research design:

- The use of multiple sources of data;
- The use of multiple methods of data collection (triangulation);
- The use of a research reflective journal; and
- The use of member checking to examine my interpretations with the participants, so as to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Construct validity (Yin, 2003) was established in this study using the single-case exploratory design, multiple data sources (13 teachers) and multiple sources of evidence: focus group interview, in-depth interviews, participant observation, direct observation, my reflection journal and documentation review. The collection and comparison of this data enhanced data quality based on the principles of idea convergence and the confirmation of findings (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989) as discussed earlier. In addition, I sought to establish credibility through the extensive use of reflective field notes throughout the research. I have attempted to create

transparency in the research process by drawing on my reflective journal at significant points in the writing of this dissertation. In this way, I have made my history, values and assumptions visible to the reader.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for this research study was sought through the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). I also sought permission from both the Principal of the College and the Head of the Junior School of the College to conduct the study. The College, the site of this research study, was presented with a copy of my research proposal, together with a detailed document identifying the extent of the anticipated involvement of the college in the study. Written consent was obtained from the College Principal. All potential study participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the roles that they would take in this study. I ensured that they were provided with all information that might influence their willingness to participate. Signed informed consent was obtained from each participant.

Relationships of trust, mutual respect, fairness, confidentiality and accountability were developed with the participants and stakeholders of this research study. I ensured the rights, privacy and sensitivity of those involved in the study by keeping the participants' anonymity and storing data securely. As discussed earlier, I have strived to avoid bias in the research design, data analysis, data interpretation and other aspects of the research where objectivity is expected or required, particularly when using the data collection method of overt participant observation.

I was aware throughout this study that as an advocate for the teacher participants that my middle level leader position within the school brought with it responsibilities and obligations to the school executive team. I was faced with an ethical dilemma in maintaining the teachers' privacy when members of the school executive team requested access to the teachers' completed Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guides during the conduct of the study. In accordance with my confidentiality agreement with each teacher I denied the executive team access to all confidential material collected during the study, particularly the completed PGSA Guides.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the constructivist/interpretivist research paradigm used to frame the research inquiry, within which knowledge has been co-constructed through my interactions with the participants. I chose to utilise a qualitative exploratory case study conducted over three phases to investigate the research questions. Three areas of concern that may affect qualitative studies, highlighted by Ramos (1989), have been addressed in this chapter: the researcher/participant relationship, the researcher's subjective interpretations of data, and the design itself. My position as an insider researcher, participant observer was particularly important in this study. The inquirer's position as participant observer has been critiqued by Carr and Kemmis (1986) in terms of expanding the role beyond reasonable expectations of expertise and competence. In this study, I attempted to address the authors' concerns through adoption of the 'insider' position and the use of 'reflexivity', as discussed in section 3.4 of this chapter, in terms of the implications this has had for the research. I attempted to be constantly aware of the potential for bias that might have come from my position in the research and believe that my consistent use of reflexivity during this interpretive study has addressed any potential criticisms of my role choice.

Choices to modify the research design were based upon developments that took place following my interactions with the participants after conducting Phase One of the study, and my reflections on the appropriateness and/or effectiveness of the design and progress of the research. This demonstrates my use of a particular dimension of constructivism in that the research process itself can change or evolve as the research takes place.

In exploring the research question and sub questions in this study, I sought to understand the meaning constructed by the participants who had taken part in professional learning opportunities (PDOs) and how they made sense of that meaning in terms of their own professional growth using the PGSA Guide based on the APST. The Phase One participants had undertaken a year-long professional development project involving the establishment of a learning community supporting teachers to identify the characteristics of learning difficulties and special needs students, with the aim of enhancing their knowledge in the area of differentiation. The findings from Phase One are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: Phase One - Reflection Tool: More than a checklist?

4.1 Introduction

Phase One of the case study was designed to elicit ten participant teachers' experiences in using the Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) guide as a reflection tool in order to understand the use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) as criteria against which they might self-assess their own professional growth. The teachers had taken part in a year-long, teachers as researchers, action learning/action research project, the Teachers as Researchers (TAR) project.

The purpose of Phase One of the case study was to explore:

- Whether the PGSA Guide supported the teachers in capturing their enhanced knowledge and change of practice as a result of taking part in the professional development opportunity, TAR project;
- Teachers' experiences in using the PGSA Guide in understanding the use of standards as criterion against which they might self-assess their own professional growth;
- Whether the guiding questions within the PGSA Guide were of benefit to the teacher participants in breaking down the criteria into smaller chunks to increase their understanding; and
- Teachers' experiences of the actual process of self-assessment.

This chapter presents the findings from Phase One of the case study. Data presented in this chapter were drawn from the analysis of:

a) extensive field notes, notes from the researcher's reflective journal, reflections compiled through participant observation, direct observation and document review;

b) transcripts of recordings made during the focus group session whilst I guided the participants through completing the Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide version 2; and

c) Eight of the participants completed individual PGSA Guides.

The structure of this chapter is shown in Figure 4.1.

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┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
│     Section 4.2      │        │     Section 4.7      │
│  The reflection tool │        │   Chapter summary    │
└─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘
          │                              │
┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
│     Section 4.3      │        │     Section 4.6      │
│  The professional    │        │    Key findings      │
│ development opportunity│       │                     │
│ and study participants│        └─────────────────────┘
└─────────────────────┘                  │
          │                              │
┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
│     Section 4.4      │────────│     Section 4.5      │
│ The focus group session│      │ Use of the reflection tool│
└─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘
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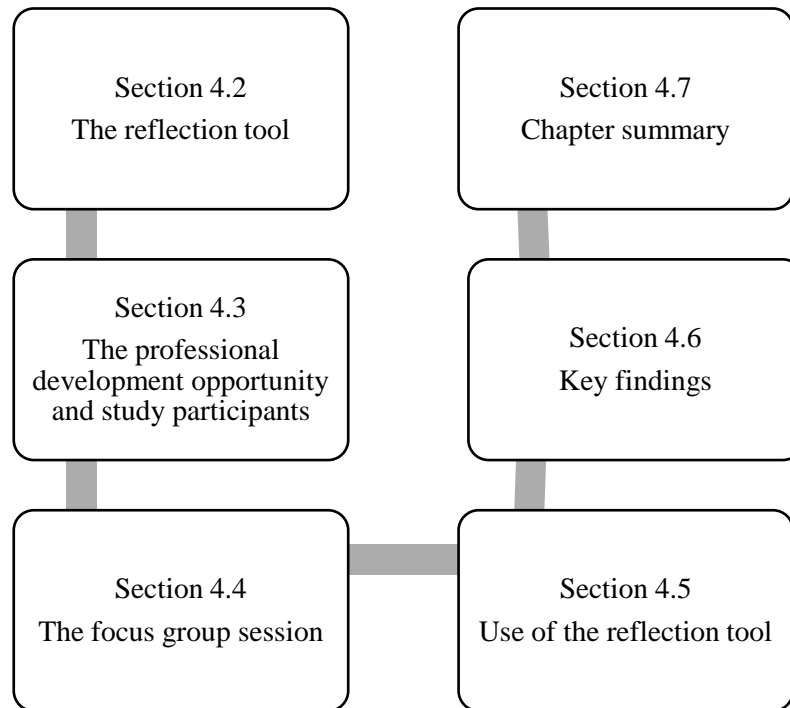
Figure 4.1. Structure of Chapter

4.2 The Reflection Tool

As discussed in Chapter 3, I developed a reflection tool, the Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide for teachers' use in this study. I elected to use standards 6.2 'Engage in professional learning to improve practice' and 1.5 'Differentiate teaching to meet the specific needs of students across the full range of abilities' from the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) as criterion on the reflection tool. A separate template was developed for each standard and a sample template for standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice is shown in Chapter 3, Figure 3.4. The PGSA reflection tool, used in the study consisted of two templates, one for each standard. The four career stage headings from the standard (Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead) were removed on each template. I chose to take this approach as I was concerned that the teachers would approach the PGSA Guide as a checking mechanism by looking firstly at the career stage that they thought they had attained, rather than by looking at the document as a whole to self-assess themselves against the criteria. In place of the career stage titles, the first row of each standard template within the PGSA Guide provided the APST

descriptors from each of the career stages. I developed a set of guiding questions focused on each standard and these were placed on the second row of each template for two reasons:

1. To break down each standard into smaller chunks to facilitate teacher comprehension of the standard descriptor as a criterion to self-assess their professional growth.
2. As an attempt to shift the teachers' reflective thinking to a deeper level in terms of how they may have enhanced their knowledge and/or practice as a result of their participation in a professional development opportunity (PDO).

The teachers had the choice of which of the two templates they would prefer to use to self-assess their professional growth. All the teachers made the decision to highlight the sections of each descriptor of the standard that they felt they had each met. Two members of the school executive team had taken part in the TAR project and were present at the Focus Group session, during which two participant teachers were found to question whether the executive team members would also review the completed PGSA Guides. Despite my reassurances of confidentiality, the two teachers did not return their completed PGSA Guides. A selection of the returned completed PGSA Guides representative of the findings from the focus group session are included in this chapter.

4.3 The Professional Development Opportunity and the Study Participants

The teachers who took part in Phase One of the study had undertaken a professional development opportunity, the Teachers as Researchers (TAR) year-long project. Funded by Independent Schools Queensland and facilitated by myself, this project was established to support teachers in identifying the characteristics of learning difficulties and special needs students, with the aim of enhancing the participating teachers' knowledge in the area of differentiation. Through this professional development opportunity, a professional learning community (PLC) was established enabling teachers to:

1. work collaboratively to research effective differentiated teaching strategies for diverse learners within their classrooms using Action Learning Action Research methodology, recording their progression through each cycle in a reflective journal;

2. share their 'stories' regarding strategies for diverse learners with each other and allied health professionals; and

3. take time to reflect on their own practice.

It was during a TAR workshop that the learning community members stated that they would like to be able to demonstrate their enhanced knowledge and/or change to practice as a result of their involvement in the TAR Project within their portfolios for the Annual Review. However, they expressed concerns in doing so, given that the College's requirements had changed to necessitate them to identify their learning in terms of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). According to Södergren (1996), leaders make use of openings arising in the workplace to create opportunities for learning. Such an opportunity opened for me in undertaking this study as I sought to address the problem the teachers faced in demonstrating their professional learning and/or change to practice in terms of the APST.

The learning community consisted of ten teachers, myself as project facilitator, middle level leader and two members of the school executive team. Volunteers for my study were sought from the ten teachers who had participated in the TAR Project. All ten teachers volunteered to take part in Phase One and Table 4.1 provides their profiles.

Table 4.1

Phase One Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Role	Number of years teaching experience
Fleur	Female	Prep Teacher	1-5 years
Regina	Female	Prep Teacher	1-5 years
Eugene	Female	Year 1 Teacher	5-10 years
Elaine	Female	Year 1 Teacher	15-20 years
Lesley	Female	Year 2 Teacher	5-10 years
Vera	Female	Year 3 Teacher	15-20 years
Roxanne	Female	Year 3 Teacher	21+ years
Barbara	Female	Year 5 Teachers	5-10 years
Sven	Male	Specialist Teacher	15-20 years
Sally	Female	Specialist Teacher	15-20 years

4.4 The Focus Group Session

The focus group session, in which the participants completed the PGSA Guide, took place over a one hour, fifteen-minute period in the College Boardroom at the conclusion of the TAR Project final workshop. When the focus group participants were gathered together, I suggested working within groups of three teachers based on my previous observations of the way in which the teachers had successfully worked as a group within the TAR project. However, the teachers wanted to undertake the process as a whole group.

Extract from my reflective journal:

I am concerned about the potential for some people to feel uncomfortable within a whole-group situation. My previous experience working with this group of teachers during the TAR project, is that they tend to sit back within a large group but are vocal during small group work. I am worried that if I don't agree to present the information as a whole group, then their attitudes towards the small group and potential time constraints will not be favourable and might stifle potential discussion.

I began the session by informing the participants about how they could use the PGSA Guide to self-assess their professional growth and in particular that there were two PGSA Guide standard templates. Particular emphasis was made on how they might link their learning, as a result of participating in the TAR project, to the standards for presentation in their portfolios. I encouraged the teachers to choose whichever standard template they would like to use to represent their growth in their portfolios for their Annual Review. I drew the teachers' attention to the second row of guiding questions under each descriptor and further breakdown was provided. For example, I asked them to consider why they had been interested in participating in that professional learning opportunity, providing them with examples of some potential answers.

Through the provision of examples, I attempted to simplify the task as I was aware that every participant had at least developed and implemented one teaching strategy for diverse learners. As the teachers completed their own PGSA Guides, they discussed the guiding questions in small groups or pairs. I interacted with all teachers particularly when they sought validation of their interpretation of the guiding questions and the evidence they provided to support their answers.

Several teachers, upon receiving the PGSA Guide, stated they perceived difficulties in terms of providing evidence of their professionalism and classroom practice. For example, seven of the ten participants suggested that a photograph of themselves attending the PDO workshops would suffice as evidence of participation in the TAR project.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I have observed enhanced knowledge and changes to most teachers' practice through their participation in the TAR project. How can I guide them to consider the following question? How do they demonstrate their professional growth– a photograph shows they have attended, but what did they learn and how have they put that learning into practice?*

Vera attempted to further the discussion of relevant evidence of the teachers' learning providing an example from her own practice:

I think people have to remember that it is not some massive big thing either. The three basic things are your practice and how you have applied it and reflected on it and the feedback. I can see people are sitting here looking a bit worried about what you are saying and they might be thinking that it is all too much. I am going to use an excerpt from my reflective journal, which shows my progression in my thinking.

Two teachers referenced their detailed TAR project reflective journals to assist them to complete the PGSA Guide. The journals recapped their experiences including the implementation and evaluation of the teaching strategies developed during the PDO. Table 4.2 shows that Vera has highlighted in yellow the sections of each criterion, which she felt she was able to meet within standard 1.5, and has answered the guiding questions to capture her professional growth. She used her TAR reflective journal to assist her to carry out the self-assessment process, requiring little support from the middle level leader apart from continuously seeking validation concerning what she should include within her PGSA Guide. Vera has assessed herself across all criteria within the standard. Her approach was to provide snapshots of students, identifying the focus of the differentiation strategy and evaluating the strategy in terms of its impact on the student's outcome.

Table 4.2

Vera's PGSA Guide - Standard 1.5: Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities

APST descriptors as Criteria	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.	Develop teaching activities that incorporate differentiated strategies to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.	Evaluate learning and teaching programs, using student assessment data which are differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.	Lead colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching programs differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
Guiding Questions	**What do you consider to be a differentiated teaching strategy?** Meeting a need. E.g. assessment in non-written form. **What specific student learning needs are you aware of in your class?** Working memory difficulty, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and ASD **Given one of those learning needs (x), can you give an example of a strategy for differentiating teaching that would address that particular learning need.** ADHD- lists, graphical organisers, and chunking of content.	**Have you developed teaching activities that incorporate differentiated teaching strategies?** yes **How often do you do this?** All the time **Why have you found it necessary to do this?** In order to meet the students' needs. **What are the indicators to you that it is necessary?** Struggling students Student results and work samples.	**What assessment data do you use to differentiate activities within your classroom?** Westwood, PM Benchmarks, spelling results **How do you use this data to evaluate the child's learning?** Grouping for literacy rotations, specific Understanding Words program and which groups require additional assistance. I compare pretest and post test data. I review the child's outcomes as a result of implementation of teaching strategies. For example, as a result of the TAR project I used differentiation strategies for a child diagnosed with ASD in my class to reduce his anxiety throughout the day. I contacted the psychologist and made visuals displayed on his desk of the same strategies she was teaching him during her sessions. The outcome - he is calmer and appears to be thinking things through. **How do you evaluate if the programs have met the differentiated specific needs of the students?** I refer to the child outcome as a result of implementing the strategy. For example, for a child that has been diagnosed with Dysgraphia and Dyslexia, I wanted to assess his understanding of a topic rather than his writing so I did not use written forms of assessment unless writing was being assessed. I used voice recording, teacher scribe, illustrations and slide show. The outcome – he is now demonstrating understanding without frustration. He is also feeling successful. I also look at if the child is transferring the knowledge and skills to everyday.	**What are some examples of where you have led colleagues to differentiate teaching programs to meet the needs of the range of abilities in their classrooms?** During year level meetings and the TAR project and presentation at staff meeting, I have shared my open-ended assessment tasks and how I differentiate to meet the needs of the students.

Based on my prior knowledge of the participant teachers' practice, to facilitate the process of self-assessment further, I found the need to ask prompting questions such as 'Have a think about how you used to approach reading with that student: what do you do now?' With Elaine this process went further as I provided her with an example from her own practice. I drew her attention to my observation of her guided reading sessions. She had executed a change to practice in terms of provision of a modified spelling list, which aligned to the school's reading program for dyslexic children. Elaine stated that she had forgotten about that change, and as a result she was then able to include within her PGSA Guide other strategies she had used during the TAR project. During the session, whilst talking with other participants, I observed that Elaine appeared to want to dialogue with others about self-assessment as a means of understanding the process itself, and as a validation mechanism to support her in her completion of the tool. This is an instance in which in my position as middle level leader, drawing upon my observation of a teacher's practice, I provided an example as guidance to assist a teacher to reflect more deeply as she completed the PGSA Guide. Elaine did not complete any columns after the first two and advised me that she had finished. As shown in Table 4.3, Elaine has highlighted the statement that she has used student assessment data but has not answered the guiding questions.

Extract from my reflective journal:

I was concerned about Elaine's completed PGSA Guide in terms of whether my inability to return to provide more guidance, due to time constraints, had influenced her self-assessment of professional growth. Had she just given up? Might we have gone deeper in terms of whether motivation had been the issue, as she did not complete the third column? Did she need individual guidance to support her in understanding evidence? She highlighted that she uses student assessment data but has not supplied evidence to support this assessment. The process of change is very important and I have observed a gradual process of change throughout the year-long project with Elaine but it may appear that Elaine does not see it as her tacit knowledge has just become part of her practice. Perhaps this has been a problem with the whole group approach in terms of the degree of support provided by the middle level leader.

Table 4.3

Elaine's PGSA Guide - Standard 1.5: Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities

APST descriptors as Criteria	**Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**	**Develop teaching activities that incorporate differentiated strategies to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**	**Evaluate learning and teaching programs, using student assessment data which are differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**	**Lead colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching programs differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**
Guiding Questions	**What do you consider to be a differentiated teaching strategy?** Looking at the needs of the students and modifying program to meet the needs. **What specific student learning needs are you aware of in your class?** Working memory difficulties, language and organisational difficulties. **Given one of those learning needs (x), can you give an example of a strategy for differentiating teaching that would address that particular learning need.** Language (spelling) Modified spelling lists, word boxes, grouping of students according to ability or needs e.g. focus on blends and word families. Evidence: Photos of the modified spelling lists, word boxes.	**Have you developed teaching activities that incorporate differentiated teaching strategies?** Yes **How often do you do this?** daily **Why have you found it necessary to do this?** To engage students and make learning relevant. **What are the indicators to you that it is necessary?** Behavioural issues arise due to lack of engagement Lack of confidence in students	**What assessment data do you use to differentiate activities within your classroom?** **How do you use this data to evaluate the child's learning?** **How do you use the assessment data to evaluate the teaching program (e.g. literacy or maths)** **How do you evaluate if the programs have met the differentiated specific needs of the students?**	**What are some examples of where you have lead colleagues to differentiate teaching programs to meet the needs of the range of abilities in their classrooms?**

Whilst teachers completed the PGSA Guide within a large group, extensive interaction took place between groups of two or three teachers. However, the teachers were observed to be selective in terms of with whom they sought interaction. This was also the case when it came to sharing the process of completing the PGSA Guide. Five teachers elected to share their reflections with previous year-level teaching partners, three chose friendship relationships and two chose current year-level teaching partnerships as they went through the process of completing the PGSA Guide.

During their discussion, Lesley showed Eugene how she had answered the questions on her own PGSA Guide and gave examples of the evidence she had provided to support her self-assessment of professional growth. Lesley had knowledge of Eugene's practice and suggested: "… an example of your change of practice is how you have changed the set-up of your differentiated writing groups and you can show how student x has improved". Eugene replied "Oh yes, and I can also show work samples from pre-test and post-test relating to how the top students and the strugglers have improved". However, Eugene did not include Lesley's suggestion and her own thoughts about the relevant evidence as shown in Table 4.4. In addition to highlighting the descriptors Eugene has also highlighted the guiding questions that she felt represented her self-assessment. She also answered some of the guiding questions with generic statements. Eugene also reflected with Lesley on the template for standard 1.5, without producing any content.

Table 4.4

Eugene's PGSA Guide - Standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

APST Descriptors as Criteria	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.	Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice and offer quality placements for pre-service teachers where applicable.	Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers.
Guiding Question	Do you feel that this professional learning addressed your own professional needs? To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning? 1. Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice within your classroom. 2. Increased Knowledge about a topic area? 3. Applied the learning to your classroom practice.	How do you identify what professional learning you need? How do you plan targeted professional learning opportunities to improve practice? How have you applied your learning to your classroom practice? Research student data to inform how to adjust my teaching practices to cater for students' needs. Guest speaker presentations of relevant research.	Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities? Discussion with professional colleagues. How did you go about it? How have you engaged in research to inform your teaching? Professional reading – Learning difficulties

Sally's approach was to complete the PGSA Guide alone, highlighting the guided questions she answered across all three columns. Her answers suggested that she may have benefited from dialoguing with others and I would have liked to have had the opportunity to ask further prompting questions to elicit more information and examples. Sally's PGSA Guide is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Sally's PGSA Guide - Standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

APST Descriptors as Criteria	**Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.**	**Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice and offer quality placements for pre-service teachers where applicable.**	**Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers.**
Guiding Questions	**Do you feel that this professional learning addressed your own professional needs?** **To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning?** 1. **Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice within your classroom.** 2. **Increased Knowledge about a topic area?** This experience allowed me to develop an understanding of testing instruments and areas of development in children. 3. **Applied the learning to your classroom practice.**	**How do you identify what professional learning you need?** Listening to feedback from other teachers and identifying areas I may be able to support their teaching needs (my position in pastoral care). **How do you plan targeted professional learning opportunities to improve practice?** **How have you applied your learning to your classroom practice?**	**Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities?** **How did you go about it?** Engage in discussions with Learning Enhancement and teachers about current needs and access additional training in areas of need if required. **How have you engaged in research to inform your teaching?**

Roxane took a different approach to the self-assessment by only completing column two of standard 6.2 as shown in Table 4.6. She has focused on the identification of a set of strategies she chose to implement as a result of her enhanced knowledge regarding working memory difficulties. In contrast to Fleur's self-assessment, Roxanne has not included any evaluation of the use of the strategies.

Table 4.6

Roxanne's PGSA Guide - Standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

APST Descriptor as Criteria

<mark>Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice</mark>, targeted to professional needs and school and/ or system <mark>priorities</mark>.

Guided Questions:

Do you feel that this professional learning addressed your own professional needs?

To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional leaning?
1. **Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice within your classroom.**
2. **<mark>Increased knowledge about a topic area</mark>**
Working memory
3. **<mark>Applied the learning to your classroom practice</mark>**
Repetition opportunities for students
Visual prompts
Set routines for tasks and break down of instructions.
Modification of literacy tasks to allow for more time to complete tasks.

Evidence:

Participation in Teacher as Researcher days- Notes from PD

Differentiation is one of the Schools priorities

Photos of resources created.

In contrast, Fleur, who used her reflection journal to complete the PGSA Guide, took a different approach to self-assessment and provision of evidence using standard 6.2. As shown in Table 4.7, Fleur decided to focus in depth on one column of standard 6.2 to demonstrate her professional growth. In answering the guiding questions, she has given a detailed account of her TAR project participation with respect to how her enhanced knowledge about teaching diverse students has changed her practice and, as a result, has influenced student outcomes. Fleur has used an extract from her reflection journal as evidence of her evaluation of the implementation of chosen strategies and continuous reflection on practice throughout the year-long project. She has further supported her self-assessment with the inclusion of graphed student data as evidence of change to student outcomes.

Table 4.7

Fleur's PGSA Guide - Standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

APST Descriptor as Criteria

<mark>Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/ or system priorities.</mark>

Guiding Questions:

Do you feel that this professional learning addressed your own professional needs?

Yes- 'Teachers as Researchers' is a brilliant initiative that enabled me to work collaboratively to ensure the best possible outcomes for my students. It has allowed me to focus on specific students and closely examine every area of their learning. I found it beneficial as we can often miss the small details when teaching big classes. It also allowed me a chance to collaborate with teachers in other grade levels and brainstorm ideas to better teach and support students who were struggling academically.

To what extent do you feel that you have learnt from the professional learning?
1. **Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice within your classroom.**
2. **Increased knowledge about a topic area**

The PD gave me clarification on things like working memory, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and how they impact on student learning. The PD gave me the opportunity to work with professionals and allowed me to create a unique and valuable program for specific students. I am now able to view my students with a more extensive knowledge base. My practice is better informed and as a direct result I can see the incredible and rewarding progress that my students are now making. It served as a reminder to really use the school's resources in the form of Learning Enhancement to further my knowledge about literacy and numeracy skills.
3. Applied the learning to your classroom practice

The following is taken from my reflective journal that shows the differentiation strategies that I implemented throughout the TAR project.

Student X	**Implementation Strategies**	**Reflection**
Term one: Letter and sound. Recognition is low. Pre-writing is present (Drawing, scribbling, symbols that represent letters) **Term 2:**	A focus is simply on sounds rather than names at this stage. Take away several processes and focus on one. Differentiated Literacy rotations: Levelled guided reading x2 per week.	Student X inability to decode words concerns me. Now that he is demonstrating an automatic ability to use his one/one, I will move him up to a level two where the text is not as predictable and is more challenging for him. This will allow him to begin decoding words. I hope that this will also increase his letter/sound knowledge as he can see the relevance of its application to reading.

Struggles with one-one correspondence while reading. Letter/sound recall is increasing Inability to use letter/sound knowledge to decode words. Lack of interest in work **Term 3:** More interest shown in learning. Dramatic increase in letter and sound recall Understanding of one-one correspondence is established. Beginning to make use of letters and sounds in decoding.	The use of my pipe cleaner 'glasses' to help Student X focus on each word, I added magic pointing finger to the equation as he became more automatic in focusing on each word. Focus on reading skills and early writing skills. Also a continuation on Letter/Sound knowledge. Working with TA to review 3 times per week to help try and bridge the gap between him and the other students in terms of letter knowledge. (Repetition, repetition, repetition). Have student X mum on board to work with him at home. We wrote a plan together and we are both focusing on the same outcomes. Use of the fish chart and positive reinforcement to motivate student X.	I would like to continue motivating student X and his mother who has jumped on board with supporting him at home. It has been really important to also educate parents on appropriate motivation strategies. It is so important that we work together rather than two completely different approaches being taken. We have reached all our goals and targets together. This highlights the importance of building the link between school and home and doing it effectively.

The graph below shows the direct result of my enhanced knowledge base and implementation of strategies. Over three terms, student X has reached the class average.

Student X

Number of Letters and Sounds

- Student X Letters
- Students X Sounds
- Class Average Letters
- Class Average Sounds

Term 1   Term 2   Term 3
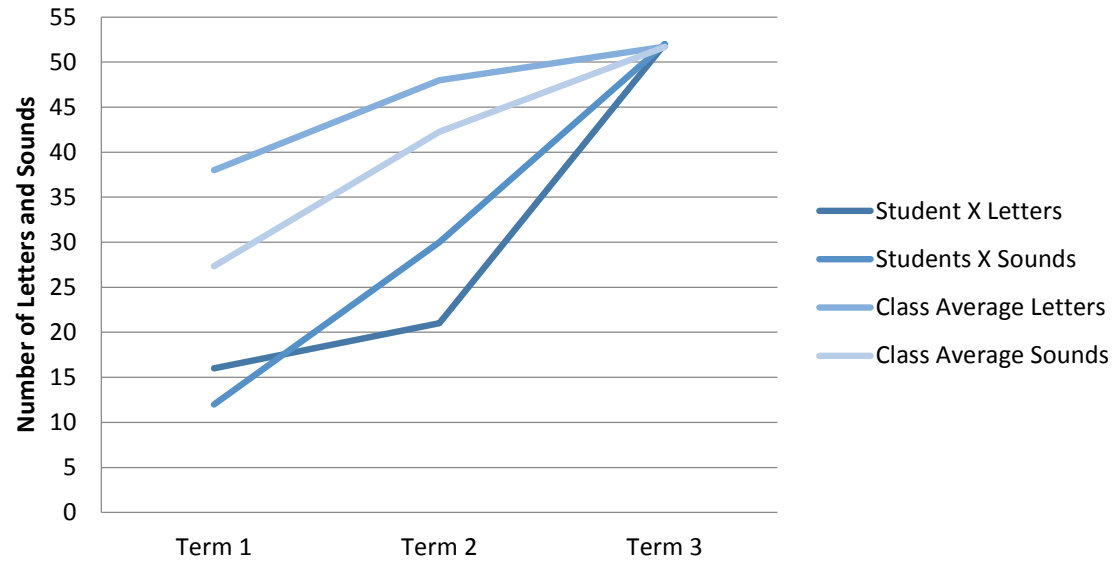
Regina was observed to complete each of the two templates within the PGSA Guide with limited interaction with other teachers within the group. On a number of occasions, she initiated interaction with myself, as the middle level leader, in order to discuss her own answers to the guiding questions. I provided Regina with positive reinforcement and where she had difficulty answering particular questions, I gave her an example from my own practice as to how I use assessment data to evaluate a teaching program. I advised her that one of my reading groups' goals last term was firstly to increase their sight words and secondly to increase their use of the sounding out strategy. I explained to her that I used the running record data with my own observations and anecdotal notes throughout the group to evaluate if my teaching programs were addressing some of the students' learning gaps. If necessary, I reviewed my teaching practice.

Regina responded by nodding and saying "I get it", so I moved on so as to provide support to another teacher. Regina's completed PGSA Guide, shown in Tables 4.8 and 4.9, however, shows she did not answer the guiding questions relating to how she uses the assessment data. Given time constraints, I did not have the opportunity to discuss this further due to reasons outlined in my reflective journal:

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *It would have been beneficial had I had more time with Regina so as to enable me to delve deeper into the way she uses the assessment data for her teaching. I chose to give the running record example from my own practice as I thought she would be able to relate to it, as I know she uses the same reading assessment. I feel that in order for me to support Regina further to explore the use of assessment data to evaluate her program, I need an environment where she felt comfortable away from the other teachers. This is based on my observation that she appeared to shy away from others and excluded herself from the group of teachers. Perhaps she required further prompting questions related to assessment data, or maybe she would like more support in this area or further professional learning which could then link to goal setting. These are very specific individualised questions that I felt were inappropriate to discuss within the whole group situation.*

Table 4.8

Regina's PGSA Guide - Standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

Descriptors as criteria	**Participate in learning to update knowledge** and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/ or system priorities.	**Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice** and offer quality placements for pre-service teachers where applicable.	**Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities,** engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers.
Guiding Questions	**Do you feel that this professional learning addressed your own professional needs?** **To what extend do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning?** 1. **Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice within your classroom?** 2. **Increased knowledge about a topic area** Participated in teachers as researchers' professional development. Discussed individual students with the guest speaker and the learning enhancement team. I shared my practice with the group. 3. **Applied the learning to your classroom practice.** Re-read questions to individual students. Modified activities for students with working memory difficulties.	**How do you identify what professional learning you need?** **How do you plan targeted professional learning opportunities to improve your practice?** **How have you applied your learning to your classroom practice?** Buddy students that have difficulties with a capable student Use of visuals Learning	**Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities?** Yes, with the guest speaker involved in the TAR project, the learning enhancement team and other staff members discussing students and using strategies. **How did you go about it?** **How have you engaged in research to inform your teaching?** Listening to guest speakers explain assessments, data and how to interpret reports. Learning about data and applying it in the classroom.

Table 4.9

Regina's PGSA Guide - Standard 1.5: Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities

APST Descriptors as Criteria	**Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**	**Develop teaching activities that incorporate differentiated strategies to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**	**Evaluate learning and teaching programs, using student assessment data, that are differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**	**Lead colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching programs differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.**
Guiding Questions	**What do you consider to be a differentiated** teaching strategy? When asking a question, give students a choice of answers. Chunking of tasks **What specific student leaning needs are you aware of in your class?** Working memory difficulties **Given one of those learning needs (x), can you give an example of a strategy for differentiating teaching that would address that particular learning need.**	**Have you developed teaching activities that incorporate differentiated teaching strategies?** Grouping students into ability groups. **How often do you do this?** Daily visuals on board	**What assessment data do you use to differentiate activities within your classroom?** Individual testing, PIPS testing, running records Allowing students different opportunities for assessment e.g. painting, collage, building, writing etc. **How do you use this data to evaluate the child's learning?** **How do you use the assessment data to evaluate the teaching program (e.g. literacy or maths?)** **How do you evaluate if the program has met the differentiated specific needs of the students?**	**What are some examples of where you have lead colleagues to differentiate teaching programs to meet the needs of the range of abilities in their classrooms?**

4.5 Use of the Reflection Tool

During the discussion, guided by the questions focused on the use of the reflection tool, PGSA Guide, the teachers suggested two aspects as the most useful.

Firstly, the PGSA Guide used the APST as the self-assessment criteria. The linking of the PDO with the APST was what was required for their portfolios.
Roxanne stated:

> It is really useful to get a certificate where it states that the PD is linked to what standards and the number of hours … The document [PGSA Guide] is useful because you have identified the standards that relate to this PD and I can now include this in my portfolio. I can also now log onto the College of Teachers website and include this PD in my CPD log … I also think standard 7, engage with professional colleagues relates to this PD because I felt that we have learnt so much from the conversations throughout this TAR project.

Vera contributed to the discussion:

> I would like to see an electronic version of the PGSA Guide as I think the College is moving towards electronic portfolios. That way I could also insert photos of some of the strategies that have benefited the students that I have focused on in this PD. I think the PGSA Guide help me to make more sense of the standards which is good because we now need to address them in our portfolios.

Secondly, the guiding questions assisted the teachers to understand the standard descriptor as criteria against which they to self-assess their professional growth. Once they had answered the guiding questions, the teachers decided to highlight the sections of each descriptor that they felt they had met.
Fleur stated:

> Going through this process has been very informative and has enabled me to demonstrate how I have incorporated my learning from the PD into practice. My PGSA Guide was very detailed as a result of the guiding questions as the questions assisted me in understanding the

criteria. The questions also prompted me to consider the purpose of evidence when explaining how my practice had changed.

Eugene further commented:

I liked completing this document with others because I think I would have struggled doing it by myself. I chose to highlight certain questions that I was able to answer because I saw someone else doing it and thought it was a good idea. I also valued the discussion with others when completing the document.

Elaine:

I think the PGSA Guide helped me think about what I have actually learnt from being part of the TAR project. The guiding questions helped with that. I could better understand what the standards' descriptors meant.

The two teachers, Fleur and Vera, who were assisted in the self-assessment process by reference to their TAR Project reflective journals stated that they felt that the PGSA Guide did capture their professional growth. Fleur also stated: "My reflective journal gave me the evidence that I needed to complete the document and now I can add it to my portfolio". Of the other eight teachers, five stated that they would include their completed PGSA Guides within their portfolio for their annual review. The teachers involved in the focus group all volunteered to complete the PGSA Guide; however, only eight returned their completed PGSA Guides to me. The other two teachers questioned the presence of the two members of the College executive team and were unwilling to share their completed PGSA Guides. Lesley stated: "I'm not sure about handing in my guide because I never know what the executive team will do with that information". I reiterated the confidentiality agreement regarding this study and she responded: "they will want to see it".

4.6 Key Findings

The teachers were found to take varying approaches to completing the reflection tool, PGSA Guide, in terms of representing their enhanced knowledge, change to practice,

and provision of evidence to support their self-assessment. The findings from Phase One suggest:

- The self-assessment of professional growth is an intrinsically individualised process, in that it makes oneself visible to others;
- The PGSA Guide was a critical element supporting the collaboration and dialogue which took place during the self-assessment process within the focus group, albeit the teachers were selective in their interactions;
- The interaction deepened the teachers' understanding of the APST and their use as criterion against which teachers might self-assess their professional growth; and
- The process of self-assessment required varying degrees of support from, and interaction with, the middle level leader.

The self-assessment process which emerged from Phase One of this study is graphically represented in Figure 4.2.

Middle level leader's prior knowledge of teachers' knowledge and practice

Professional Development experience:
- Teacher perspective
- Middle Level Leader perspective

Teacher uncertainty about demonstrating professional growth in portfolio

Reflection tool

Middle Level Leader

Teacher

Teacher

Dialogic Interaction

The need for an individual approach

The need for a safe and honest environment for communication about the PDO experience

Some teachers' confusion regarding evidence of professional growth

Teachers' perceptions of professional standards as criterion against which they might self-assess their professional growth

Completed Reflection tool-Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide

Knowledge of teachers' practice

Figure 4.2. Phase One Self-Assessment Process

In Figure 4.2 the circle represents the process of self-assessment itself, during which dialogic interaction took place between the middle level leader and the teachers and between the teachers themselves as the participants completed the PGSA Guide. The left-hand boxes show process inputs which were found to be:

- Middle level leader's prior knowledge of teacher' knowledge and practice;
- Professional development experience including teacher perspective, middle level leader perspective; and
- Teacher uncertainty about demonstrating professional growth in portfolio.

My prior knowledge of the teachers' practice was found to contribute to the process of leading the teachers to self-assess professional growth, as I was able to provide relevant prompting questions and examples of the teachers' practice to further support them in answering the guiding questions within the PGSA Guide. The box above the circle in the middle of the diagram represents the reflection tool, PGSA Guide, being used as a stimulus for the dialogic interaction. The right-hand boxes show the process outputs which were found to be:

- The need for an individual approach;
- The need for a safe and honest environment for communication about the PDO experience to take place;
- That some teachers' demonstrated confusion regarding identifying evidence of professional growth;
- An indication of teachers' perceptions of professional standards as criterion against which they might self-assess their professional growth;
- The completed reflection tool - Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide; and
- Knowledge of teacher's practice found to assist the process.

4.7 Conclusion

The PGSA Guide's initial focus was the creation of a self-assessment tool to assist teachers to reflect on the APST and consider representative samples of evidence which they might wish to include in their electronic portfolio to support their learning from the TAR Project. However, the focus group session revealed that the process supporting the completion of the PGSA Guide, as a means of self-assessment, was

individualised and complex, requiring further exploration. The findings from Phase One of this study support the need for an individual approach to self-assessment, and as a consequence I made changes to my original research design as discussed in chapter 3. The focus group session revealed significant findings regarding the use of the reflection tool, the process of self-assessment, and potential issues associated with the identification of appropriate evidence to support the teachers' assessment of their professional growth. As a middle level leader and facilitator, I had taken part in the TAR Project and was therefore able, in Phase One, to draw upon my knowledge of the teachers' experiences of the PDO. However, during Phase Two, I wished to explore the self-assessment process and use of the PGSA Guide further. Particularly, I chose, based upon my reflection below, to undertake this with teachers who had taken part in other professional development opportunities of which I had no understanding.

Extract from my reflective journal:

What happens when I can't tailor my prompts to the guiding questions based on my prior knowledge of the PDO experience? How can I go about guiding the teacher through the process?

Version two of the PGSA guide and a semi-structured interview questionnaire were developed for use in Phase 2 of the case study. This phase included four in-depth studies with individual teachers. The focus of Phase Two was on the exploration of teachers' interpretations of their PDO experiences in terms of professional growth. Phase Two also explored the contribution of the self-assessment process to goal setting, suggested by Ross and Bruce (2007) as important to directing attention to particular dimensions of teaching practice in order to improve teaching quality. Chapter 5 presents the findings from Phase Two of the study.

CHAPTER 5: Phase Two - Let's Go Deeper and Phase Three - Give Me More

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of Phase Two of the case study was to explore all three of the research sub-questions:

1. How do teachers engage in the process of self-assessing their own professional learning?
2. What processes can be put in place to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the standards?
3. What forms of evidence do teachers find most effective in self-assessing their professional growth?

In designing Phase Two of the case study, I made a deliberate decision to reduce the number of teacher participants to four as a means of carrying out an in-depth study of individual's experiences in self-assessing their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (2011). Version 2 of the PGSA Guide was used in Phases Two and Three. This version included a template for standard 2.5 Literacy and numeracy strategies (AITSL, 2011) to accommodate the request from a Phase Two participant, Helen, that she self-assess her professional growth using this standard. Version 2 of the PGSA Guide also included some minor changes to the guiding questions based upon the findings from the use of the reflection tool in Phase One.

Recruitment of volunteers for Phase Two occurred in an opportunistic way. Four teachers, Sally, Helen, Rebecca and Hannah volunteered to take part in this phase of the case study and, once again, pseudonyms have been applied to each participant. Sally, who had previously taken part in Phase One, asked for clarification as to what I intended to pursue in Phase Two, and after explanation, expressed interest in taking part in Phase Two. Helen, as a member of the Leaning Enhancement team, had expressed interest in exploring how she had grown as a professional as a result of her coaching role in a recent program.

Following the completion of Phase One, I was engaged in an informal conversation with a group of teachers, who had not been involved in Phase One. Our discussion concerned how the teachers were going to include their professional learning within their digital portfolios for their annual review. After providing them with some detail about my own study and its relevance to their dilemma, two of the teachers (Rebecca and Hannah) expressed their desire to take part in Phase Two of the research.

At the end of Phase Two an unexpected and unplanned event in the research process occurred. Two months after Phase Two was completed two of the teachers who took part in Phase Two, Rebecca and Hannah, approached me separately expressing their desire to continue the process of self-assessment of their professional growth. Both teachers had attended an additional PDO which addressed the individual goals they had identified as part of their self-assessments during Phase Two. Rebecca and Hannah, each wished to demonstrate to the Head of Junior School, their professional learning journey for the year, by including an additional completed PGSA Guide in their portfolios. At this stage, it was considered necessary to include Phase Three in the research design.

Data from both Phase Two and Phase Three presented in this chapter were drawn from the analysis of:

a) extensive field notes and reflections compiled through participant observation, direct observation and documentation review;

b) transcripts of recordings made from the first of the individual semi-structured interviews, which focused on the participant's professional learning experience;

c) transcripts of recordings made from the second individual semi-structured interviews conducted whilst I guided the participants through the self-assessment process as they completed the reflection tool, the Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide Version 2;

d) individual interpretation of the completed reflection tool-PGSA Guides; and

e) transcripts of recordings of the third individual interviews, which were focused on the self-assessment process itself and the usefulness of the reflection tool.

Within this chapter, the data from the first of the individual interviews are represented as Interaction 1. The data from the second individual interviews are represented as Interaction 2. In Phase Three, the first and second interviews were combined and these data are represented as interaction 3. The themes that emerged from each phase of the study were found to be necessary to the process of self-assessment and are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Structure of the Data - Emergent Themes

Phase	Interactions	Commentary	Emergent Themes
Phase Two: *Let's go deeper*	**Interaction 1**	This interaction took place six weeks after the participants attended or took part in the PDO. This period of time allowed for the participants to evaluate the professional development experience and to trial strategies learnt. Researcher aim was to gain deeper understanding of the PDO in order to guide questioning during the completion of the PGSA Guide. Verbal examples of evidence requested throughout interview.	• Participant observer's relationship with teachers • Use of dialogue • Bringing knowledge to the surface and discussing teachers' learning before understanding implementation into practice. • Trial of some strategies as a result of attending the Professional Development Opportunity (PDO) • Teacher evaluation of strategies • Greater understanding of role of evidence
	Interaction 2	Dialogue took place between the teacher and middle level leader throughout the completion of each PGSA Guide, as: 1) questions were posed to support the self-assessment process; 2) participants requested clarification of the meaning of the standards; and 3) the participants attempted to answer the questions on the tool. Knowledge or deeper understanding was constructed from two perspectives: firstly, from the middle level leader – knowledge about the process of self-assessment of professional growth utilising the PGSA Guide; and secondly, from the processes required to support that self-assessment.	• The need for a safe and honest environment • Use of dialogue and collaborative interaction required to support self-assessment of professional growth • Participate observer's prior knowledge of teaching practice • Participant observer's perception of evidence • Teachers' perception of evidence • Goal setting • Identification of support required to move forward within their professional learning journey.
Phase Three: *Give me more*	**Interaction 3**	This interaction took place six weeks after the participants attended their second PDO. Researcher's aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the process of self-assessment when revisited and the practicalities of implementing the processes within a school context. The outputs from Phase Two (Figure 5.6) were inputs into phase Three.	• Degree of support provided decreased • The teachers' use of the language of the PGSA Guide to dialogue about their PDO experiences • Teachers set goals • Participation in Phase Two assisted teachers in Phase Three.

The data from Interactions 1, 2 and 3 are represented in the form of the stories of each participant in sections 5.2 to 5.5. After the teachers had self-assessed their professional growth, separate interviews were held with each participant to gather data about their reflections on the self-assessment experience. These data, together with my reflections, is presented in section 5.6. Exerts from my reflective journal are presented in italics and boxed. As Phase Two evolved, it became evident that the notion of self-assessment was more complex than I had previously anticipated. Two supporting processes emerged from the data during Phases Two and Three as discussed in sections 5.7. Figure 5.1 represents a graphical outline of the structure of this chapter.
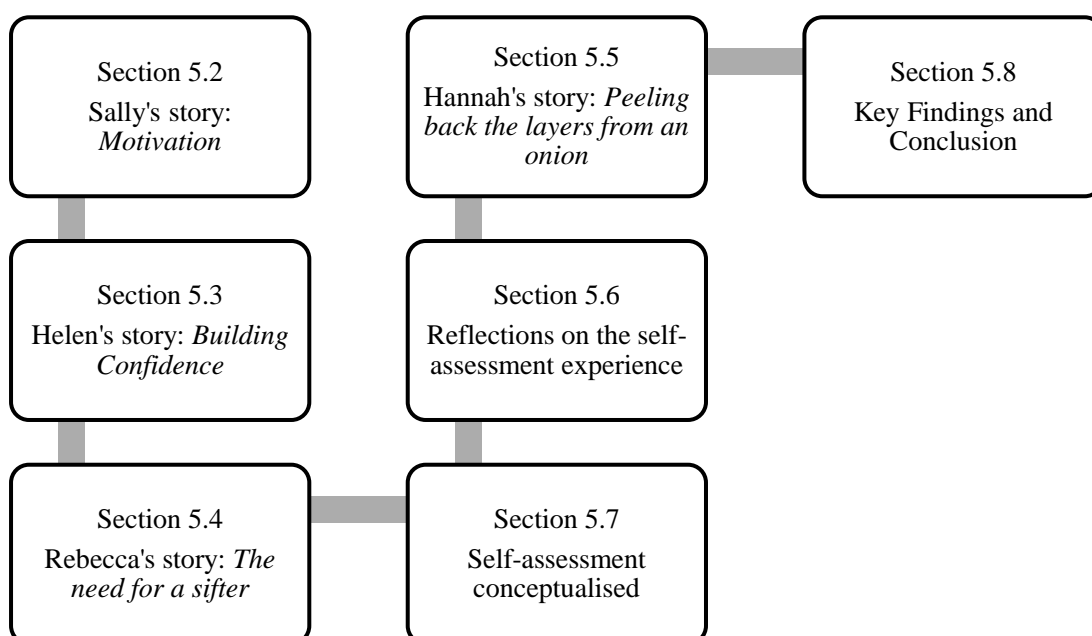
Figure 5.1. Data Presentation and Chapter 5 Structure

As each individual teacher's story evolved, the themes from Table 5.1 emerged from the data. Each of the teacher's stories are described in the following sections.

5.2 Sally's Story: *Motivation*

Sally and I had formed a strong collaborative professional relationship. She advised that her motivation to participate in Phase Two was not entirely focused on learning more about self-assessment of professional growth, but rather on extending her understanding of the process of conducting research.

Interaction 1: Exploring the PDO

Teachers as Researchers (TAR) Project - Catering for diverse learners within Junior School.

Sally was a member of the focus group session in Phase One of the study. The first interaction took place in Sally's office where, she suggested, we would least likely be interrupted. We often met in Sally's office to discuss students over a cup of coffee. In relating the relevance of the PDO to her professional needs, Sally stated:

> It was really beneficial for my practice especially looking at a psychological report like the WISC [Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children] and looking at the results and understanding what implications that would have for a student rather than just looking at the psych report. Actually, looking at their working memory and having an understanding of what it would mean for that student so that was really good.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *Sally appeared to have evaluated the acquired knowledge from the PDO within the six-week time frame from the time the project ceased and the first interaction with myself. I need to explore this aspect further because when Sally took part in Phase One, she did not have this six-week time period to reflect upon her participation in the TAR project prior to completing the PGSA Guide.*

Sally suggested that she felt she had enhanced her knowledge regarding working memory difficulties. However, she also stated that she required further professional learning to implement strategies within a session:

> If I got a psychological report now, I feel better equipped to be able to read it and to understand what was written in it. In the workshop it was put into a practical sense. I would need further training in how that reflects on what I would need to do in my setting because it was more designed for classroom teachers. It gave me the framework and has given me what else I need to learn.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *Sally has performed a form of self-assessment. She has identified gaps in a practical sense – i.e. how she would implement the enhanced knowledge.*

Sally described how there had been one instance where she had changed the way she had approached a situation with a student as a result of the knowledge she gained from PDO1:

> There has been one case where a student had a diagnosis so I looked at the report and saw some indicators of that diagnosis and attempted to structure a program around those needs but also liaising with the teachers about what is happening in the classroom for that child. For example, I make it active so we go down to the garden- do some gardening, might go for a walk, use more tactile play so it's not just sitting and listening questions for an entire session. So setting smaller tasks for that student- breaking them down into more manageable sections.

Although this was an example of one instance, Sally suggested:

> It is something that is progressing over time. Definitely that understanding that was gained enabled me to make better choices or cater to the needs a bit more or refine it more.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *From her dialogue, it became clear to me that Sally has begun to self-assess by using the PGSA Guide.*

Interaction 2: Leading Sally through Self-assessment of professional growth

The second interaction with Sally took place one week after the first. I began the interaction with handing the transcript from the Interaction 1 to Sally. I then sat next to her with my computer explaining that she also had a hard copy of the PGSA Guide and I had the electronic version so I could type as she talked. Sally replied with "Oh

no, I would like to just talk to this document. I don't feel I need it written down". She went on to explain further that she had already completed her digital portfolio for her upcoming annual review so she felt she did not need to include the completed PGSA Guide.

Sally decided to begin by discussing her experience of initiating collaborative relationships as part of the professional development experience:

> It [being the PDO] definitely did initiate that collaborative relationship with the teachers because you are listening to other people's experience with those students and a lot of the students are ones that I work with as well so it gave me a sense of what was happening in the classroom.

In my reflective journal, I recorded at this time that I had found Sally's response very thought-provoking as I felt that she had begun to evaluate if the professional learning experience itself had provided her with the opportunity to initiate collaborative relationships. Her focus appeared to be on the PDO itself rather than a reflection upon what had taken place during the period since her participation in the PDO; questioning whether she had used the PDO as a platform to further develop collaborative relationships. She appeared very keen to move on to discuss how the professional development enhanced her knowledge about the topic area from the transcript of the first interview. To maintain the momentum of the interview I therefore, did not prompt her further regarding the collaborative relationships aspect. Sally described how she reflected on the professional development experience, and, as a consequence, set goals:

> When professional learning opportunities come up you think: is that going to be beneficial to what I do? and then afterwards you reflect on it, either say well that was really helpful or sometimes you think no that didn't really add, or yes that was really helpful and I need to know more about this aspect of that and it helps you to identify where you need more learning opportunities.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *The way Sally described how she reflects on the professional development opportunity has me wondering if it is actually reflection or evaluation, similar to the 'grab and ditch' approach to professional development.*

Sally continued to describe how she felt she had increased her confidence in a particular area, and, as a result, set goals:

> Part of it is that confidence in coming back and thinking do I know enough about this and the other is identifying something that you may not have thought of before or a change in a legality of something. For example, doing professional learning in something like child protection and things change over time so when you go to some professional learning and they tell you things may have changed or you need to change protocol or practice.

> So things that have a reoccurring theme within your practice and you are not sure about how to deal with that specific problem will lead you to try and get some professional learning in that area.

It became evident to me during the discussion that Sally had engaged in the process of self-assessment. Firstly, she referred to her confidence level in terms of: Did she feel confident to change her practice as a result of a PDO? Secondly, she recognised gaps within her practice through the identification of reoccurring situations that arouse in her practice and questioned whether she needed professional development to deal with such situations. I felt that she was using the tool as a stimulus for reflection on how she had implemented her enhanced knowledge.

5.3 Helen's Story: Building Confidence

Helen was a member of the teaching team within my department. We had developed a good professional relationship in which we respected each other and valued one another's opinions. We often bounced ideas off each other regarding teaching issues relevant to the department. The professional development provided to the six teachers

who took part in the literacy coaching project was funded through a literacy grant from Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ). The designated coach in this project, Helen, assisted teachers to differentiate their literacy instruction based on student data. My own role within this project was to oversee the design of the project and the collection of evidence to report progress to ISQ. ISQ coordinated two initial workshops based upon The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction, by Robert J. Marzano (2007) in which a framework for ensuring quality teaching was articulated in the form of 10 questions that represent a logical planning sequence for successful instructional design. A condition of the grant was that the coach attend the workshops. ISQ provided the coach with coaching support in the form of online anonymous virtual sessions. Support in the area of Literacy Differentiation was given through face to face workshops, to which Helen was able to take one of the teachers she was coaching.

In the case of Helen, I had already gained considerable understanding of Helen's experiences as coach in the PDO she chose to use in self-assessment of her professional growth. This knowledge came about because as part of Helen's obligations within the Coaching Project she was required to record her experiences as a coach in a reflective journal. Her journal was sent to Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) once per term. In each instance, prior to sending the journal Helen asked me to read her reflections for confirmation that they were ready to send. I advised her that the reflections were her own personal thoughts and perceptions of the experience and of course they were appropriate to send but I was always happy to read them for her. Every coaching meeting held with Helen was recorded and transcribed by me as manager of the coaching project.

Interaction 1: Exploring the PDO

Literacy Coaching Project - Using student data to differentiate instruction.

All interactions took place in my office during Helen's release time. Sitting at a round table at right angles to one another, Helen appeared nervous so I suggested we "get a cuppa for our chat". Helen replied with "Oh yes, that would be nice". I once again reassured Helen that I was interested in her experiences of the coaching project. I used

the semi-structured questionnaire, developed after conducting Phase One to guide the interaction.

Helen expressed feelings of disempowerment after attending the initial workshop. It was not until six months into the coaching project, that she began to see how she could implement parts of the theory into her practice.

> The workshop was outside practicality, it was all the theory and later on I could fit bits of that theory into it. It [The first workshops] didn't empower me at all. I came back thinking that I wish I hadn't done this. It was later on when the workshops became a little more personal and practical where I could say- right I can see how that might help me with the teachers.

> I think my confidence grew a little bit in dealing with the staff when they approached me and saying what about giving it a try when people would come in and ask me oh no- what should I do. So not so much light bulbs but gradual increase in dealing with adults and teachers as learners and me as an instructor because that is not the area that I feel I have a lot of expertise in. Give me children not adults.

Helen put forward another example of when she was able to assist someone with teaching literacy. It appeared that she had self-assessed how she was progressing with her coaching role. She explained that if teachers approached her and asked her questions, she enjoyed finding solutions to others' problems:

> I went on [PD workshop] with reading assessment with [another teacher] and he came out saying I didn't know how the data could inform my teaching – I haven't looked at the running records like that, could you help me. I am good with a specific request and when someone says can you help me, I think wow, yes, I can and if I can't I love going and finding out how I can.

During the interaction, I wanted to explore this concept further in terms of how she went about self-assessing her progress based on other staff members' requests for

assistance. Therefore, I asked her to talk me through an incident or a change that had taken place when she had discussed literacy with other teachers:

> I think one of the biggest things was after one of the workshops a teacher had asked for some testing and I had feedback results with a very negative outcome - the response from the teacher was negative so I talked it through with one of the leaders and it is giving the teachers the ownership. I wasn't giving them the ownership and saying right what can we do about this. Shortly after that it was followed up by one of the online workshops about cooperative planning and how it should come from the teachers and contributions when asked for and a gentle lead-in rather that I take the ownership of it. So that is now the approach I take with [another teacher]. I wait for her to come and ask me and then I can say well what about…why don't you try this or this. That is what I did learn that it was a cooperative role and a gentle guiding rather than a jump in and say right look that is the data and you will do this now.

I used a prompting question to promote Helen's reflection on how she came to feel that she had grown in the area of allowing teachers to take ownership. She described how she had come to learn how to say "no".

> It is from a lot of PD last year and when I have spoken to them about things that I have done [mentor role] and they have said there is a limit to what you should be doing. Your role is not for you to teach their class, it is helping the teachers teach their own class. I think that is really important because you can feel a little bit sorry for them when they are over worked and they ask can you help me with this? I have spent hours looking for research articles that might help them so when you do that you hope they take something on board.

Extract from my reflective journal:

This is an instance in which I find forms of evidence fascinating. Most teachers within the context of the College, when preparing their portfolios, consider it sufficient to provide a photograph with a description to demonstrate how they have met a particular standard. I suppose this is because that is the way the standards are perceived: teacher shows evidence and we can tick off that they have met that standard. If teachers and leaders can look at the standards through a different lens, during the process of self-assessing of professional growth then it appears to be a much richer and deeper learning experience. As in Helen's example, it is the self-reflection on the implementation of the knowledge gained from the PDO and her consequent change to her approach that is her form of evidence in demonstrating growth. This form of evidence appears to show a deeper level of thinking and honesty about one's practice. When I first set out on this exploratory journey, I was thinking of concrete evidence in terms of the tick off approach. I now realise that evidence of teachers' critical reflection on practice appears to be a much deeper level of thinking and it seems that there needs to be an open and honest environment for this to take place and to be articulated.

Interaction 2: Leading Helen through self-assessment of professional growth

Helen chose to begin at the descriptor 'supporting colleagues' as this was the focus of the coaching project. Therefore, she immediately began with the purpose of the PDO and aligned it with the standard. Interaction 2 was found to be very repetitive of Interaction 1. This was largely because we were able to easily answer the questions on the PGSA Guide from the transcript of Interaction 1. Table 5.2 shows Helen's PGSA Guide for standard 2.5 Literacy and Numeracy strategies (AITSL, 2011).

Helen's approach to completing the PGSA Guide was to go straight to the fifth column headed: Monitor and evaluate the implementation of teaching strategies. When questioned about why she had taken this approach, she advised me that she had been informed that an anticipated outcome of the project was that the coaches would have met the requirements of lead teacher status within the standard 2.5 Literacy and Numeracy strategies. After answering the guiding questions in this section of the PGSA Guide, she then moved to column 4: Support colleagues to implement effective

teaching strategies to improve students' literacy and numeracy achievement. Helen advised columns two and three were not relevant to her PDO. The information gathered during Interaction 1 played a significant role in completion of the PGSA Guide.

Table 5.2

Helen's Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide

	Professional Development Opportunity: Coaching Project			
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 2.5 Literacy and Numeracy Strategies				
APST descriptors as criteria	Know and understand literacy and numeracy teaching strategies and their application in teaching areas.	Apply knowledge and understanding of effective teaching strategies to support students' literacy and numeracy achievement.	Support colleagues to implement effective teaching strategies to improve students' literacy and numeracy achievement.	Monitor and evaluate the implementation of teaching strategies within the school to improve students' achievement in literacy and numeracy using research-based knowledge and student data.
Guiding Questions	**What are some strategies you use to teach literacy?**	**What are some effective literacy or numeracy teaching strategies you have adopted in your classroom?** **How do you apply literacy teaching**	**Describe how you have taken part in collaborative processes with colleagues regarding implementing teaching strategies to improve student's literacy achievement?** -Initially I met regularly with the year 1 and 2 teachers. We focused more in prep once one teacher had experienced interest. -I helped, advised and encouraged more reading happening in the class room. Talked about effective strategies that would enhance their learning. For example, fluency with one year 2 teacher. -I presented at Staff meetings –how to use running record data to inform their teaching. -I waited for teachers to come and approach me to assist them with their teaching of reading as I felt the readiness of a teacher to take on board suggestions are very important.	**How do you monitor the implementation of teaching strategies within the school to improve students' literacy?** Running records -I use the APST twice during the year. I analysed the data and then met with individual teachers to discuss the analysis- showed gaps and leaving it up to the teacher where to from here. This next year I would like the teachers to become more involved in the analysis part by doing it together. -Make suggestions and variety of activities to enhance student's literacy. PiPS [Performance Indicators in Primary Schools] findings and observations. Discuss the reading readiness screener results- Pre and Post- test after understanding words program was implemented.

	strategies in your classroom? How do you know they are effective?	-I arranged Informal meetings with the teachers to discuss their literacy results and make suggestions once they had approached me. When I was asked I attending planning meetings. **How do you continually support colleagues with implementing effective teaching strategies?** -I find Informal meetings are the best- having a conversation about it and asking the teachers first to identify the strengths and weaknesses and then I can affirm and support them and make suggestions. -Specific resources that I can draw on and I show them how to use them. -Helped with the teaching of the lower band children by modelling strategies and discussing what is working for me. -Make myself available at break times and have lunch in the staff room. -Assisted prep teachers to select appropriate resources to buy. -Meeting about which resources are effective and how to use them.	**Monitoring teaching strategies** Working on the students at risk with the teachers to improve literacy. In and out of their classrooms. Take part in literacy rotations as a starting point to get to know classroom routines and procedures. **How do you evaluate the implementation of teaching strategies within the school to improve students' literacy?** -After given suggestions, I then go in and observe (buddy reading) together with PMs. -Touch base with teachers if not invited in and asked how they are going. -Look at the running records and PIPS testing as a cohort and analyse in terms of strengths and weaknesses. *How do you link this to research-based knowledge?* -Have seen the strategies been effective before. They are taken from Professional Development coaching course and other courses I have attended. I have trialled the strategies and know they are effective. -My goals for next year as a coach is to be involved more at the planning stage and let's develop a strategic plan together.
Evidence	Evidence	Evidence Coaching reflection journal	Evidence- Student data: Coaching reflection journal PIPs, Understanding Words, Reading readiness screener. Observations of students and teachers

5.4 Rebecca's Story: The Need for a Sifter

An aspect of my role within the school afforded me the opportunity to observe various students within classroom settings at the request of teachers. This had enabled me to obtain some understanding of the teaching practices of Rebecca and Hannah. This knowledge was relevant to the study as both teachers chose a PDO, which related to an aspect of improving teaching practice.

Rebecca and I were professional work colleagues. Rebecca had been at the school six months prior to my commencement in my position as Head of Learning Enhancement. We appeared to connect from the beginning as we had things in common such as our teaching background and children of a similar age. Occasionally, Rebecca asked to join me for lunch in my office to catch up when she was having a bad day and needed to debrief. As a consequence of these interactions, over the previous two years a collegial relationship had been built, in which she felt comfortable to discuss issues that were pertinent to her within the school environment. She advised me that she felt assured I would not reveal these thoughts to other members of staff. This confidence was also evident with various other members of staff who visited my office under similar circumstances. My office became known by some members of staff as the 'Cone of Silence', where tissues and lollies were offered. Some days I thought of my office as a revolving door, as staff members sought assurance that they were doing a good job despite feeling overwhelmed or under pressure. For example, one teacher would enter saying "I'm entering the 'Cone of Silence', I have to share this with you".

Interaction 1: Exploring the PDO

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Conference

Rebecca attended an *International Baccalaureate* (IB) *Primary Years Programme* (*PYP*) two-day workshop in which teachers had the opportunity to further their knowledge of the IB's principles, philosophy and methods. Rebecca chose to use this PDO to explore her professional growth during Phase Two of the study.

All interactions took place in my office during Rebecca's release time. We sat at a round table across from one another. Although Rebecca had sat at the table numerous

times before, she commented that she felt nervous in this situation with me taking a role outside the norm that we had with each other. For example, her experiences in the office under the auspices of the 'Cone of Silence'. I used the semi-structured questionnaire developed following Phase One to guide Interaction 1. Different probes were used for different participants in accordance with the flow of the conversation or when the participant articulated their experience.

Rebecca found that the PDO provided her with a level of detail that enabled her to utilise the knowledge within various tasks, saying:

> Looking at the nuts and bolts how to do IB planners in my subject. Ways we can look at different summative assessment, ways we can do it in our area, ways we can use the learner profiles attributes and even the understanding of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) terminology. The networking - learning new games off other people. It was fantastic in so many ways.

From the very beginning of the interview with Rebecca, there appeared to be an overwhelming amount of information that she had acquired from the PYP conference and it was important to break down the knowledge into two sections: change of practice as a direct result from her attendance at the conference, and enhanced knowledge.

Extract from my reflective journal:

The reason I realised the need for a break down while dialoguing with Rebecca was because I was thinking ahead regarding mapping this PDO experience to the PGSA Guide. I hoped that by breaking the information down into two sections, they would align smoothly with the content of the PGSA Guide.

Rebecca described the direct changes to her practice that had taken place within the six-week period after her attendance at the workshop. These changes related to her use of the IB attitudes, and asking the students to self-reflect on the attitudes they had demonstrated within her lesson. She had also begun to revise the units of inquiry:

I have started using the learner profile as visuals trying to get the children to do their reflections. One way is to have the attitudes e.g. courageous placed around the area and at the end of the lesson the children move to the attitude they feel they have used within the lesson. Another way is having the children write their name on a post-it-note and stick it to the attribute. I am in the process of re-working the IB planners. Before I wasn't confident enough in IB, planning to revamp the whole thing.

The other thing I found was that I wasn't particularly good at provocation and finding that out and it was good to see what other people do. I think that will also be a direct result. I am now thinking of ways to get the kids enthusiastic and get them interested so I can have good provocations.

Rebecca provided an example of how, as a result of having collaborative conversations during the workshop she had self-assessed herself regarding provocations (introducing the beginning of a unit).

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I thought this was an important statement as she was self-assessing a part of her practice and I wondered at the time how this could be demonstrated on the PGSA Guide.*

After having reflected upon Rebecca's discussion I prompted her to discuss examples of how she had changed her practice since her initial self-assessment of provocations. She responded with:

Getting them interested by playing different music - not saying a lot. Getting them interested first and going from there rather than starting with saying this is what we are going to do. It is a different style of teaching.

At this point in time during the interview I wanted to explore this concept of evidence further than Rebecca's change of practice and she informed me that the students were enthusiastic and focused as a result of her change to the way she did provocations.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *It appears that Rebecca has thought the new way of introducing provocations to her students has been successful based on the class's engagement. It seems that she has evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies based on the students' engagement levels and as a result has said that she will continue to introduce provocations in this way. What intrigues me about the change in practice in terms of provocations is that Rebecca has 'grabbed' this strategy and put it in her teaching tool bag as a result of the students' positive responses during that first lesson. I wonder what would happen if the students had a negative response – would she 'ditch' the new provocation strategy even though the professional development course suggested to introduce provocations this way or would she try again? I look forward to exploring further this 'grab and ditch approach' with other participants.*

Interaction 2: Leading Rebecca through self-assessment of professional growth

Interaction 2 took place one week after the first. The transcription from Interaction 1 was handed to Rebecca for review five minutes prior to Interaction 2 taking place. This was done so as Rebecca could refresh her memory of our dialogue about her professional development experience. This interaction took place also during Rebecca's release time in my office. We sat adjacent to each other at the round table, as I suggested that positioning ourselves in that way might make it easier to see the PGSA Guide (electronic version) on my computer screen. Rebecca had a hard copy of the PGSA Guide in front of her and I explained that I might type straight into the PGSA Guide as she talked. This interaction had a different feel to the first. We both expressed excitement about what was about to take place. Rebecca began with the comment:

> This is so good, because you know why? It makes me accountable to
> use what I have learnt. I just said how you can get so busy and not do

anything but this is great because it focuses me on it again. I am already getting good stuff out of it.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *Rebecca's initial comment set the scene for the interview, putting my mind at ease as Rebecca confirmed that she found the process useful. I had harboured feelings that I was taking up Rebecca's precious release time and the process might not prove to be beneficial to her. The interview structure was more like a conversation, uninterrupted flow of dialogue, rather than a question and answer situation.*

Rebecca questioned whether standard 6.2: Engage in professional learning to improve practice (AITSL, 2011) was in the Teacher Annual Review and I explained that the Junior School executive team had grouped all the Professional Learning Standards into one document and that I had provided the guiding questions on the PGSA Guide for that standard.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *At the time, I was really pleased with Rebecca's questioning about the PGSA Guide because to me it demonstrated she was thinking ahead as to how she could use it within her portfolio. It also showed her active engagement within the process from the start. Rebecca read the hard copy and I remained silent and waited as to where on the PGSA Guide Rebecca would like to begin. This was because I had observed during Phase One, that the Teachers adopted varying approaches to completing the PGSA Guide.*

Rebecca began with the question concerning whether she felt that the PDO had addressed her professional learning needs, to which she responded:

> Definitely because I was at the stage where I had done a little bit of PYP but I needed something a little more specific so I was ready to go further into my area.

As we proceeded with the process of completing the PGSA Guide, I found that Rebecca provided a significant amount of detailed information and examples of her

application of the content of the PDO. Consequentially, as Rebecca's responses to the guiding questions on the PGSA Guide were recorded, we often experienced difficulties in presenting the information in a succinct format. When this was the case I asked probing questions, an example of which was: Did the PDO take place at the right time for you in your PYP learning journey?

I was surprised at Rebecca's very detailed response as I noted later in my reflective journal. She then went on to answer a couple of the guiding questions within the one response. This highlighted to me the benefit of a probing question when the participant felt comfortable within the situation. She had delved deeply into the reasons as to why the timing of this PDO was significant in terms of what it had affirmed to her about the degree to which she was implementing PYP best practice suggesting:

> It confirmed that I was implementing parts of best practice. Another thing we looked at was the IB scope and sequence and it is always refreshing to know what I am doing is in line with what others are doing. A lot of the times I am questioning - I wonder if this is right and it was nice to go there and know what we have in place is very sound. It affirmed what we do as an IB school is really good and some schools are not doing as much as what we do. I have now been in the job for three years and it is good to now start making changes here and there.

Rebecca read one of the descriptors on the standard and guiding question aloud a number of times: for example, the descriptor 'Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice' (AITSL, 2011). The guiding question from the PGSA Guide was 'How do you assess current best practice research?' During this time, I remained silent to allow her thinking time. I did nod when she looked at me, as my aim was to encourage her to attempt to answer the question. Finally, Rebecca asked what assessing current best practice meant. I gave an example relevant to her own practice based on the knowledge I had gained during interaction 1. I drew her attention to her suggestion that attending the conference confirmed that she had applied acquired knowledge to her practice and asked what she would do if she wanted to keep going with the momentum generated from the conference.

Rebecca's response was not what I anticipated. I thought she might have said something like review an article or notes from the conference, however, she stated:

> Probably something what we are doing now because it is bringing it all back to me and sitting and talking to you about it. If everyone could do this after a PD - how good would that be because it gives you something to focus on. It is kind of in a way like that timeline of what you are going to do. Rather than just going off into your own little area and 1000 other things happen. Also keeping in contact with the people on the course and saying – I have done this … How are you going with it?

I thought we could delve deeper into the future focus area so I wanted to keep the flow of the interview going and decided I would come back to the accessing research question. Therefore, I asked a probing question focused on her next step in her PYP professional learning. Rebecca responded with:

> At the moment I feel like I have enough. I feel like I have all this stuff that I need to do something with. I would like some support - practical support with getting some resources made - teacher aide.

At that point in time, I really wanted to explore what Rebecca had said about having all this information and doing something with it. I felt that having a teacher aide make resources was not going to assist her with 'having all this information' so I probed more and the following unfolded:

> Sitting down with PYP Coordinator and getting feedback about when I do rework one of the planners, making sure that it is on the right track. Rather than more information overload at the moment, I just need to use what I have got…more release time and a regular meeting with PYP coordinator once a month maybe because it would hold me more accountable to getting stuff done as well.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I felt very excited during the interview with Rebecca when she began to set goals for herself as a part of this process. It appears that giving her the opportunity to reflect and self-assess, gives her the power and control to make changes within her own professional journey. There has been some frustration amongst the staff regarding the one size fits all approach PYP PD workshops which are regularly offered both externally and internally. One staff member suggested differentiated workshops as she felt that they were expected to differentiate within their classrooms, and therefore, staffs' different learning experiences should also be taken into account. This led me to think more about the effectiveness of one-off PD workshops as the literature suggests there is limited transfer of the knowledge gained from the PD to change to practice within the classroom.*

Taking part in the self-assessment process provided the teacher with a follow up from the PDO giving them reflection time to process the enhanced knowledge and evaluate any changes to their practice. This also gave the teachers the opportunity to set goals for their professional growth in that specific area after attending the PDO workshop.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I have just gained significant insight into this study and I feel like a light bulb is flashing right before me. When I first began this study, I thought I was exploring whether it was possible and to what extent teachers might be able to use the APST as a criterion against which they could self-assess their professional growth.*
>
> *I now realise that the PGSA Guide is used as a stimulus for dialogue and interaction between myself and each individual participant, and provides the mechanism through which learning takes place. It is the process itself through which the teachers' knowledge and understanding gained from the PDO is brought to the fore, reflected upon, and transferred into their understanding of their own professional growth. I have also come to understand that the process is part of each teacher's (and my own) professional learning journey as they learn how to self-assess their professional growth using the APST. For example, in Rebecca's case when she was able to identify that observing another teacher and meeting with a member of the executive team, would provide her with the means to further develop her goals. It was her participation in the process of completing the*

> *PGSA Guide, together with my prompting questions, that assisted her to gain a deeper understanding of what was needed as her next step within her professional learning journey. Had she not taken part in this process this may not have come to her attention.*

Table 5.3 shows Rebecca's reflection tool - PGSA Guide. The PYP framework was implemented within the Junior School and the PDO which Rebecca attended was aimed at enhancing her knowledge in this area. The process which evolved while Rebecca completed the reflection tool was as follows:

1. Rebecca read through the descriptors and the guiding questions.
2. She began by discussing what she perceived to be a relevant answer to the questions in column three: Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.
3. She then moved between columns and various topics as she attempted to articulate a significant quantity of information that she felt she had gained from attending the PDO.
4. In order to re-focus the self-assessment process, I interrupted her dialogue and stated "Let's reign it in and focus the information into two areas: enhanced knowledge and change of practice. Give me some examples of your change of practice".
5. Taking a specific area (learner profiles) and using the questions as a guide, Rebecca provided examples from her practice. She then continued this process to complete the PGSA Guide.
6. Rebecca then considered the areas in which she had enhanced her knowledge but had not attempted yet to implement a change of practice (IB planners).
7. Step six provided an opportunity to further explore what Rebecca felt she needed to transfer the enhanced knowledge into change to her practice (goal setting). For example, column three, her discussion regarding IB planners and the steps identified as necessary to further her professional learning.

Rebecca's whole approach to self-assessing her professional growth appeared to be based on her desire to explicitly demonstrate that she had taken the knowledge she had acquired from the PDO and implemented it into her practice. It became evident that

Rebecca felt she was gaining a greater understanding of her own outcomes from the PDO as she completed the process of self-assessment.

Table 5.3

Rebecca's Professional Self-Assessment Guide

		Professional Development Opportunity: PYP Conference		
		Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 6.2: Engage in professional learning to improve practice		
APST descriptors as criteria	Understand the relevant and appropriate sources of professional learning for teachers.	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.	Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice.	Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers.
Guiding Questions		**To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning?** **Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice?** By attending the conference, it also confirmed for me that I am implemented aspects of best practice in terms of my IB planning and teaching strategies. The conference also confirmed for me that as a school, we have the scope and sequence mapped out well. **Enhanced knowledge about a topic area?** I felt by participating in this professional learning opportunity, it has deepened my	**How have you applied your learning to your classroom practice?** As a result, from my enhanced knowledge from the conference, I have implemented the following changes to my practice: • Using the learner profiles as visuals for their reflections. For example, the visuals are placed around the area and at the end of the lesson the children moved to which attitude they feel they had used within the lesson. Another way is having the children write their name on a post-it-note and sticking it to the attribute. • Provocations- I now am thinking of ways to develop the students' enthusiasm and interest from the beginning of the unit. For example, for the dance unit, I played different types of music to develop the students' interest rather than saying 'this is what we are going to do'. • Record the students using the Ipad. Then use the recording as a reflection tool for the next lesson. • I am in the process of reworking the IB planners. I am beginning with the stand-alone units as they come up. I now feel more	**Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities?** By attending the conference, it has given me the opportunity to expand my collaborative relationships with other teachers. As a result, from the sharing, I have implemented new strategies within my lessons. It was also very valuable listening to how other schools organise student led conferences.

understanding and enhanced my knowledge in the following areas:

- Ways to implement summative assessment
- Unpacking the IB planners and understanding how your key questions and key concepts drive the inquiry
- Ways to implement learner profile attributes within a lesson for reflection and self- assessment
- PYP terminology- what it means and where to find all the documents. For example, on the OCC website.

Applied the learning to your classroom practice?

As a result, from my deeper understanding of PYP from the conference, I plan to implement the following changes to my practice over the next 12 – 18 months

- Using the attributes for students to self-assess themselves and include these as portfolio inclusions.
- Taking pictures of the students showing the attributes
- Relook at our yearly overviews and see if there is a possibility of streamlining and combining some.
- Use some of the assessment ideas

confident to do this as I clearer about the concepts I am focusing on as I see how they are driving the inquiry.

- Implemented the practical component of the conference

What is your next step in this professional learning journey?

I feel the next step in developing my professional learning in PYP is through the following:

- Keeping in contact with the participants from the course
- Practical support. For example, having a teacher aide making some resources such as the visuals.
- Perhaps regular meetings with a member from the Executive team once a month. The aim would be to gain feedback regarding the planners I am reworking.
- More release time with teams. I believe true collaboration is at the cold face when a unit is being planned.

For my professional learning, I would like to observe someone within the middle or senior school. It also would be valuable to sometimes have staff meetings to allow for staff to meet across sub schools.

Once I had time to reflect on my enhanced knowledge, I discussed my new learnings and interesting examples of how other schools organise student led conferences and exhibition with Executive team.

A wiki was established with the conference participants so that we can keep in contact.

Networking has increased my awareness regarding valuable apps and websites that I can use to assist me. For example, one website I access is very useful because you can see examples of units others have placed on the website and you are able to ask questions via the forum or email.

Rebecca's Story from Phase Three

Interaction 3: Exploring the PDO and leading Rebecca through self-assessment of professional growth

The PDO experience chosen by Rebecca for Phase Three was 'Observe and Feedback'. The observer was a member of the Junior School executive team. The Observe and Feedback process within the school involved:

- Teachers completed the first page of the reflection sheet;
- Teachers arranged a time for the Observer to watch their lesson;
- The Observer met with the teacher 5-10 minutes prior to the lesson to briefly discuss the lesson focus and other areas on which teachers required feedback; and
- The Observer completed their observation notes and met with the teacher to go through the feedback.

The teachers, who took part in this PDO, were asked to identify an area of focus for the observe and feedback process. Rebecca chose to focus on two areas within her teaching practice. She had identified, during Phase Two of this study, that she had changed her teaching approach when introducing a unit (provocations) and as a result, chose to focus on this area for the Observe and Feedback PDO. Her second focus area was the teaching strategy chunk, chew and check. The chunk aspect of this strategy relates to the information the teacher provides to the students. The chew part gives the students the opportunity to process the newly acquired information and check is when students are given the choice as to how they demonstrate their understanding of the lesson. Rebecca informed me that the reason she chose to focus on the two specific areas was because she felt unsure about the way in which she was implementing the strategies, and sought feedback to make sure the implementation adhered to school intentions:

> A big thing I wanted to look at was finding out about provocation. It was an area in which I felt I probably wasn't doing as well as I could.

> The chunk chew check was something we did at staff PD at the start of the year. I wanted feedback on that because I have been trying to use that and wasn't sure if I was getting it right.

During this interaction, we sat at right angles to one another so as we were able to view the electronic version of the reflection tool and reference a copy of her previous PGSA Guide from Phase Two. During Phase Two, Rebecca had established the professional learning goals shown in Table 5.4. The interaction commenced with a discussion of her goal progression from Phase Two. Her responses are outlined in the second column in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Rebecca's Goal Progression

Goals shown on PGSA Guide from Phase Two	Rebecca's responses
Keeping in contact with the participants from the PYP course	Still aiming to do that
Perhaps regular meetings with a member from the Executive team once a month. The aim would be to gain feedback regarding the planners I am reworking.	I have made regular scheduled meetings with a member from the executive team and received feedback on the units, which has been really positive.
Practical support. For example, having a teacher aide making some resources such as the visuals.	I have made a few visuals myself
More release time with teams. I believe true collaboration is at the coal face when a unit is being planned.	I have not received any more release time but I have been making sure that I have scheduled meetings with year-levels during the team collaboration time one afternoon a week.
For my professional learning, I would like to observe someone within the middle or senior school. It also would be valuable to sometimes have staff meetings to allow for staff to meet across sub-schools.	I plan to discuss this as part of my annual review and use the PGSA Guide as the entry point for the discussion.

The process continued as Rebecca answered the guided questions, using the language on the reflection tool - PGSA Guide as evidenced through her dialogue:

It [the PDO] was great in that it affirmed the strategies that I had been doing and the new strategies I tried have been successful. The observer

was really happy with what they saw and what I was trying and doing was working.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I am amazed and excited that Rebecca began the process using the language within the PGSA guide questions without having it in front of her. She was self-assessing the PDO experience through the lens of the PGSA Guide. This presents a potential way in which to view PDO experience and a common language for teachers to use when discussing their professional learning and growth which would be useful to a whole school approach for self-assessment of professional growth. It's the way of thinking -- "it affirmed for me this …"*

Rebecca expressed the view that she felt that she had enhanced her knowledge and was given some ideas from the observer about trialling various ways of introducing provocations to the students:

> The observer gave me some ideas about the provocation which I liked. For example, you could use an actual prop like set up some activity stations. I like that because it is hands on and the kids like hands on. I now feel confident enough to implement the provocations myself. I plan to do it at the start of every unit. It is about taking the time to plan it.

Table 5.5 shows Rebecca's PGSA Guide for the Observe and Feedback professional development opportunity. During this Phase it became evident that Rebecca had gained significant understanding and familiarity with self-assessment and the APST during her participation in Phase Two. This was evidenced throughout our dialogue in that she was able to produce comprehensive answers to the questions with less prompting from myself. Rebecca advised she had not implemented any of the suggested strategies, as she had not had an opportunity to do so due to the timing of the unit.

During Phase Two, Rebecca provided a significant amount of information and examples of her application of the content of the PDO to her practice. It remained

necessary to continue to support the process through the provision of prompting questions. This provided me with a valuable opportunity to redirect her thoughts towards evaluating her newly acquired knowledge in terms of the extent to which she might implement changes to her own practice. The prompting questions were focused on an attempt to encourage Rebecca to critically reflect on her experience. For example, when she sought to answer the guiding questions in column three and was prompted by my question seeking whether there was anything that she might apply to her practice, Rebecca stated:

> Yes, definitely all the ideas given to me by the observer about rotations. I will use those. Hands on equipment (pause), I guess if I am doing a ball and a bat, throwing or striking unit, I could do endless things with the provocations (pause, provides examples as shown in the PGSA Guide in column three). It's a really good way of getting the kids thinking about what we are doing.

Here Rebecca has identified ways in which she could utilise the pedagogical knowledge gained from the PDO across various units within her teaching program. During Interaction 3, Rebecca reflected upon her experience of self-assessment and when asked whether having gone through the process previously aided her in Phase Three, she replied:

> For sure, you are exposed to it. With such a detailed one to start off with when you come to something that had less content and you are familiar with what these are, you can easily go and put it into that process straight away. I think the other thing that was beneficial was having two really different types of PDO and it shows you how you can use it in slightly different ways.

The following reflections from Rebecca, during the interaction provided further support to the suggestion that she had taken her learning from Phase Two and expanded it into Phase Three, particularly with respect to setting a goal for the next step in her professional learning in terms of the PYP program:

> The classroom observation process is a little less detailed I suppose because it wasn't such a rich experience as all the things I took out of

the PYP one. It was still really helpful to see it all on the PGSA and to refer to the things I can do to take it further and to actually know the things I am going to do as in the more collaboration and watching other people or them come and watch me. The PYP one was very in-depth and very beneficial.

When I meet with management this will be a great tool as well to use it to talk about what I have got out of and what I am doing from the PDO experiences.

It has been a great process and I can't wait to get in and use the grids. I feel like it is a process and in no way shape or form complete yet. I feel like it is a working document that I can go back and refer to and jog my memory about the things I am trying to accomplish. The challenge is then making sure you use it all. It would be good to go back and hone in on a particular point and follow it through. I would love to do this again for further professional development opportunities.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I feel delighted to see Rebecca enthusiastic and having a sense of accomplishment about her self-assessment of professional growth. Her view about how the use of the PGSA guides can be linked together through a goal, into a series of PGSA guides that demonstrate professional growth has lead me to consider potential big picture implications within the current educational landscape. Perhaps the interaction between the teacher, middle level leader and reflection tool could be used within the development of learning plans suggested by the Australian Professional Standards for Principals (APSP). Within the professional practice lens of the APSP, it states that principals should ensure reflective practices…. and use of APST lead to personal improvement of both students and staff. Also within the developing self and others profile of the APSP, it states they identify and implement professional learning opportunities with staff that are aligned with staff learning plans and school priorities. I am realising the significant and powerful connection between a middle level leader leading learning and the implications this may have towards enhancing the quality of teaching within an educational organisation. I have come to the realisation that the PGSA Guide can be viewed not only as a self-assessment of professional growth but also contributing to a learning plan.*

Table 5.5

Rebecca's Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide (Phase Three)

		Professional Learning Opportunity: Observation and Feedback		
		Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice		
APST descriptor as criteria	Understand the relevant and appropriate sources of professional learning for teachers.	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.	Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice and offer quality placements for pre-service teachers where applicable.	Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers.
		To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning? **Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice?** By participating in this professional learning opportunity, it has affirmed for me that I am implementing aspects of best practice within my lessons based on the positive feedback. For example, the Observer highlighted where I chunked, chewed and checked within the lesson. When I discussed how dancers sometimes tell a story, and the chewing was	**Applied learning to classroom practice?** Through participating in this professional learning and reflecting on the feedback, I plan to use the provocation suggestions. For example, I liked the activity station idea. 1 station-actual prop like an artefact from another culture. 2- a little dance. 3- Gallery walk. I have reflected on how I can use the activity stations for other provocations. For example, if I am doing a ball and a	**Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities?** During the lesson a member of the executive team took photos of how I was using the PYP attitudes as visuals. The images were then shared via email to the Junior School staff as an example of best practice. A brief description of how I used them was provided. This has sparked some teachers'

when the children discussed what they discovered or felt when they were dancing to it. The check was sharing their ideas with a partner and then sharing as a whole class. It has also affirmed for me that the new teaching strategies I was trialling are successful. For example, the provocation. It was an area that I felt I wasn't doing as well as I could. The Observer commented that the way I had the students dancing to different types of music was a good way to spark their interest and have some of the students' share that wouldn't normally share. As a result, my confidence has improved.

Authentic links to the PYP. For example, standing by the attitudes visuals.

Management strategies and redirecting a student that was off task using encouraging language.

Using the attitudes such as respect others at the start of the lesson was a good way to encourage students that were not keen to dance, join in.

bat, throwing or striking unit I could have apple TV with images up- elite sports people, 2 station- could have different kinds of striking equipment they may have used in the past, 3- gallery walks, 4- ways to teach your partner to hit a ball.

What is the next step in your professional learning journey?

I feel the next step in my professional learning is observing how other teachers assess students' prior knowledge and thinking how I could adapt that to PE.

interest which has led them to ask me further questions about it.

5.5 Hannah's Story: Peeling Back the Layers from an Onion

When I first began my position at the school, Hannah was very welcoming, always checking to see if I had any questions, and ensuring I was made aware where staff meetings were held. Hannah and I had brief daily interactions for six months and then she went on leave. Hannah returned to work feeling very excited about a number of teaching strategies she would like to implement at the beginning of the year. Given the close proximity of my office to her classroom, Hannah on occasion came into my office and to ask what I thought about something new she was trying. For example: when Hannah was expanding the use of 'visible thinking routines' with the students, she prepared her lesson and lay her materials out on tables and asked me 'what do you think?' I always thought her ideas were very innovative and would usually remind her to take a video or photograph of the students work for her digital teaching portfolio. The reason for this was because implementing thinking routines across all areas of the curriculum was one of the strategic foci of the school. Hannah was always happy to share positive stories from her lessons. She would also often invite me to be part of her lessons if she was trialling a new teaching idea. As our relationship developed over the following five months, Hannah also began to share stories from her practice when a lesson did not go as well as she thought it would. For example, she commented:

> That group of year 1 students were a bit off today. It could be because
> I didn't start the lesson as settled and calm as I normally did because I
> am a bit stressed.

 I always thought of myself as a listener and sounding board where Hannah was concerned.

Interaction 1: Exploring the PDO

Observe and Feedback Opportunity

The location of Interaction 1 had to be moved at the last minute due to limited space within the department, as a consulting psychologist needed to administer a number of tests to one of the students. I suggested the psychologist take my office as it was the biggest, and I used one of the Learning Enrichment Teacher's offices. The office was

very small with a large desk in it. I attempted to make the physical environment less formal by placing Hannah's and my chair at one corner of the desk so that it did not appear that I was sitting behind a large desk during the interview to address any potentially perceived potential power relationship.

The school had introduced an Observation and Feedback PDO for the teachers within the Junior School. The Observer was a member of the Junior School executive team. The teachers were asked to identify an area of focus for the observation and this was recorded on the professional partner reflection sheet, which was submitted to the observer. The Observation and Feedback process continued as follows:

- Teachers completed the first page of the reflection sheet
- Teachers arranged a time for the Observer to watch their lesson
- The Observer met with the teacher 5-10 minutes prior to the lesson to briefly discuss the lesson focus and other areas on which teachers required feedback
- The Observer completed their observation notes and met with the teacher to go through the feedback.

Hannah chose to focus on the area of student engagement in her Observation and Feedback PDO. She informed me that this was because she felt that since her subject area was a particular area in which student engagement was very important.

> For me, for a unit to be successful, the students need to be highly engaged in the first lesson. I wanted [the observer] to assess that.

It appeared that this focus area was more complex than Hannah had initially anticipated and therefore the PDO may have met professional needs that she had not previously identified:

> She [the observer] has given me positive feedback and so in some ways I am doing things right. She has also given me things that I could have done and one of the main ones was introducing the central idea. Instead of saying this is our central idea, doing an activity to get them engaged and then moving on to what the central idea is. That is definitely something I would do in the future.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I felt it was important to uncover the reasons behind Hannah's choice of focus area for the Observation and Feedback PDO. This was because, firstly, one of the questions on the PGSA Guide is about identification of professional learning need, and secondly, from my own perspective as a regular visitor to her classroom, student engagement is one of her strengths.*

Hannah's response to why she focused on student engagement unfolded:

> I think student engagement is really important in my lessons. I really want all the children to be engaged. Also it was the first lesson in the new unit of work. For me, for the unit to be successful, they need to be highly engaged in the first lesson. If I don't have high student engagement for the first lesson, then I would really need to reassess where I was heading with that unit. I wanted [the observer] to assess that.

> I think it is one of my strengths but I also wanted feedback on did the activities that I provided create that engagement. Did I choose activities that got the students enthusiastic about the lesson?

How she had increased her awareness regarding timing of activities within a lesson as a result of participating in the PDO was described:

> I think often when I have a lot of activities planned, I like it to be a fast-paced environment- I will say to myself 'ok, next thing'. One of the comments was that the movement in the room was good between the activities. One of the things [the observer] said was one of the activities was so valuable but I did it so quickly so she said maybe spend more time on that activity. I could have spent more time on it but I was thinking 'I've only got 15mins left- ok next'. I am now more aware of the time I am giving to activities and we have done that activity in the next lesson. Now I am thinking that it is something worthwhile so we will leave the other thing to next week.

Changes made to her practice were also explained:

> One of the other big things is that I would ask children to answer a
> question and I would only ask children that raised their hands. [The
> observer] was saying also call on children that do not have their hands
> raised so that they are aware that I could call on them at any time.

Hannah expanded on this by explaining the reasons why she had made some changes
and why she had not made others.

> They weren't really hard changes to do – they were quite easy things
> to incorporate. I am more aware of them. To have the activity before
> the central idea, I would have to be extremely organised to have that
> ready.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *It appears that Hannah has evaluated the strategies put forward within the
> PDO 'observe and feedback' and developed a 'grab and ditch' approach
> depending on her beliefs about the strategy, if it would enhance engagement
> for the children, and her perceptions about the person offering the
> professional development.*
>
> *It was interesting to see how Hannah's responses changed during the
> interview. For example, towards the end she always answered the questions
> and followed them up with evidence from her practice, whereas at the
> beginning there were long pauses when she was asked to think of examples
> from her practice. I felt this interview was similar to peeling an onion
> depending on her response. If Hannah could provide evidence, then we
> would peel back another layer. At one point during the interview I reassured
> her that it was quite ok to be at the awareness stage and at times it is ok to
> stay within that awareness stage (that onion layer) and develop a plan to
> adopt when she feels ready to peel back the next layer.*

Interaction 2: Leading Hannah through self-assessment of professional growth

Interaction 2 took place in my office one week after the Interaction 1. I placed a copy
of the PGSA Guide with the transcript from the first interview on one side of the table

for Hannah. I sat at right angles to her so as I could add her reflection to the electronic version of the tool.

Throughout the process of completing the PGSA Guide with the participants, I was very aware that the focus was self-assessment of professional growth using the APST standards as the criteria, and as such different people may very well interpret the standards in different ways. I felt as long as the participants could provide evidence, and explain why they wanted to include a particular aspect within their self-assessment; I would be open-minded about its inclusion. For example, Hannah chose to begin at column 5 on the PGS Guide: Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research:

> With this one [descriptor within the standard] (collaborative relationships) having the observer observe the lesson would come under collaborative relationships. Getting the feedback and also having her engage in the lesson. I feel that that has expanded my working relationship with [the observer] as well. It was collaborative in that she was giving me feedback.

When Hannah began discussing this, my initial thought was that within the lead box the standards state 'Initiate collaborative relationships'. I decided to give Hannah the opportunity to explain further, to encourage her to go on talking by nodding and smiling and she responded with:

> Because she observed and I have had that collaborative experience, I am now happy to share with her things that are working well. For example, the year 3 unit that she observed, when I would see her, I would share other things we were doing in the year 3 unit and other year level units as well. So the observation started the sharing of what I am doing with her.

It appeared to be important for Hannah to include the collaborative relationship with the observer on the tool. It also seemed that Hannah felt comfortable sharing the positive stories from her classroom so I attempted to delve deeper by asking: "If you were questioning your planning of a content area to implement or not with a unit,

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would you feel comfortable discussing it with the observer?" Hannah stated that she would feel comfortable asking the observer's advice but in this case, it was not necessary for her to do so.

Throughout the process of completing the PGSA Guide, Hannah initiated discussions by choosing to answer the guiding questions. There did not appear to be any structure in how she decided which question to answer on the PGSA Guide. For example, she began with the collaborative relationships (column 5) and then jumped to responding to the question about identifying professional learning, column 3: Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities. This discussion then led to Hannah narrowing down what professional learning she required in order to respond to the observer's statement about the lesson:

> In regards to the lesson observation, one of the big things was [the observer] said to have the introductory activity before introducing the central idea. So that would mean more PYP training.

A discussion about goal setting for the upcoming PYP conference she was going to attend evolved from this statement. On occasion, Hannah referred back to the transcript from Interaction 1, providing what appeared to be necessary prompts to assist her in answering some of the other questions on the PGSA Guide. Towards the end of the interaction, Hannah re-read the PGSA Guide and the transcript to see if she could add any further information. I waited until there was a long pause and then I highlighted an aspect that she had not considered. This related to a statement she might like to make about how she realised the importance of some activities. I pointed out that there was one particular activity that was important but she wanted to move the students through. Hannah responded by stating:

> Also with that activity, I wasn't aware that it was so valuable but when she [the observer] saw the activity and said I could have spent more time on it…. I thought it was valuable but I didn't think it was so valuable … That was interesting to think about because I now realise I didn't always think about how valuable an activity can be.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *When Hannah made this comment, it indicated to me the extent to which she had transferred the information gained from the PDO into learning about her own practice. I feel I am coming to the realisation that I play an important role within this process as in the example of Hannah above. I continue to think of Hannah's experience as an onion layer and felt that each time we could peel back a layer together; she developed a deeper understanding of the professional development experience which led her thinking about the next steps for her in professional learning for her professional growth.*

At the conclusion of the interaction I asked if there was anything more Hannah would like to add, as I felt that there were potentially more valuable learnings from our experience of opening the door to her PDO experience to be included within her completed PGSA Guide. I drew her attention to her description of how she had included the observer's feedback into her lessons. I also pointed out to her that it was through her evaluation, based on feedback given to her about the central idea and the implementation of that approach into her practice, that she had identified that she needed to learn more about PYP. She had taken the observer's feedback to the next level because now she had established goals that she would like to meet when she attended the PYP conference. This emphasises the importance of the knowledge gained by the middle level leader from taking part in the opening the door to the PDO process and how necessary it is to facilitate teacher reflection.

Reflection on my suggestion prompted Hannah into thinking about the upcoming conference in more detail and what she wanted to achieve as part of her professional learning. The suggestion was that the process of completing the PGSA Guide had been useful to her with respect to recording her enhanced knowledge and change of practice, but it also provided her with a means to look towards a future direction:

> Also with the collaborative section, before I had my leave, I was really
> into that networking and collaborative relationships (gave example of
> PYP Sydney conference and networking emailing each other and with
> teacher from another school observing lesson and vice versa). Going

to this conference, I really want to get some more networking happening. Also wanting to revamp the units that we do and I just want to get lots of ideas from other teachers.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I am coming to the realisation that the process of self-assessment is in itself a professional learning experience for both the teachers and myself as a middle level leader. The teachers are coming to learn more about what they actually understood from the PDO. Hannah is coming to understand what she individually requires with respect to the next step she needs to take in her professional learning journey. The observer suggested an alternative way to present the central idea to the children, and it was through this process, (i.e. our interaction opening the door to the PDO and using the PGSA Guide to self-assess professional growth) that Hannah identified that for her to consider this alternative approach, she would need more PYP training. Because she thought deeply about the idea, she identified that she needed a way of getting there. I am learning more about the interaction with the tool as a means to delve deeper into the PDO experience, which is more than I anticipated?*

Table 5.6 shows Hannah's PGSA Guide for the observer and feedback PDO.

Table 5.6

Hannah's Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide

	Professional Development Opportunity: Classroom observation and feedback		
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice			
APST descriptor as criteria	Understand the relevant and appropriate sources of professional learning for teachers.	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.	Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice	Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research
Guiding questions		**To what extent to you feel you have learnt from the professional learning?** **Confirmed aspects of best practice?** Through participation in this professional learning opportunity, it has confirmed for me that I am implementing aspects of best practice within my lessons based on the positive feedback. For example, the movement within the classroom, using the space and giving directions was highlighted as an area of strength. I believe this is important for learning and student engagement to have them moving within the classroom and looking at different displays around the room. **Enhanced knowledge about a topic area?**	**What is the next step in professional learning journey?** Through participating in this professional learning and reflecting on the feedback, I have been able to set goals for my next professional learning opportunity which is the PYP conference. For example, the suggestion was made to have the introductory activity for the unit before introducing the central idea to the students. At the	**Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities?** This professional learning has given me the opportunity to expand my collaborative relationships. For example, I felt it was collaborative in that we discussed the feedback and now I will share other things we are doing within the unit that she observed, and other units I am teaching. I would

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Through participation and my constant reflection on the feedback given to me, I have enhanced my knowledge about student engagement and applied this learning to my classroom practice.

Applied learning to classroom practice?

Firstly, I now understand that creating an environment where all the children feel I could call on them to answer at any time is important. For example, after I asked a question within my lesson, I used to only ask children that raised their hands. I now call on other students that do not have their hands raised as well.

Secondly, after reflecting on the feedback, I understand the importance of taking the time to be aware of the time allocated to the activities within the lesson and how valuable they are in relation to the central idea. For example, I used to allocate 15 minutes for each rotational activity whereas now I am thinking that it is something worthwhile so we will leave the other task until the following week.

conference I will seek out opportunities to further enhance my understanding in this area.

How do you target professional learning opportunities?

I target my professional learning to improve my practice through my constant professional evaluation and reflection cycle during my lessons. For example, I am always asking myself 'are the students engaged?' and if they are not 'why, what isn't working well?' and 'what do I need to change?'.

also feel comfortable to ask her advice for any future units.

Networking with other teachers is very important to me. Before my leave, I used to communicate with the teacher network from attending a PYP conference.

By attending the PYP conference soon for teachers, I really would like to seek out opportunities to network with other teachers and communicate after the conference.

Hannah's story from Phase Three

Interaction 3: Exploring the PDO and leading Hannah through self-assessment of professional growth

The PDO experience chosen by Hannah for Phase Three was the International Baccalaureate PYP conference. As part of Hannah's self-assessment of her professional growth in Phase Two, she identified two goals which are shown in her reflection tool- PGSA guide, PYP conference, Table 5.6. The following is an extract from the guide:

> Goals for my next professional learning opportunity, which is the PYP conference:
>
> 1) The suggestion was made to have the introductory activity for the unit before introducing the central idea to the students. At the conference, I will seek out opportunities to further enhance my understanding in this area.
>
> 2) I really would like to seek out opportunities to network with other teachers and communicate after the PYP conference.

Interaction 3 took place in my office, sitting at right angles so as we could view the electronic copy on the computer screen. Hannah's previous PGSA Guide completed during Phase Two was placed on the table in order to reference the goals. When Hannah asked whether she had had any opportunities to address the networking at the conference she replied:

> The best part of the conference was opportunities to network. The presenter established an edmodo page [online network] so everyone at the conference in our workshop is now on the edmodo page. That was established before we went to the conference so throughout the conference and now we are able to share ideas and planning. I shared a year 4 unit - taking action where they sent artwork to a Mt Fuji conference. I was able to share that with the other teachers through edmodo.

Her response regarding the central idea goal in terms of having the students inquire into the central idea rather than tell them:

I have changed the way I taught the central idea and it went really well. I did the provocation first and then going into what the central idea is going to be. So we did a see, think wonder (thinking routine) then looking at Utube. With year 5, we are looking at the bombing of Hiroshima and the story of Shiradko and the story of 1000 cranes. I have had photos of the dome that was bombed, and photos of the peace park and had the children walk around –what do you see, what do you think and now what do you think we are going to be looking at this term? Rather than telling them. Because they were not looking at photos of the actual bombing, they thought we were looking at famous landmarks. So, they had not linked it to the bombing of Hiroshima. This could be a good thing or it might not be? I did want them to link it to the bombing but they were thinking outside the square.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *As Hannah concluded her response to the central idea goal, I began thinking the PGSA Guide is a record of teachers' professional learning journey which captures their professional growth, as a snapshot, at that point in time. Each PGSA Guide reflects the teacher's individual learning journey and growth. But, it doesn't stop there. Why not take the focus of the previous PGSA guide and explore whether this new PDO has or has not contributed to the teacher's growth in that focus area? I did this by using a prompting question.*

As a means of exploring Hannah's goal regarding the central idea more deeply, I used the prompting question: How successful do you think the thinking routine was in terms of student engagement?

She responded:

I think that it has worked a lot better because it is creating more student engagement because they are thinking 'wow what are we doing this term?'. Instead of explaining what we are doing first and then doing a thinking routine.

Table 5.7

Hannah's Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide (Phase Three)

Professional Learning Opportunity: PYP Conference			
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice			
Goals set before attending the PYP conference: network with other language teachers and enhance knowledge about teaching the central idea			
APST Descriptor as criteria	Understand the relevant and appropriate sources of professional learning for teachers.	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.	Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice	Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research
		To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning? **Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice?** I felt this professional learning opportunity was a refresher about inquiry cycles and Kath Murdoch's teaching strategies e.g. tuning in activities, chunk chew check.	**How have you applied your learning to your classroom practice?** By reflecting on the observation and feedback professional learning opportunity and the PYP conference, I have changed the way I present the central idea to the children. Recently I did the provocation first before discussing the central idea. For example, with year 5, we looked at the bombing of Hiroshima and the story of 1000 cranes. I placed photos of the dome that was bombed and the peace park. I had the students walking around participating	**Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities?** By attending the conference, it has given me the opportunity to expand my collaborative relationships with other language teachers. For example, an edmodo page was established with the conference participants before attending. This enabled us to share planning ideas throughout the conference. I shared a year 4 unit –

Enhanced knowledge about a topic area?

I have enhanced my knowledge about central ideas. For example, some teachers teach the same central idea amongst year levels e.g. P-4. The central idea could be Japanese writing systems change depending on situations.

Another way is using the conceptual understandings as the central ideas or having more grammatical based central ideas. I have returned from the conference thinking we may need to look at the way we teach the central idea.

in a see, think, wonder thinking routine. What do you see, what do you think and what do you think we are going to be looking at this term?

By presenting the central idea this way, it created an atmosphere where more students were engaged because the they were thinking 'wow what are we doing this term' instead of me telling them the topic area.

What is the next step in your professional learning journey?

The conference gave me a good review of the inquiry cycles and PYP but it didn't give me examples of how a language teacher teachers in PYP. Therefore, I feel my next step in planning my PYP professional learning opportunities is through networking with other language teachers 1:1. One way I can continue networking is through edmodo.

taking action where they sent artwork to the Mt Fuji conference.

Since networking after the conference through edmodo, I have changed some of the ways I present information. For example, a French teacher shared how he presents all his central ideas in French. I am now putting the main points within the central idea in Japanese. E.g. Natural disasters (in Japanese) necessitate an emergency response in Japan (in Japanese). I then go through it with the children.

I have also increased my awareness of how different teachers differentiate.

Hannah provided an example of how, as a result of a sharing session that occurred during the conference, she has changed her practice in the way she displays the central idea within the classroom:

> In particular, there was a language teacher who had some really good things that I have implemented in the classroom. For example, he had all of his central ideas in French. I'm now putting the central idea in Japanese. Not completely but the main words in Japanese and going through that with the children at the beginning of the units. Another example would be – Natural Disasters necessitate an emergency response in Japan.

Hannah provided examples of forms of evidence without any prompting from myself. She appeared to be unaware of the significance of this change in her approach from the one that she adopted during Phase Two. Table 5.7 shows Hannah's PGSA Guide for the PYP Conference PDO.

5.6 Reflections on the Self-Assessment Experience

After Phases Two and Three were completed each participant was interviewed in my office. The purpose of this interview was two-fold: firstly, to explore the teachers' reflections and experiences of the use of professional standards to self-assess their professional growth; and secondly, to explore processes that might be put in place to support teachers to self-assess their professional growth. The data in this section were converged from the interviews conducted with the four participants and are presented through my reflections, together with the voices of the participants.

5.6.1 Reflection tool – PGSA Guide document.

Hannah explained how the questions on the reflection tool assisted her in breaking down the statements within the standards in order for her to understand the criteria:

> I think it is great to have the questions as a guide and having read them,
> I then thought of other things I wanted to do. It is definitely worthwhile
> having the questions on there as a guide to be able to respond to the

criteria. For me I would need those questions there. Sometimes I was also a bit unsure about where my answers would go and having the questions I was able to respond to the particular question (descriptor).

Rebecca appeared excited and confident as she discussed how the questions on the tool assisted her in bringing the knowledge acquired during the professional development workshop to the surface and in the forefront of her mind:

The different criteria and questions helped to bring things out or draw things out like the question 'how have you applied your learning to your classroom practice' made me really think about what I was doing and bringing to light all the things I am doing and what I am going to do.

The one about 'how do you access current best practice research?' I didn't think I was doing any research but then I realised that accessing the websites and using the wiki and using the OCC [policy documents] and talking to others. That is accessing best practice research and I wouldn't have realised.

There is a proviso of course with respect to the quality of on-line resources that Rebecca might consider to be relevant to her practice. However, it is evident that she has come to the realisation here that the process she uses might be considered appropriate to accessing current best practice research. The knowledge was created through the interaction that took place between Rebecca and myself (as middle level leader) as we completed the PGSA Guide.

During Rebecca's third interaction, I expressly attempted to elicit her perceptions about how the questions assisted her within the self-assessment process as well as the potential impact a safe environment might have had in eliciting her reflections and understandings. Rebecca's response was:

The questions are guiding you and it channels you to think in a certain direction and then once you get used to the questions, the answers go in different directions anyway and it tends to spark off something else. The biggest thing is getting that thought process down on paper and the

questions to extract the information. I have gone to a PDO and then to have this experience where I can say 'wow' this is what I got from this and this is where I am going with it.

Helen expressed her own feelings of accomplishment as she discussed how self-assessing her growth against the standards confirmed that she was implementing best practice in accordance with Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) requirements for the project. She stated this had also increased her confidence in the role she had taken on as the coach within the project:

In a way, it was quite flattering using the standards as the criteria because I thought oh yes, I obviously have moved and can take things to a greater depth and the meaning of why I am doing things.

Helen further explained how, by using the PGSA Guide as the self-assessment tool, she realised she had implemented more of the coaching role than she had first anticipated. It was evident through her dialogue and facial expression that she was pleased with herself and felt a sense of achievement as she kept sitting back and smiling and pointing to the fourth box on the right of the PGSA Guide (This was the lead teacher box). Helen reiterated that ISQ had stated that one of the goals for the coaches involved in the project was that they meet the leading teacher standard within the APST:

Our mentors at ISQ said that what they are hoping for is that we will meet these standards within the leading teacher column. So now, I think yes, that is what they are wanting us to do and it made me feel more confident in that perhaps I am taking on more of the role than I thought. The teachers had adopted the monitoring and evaluating strategies as a result of my advisory role. It was probably what they had set out for us to do, but I hadn't really realised that I had achieved this (points to the descriptors for columns four and five of the PGSA Guide).

Sally discussed how she found the PGSA Guide useful in comparing this process to other instances when she had returned from PDO experiences. Sally's response below

was to the question: Have you found the process of self-reflecting on the PDO against the standards beneficial?

> Yes, it is because often you don't do it, you just go and do a PD and you come back and sometimes you use a bit of it and sometimes you don't. Often you just forget what you have learnt. You will get given print out sheets – the Powerpoint presentation you have got and then you just file it and you never even look at it again. I think being able to reflect on questions like this, you are able to set some goals about how you are going to use that within your practice rather than just letting it be forgotten. Obviously, there are always things that are going to stand out to you when you do a professional development and you tend to carry those but I think by doing an active reflection on it and setting some goals and setting some follow up for learning you kind of engage in what you have learnt a little bit more.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *The experiences of completing the PGSA Guide with Rebecca and Hannah confirmed for me that if I had carried out an in-depth uncovering process, unnecessary, time-consuming repetition would have taken place and may have stemmed the flow of dialogue between us. As a result, we were able to place answers to the PGSA guide questions onto the document in a single process, thereby eliminating the necessity for two separate interviews.*
>
> *It was interesting to discover that if you invest time initially so that the teachers really come to understand the process, this may have an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness (well it seems so) of the whole process in terms of how self-assessment against the APST might be rolled out as a whole school improvement initiative – if effort and time are put into this process at the initial phases, then is it possible.*
>
> *I believe that my understanding of the self-assessment process and use of the PGSA guide as a reflection tool increased over time. By the time I got to Phase Three I was very familiar with all the guiding questions and the prompts required to elicit the necessary information from the participants.*

In Phase Two I had a lot going on in my head about the research process itself. Am I getting the information required to answer the research questions? I needed to forward think; what are the questions on the guide? Can we delve deeper into specific questions? But the main thing was, I needed to keep that conversation going because the learning and understanding was taking place through the dialogue and I couldn't interrupt the teachers' flow. I had to keep it going and I was a bit nervous as well. Compared to Phase Three, both participants and I were more relaxed having gone through the process before and having developed a greater understanding of that process.

5.6.2 Support processes required to self-assess professional growth.

Rebecca discussed how the process had assisted her in bringing the knowledge from the PDO to the surface and that the support from myself as middle level leader had assisted her in developing goals to move from the awareness stage to change of practice. Rebecca's response below was to the question: Has the process of self-assessing your professional growth had an impact on your teaching during the last six weeks?

> I think it definitely has in terms of the process and I may not have done anything yet but it has definitely planted the seeds with where I want to go from here. That provocation stuff, every new unit now I will change the provocation and it has changed my teaching and you can see the kids enjoying it. As far as the planning of units what I want to do, having done this process has made what I want to achieve clearer.

> Just making sure that the research-based strategies I am using are valid and making sure what I say I am going to do that, I am getting in there and doing it. Which is also having a positive impact on my teaching. Also understanding the support that I need, knowing that I might need some more relief time here and there or I might need to meet with someone regularly or observe someone. To talk to someone like you about that has made me feel that I can ask for those things if I need

them. I will try and get these things up and running and refer back to this what I want to achieve when I am meeting with people like management and when I am going and observing others, I can refer back to this and say these are the things that have come out of it. I think it definitely has had a positive impact on my teaching.

Rebecca continued to discuss the benefit of going through this process in terms of how the timing between the professional development opportunity and the first interaction was useful. She also pointed out how the timing between each interview gave her the opportunity for reflection:

> It has been a process instead of all happening at once because I had so much information. It was over an hour for that first interview and the way it was divided into several interviews was great because it gave you time in between to reflect on what you have done and maybe think of something else. If we tried to do it all in one hit it would be too overwhelming.

Helen stated that the interaction between us during the self-assessment process was one of the key aspects, which assisted her to self-assess her professional growth using the PGSA Guide. Below was her response to the question: Have you found the process useful?

> Yes, because you have that higher order thinking so you were able to lead me to thinking along the lines of meeting the criteria because if it was left up to me I would still be thinking of it in very simple terms like this section (pointed to descriptor).

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *Helen's example today has highlighted to me the extent of my role within the process as a middle level leader. I feel I am more than just a guide, I am leading their learning about not only about the PDO in terms of their professional growth, but also their learning about how to self-assess using the APST.*

The following two examples, as well as my own reflections, aided my understanding of my position within the process and the significance of the interaction between the teacher, the PGSA Guide and myself. Helen's response to this question highlighted to me how important my role was within the self-assessment process and how, in order for me to guide her through this process, it was important that I had knowledge about her practice. I also realised that the use of dialogue assisted in enlightening her understanding of the PDO in terms of her professional growth. Below is the first example of how during the process, when Helen appeared to feel at a standstill when completing the tool, I shared my own observations of her professional growth in relation to the coaching role:

> Last year you remained virtually silent during teacher/coach meetings. However, this year I have observed a significant change in your dialogue with the teachers. You are now posing questions to prompt their thinking. You let them talk and tell you things but if you disagree with what they are saying, you now have the courage to pose a question back to them in a nice way whereas before you probably would have left it.

When carrying out the process of completing the PGSA Guide with Hannah, I felt I could not type fast enough as she answered the guiding questions on the tool, so I decided to work from a hard copy rather than the electronic version. As a result, the dialogue was continuous. Hannah expressed the view that the more she talked the more her ideas became clearer:

> I think the whole process of talking about the evaluation (observe and feedback PDO) is the most important thing because it has just reinforced the whole information from the PDO and made myself more aware of where I am heading. If I hadn't gone through this process, I would have taken [the observer's] feedback and thought 'yep I will try and do that' but because I have gone through this whole process, it is actually exciting and makes me want to implement [the observer's] feedback.

Rebecca's statements below also illustrated the importance of the dialogue that occurred between us, how we interacted with the tool, and how talking through the professional development workshop assisted her to make meaning of the information and discuss her learning:

> Talking through the PYP workshop was really useful because it was so valuable for me and gave me so many really good ideas and so much I can use. Therefore, to sit down and do something that is very in-depth about that has been extremely beneficial and it gives me something to refer back to and refocused me back on it because it was [specialist] PYP specific. It was right when I needed the professional development and then to do this has made it clearer and sharper in my mind about what I can then do with it.

What appears to be one of the significant findings from this phase of the study is the change in the level of support provided to the teachers by the middle level leader. However, the teachers still emphasised that they needed to talk to someone else about their learning from the PDO in order to enlighten their understanding in terms of their professional growth. In Phase Two significant guidance and dialogue was required to support the teachers' learning about their professional growth. The PDOs selected in Phase Three were primarily focused on meeting the professional growth goals that were developed during Phase Two. The decision to begin the process of self-assessment by addressing these goals was distinctly different to the approach taken in Phase Two, where we began by opening the door to the teachers' PDO experiences. The decrease in the degree of support provided by myself as middle level leader may have been influenced by:

a) the goal-oriented Phase Three approach;

b) the use of the particular PDO's chosen by the teachers for their Phase Three self-assessment of professional growth;

c) the increase in the teachers' and my own understanding of the reflection tool-PGSA Guide and the self-assessment process.

The teachers stated that they perceived the PGSA Guide as a working document with which to foster discussion with management about their professional growth over the course of the year and their future directions. During Phase Three, I became aware of a potential use for an adaptation of the PGSA Guide. A series of PGSA Guides may provide teachers with a means to reflect on their professional growth over time.

5.6.3 Roles of, and forms of, evidence.

Sally described how she found the most useful evidence of her professional growth to be her own thought processes and compared this to before and after taking part in a PDO. When asked what evidence would she suggest supports having updated her knowledge Sally suggested:

> In terms of updating knowledge- I just think of new ideas –what I did not know before. There were certainly things in the TAR that I did not know before. You gave an example of the collaborative relationships…How does this relate to what I do and how much do I need to know more about this to progress?

Sally's thoughts and reflections about evidence during the use of the tool were found to be similar to those of Rebecca and Hannah. When we were finalising the document for presentation within their portfolios, we found that the evidence was intertwined with their answers to the guiding questions. Therefore, we made the decision to delete the evidence boxes at the bottom of the PGSA Guide, as it seemed to be repetitive, as in the example of Rebecca's PGSA Guide:

> As a result, from my enhanced knowledge from the conference, I have implemented the following changes to my practice. Using the learner profiles as visuals for their reflections. For example, the visuals are placed around the area and at the end of the lesson, the children moved to which attitude they feel they had used within the lesson. Another way is having the children write their name on a post-it-note and sticking it to the attribute.

Extract from my reflective journal:

> *I have been coming to grips with the forms of evidence that teachers might find useful to support their self-assessment of their professional growth. This has been largely due to my own perception of evidence as something concrete, similar to what the teachers were asked to provide in their portfolios. I have now come to understand that the role and forms of evidence are more complex.*

 It was the teacher's deep reflections, articulated within an honest, safe and trusting environment, that they found most effective in self-assessing their professional growth as confirmed by Rebecca's comment:

> The biggest thing is getting that thought process down on paper and the questions to extract the information. I have gone to a PDO and then to have this experience where I can say 'wow' this is what I got from this and this is where I am going with it.

5.6.4 Reflection tool – PGSA Guide capturing professional growth.

Dialogue played an important role in synthesising the information to ensure it was recorded clearly and concisely on the PGSA Guide as Rebecca outlined:

> There was an awful lot of information and that is why this is so good because there is so much and you have it in front of you and go ah that's right… that and that… and that….

> To be able to bring it back to the standards is great because when you are out on the coalface doing it, you miss that connection to the standards. You know you are doing good practice but linking it is good. I don't think we have missed anything. The amount of information from that first interview was so much.

Each participant viewed the document in a different way. Sally viewed the document as a stimulus for her reflection. However, as she did not want to record her answers to the questions on the PGSA Guide, she was not provided with a reference point, making

it difficult to evaluate whether it had captured her professional growth. In Sally's case the guide certainly ignited rich discussion in terms of self-assessing her professional growth; however, the dialogue, for Sally, was also about understanding how to conduct research. How each participant chose to engage with the PGSA Guide emphasised to me the different ways people learn and how each individual may wish to take a different approach to completing the reflection tool.

Rebecca, Hannah and Helen felt that the PGSA Guide had captured their professional growth and they outlined the reasons why. Rebecca's focus appeared to be on how she could use the completed guide as a means to communicate with management stating:

> It shows what I have learnt from the PDO and how I have applied it to practice. I am very happy with it. It has captured my professional growth and when I meet with management this will be a great tool as well to use it to talk about what I have got out of and what I am doing from the PDO experiences.

Hannah stated that she felt that the PGSA Guide captured her professional growth as a result of going through the process pointing out:

> The guide is a reflection on my feedback from [the observer] and how I am going to implement that feedback.

Helen found the experience of self-assessing her professional growth to be positive and felt the PGSA Guide illustrated her progress throughout the coaching project:

> It has summarised what I have done and it is tabulated and you see the progress from when you initially met to when we advised to when I've monitored. I have come away thinking quite positive. Yes, I am doing something.

The teachers' views point to the importance of the use of the reflection tool to support the process of self-assessment of professional growth.

5.7 Self-Assessment Conceptualised

The process of self-assessment of professional growth which evolved during Phases Two and Three of this study was found to be very complex and I had difficulty in

articulating that complexity. In order to address this dilemma, I used a diagramming technique as a means through which the complexity was broken down into inputs, outputs and the two processes that took place to produce those outputs. Self-assessment of professional growth involved the use of a reflection tool, PGSA Guide, as a stimulus for reflective dialogue, through which the teachers recaptured and reflected upon their experiences, interpreting them in terms of their own professional growth. The reflection tool, PGSA Guide, was revealed to be a means of capturing the teachers' deeper understandings of their own learning and growth. The dialogue, which took place during Interaction 1 opened the door to the PDO experience. During Interaction 2, the teachers became enlightened as to what the PDO experience meant in terms of their professional growth. Both these processes took place within a safe, honest and trusting learning environment. The emergent themes from the data, Table 5.1, which were found to be necessary to self-assessment of professional growth led me to the conceptualisation of this process as shown in Figure 5.2.

The box on the left-hand side represents the inputs to process 1, *Open the door* to the PDO:

- Teachers' professional development opportunity experiences
- Teachers' evaluations of trialled strategies- grab and ditch approach
- Students' responses to the trialled strategies
- Teachers' and middle level leader's beliefs and perceptions
- Teachers' level of confidence
- Middle level leader's prior knowledge of teachers' practice.

Within process 1, *Open the door* to the PDO, knowledge regarding the teachers' experiences was constructed through the dialogic interaction between the middle level leader and teacher. This was supported by the interplay between reflection and questioning. The outputs from process 1 were found to be inputs to process 2 as shown by the direction of the arrows in Figure 5.2. As we opened the door, teacher knowledge about, and reflections on, their PDO experience, and evaluation and trialling of strategies were brought to the surface through the use of and dialogue, constructing knowledge about the PDO as we gained a deeper understanding of the experience.

Established Safe, Honest and Trusting Learning Environment

Questioning

Reflection

Inputs to process 1

Teachers PDO experience

Teacher evaluation of trialled strategies

Students' responses to the trialled strategies

Teachers level of confidence

Teachers' and middle level leader's beliefs and perceptions

Middle level leader's prior knowledge of teaching practice

Interaction 1 as Process 1:
Open the Door

Dialogic Interaction Middle level leader and teacher

Outputs from process 1

Middle level leader	Teacher
Understanding of PDO experience	Increased understanding of PDO experience
Knowledge of teachers implementation of their PDO learning to practice.	Increased understanding of the sources of evidence to support enhanced knowledge or change of practice.

Inputs to process 2

Setting goals for PG

Middle level leader Prompt for evidence

Reflection-on action

Teacher clarifying interpretation of criteria (standards)

Reflection tool as stimulus

Interaction 2 as Process 2:
Enlightenment

Dialogic Interaction Middle level leader and teacher

Teacher clarifying interpretation of guiding questions

Teacher reflections on prompting questions

Use of prompting questions by middle level leader

Outputs from process 2

Middle level leader understanding

Teacher understanding

Reflection tool

Figure 5.2. Self-Assessment Conceptualised

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With this increased understanding, we then entered into the *Enlightenment* process, during which we made meaning of the PDO experience in terms of each teacher's professional growth. This process is broken down further into seven elements that were always present and necessary to self-assessment process. The interplay between the elements is represented by the inner circle and the double headed arrows. The seven elements were found to be:

- Middle level leader prompts for evidence
- Teacher reflections on prompting questions
- Teacher clarification of interpretation of guiding questions
- Teacher clarification of interpretation of criteria (standards)
- Reflection on action
- Middle level leader prompts for evidence
- Setting goals for professional growth.

The degree to which the elements were used within the *Enlightenment* process was dependent upon the needs of the teachers. For example, the element 'middle level leader prompt for evidence' was used more frequently throughout Hannah's second interaction compared to Rebecca's. This was because Hannah expressed the need to reflect upon the question before she felt able to provide relevant forms of evidence. During this reflection time there were instances where I found it necessary to provide her with prompts to stimulate her thinking about the situation. To a large degree the prompts were drawn from the knowledge I had gained from opening the door to the PDO experience. The arrow from the grouping of these elements leads to the outputs from the *Enlightenment* process: Middle level leader understanding, teacher understanding and reflection tool.

5.8 Key Findings and Conclusion

The complexity of the self-assessment process became evident during Phase Two through the identification of the two key processes that were required to enhance the process of self–assessment of professional growth*: Open the door* to the professional development experience, and *Enlightenment* of that experience in terms of professional growth. Professional growth in this study took place:

> After actively engaging in professional learning, the teachers brought new knowledge and skills to their practice, and through refelection on action changed their practice, thus building and enhancing their knowledge of teaching.

Within this phase of the study I came to understand the significance of my support in leading the teachers' learning. Through my leadership and dialogue, within a safe, honest and trusting environment, the teachers gained a deeper understanding of the professional development experience when we opened the door. When the teachers underwent the second of the processes their understanding of their PDO in terms of their professional growth was achieved through the use of the PGSA Guide together with dialogue, reflection on the professional development experience and the seven elements which were found to be enacted to varying degrees throughout the process.

In Phase Two significant guidance and dialogue was required to support the teachers' learning about their professional growth. The PDOs selected in Phase Three were primarily focused on meeting the professional growth goals that were developed during Phase Two. The decision to begin the process of self-assessment by addressing these goals was distinctly different to the approach taken in Phase Two, where we began by opening the door to the teachers' PDO experiences.

Each teacher viewed the PGSA Guide in different ways. For example Sally saw the document as a stimulus for her reflection. All teachers felt that the PGSA Guide captured their professional growth. The teachers advised that the questions on the PGSA Guide assisted them to break down statements within the standards, thus aiding their understanding of the criteria for self-assessment. The questions were also found to assist the teachers to bring their knowledge acquired from the PDO to the surface, and in some cases made them more aware of what knowledge they had actually acquired and implemented into their practice. One teacher pointed out the advantage of using the PGSA Guide with respect to her PDO, comparing the process to instances when she had returned from other PDO experiences when "you just forget what you have learnt". The support from myself during the process assisted teachers to develop goals to move from the awareness stage to change to practice.

The timing between when the PDO took place and the first interaction and the timing between each interview was found to be useful in providing the teachers with opportunities for reflection. I came to understand during Phases Two and Three:

a) the significance of the interaction between the teachers and myself as each teacher completed the reflection tool, PGSA Guide;

b) how important my role was within the self-assessment process; and

c) the importance of my prior knowledge of the teachers' practices.

The teachers needed to talk through their PDO experiences in order to enlighten their understanding in terms of their professional growth. The guiding questions on the tool were useful but it was the dialogue with myself which aided teacher understanding. Evidence was intertwined with the teachers' answers to the guiding questions and it was the teachers' deep reflections, articulated within an honest, safe and trusting environment that they found most effective in self-assesssing their professional growth. The self-assessment process was also found to enable two of the teachers to identify gaps in their knowledge and practice. Through their experience of our interaction and my use of prompting questions they came to reflect upon their practice and set goals as a means of moving forward in their professional learning journey.

During Phase Three as a middle level leader, through my interactions with the participants, I perceived a potential use for an adaptation of the PGSA Guide. A series of PGSA Guides might have provided teachers with a means to reflect on their professional growth and a basis on which to develop a learning plan. The teachers perceived the PGSA Guide as a working document by which to foster discussion with management about their professional growth over the course of the year and their future directions.

In chapter 6 the findings from the holistic case are reviewed and the conceptual model of the process of self-assessment, Figure 5.2 is developed further to answer the three research sub-questions.

CHAPTER 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 in answering the first three of the research sub-questions defined in Chapters 1 and 3. Section 6.2 presents the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework (Figure 6.2) developed from the interpretation of the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The evolution of the framework is discussed in this chapter as each of the first three research sub questions are answered. Figure 6.1 shows a graphical representation of the structure of this chapter.
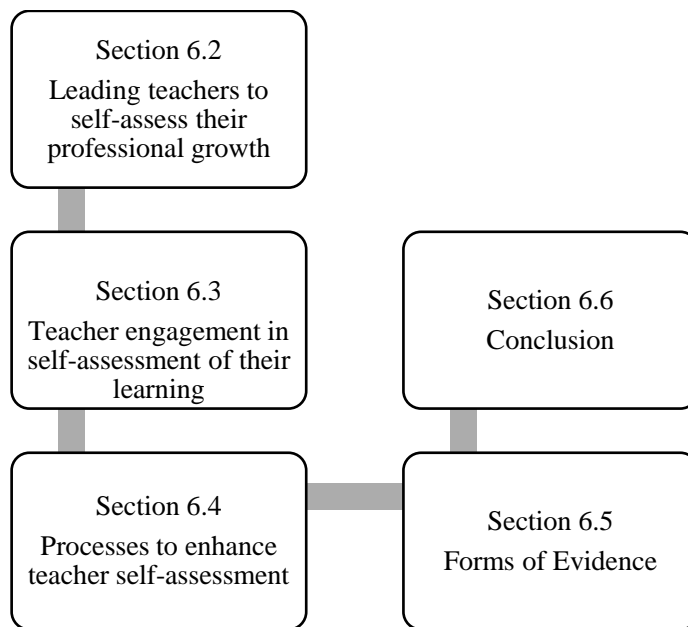
Figure 6.1. Chapter Structure

6.2 Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth

The *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework, shown in Figure 6.2, has been developed from the interpretation of the findings from Phases Two and Three of the case study. Initially teachers took part in a Professional Development Opportunity (PDO). They then engaged in self-assessing their learning from that PDO by moving through the *Corridor of Experimentation*, during which time they trialled strategies based on the knowledge gained from the PDO, within their own contexts.

Middle Level Leader	Teacher
Understanding of PDO experience	Increased understanding of PDO experience
Knowledge of teachers implementation of their PDO learning to practice.	Increased understanding of the sources of evidence to support enhanced knowledge or change of practice.

Inputs to process 2

Use of prompting questions by middle level leader

Setting goals for PG

Outputs from process 2

Middle level leader Prompt for evidence

Reflection tool as stimulus

Process 2:
Enlightenment

Dialogic Interaction Middle level leader and teacher

Reflection-on action

Teacher clarifying interpretation of criteria (standards)

Teacher clarifying interpretation of guiding questions

Teacher reflections on prompting questions

Outputs from process 1

Process 1:
Open the Door

Dialogic Interaction Middle level leader and teacher

Reflection

Questioning

Established Safe, Honest and Trusting Learning Environment

Teacher Self-Assessment of Professional Growth (PGSA Guide)

Other Outputs

Middle Level Leader Understanding	Teacher Understanding
The importance of the relationship between middle level leader and teacher	Professional learning experience
	Forms of evidence
	Role of the standards
	Increased confidence to self-assess using the PGSA Guide
	Ownership over their professional learning and growth journey

Corridor of Experimentation

Professional Development Opportunity

Figure 6.2. Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth Framework

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Through dialogic interaction, utilising reflection and questioning, the middle level leader and the teacher *Opened the door* to greater understanding of the PDO experience. Through the process of *Enlightenment* knowledge gained from the PDO was brought to the surface, reflected upon, understood and interpreted by the participants in terms of their professional growth. Opening the door and becoming enlightened required a safe, honest and trusting learning environment and my guidance, as the middle level leader.

An output from the *Enlightenment* process is a completed Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide (PGSA Guide) which documents each teacher's understanding of their professional growth (Tables 4.2-4.9 from chapter 4 and Tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.5-5.7 from chapter 5). The evolution of the framework presented in Figure 6.2 is discussed as each of the first three research sub questions are answered, represented in t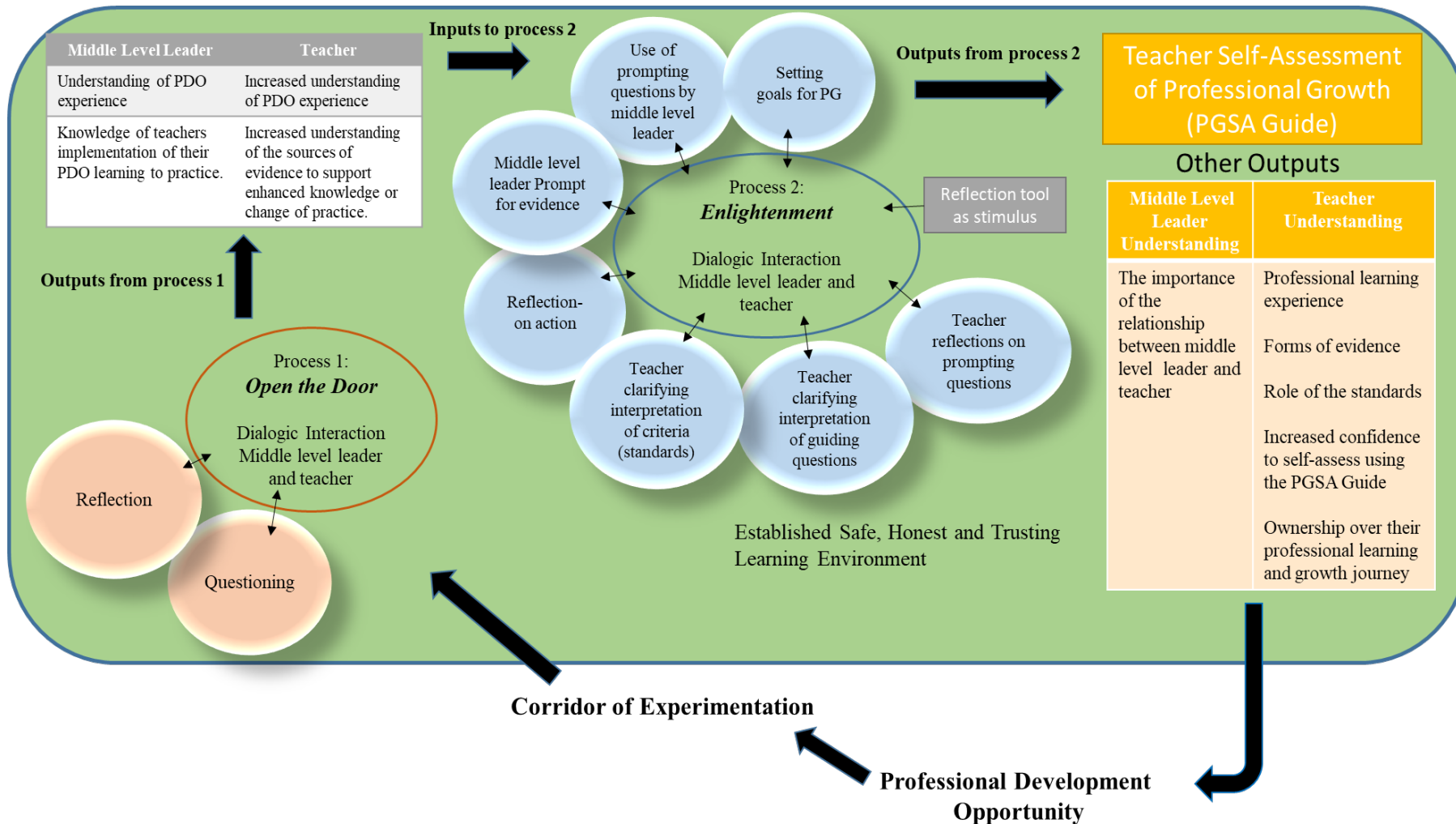he graphical representation of the structure of this chapter (Figure 6.1). Section 6.2 addresses how teachers engaged in self-assessing their professional learning from the PDO. The processes which enhanced teacher self-assessment of professional growth are discussed in section 6.3. Forms of evidence to support self-assessment of professional growth are discussed in section 6.4.

6.3 Teacher Engagement in Self-Assessment of their Professional Learning

This section answers the research sub question: How do teachers engage in the process of self-assessing their professional learning? The answer to this question can largely be found by exploring what took place during what I have termed the *Corridor of Experimentation* (see Figure 6.2), that is the period during which the teachers trialled strategies developed from the knowledge acquired from the PDO, and reflected on their success based on their students' responses. Prior to carrying out their self-assessment of professional growth, the teachers were provided with time to develop, absorb, discuss, and practice the new knowledge acquired from their participation in a PDO. Table 6.1 shows how the *Corridor of Experimentation* manifested itself across the three phases of the case study.

Table 6.1

Corridor of Experimentation across the Holistic Case

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Corridor of Experimentation</th></tr>
<tr><th>Phase 1</th><th>Phase 2</th><th>Phase 3</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>During their participation in the year-long PDO Teachers as Researchers (TAR) project, the teachers implemented their learning from the PDO into their practice by **trialling strategies** developed within the cycles of the Action Learning Action Research (ALAR) process.

There was evidence of a **Grab and Ditch approach** during each of the ALAR cycles.</td>
<td>**Trialling of strategies** was dependent upon: a) the level of **confidence** teachers felt in implementing the acquired knowledge from the PDO; b) the degree to which the **PDO aligned** with their perceptions and beliefs; c) their level of **motivation to change** their practice; and d) whether or not they had identified **gaps in knowledge or practice** or both.

Evidence of a **Grab and Ditch approach** for all four teachers. Teachers **trialled strategies** after attending the PDO and, **depending on student responses**, they added the strategy to their teaching tool bag or discarded it.</td>
<td>One teacher adopted the **grab and ditch approach** and one teacher did not undergo the Corridor of Experimentation.</td>
</tr>
</table>

The teachers who participated in Phase One of the study had developed trusting relationships within the learning community which was formed to conduct the professional development opportunity, the TAR Project. However, during the Focus Group session, they were unwilling to share their professional learning with the whole group, rather, it became evident that the teachers preferred to dialogue with specific trusted others, be it teachers or the middle level leader. The Action Learning Action Research (ALAR) process, used within the TAR Project, shown in Figure 6.3, provided the teachers with the guiding structure within which they were able to gather knowledge gained from the professional development workshops to develop a plan to trial a teaching strategy, observe the student's response to that strategy, and reflect on the outcomes. The initial workshop involved presentations from the project facilitator and an Educational Psychologist on aspects of the topic of the research. Teachers were given links to current research literature and worked in groups to disseminate information to inform the development of their plan to trial a strategy. Conversation

Cafes, during which the teachers interacted with one another to discuss their reflections and gather feedback about their strategy implementations, were organised four to six weeks after each professional development workshop. During the conversation cafes, the facilitators of the TAR Project utilised prompting questions to elicit deeper reflection in preparation for each of the next ALAR cycles. Mentoring was given to the teachers throughout the ALAR process.

Figure 6.3. Action Learning Action Research (ALAR) Process in The Teachers as Researchers (TAR) Project

The teachers who took part in Phases Two and Three identified potential gaps in their teaching and/or practice after attending a PDO. This came about through listening to, gaining feedback from, and conversations with others. Sally, Helen, Hannah and Rebecca used the grab and ditch approach which involved trialling strategies in the classrooms and their reflection on their students' responses to those strategies: reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) and single-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Whether or not the teachers trialled specific strategies was dependent upon: a) the level of confidence teachers felt in implementing the acquired knowledge from the PDO; b) the degree to which the PDO aligned with their perceptions and beliefs; c) their level of motivation to change their practice; and d) whether or not they had identified gaps in knowledge or practice or both.

Furthermore, during the *Corridor of Experimentation* teachers were found to engage in various ways of self-assessing their professional learning as it impacted on their professional growth, where growth is reflected in enhanced knowledge and/or change to practice in the following ways:

- Identification of gaps in their knowledge and or/practice;
- Development of their perceptions and beliefs about the pedagogical content knowledge of the PDO in terms of whether it aligned with their perceived gaps;
- Dialogue with others;
- Self- reflection on their PDO experiences;
- Development of confidence to trial strategies in their classrooms; and
- Trialling of strategies – Grab and ditch approach. After reflecting on the students' responses to the trialling of a strategy, the teachers either adopted the strategy (grab) or discard the strategy (ditch).

Sally assessed her professional learning by identifying reoccurring themes in her practice to which she needed to find a solution. It was through this identification process that she then acknowledged that there was a gap in her understanding. Her assessment of whether there needed to be a change to practice as a result of her participation in the PDO, was based upon her level of confidence in implementing that change.

Hannah engaged in self-assessment of her professional learning by examining and implementing collegial suggestions offered during the Observe and Feedback of the PDO. Rebecca and Hannah demonstrated their attention to the learning of individual students within their classes, and that they sought to design teaching strategies aimed at achieving meaningful learning for all students. Both teachers appeared to achieve this through reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983) and analysis of the teaching and learning that occurred in their classrooms. Rebecca self-assessed her professional practice through listening to others sharing their own stories about how they implemented the provocation strategies. After reflecting on those stories, she identified her need to seek professional development in that area. This is consistent with the influence of peers on the teacher self-assessment aspect of Ross and Bruce's (2005) model for teacher self-assessment: "Peer input can influence the first self-

assessment process (self-observation) by directing teacher attention to particular dimensions of practice" (p. 6). After undertaking the appropriate PDO, Rebecca sought affirmation from the executive team that she was meeting best practice in terms of implementation of aspects of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP).

Teachers engaged in self-assessment of their professional learning as it impacts on their professional growth by moving through the *Corridor of Experimentation*. The *Corridor of Experimentation* was found to be a vital component of the process of teacher self-assessment of their professional learning. It allowed the teachers to trial the strategies within their own contexts. However, this was an individualised perspective and the next section discusses how it was not until the teachers underwent the processes of self-assessment of professional growth, interacting with the middle level leader, that they were able to come to understand their growth.

During the *Corridor of Experimentation*, in self-assessing their professional learning after attending a PDO, all the teachers demonstrated single-loop learning in that they enhanced their knowledge and or changed their practice to improve their teaching. Rebecca and Hannah demonstrated single-loop learning in that they changed their practice to meet the school's objectives regarding implementation of the PYP framework.

6.4 Processes to Enhance Teacher Self-Assessment

This section answers the research sub-question: What process can be put in place to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). In this section I discuss the findings from Phases One, Two and Three respectively. Furthermore, I identify the supporting processes, which emerged across Phases Two and Three of the case study.

6.4.1 Discussion of the findings from Phase One.

The participants in Phase One had taken part in the TAR project and self-assessed their professional learning as discussed in section 6.2. I had been privy to the teachers' learning in my role as facilitator of that project. The findings from Phase One suggested that the self-assessment of professional growth was an intrinsically individualised process, in that it made oneself visible to others. All the teachers were

given the opportunity to converse with their peers, exchanging viewpoints about their joint experiences of the TAR Project, questioning their own beliefs through active engagement with the process of collaborative learning. In Phase One of this study, the quality of the interactions appeared to influence the degree of learning that took place in the context of the focus group. Two members of the Junior School executive team who had taken part in the TAR project requested to be present at the Focus Group session. Two teachers were found to question whether the executive team members would also review the completed PGSA Guides. This was despite having clearly articulated their use of strategies based on the knowledge gained during the TAR Project at the conversation café at which the executive team members were also present. The two teachers did not return their completed PGSA Guides. This decision highlights the importance of trust and authenticity within the learning environment. It also emphasises the significance of the need for teachers to feel safe in the learning environment, where they can be honest with themselves and others about their professional growth. The findings suggested the learning environment should be one in which people feel safe to take risks to expose their inner-most challenged feelings so that critical reflection and self-analysis about their professional practice could take place.

The teachers took varying approaches to completing the PGSA Guide in terms of representing their enhanced knowledge, change to practice, and provision of evidence to support their self-assessment. However, some were similar. For example, Fleur and Vera used their reflective journals from the TAR Project to assist them in recounting their PDO experience and their changes to practice. Roxanne and Fleur focused on 'Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities' within standard 6.2. Some teachers highlighted specific areas that they felt reflected their self-assessment and answered some of the guiding questions, others did not answer the questions at all. The PGSA Guide was a critical element supporting the collaboration and dialogue, which took place during the self-assessment process within the focus group; albeit the teachers were selective in their interactions. But, it was not the PGSA Guide alone that brought about teacher understanding of their professional growth. Teachers' understandings required self-reflection through interaction with trusted others, together with my own guidance. It was evident from some completed PGSA Guides (see Table 4.7 Fleur and

Table 4.2 Vera in Chapter 4) that the interactions deepened the teachers' understanding of the APST and their use in self-assessing their professional growth.

During Phase One, I came to the realisation that there appeared to be a need for a rigorous process to accompany the completion of the PGSA Guide. The process of self-assessment required varying degrees of support from, and interaction with myself, as the middle level leader. It appeared that some teachers, for example Eugene (see Table 4.4 in Chapter 4), may have required additional support, in the form of the use of prompting questions and provision of examples taken from my own observations of the teachers' practices so as to support their learning about the process of self-assessment. The focus group situation presented me with difficulties during Phase One in terms of leading the teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth. Time constraints meant I was unable to provide support that I felt some teachers needed to complete their guides. I found I was unable to individualise the process.

The teachers' request to conduct the process within a whole-group situation appeared to be based on their experiences of sharing strategies and understanding within the learning community developed within the TAR project. However, Phase One of this study suggested that the complex personal nature of the process of self-assessment of professional growth may create an entirely different dynamic within any previously established group. The process appeared to pose feelings of uncertainty with some teachers' self-understanding of their practice in terms of the degree to which they were able to meet aspects of the APST. It was important that the teachers were provided with the opportunity to have conversations with others who had knowledge of their practice, as the interactions gave the teachers the opportunity to develop a greater understanding about self-assessment and the role of evidence in supporting that assessment. Re-storying experiences are essential to teachers' personal and social growth (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) and in this study, was found to be significant to the teachers' ability to make meaning of their PDO experiences throughout all phases of the study, giving them 'a new sense of meaning and significance' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

During Phase One, self-assessment of professional growth consisted of one process, supported by the PGSA Guide and my own guidance. Phase One revealed the need for teachers to talk about their PDO experience in order to make meaning of their

knowledge and practice in terms of their professional growth and the findings from Phase One supported the need for the individual approach to self-assessment which was adopted in Phases Two and Three.

6.4.2 Discussion of the findings from Phases Two and Three.

In Phase Two, each teacher selected their own individual PDO experience to use in the process of self-assessment of professional growth. In contrast to Phase One, I had little or no knowledge of each teachers' PDO experience. The findings from Phases Two and Three are discussed in terms of the emergent processes found to support teacher self-assessment of professional growth. It became evident during Phase Two that the teachers became actively involved in the process of learning about their professional growth. The teachers and I gained deeper levels of shared understanding through connecting our thinking and feelings about self-assessment of professional growth through dialogue and reflection. Through acknowledgement of the teacher as learner, they were provided a 'voice' in their own learning. A number of theorists have advocated for the voice of the learner to be heard in the learning process (Dewey, 1964; Freire, 1970; Knowles, 1980) and see this as a method of adult education: "Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education" (Freire, 1970, p. 73). Schon (1983) claims that reflection for transformation requires dialogue with others about practice. The teachers constructed knowledge about what they had learnt from their selected PDO and what that meant in terms of their professional growth from the experience of taking part in the self-assessment process, supported by my leadership and the PGSA Guide. The process required the teachers to take part in intentional reflection, making sense of and learning from their PDO experience for the purpose of coming to learn about their professional growth.

The learning partnership was fostered through my respect for the teachers as learners in their own learning. I allowed the teachers to find and express their own voices as they went through the two supportive processes involved in self-assessing their professional growth. I took the role of guide as they completed their PGSA Guides, providing a non-judgemental environment so as they could reveal their beliefs and

attitudes towards their teaching practice. The established trusting relationships with the participants played an important role in supporting the process of self-assessment.

During Phase Three the teachers developed into active learners, constructing their understanding of their PDO experiences:

- their own thinking and beliefs about their PDO experiences and the value they had put upon those experiences in terms of their practice;
- how those experiences might be construed in terms of their own professional growth; and
- how to self-assess their professional growth through a greater understanding of their own learning practices, setting goals for their professional learning journey.

Each teacher was able to create their own professional learning journey, evaluating the PDOs they experienced and representing themselves as professionals within their own school context. However, from a middle level leader's perspective two processes are required to support this activity: process 1: *Open the Door* and process 2: *Enlightenment*.

6.4.3 Processes supporting teacher self-assessment of professional growth.

The supporting processes, as they emerged during phases two and three, are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

Processes Supporting Self-Assessment of Professional Growth

Process	Phase 2: *Let's go deeper*	Phase 3: *Give me more*
Process 1: *Open the Door* (refer to Figure 6.4)	The **Open the Door process** (between the middle level leader and teacher), involved dialogic interaction and reflection, and the use of questioning. During **Interaction 1,** knowledge that the teachers had gained from the PDO experiences was brought to the surface through reflection-on-action and dialogue with the middle level leader. **Teacher output**: increased understanding of the PDO experience and articulated examples of evidence of enhanced knowledge and or change to practice. **Middle level leader output**: understanding of PDO experience and knowledge of the teacher's implementation to practice from acquired knowledge of PDO.	The **single interaction** that took place during this phase incorporated both processes: Open the door and Enlightenment. During the Open the Door process, **teachers initiated use** of PGSA guide terminology to reflect as they came to understand their PDO experience.
Process 2: *Enlightenment* (of PDO experience in terms of professional growth) (refer to Figure 6.5)	**Individual approach** to leading self-assessment of teachers' professional growth. This **process** was the mechanism through which the teachers gained a deeper understanding of the APST and their use in the process of self-assessment of professional growth. During **Interaction 2** teachers were able to articulate their PDO experience in terms of their professional growth. The **Enlightenment process** involved a number of **sub processes** including: teacher reflections on prompting questions, teacher clarifying interpretation of guiding questions, teacher clarifying interpretation of criteria (standards), reflections on action; middle level leader's prompt for evidence, use of prompting questions; and teacher setting goals for professional growth. The **reflection tool (PGSA Guide) acted** as a stimulus for dialogue and reflection between the middle level leader and teacher. During this process, the teachers completed the PGSA Guide capturing their professional growth through the guidance from the middle level leader and taking part in the sub processes (*Open the Door* and *Enlightenment*). Teachers were able to set goals as a result of the self-assessment process.	The **two processes** of Open the Door and Enlightenment took place within the single interaction (combining Interactions 1 and 2). Whereas, the **Enlightenment process in Phase Three** was manifested in the same form as in Phase Two, the teachers articulated evidence themselves. A **decrease in the level of guidance** provided by the middle level leader was evident.

Through the process of self-assessment, knowledge gained from the PDO was brought to the surface, reflected upon, understood and interpreted by the teachers in terms of their professional growth. Teachers acquired some degree of understanding of the PDO experience during the time they went through the *Corridor of Experimentation*. When the teachers *Opened the Door*, (Process 1, see Table 6.2), through their interaction with the middle level leader, they came to see the reality of their learning: "Our actions and interactions with the environment create and enlarge knowledge through the conversion process of tacit and explicit knowledge" (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2003, p. 4). Figure 6.4 shows the *Open the Door* process from Figure 6.2.
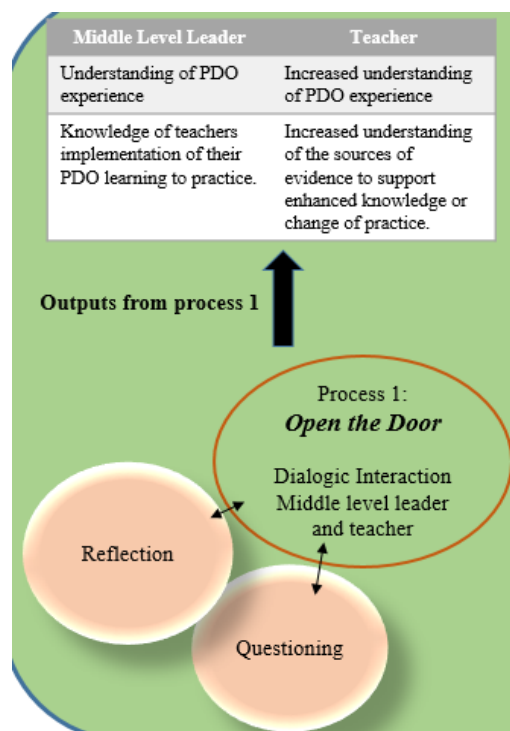
Figure 6.4. Graphical Representation of Process 1: Open the Door

Within process 1, *Open the Door*, knowledge regarding the teachers' experiences were constructed through the dialogic interaction between the middle level leader and teacher (single-loop learning). This was supported by the interplay between reflection and questioning. Through this process the middle level leader gained a greater understanding of the teacher's PDO experience and knowledge of the teacher's implementation of their PDO learning to practice. This understanding was essential to the focusing of appropriate prompting questions to lead the teachers in the use of the PGSA Guide during the *Enlightenment* process (process 2, see Figure 6.5). The

findings from the study (see Chapters 4 and 5) suggest that the teachers gained a greater understanding of their PDO experiences in terms of their professional growth and potential sources of evidence of their enhanced knowledge and/or change to practice as they took part in process 2.

The outputs from process 1 are the inputs to process 2. The skills and knowledge acquired through the teachers' participation in PDOs were interpreted in the context of their professional growth during the *Enlightenment* process. Figure 6.5 shows the elements which promoted dialogic interaction within the learning space in process 2.
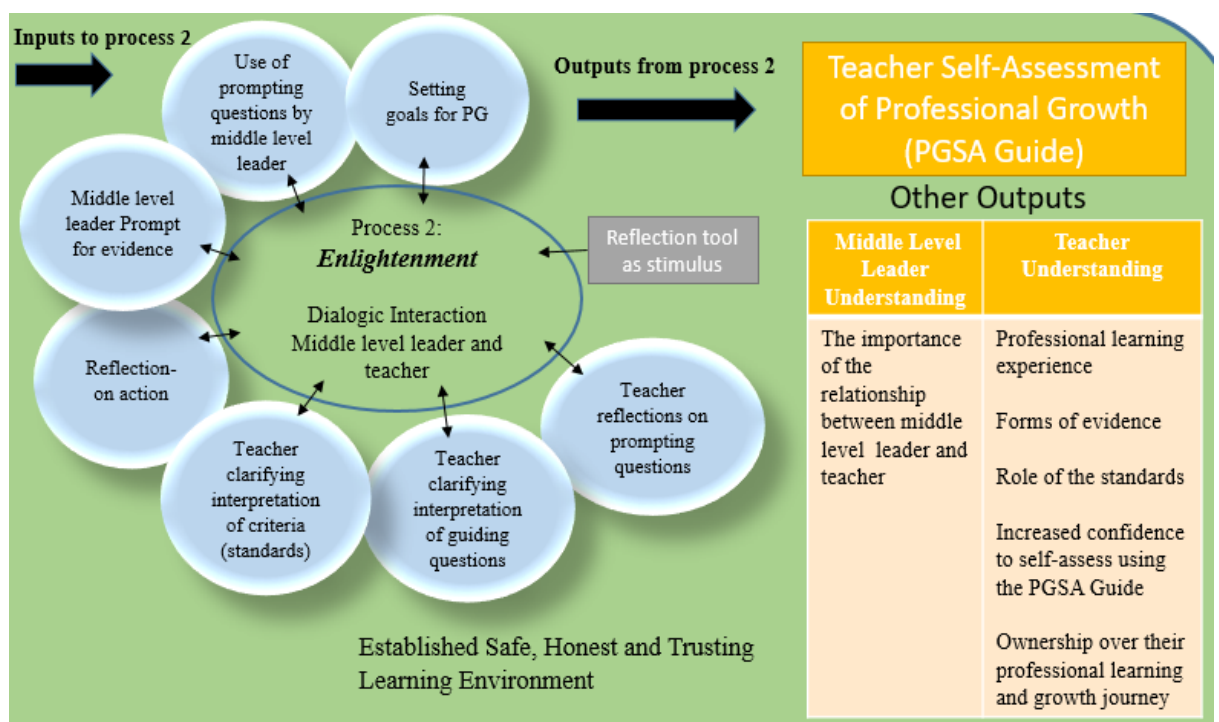
Figure 6.5. Graphical Representation of Process 2: Enlightenment

During Process 2, through the use of the reflection tool - PGSA Guide (see Figure 6.5) as a stimulus for dialogue, the teachers were able to reflect deeply and critically about their knowledge gained from the PDO and its subsequent application to practice. The teachers, through their reflection upon their experiences, created a framework for attributing meaning to the discourse (Smith & MacGregor, 1992) and it was through that interaction that both single-loop (Sally and Helen) and double loop (Rebecca and Hannah) learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978) took place.

Within the research design, the aim of the PGSA Guide was to enable the teachers to undertake the process of self-assessment of professional growth so as they could comprehend and demonstrate their progression in their learning that impacted their practice (professional growth). In addition, the PGSA Guide was designed to assist teachers to reflect on professional standards and consider types of evidence which they might wish to include in their electronic portfolio to support their learning from the PDO. Through the social interaction with each teacher as they completed the PGSA Guide, I was provided with the opportunity to promote constructive discourse supporting learning and collective knowledge building.

Table 6.3

Seven Elements Promoting Dialogic Interaction

Element	Commentary
Teacher interpretation of the criteria (APST)	When teachers were uncertain of their understanding of any of the APST criteria they sought clarification from me, as the middle level leader, fostering further explanation and discussion about the standards.
Teacher interpretation of guiding questions	Teachers sought clarification of the guiding questions on the PGSA Guide fostering deeper thinking about how they might answer that question
Middle level leader's use of prompting questions and teacher reflection on those prompting questions	I used prompting questions to drill down so as to identify and bring to the surface taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs about their teaching. Teachers were then given time to reflect on those prompting questions. My aim was to extract tacit knowledge about their learning and convert it to explicit knowledge about their professional growth.
Reflection on action	The teachers reflected on their application of their professional learning to practice.
Middle level leader prompts for evidence of professional growth	I drilled down so as teachers were able to reflect on their practice to identify evidence to support their self-assessment of professional growth.
Setting goals	Rebecca and Hannah set goals for their professional learning journey.

The discourse was more than knowledge sharing which included provision of examples from my own practice, reflections on student outcomes from the teachers' implementation of strategies and their PDO experiences. Teachers also made meaning of their professional learning in terms of their professional growth through **the interplay between the seven elements** (see Figure 6.5) which promoted the dialogic interaction, illustrated in Figures 6.2 and 6.5 and summarised in Table 6.3.

I encouraged the teachers' reflection through the use of prompting questions, seeking explanation and elaboration in a process of collaborative knowledge building consistent with Lambert's (2003) view:

> When new experiences are encountered and mediated by reflection, inquiry and social interaction, meaning and knowledge are constructed. Learning takes place, as does adult development. … Personal and professional learning require an interactive professional culture if adults are to engage with one another in the processes of growth and development. (p. 422)

The dialogic interaction which took place within the safe, honest and trusting learning environment, created the setting for tacit knowledge to be articulated and made explicit. This co-constructed knowledge of the teachers' professional growth was then documented on the Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide. The teachers learnt how to self-assess their professional growth and take ownership of their professionalism. The teachers gained a greater understanding of:

- the forms of evidence to support their professional growth; and
- the role that the APST can play as a criterion against which teachers might self-assess their professional growth.

The teachers also increased their confidence to self-assess using the PGSA Guide and took agency over their professional learning and growth journey. Rebecca and Hannah suggested that the confidence gained from carrying out the self-assessment process during Phase Two had a significant impact on the way in which they approached the process the second time around in Phase Three and, as such, they appeared to feel a sense of autonomy over the process of self-assessment.

An aim of Phases Two and Three was to explore the extent to which the reflection tool - PGSA Guide, and the self-assessment process might be utilised for goal setting as a strategy for teachers to continue their professional learning journey. The PGSA Guide

was shown to be a working document to which teachers could refer when reminding themselves of established goals and what they had gained from a PDO experience: a means of setting goals for their professional growth. Through the process of self-assessment, Rebecca and Hannah appeared to be able to identify relevant individual goals for enhanced knowledge and/or improvement to practice. As part of the goal-setting process, the two teachers were also able to identify the individual sources of support they required in order to implement their goals. Goal setting manifested itself as an identification of what the teachers planned to do, evolving from the interactions between the teachers and myself, and the use of the PGSA Guide as a stimulus for dialogue and reflection. Deeper reflection on the PDO experience was shown to assist in the goal setting process. The PDOs selected by Rebecca and Hannah in Phase 3 were focused on meeting the goals they had set during the self-assessment which took place during Phase 2.

Ellström (2001) identifies six learning conditions which form the learning environment, five of which were found to be relevant within this study and are shown in Table 6.4. Research sub-questions 1 to 3 did not explore the sixth learning condition, the established direction and goals of the organisation that could inhibit learning,

Table 6.4

Learning Conditions within the Environment

Condition	Evidence from the study
The learning potential of the work task	The teachers had requested help in demonstrating their professional learning in their digital portfolios. The teachers had been introduced to the APST but were uncertain as to how they would demonstrate their adherence to the standards. The processes involved in the completion of the PGSA Guide provided the teachers with the opportunity to further their understanding of the standards and how to self-assess their professional growth.
The balance between autonomy and the introduction of formal standards	With my assistance, the balance between the autonomy of the teachers and the introduction of the APST into the school was achieved. The APST were used as the criteria for each individual teacher to self-assess their professional growth.
The participation of employees in decisions and problem-solving processes	The teachers expressed their desire to apply what they learnt from the self-assessment to solve their problems associated with demonstrating their professional growth for their Annual Review process.
The individual's attitude towards learning, their learning readiness	The teachers in Phase One had requested help in demonstrating their professional learning from the TAR Project within their digital portfolios. Some were less motivated to complete the PGSA Guide but still took part in the learning process.
	The teachers in Phase Two volunteered to take part in the study and all but Sally, appeared to be ready and willing to learn about self-assessment. Sally's motivation was centred on her wish to learn about the research process itself. In Phase Three Hannah and Rebecca requested that they take part in an additional self-assessment as they wished to learn further.
A climate which encourages questioning, critical reflection, initiative and differences of opinion	During the Focus Group session in Phase One I, was limited in the extent to which I could encourage critical reflection, given time constraints and the whole-group situation. However, this environment did foster initiative, in that all the teachers provided examples of enhanced knowledge and change to practice. Across all three phases of the case, I encouraged the teachers' self-reflection by using prompting questions, and examples of change-to practice. Critical reflection was fostered in search of deeper explanations and elaborations.

Note. Developed with adaptation from "Integrating learning and work: Problems and prospects" by P. E. Ellström, 2001, *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 12*(4), pp. 421-435. Copyright 2001 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The teachers in this study, through their own voices, sought to demonstrate their professional growth in response to the college's Annual Review requirements. This relates to Ellström's (2001) first condition for learning within the workplace: the learning potential of the work task. The teachers had been exposed to the use of the standards and the school's expectations regarding meeting the standards through a workshop held to inform staff of changes to their Annual Review Process. They were informed that they were required, within their portfolios, to demonstrate their adherence to the standards. By framing discussion using the guiding questions on the PGSA Guide, as the middle level leader, I provided the teachers with the opportunity to delve deeper into their own learning and set goals for their own professional growth, thus achieving that balance between autonomy and the introduction of the APST into the school.

The environment in which the teachers came to learn to self-assess their own professional growth was one in which knowledge reproduction was emphasised, thoughtful and critically reflective, and collaborative construction of knowledge was supported within a meaningful context. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) have pointed out that an interactive learning environment in which a facilitator of learning, in providing a support system which decreases over time, is crucial to any adult learning process. The teachers were ready and motivated to learn, having expressed their desire to apply that learning to solving their problems associated with demonstrating their professional growth within their digital portfolios, which formed part of their Annual Review process. However, the teachers' degree of readiness for the different phases of professional growth varied. Sally's motivation was centred on her wish to learn about the research process itself. In Phase Three Hannah and Rebecca requested that they take part in an additional self-assessment as they wished to continue their professional growth journey.

It was possible to find evidence in this study relating to four properties of transformative learning. Kohonen (2003) draws attention to the view that professional growth is transformative learning through self-critique (Askew, 1998; Cranton, 1996) and as a consequence includes a number of properties (Jonassen, 1999; Kohonen, 2003) including the four shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5

Properties of Transformative Learning Found in this Study

Property of transformative learning	Evidence from this study
Professional interaction for growth	The teachers and I came to realise the significant impact that professional interaction had upon professional growth for all of us. Both the teachers and I grew professionally as we undertook the process of self-assessment. Most teachers gained a greater understanding of their teaching practice and learnt to self-assess their professional growth. I grew as a leader.
A critical stance to professional practice	Rebecca and Hannah saw themselves as continuous learners, questioning their practice, trialling strategies and evaluating their teaching in terms of the APST.
Reflection	Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983). The teachers made connections between their teaching and student outcomes. New self-understanding as a professional. The teachers appeared to develop a critical understanding of themselves as professionals by exploring their knowledge and teaching practice in terms of the APST.
Conscious risk-taking	Corridor of Experimentation – trialling strategies. Involvement in the self-assessment process itself – making their beliefs and attitudes about their teaching visible.

In reflecting on their teaching, the teachers focused on ways in which they had improved student learning. The examination of their professional beliefs and assumptions, through reflection of what took place in their classrooms, when they implemented their learning from their PDOs, demonstrated their involvement in a self-assessment process. Hannah expressed feelings of self-doubt bringing about reflection on her practice which Wheatley (2002) suggests may motivate teachers to learn. Cobb, Wood, and Yackel (1990) going further into this aspect suggest that "cognitive conflict" in teachers' thinking could be a motivator for change to take place.

One of the keys to transformational learning suggested by Merriam and Caffarella (1999) is drawing on experience to aid learning and that experience, which according to Argote, McEvily, and Reagans (2003), is important to a person's ability to create, retain and transfer knowledge. Rebecca and Hannah engaged in constructing, refining, and transforming knowledge about: a) their PDO experiences; b) the use of the APST as criteria for self-assessment; c) the use of the reflection tool - PGSA Guide as a means with which to self-assess their professional growth; and d) their own perceived professional growth and goals to progress that growth.

6.4.4 Key factors found to enable teacher learning.

Three key factors were found to enable teacher learning: established trusted relationships; middle level leader's prior knowledge of teachers' practice; and the PGSA Guide as a key element to stimulate reflection and dialogue between middle level leader and teacher. Table 6.6 shows how they manifested across the three phases of the study.

Trusted relationships had been established during the development of the learning community of teachers as the year-long TAR Project had progressed. In my role as facilitator of the project, I had also developed trusting relationships with the teachers and gained considerable understanding of each teacher's practice. Teachers who took part in the Focus Group session of Phase One revealed their thinking about their professional growth when they felt they could trust the person with whom they dialogued, be it another teacher or the middle level leader.

Sharing of stories from my own practice contributed to building trust and honesty during dialogic interactions. My prior knowledge of the teachers' practice allowed me to individualise the process of leading each teacher to self-assess their professional growth. I was able to tailor my prompting questions and stimulate reflection by eliciting examples from their practice. The PGSA Guide was found to be a critical element to stimulate the dialogue, which took place amongst the teachers themselves, and myself during the focus group session. For example, Lesley, having knowledge of Eugene's practice suggested: "you have changed the set-up of your differentiated writing groups and you can show how student x has improved". This prompted Eugene to self-reflect on her practice further.

Table 6.6

Key Factors Enabling Learning

Factor	Phase 1: Reflection tool: more than a checklist?	Phase 2: Let's go deeper	Phase 3: Give me more
Established trusted relationships	As facilitator of professional development opportunity - Teachers as Researchers Project - some trusted relationships were developed. Focus group situation meant the strength of the relationships could be maximised. **Shared examples** of middle level leader's practice –shared disclosure in attempt to foster relationships and break down barriers for discussion about teachers' practice.	**Individual approach**: Benefit of probing questions, participants felt **comfortable to reveal thinking** about their PDO experiences and practice which led to critical reflection and double-loop learning. **Sharing of stories of practice**- reciprocal disclosure. **Investment of time** in the process of self-assessment of professional growth.	⟶⟶⟶
Middle level leader's knowledge of teachers' practice	Initially the middle level leader refrained from prompting based on prior knowledge to allow time for teachers' reflection on their learning and practice.	The **prior knowledge** assisted in two ways: firstly, guiding the teachers in identifying their own examples of evidence of practice. Secondly, in **prompting** teachers to delve deeper into particular aspects of their teaching as they completed the reflection tool – the PGSA Guide.	⟶
Reflection tool (PGSA Guide) as a key element to stimulate reflection and dialogue between middle level leader and teacher	**Fostered interaction:** teacher to teacher; middle level leader with teacher. Stimulated dialogue. Useful that the PGSA Guide used **the standards as the criteria. The guiding questions** broke down the standards for greater understanding. One teacher used the PGSA Guide within their portfolio for their annual review.	The **guiding questions** assisted teachers to understand the standards, identify evidence and set goals. The **knowledge acquired and the change to practice** were presented in a succinct format and could be used to discuss their professional growth with the Head of Junior School during their annual review.	Teachers' perceptions that an additional completed PGSA Guide would demonstrate to management their professional learning journey for the year and use it to discuss within their annual review.

Similarly, I provided Elaine with an example from her practice, which prompted her to identify additional strategies that she had implemented. The guiding questions provided the means to break down the standards' descriptors into smaller chunks, fostering deeper reflection on, and understanding of, the standards. The questions assisted the teachers to more fully comprehend the meaning of the standards and identify supporting evidence. Rebecca and Hannah found the questions assisted them in setting goals for their professional learning.

The analysis and interpretation of the data from this study found that prior to attempting to lead teachers to self-assess their professional growth, a middle level leader should devote time to establishing relationships with the teachers and developing an understanding of their teaching practice. As the middle level leader, it was essential that I invested time with the teachers as I led them through the process of self-assessment: time between the interactions (PDO to *Corridor of Experimentation* to process of self-assessment), thinking/reflection time during the two processes (*Open the Door* and *Enlightenment*), time for reflection between questions, and prompts in using the PGSA Guide.

6.5 Forms of Evidence

In this section, the third of the research sub-questions is answered: What forms of evidence do teachers use to support their self-assessment of professional growth? The forms of evidence used by the teachers to support their self-assessment of professional growth over the three phases of the study are shown in Table 6.7. This has been extracted from the completed PGSA Guides used in Phases One, Two and Three.

During the study, teachers used excerpts from reflective journals, snapshots of student outcomes, student responses to implemented strategies and evaluations of their changes to practice as forms of evidence to support their self-assessment of professional growth.

Table 6.7

Forms of Supporting Evidence Used over the Three Phases

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Seven of the ten teachers requested a senior leader to take a photograph of them looking at the speaker as a record of attendance at PDO. **Excerpts from reflective journals** demonstrate progression in thinking. **Answers** to the guiding questions. **Snapshots of students** identifying the focus strategy and evaluation of the strategy in terms of its impact on student outcomes. **Excerpts from reflective journal together with student data** focused on how their enhanced knowledge influenced student outcomes.	Identified **concrete examples** of how the four teachers had implemented their enhanced knowledge into their own practice. **Answers** to the guiding questions Evaluation of changes to practice (based on **student responses**) Statements demonstrated **shifts in thinking**	Evaluation of changes to practice (based on **student responses**) **Increased confidence** to implement enhanced knowledge and evidence from observation and feedback of PDO. **Answers** to guiding questions

During Phase One, through dialogic interaction with a trusted other, teachers were able to identify their acquired knowledge and change to practice as a result of taking part in the TAR Project. For example, based on my observations of Elaine's implementation of the knowledge gained from the TAR Project, I was able to prompt her to delve deeper so as she was able to identify evidence to include on her PGSA Guide. Vera provided a relevant example of her learning from her own practice and two other teachers were then able to identify evidence from their own practice to support their own self-assessment. During Phases Two and Three, in answering the guiding questions on the PGSA Guide, the teachers were able to recognise evidence to support their professional growth which included:

- examples from their own practice; and

- the success of strategies, which were evaluated from students' responses; and

- statements describing teachers' shifts in thinking. For example, Rebecca's statement regarding how she introduced provocations.

Furthermore, probing questions from the middle level leader encouraged the teachers to recognise and understand their shift in thinking through the process of converting their tacit knowledge of their PDO experiences to explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Tukeuchi, 1995) of their learning and subsequent change to practice. In Phase Three, a growing level of independence was evident in that the teachers were able to identify their own examples of evidence from their practice to demonstrate their shift in thinking about what represented relevant evidence to support their professional growth in meeting the APST.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the key findings from the holistic case presented in chapters 4 and 5 have been analysed in terms of answering research sub questions 1, 2 and 3 identified in chapters 1 and 3. Dialogic interaction with a trusted other, stimulated by the reflection tool – the PGSA Guide, was essential to teacher self-assessment of professional growth. The findings demonstrated the importance of the role of the middle level leader in supporting teacher self-assessment of professional growth. The *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework, Figure 6.2, presents a supportive and challenging learning experience for both teachers and leaders, enabling learning and empowering teachers to take ownership of their professional growth.

Teachers were found to engage in the process of self-assessing their professional learning in the following ways:

- Identification of potential gaps in their knowledge and/or practice through: a) listening to and sharing reflections with colleagues; b) gaining feedback from colleagues or administration; c) identification of reoccurring themes within their practice to which a solution needed to be found; and d) conversations with others outside the school context.

- Reflection on their professional development opportunity experiences in terms of whether the pedagogical content knowledge aligned with their own beliefs and their perceived knowledge gaps.

- Trialling of strategies which depended on the teachers' levels of confidence to implement the change within their practice. The grab and ditch approach involved trialling strategies in the classroom and teacher reflections on the students' responses to those strategies. During Phase One, the Action Learning Action Research process used within the PDO, provided the teachers with the guiding structure within which they were able to plan a teaching strategy, observe the students' responses to that strategy and reflect on the outcomes.

The level of engagement with the process varied across the participants in this study. During Phase One the success of the PGSA Guide, was evident as five of the eight teachers expressed their desire to include their completed guides in their teaching portfolios as part of their Annual Review. The other two participants were concerned that members of the Junior School executive team would have access to the information and so did not wish to submit the guide to me, pointing again to the importance of the establishment of trust within this process. Three of the four participants in Phase Two and both participants in Phase Three included their completed guides in their teaching portfolios.

The evidence across the holistic case study intimates that the teachers became active partners in analysing their professional learning and identifying opportunities for further professional growth. The teachers reflected upon their professional learning, their practice, student outcomes from the implementation of changes to practice, and collaborated with myself, as middle level leader, through self-assessment and self-directed inquiry into their professional growth. While undertaking the process of self-assessment of their professional growth the teachers learnt to become more aware of how they perceived and reacted to their students' responses to new teaching strategies based on their learning from the PDOs. Greater insights into their teaching surfaced as they underwent the self-assessment process.

The supporting processes that were found to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their own professional growth with respect to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were Process 1: *Open the Door* and Process 2: *Enlightenment*. Both processes took place within a safe, honest and trusting learning environment with the middle level leader. During process 1, the knowledge gained from the dialogic interaction about the PDO experience was brought to the surface, reflected upon, understood and interpreted by the teachers in terms of their professional learning. During process 2, through the use of the reflection tool – the PGSA Guide as a stimulus for dialogue between the middle level leader and teacher, the teachers made meaning of their professional learning in terms of their professional growth.

Various forms of evidence were identified by teachers to support self-assessment of their professional growth. The teachers who took part in Phases Two and Three gained increased confidence in their ability to self-assess to the extent to which they were able to recognise and provide evidence to support their self-assessment. Self-assessment of professional growth is not an individual activity. It requires a trusted relationship in which the process of making meaning of professional learning is guided by a leader of learning as found throughout this study.

After having answered research sub-questions 1, 2 and 3, I reflected upon the research experience and came to the realisation that the answer to research sub question 4 and the overarching research question lay beyond the use of the reflection tool – the PGSA Guide and how it was used as a stimulus to generate discussion about professional growth. This was about leadership and school culture. Chapter 7 explores these aspects of the study. As such, Chapter 7 has enabled me to answer the overarching research question and explore the implications for me as a middle level leader in the school context. This chapter also presents a meta-level analysis of the research, providing new insights into the roles and responsibilities of middle level leaders as leaders of learning.

CHAPTER 7: Discovering Self as Leader of Learning

7.1 Introduction

The answer to research sub-question four lies in the exploration of the role middle level leaders can take in leading teachers in learning to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) to self-assess their professional growth within a school context. In this study, the teachers engaged in the process of self-assessment and Rebecca and Hannah, in particular, appreciated the experience as of significant value to their learning about their own professional growth, and a positive learning experience. The participants in all three phases of the case study were committed to the learning process, which is crucial to effective professional learning (Timperley, 2008). Initial engagement in the process of self-assessment was promoted by what the teachers recognised as real (Timperley, 2008); their desire to demonstrate their professional growth for their Annual Review. Viewing the learning activity as meaningful was what furthered their ongoing subsequent engagement.

The findings suggest that it was likely that the teachers had engaged in the process of self-assessment of professional growth because they knew that this process of exposing their beliefs about their own professional growth would be kept with me. They felt safe, and able to dialogue about their perceptions and feelings within a non-judgemental environment, with someone they could trust. As Hopkins (2017) states: "Your practice is an instrument for expressing who you are as a professional; it is not who you are" (p. 7). The collaborative non-judgemental discourse stimulated by the reflection tool, focused attention on the teacher's practice as a professional and thus, diverted attention away from who they were as a person. As Hargreaves (1998) suggests, teaching and learning are emotional practices and according to Denzin (1984) an emotional practice "radiates through the person's body and streams of experience, giving emotional culmination to thoughts, feelings and actions" (p. 89).

Organisations will be challenged as to how they build the level of trust, such that people feel the learning experience from self-assessment of professional growth is of value to them. As I reflected on this concern, I made notations in my reflective journal, questioning whether the school's culture was conducive to carrying this work further than my own established *cone of silence*, and the extent to which the school climate was open, that is, how well it supported learning. My reflections on the importance of the establishment of the safe, honest and trusting learning environment, and what had been achieved from this research, culminated in the profound realisation that it was entirely possible any potential benefits from this study would go no further within the school context. Despite my regular informal updates on the progress of the study, the Head of Junior School and the Principal were not completely aware of, nor did they comprehend, the potential application of what had been achieved through this study.

I became troubled that the potential for this work to contribute significantly to the Junior School would not be realised. To contend with my interpretation of the situation, I posited whether the context was conducive to being able to utilise what was actually born from the study. I also questioned whether, if it was implemented, would it lead to improvements to the quality of teaching or build capacity in teaching and leadership within the school.

Before I was able to answer the fourth of the research sub-questions and the overarching research question, I sought to explore my interpretation of the situation with the College Principal. If I could gain insight into his perspective on various issues that had arisen towards the end of this study, there was the possibility that I would gain a greater understanding of the context within which I sought to apply the work. In addressing the overarching research question, I had tracked the journeys of the participant teachers. I also depicted the journey of what I did as a leader, that is, what I had done in leading the teachers in this study.

In Chapter 6, I showed that five of Ellström's (2001) six learning conditions which form the learning environment were found to be relevant within this study. I also identified that two processes enhanced the self-assessment of professional growth: *Open the door* and

Enlightenment. Three key factors were also identified as enablers of the teachers' learning.

However, the overarching research question, *How can a middle-level leader lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?* could not be answered just by identifying: a) the presence of Ellström's (2001) learning conditions within the learning environment; b) the two enhancing processes; and c) the factors which enabled teacher learning in this study. I came to the realisation that another layer was needed for the *cone of silence* to go further and allow the work produced from this research to progress within the school. In the following section, I discuss the roles that emerged from the data: trusted critical friend; and supporter, educator and enlightener. These roles were all undertaken by the middle level leader as a leader of learning and therefore, the subsequent sections of this Chapter have been written in terms of my own self-discovery as a leader of learning in framing an answer to research sub-question four: *What role can a middle-level leader take in leading teachers to self-assess their professional growth*? Figure 7.1 shows a graphical representation of the structure of this chapter.
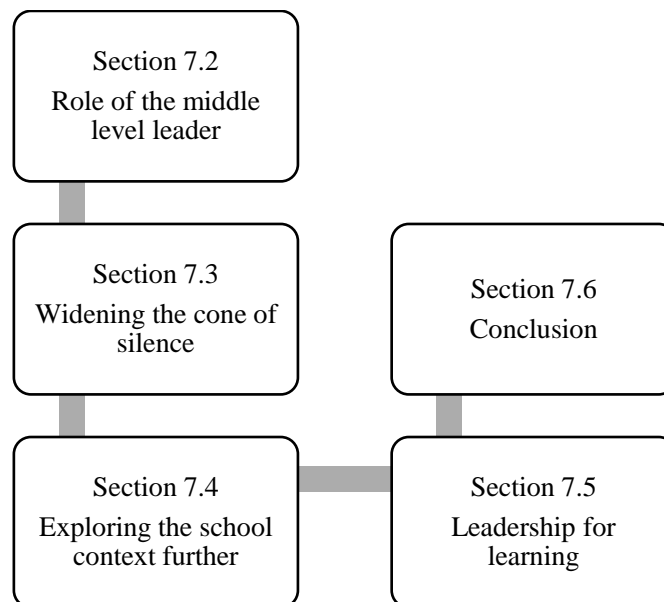

Figure 7.1. Chapter Structure

7.2 Role of the Middle Level Leader

The learning partnership between the middle level leader and the teachers was fostered through respect for the teachers as learners in their own learning. I took the role of guide as they completed their PGSA Guides, providing a non-judgemental environment so as they could reveal their beliefs and attitudes towards their teaching practice. The middle level leader must recognise that not every teacher will necessarily be ready to complete their professional growth journey. Established trusted relationships with the participants were found to be significant in supporting the process of self-assessment. Firstly, I assumed the role of trusted critical friend to the teacher participants as I encouraged the teachers to make meaning of their professional learning in terms of their professional growth. It also became evident that I adopted three other distinct roles as a leader as I led the teachers through the process of self-assessment of professional growth during all three phases of the study: supporter, educator, and enlightener. As a supporter, I created a trusting relationship with the teachers, a relaxed atmosphere within which they felt safe to discuss their teaching and professional learning. The leadership role of supporter aligns with Lambert's (2002) view of leaders as guides in sense-making and reflection, and resonates with Wallo's (2008) findings from a study of leaders as facilitators of co-workers learning in two industrial organisations. Wallo points out that this supporting role is also evident from other previous studies (Bass, 1998; Beattie, 2006; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Manz & Sims, 1991) where an educator role was employed in an attempt to widen colleagues' views so as they might conceive their work from a different perspective. The educator creates "possibilities for learning by actively engaging in the process" (Wallo, 2008, p. 148).

As the educator, I encouraged new learning in the minds of the teachers using a constructivist approach to knowledge creation. New knowledge of the teachers' practices stemmed from reflection in a trusting learning environment. This study has found that when there is a relationship of trust in the self-assessment process, teachers have a more enriched, authentic experience as they come to know what they know about their professional learning and teaching practice. It was through that relationship that the teachers came to see their professional growth in a different light. This was because they

were not seeing themselves merely through a one-way mirror, but had the benefit of also viewing themselves through the lens of their trusted critical friend, the leader of learning.

The leader's knowledge of the teacher's practice was found to be a necessary input to self-assessment of professional growth. My prior knowledge of the teachers' practice assisted me in two ways: by providing me with the background to firstly, prompt the teachers to delve deeper into particular aspects of their teaching as they completed the reflection tool; and secondly, to guide the teachers to identify their own examples of evidence of practice. Initially, I held back articulation of my own understanding of the teachers' practices to provoke the teachers to find their own answers and stimulate self-reflection. Just as the confronter (Wallo, 2008) "does not let the co-worker give up … and forces them out of their comfort zones" (pp. 148-149), I utilised the prompting questions to challenge the teachers to delve deeper into their understanding of their own professional growth so as they might critically reflect on their learning and teaching. The teachers were then able to view their professional learning from a different perspective, as they came to make meaning of that learning in terms of their professional growth. Therefore, I believe this third role, building on the work of Wallo (2008), was the enlightener.

I found that the three roles, supporter, educator, and enlightener, interchanged throughout the process of self-assessment of professional growth. For example, I adopted the educator role as I explained how to use the reflection tool and what the process of self-assessment entailed. In presenting this new perspective on the potential use of the APST, I aimed to expand the teachers' knowledge, challenge their thinking, and facilitate developmental learning, undertaking the roles of both the educator and the enlightener. During the focus group session, my role as supporter was limited due to the large group situation in which the self-assessment took place. During Phase Two of the study, this role expanded to include enlightener as I had the opportunity to conduct the self-assessment process individually with four teachers.

As a middle level leader, in carrying out this research I gained clearer insights that went beyond my role in leading teachers to self-assess their professional growth. I realised that I would not achieve any traction for this process, even if it was of value to school leaders and teachers, unless there was a whole-school approach. Furthermore, the process could

not succeed in a culture in which it was not seen as a valuable way in which teachers and leaders might learn.

7.3 Widening the Cone of Silence

My office had become known by some members of staff as the *cone of silence*: a space in which trusting collegial relationships were built, where teachers felt safe to share issues that were pertinent to them within the school environment. In questioning what would happen if the culture of the Junior School was not as healthy as the cone of silence that I had established, I realised that I needed support from the senior leadership of the school. This perception of a disconnection in the system was unanticipated and made me conscious that apart from my role as the middle level leader in this study, I also had a further role and responsibility to take in moving this work to a valued place within the school context.

In this study, trust was found to have important implications for learning within the school with respect to "individuals' perceptions about the consequences of interpersonal risks in their work environment" (Edmondson, Krammer, & Cook, 2004, p. 241), further supporting Tschannen-Moran's (2009) finding that teacher professionalism in a school is related to the trust among the school community. The findings from this study suggest that in order to move to a whole-school approach to self-assessment of professional growth, the organisational culture should be based on trust, and there should be a very clear and transparent articulation of professional growth throughout the organisation.

In implementing any improvement in a school, risks must be assumed and conflicts will need to be resolved. This, according to Bryk and Schneider (2003) requires a "context characterized by high relational trust" (p. 43), which is built through day-to-day social exchanges: "Relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students" (p. 44). In their study of exploring the role of middle level leaders in facilitating a culture of relational trust in schools, Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer, and Ronnerman (2016, p. 381) found that relational trust was characterised by five dimensions of trust, namely: interpersonal; interactional; intersubjective; intellectual; and pragmatic. The researchers claim it is these five

dimensions of relational trust that are required to "form social resources needed for securing sustainable practice development in schools" (p. 384). They further suggest that due to their positioning in the middle, middle level leaders are "critical agents for facilitating and nourishing such a culture of relational trust" (p. 384). I had developed a number of trusting collegial relationships with staff through the cone of silence and my facilitation of four research projects involving the development of learning communities of teachers within the Junior School.

I realised from the findings from this study that implementing the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework had the potential to build a culture of relational trust within the Junior School. However, this could not be done by one person alone. Therefore, an emergent realisation from this study was that positioned as they are in the middle, as Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer and Ronnerman (2016) suggest, middle level leaders have the potential to build a culture of relational trust by employing the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework with groups of teachers in the school. In order to comprehend how this might be done, and to answer the overarching research question, I felt I needed to gain a greater understanding of the College context.

7.4 Exploring the School Context Further

This study provided the means through which the teachers could view themselves as professionals, perceive and identify opportunities to enhance their growth, and recognise the support they required to further their professional growth journey. However, I had observed that during the time of this study there was a shift in how the Junior School executive team addressed professional development within the school. The executive team advocated activities such as coaching and lesson observation as learning experiences for teachers and opportunities to reflect on their practice. However, when it came to identifying professional learning needs, there appeared to be little evidence of the teacher voice in the decision-making process associated with professional development activity selection made by the Junior School executive team. There also seemed to be no means of collecting the teachers' views about professional development activities in evaluating

their effectiveness in meeting teachers' professional needs and goals. I was reminded of Ellström's (2001) sixth learning condition which forms the learning environment, which I had not yet explored in this study, namely, the established direction and goals of the organisation that could inhibit learning.

The school context appears to have a significant impact on sustaining professional development (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Pritchard & Mcdiarmid, 2006). A school's professional learning culture must be addressed if sustained change from professional development programs is to be achieved (Timperley & Phillips, 2003). School culture develops through social interactions (Morgan, 1986) and Fullan and St. Germain (2006) suggest that the outcome from developing a culture of learning is collective commitment to improvement amongst teachers and leaders. Roby's (2011) study of the potential influence of teacher leaders on school culture found that "trust building, managing change, and strengthening relationships of educators at the workplace … needed to be addressed by teacher leaders and school administrators" (p. 788). Roby (2011) suggests that informal leaders are potentially able to impact school culture, stating: "Learning from peers (which addresses communication and relationship issues found in the survey results), is a powerful action teacher leaders can initiate to impact school culture" (p. 788).

Bredeson (2000) suggests that effective principals "work to move teachers towards greater levels of independence" (p. 398), developing teacher capacity as autonomous learners and professional practitioners. I felt it necessary that I gain a greater understanding of the context in order for this work to make a significant contribution to a whole-school approach to professional growth and improvements to the quality of teaching. I wished to explore the College Principal's perspectives on:

- the degree to which professional learning was aligned with the school's goals and teacher needs;
- the evaluation of professional learning outcomes within the school from all stakeholder perspectives, including the teacher voice; and
- the role of middle level leadership within the school.

After an agreed interview with the Principal, I came to a greater understanding of what it meant to be a middle level leader and the associated responsibilities of middle level leadership within the whole school context. This was an unexpected outcome of this research study. The interpretation of the findings from my interview with the College Principal, together with my own reflections in terms of how the outcomes of this study might contribute to a whole-school approach to professional growth and quality teaching within the context, are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

7.4.1 The principal's perspective.

The Principal confirmed my own observations with respect to the activities that had been put in place in order to meet his vision, established two years earlier, to build capacity within the Junior School stating:

> The structures to enable change: the broad end-game has not changed
> just how we might get there and the broad end-game is clearer.

A set of year-level collaborative content-driven processes and activities had been put in place two years earlier to build capacity for the teachers within the overarching strategic intent of the College. My observations regarding a shift in how the executive team addressed professional development within the school were confirmed by the Principal when he described what had been put in place over the subsequent two-year period:

> Structures that enabled teachers to learn from each other having conversations about teaching and learning. Making sure that it [PD] is grounded in their everyday work. The notion of the action learning action research and that is why I think it is effective. Observe and feedback, classroom visits. One thing I have done is made sure that everyone on the senior leadership has completed a coaching course so that they are much more au fait with giving feedback to teachers. The next step is to have the middle leaders developed as coaches. Walkthroughs, where everyone walks around the room and then gives feedback. I think it is a really good thing because it builds capacity. They are mentally comparing their classroom with their peers' classroom and thinking about maybe they are

lacking in something or maybe they are doing something really well. It is either affirming or a stimulus for potential change.

Clearly, the Principal had tried to bring about change by putting structures in place where the interactions between the Junior School executive team and the teachers, and teachers-to-teachers were valued. However, this study has shown that structures are not enough. In order to maximise the outcomes from any such exchanges a safe, honest and trusting learning environment must be established. When it came to the evaluation of professional learning outcomes within the school, the Principal stated that through our dialogue during the interview he had come to the realisation that there was no accounting for the teacher voice. Other than anecdotal evidence, there was no data collected about the effectiveness of these structures from the teachers' perspectives. As for the collection of data regarding the staff PD experiences, all approved PD was recorded and aligned to a standard descriptor from the APST:

> … that is going towards things that we value as a College. Annual reviews where teachers will talk about what they are doing in their class and you get a sense that there has been that buy-in. … I have no idea if it [the PD] was beneficial or if it was productive or any results that there was a change in behaviour. Sometimes people come back and share what they have done but it is rare. Maybe it is something we should be doing more of as we are spending so much on PD… No, that is an area for growth and change. I have just spent a lot of time talking about how to empower teachers and the teacher voice is missing.

Middle level leaders, thought by the Principal to "have the greatest influence for change" in the context, were considered to be "someone in a position to influence upwards or downwards". This was not restricted to positional power but rather took into account anyone who could be influential in that way:

> Certain people because of their reputation, years of teaching or time spent in the institution just command that.

The Principal also valued the middle level leaders' abilities to provide feedback to the senior leadership team. I had made the assumption that the leadership model used within the school was distributed leadership (Elmore, 2000; Lambert, 1998; Spillane et al., 2001). The Principal, when asked how he would maximise middle level leadership in the school under this model, stated:

> You need to empower and entrust others. I always talk about my class being my senior leadership team, so if I can grow and develop them and we are all on the same page then I think I am doing a good job. What they then need to do is the same thing with the middle leaders that sit below them and make sure there is a consistent message and vision and give them the resources, encouragement and targets that they need to meet. The senior leadership team have undergone a coaching course and my vision is that they then coach the middle leaders. A project for middle leader development in the Senior School will begin next year.

Having this notion of growing and developing his senior leadership team, the Principal proposed that they should, in turn, adopt the same approach with their middle level leaders. Whether there had been a clear articulation of the role that senior leaders in the Junior School were expected to adopt in developing middle leadership was not made clear. The Principal stated that all senior leaders had been sent on professional development involving coaching and that a middle leadership coaching and mentoring program was to begin in the Senior School in the following year. No mention was made as to whether the program would be extended to encompass middle level leadership within the Junior School at any future time.

In summary, the Principal revealed that there was no mechanism in place to collect data regarding the evaluation of professional learning outcomes and the teachers' voices were not considered in terms of the established structures for professional learning. Some of the teachers in this study pointed out that a benefit of completing the PGSA Guides was that they were able to provide the Principal and Head of Junior School with an evaluation of their professional learning in terms of their professional growth. Middle level leaders were viewed as "someone in a position to influence upwards or downwards" and to "have

the greatest influence for change". The Principal's values and approach to team building had formed the basis of the College's culture. Particularly, this seemed the case given that the Principal trusted senior leaders to develop the middle level leaders under them. The existing infrastructure, together with the lack of the teacher voice in the planning and implementation of professional development programs, point to potential inhibitors within the learning environment. They appeared to be in conflict with the change that would be required for the learnings from this study, as discussed in Chapter 6, to become embedded within the College. When I engaged in critical reflection on the outcome from the interview with the Principal, I came to comprehend my own growth as a leader during the undertaking of this study, as discussed in the following section

7.5 Leadership for Learning

The professional learning opportunity provided by the self-assessment process itself gave me the opportunity to engage with colleagues in reflecting upon classroom practices, professional learning and staff development. Lambert (1998) suggests that this form of professional learning best encourages leadership and this, I believe, was the case in this study. As the middle level leader, I served as a facilitator of learning for the teachers. The teachers came to understand what they knew about their professional growth, capturing evidence to support their self-assessment on the reflection tool, the PGSA Guide. In particular, two participants, Rebecca and Hannah, also formulated goals for their professional growth journey. All teachers learnt how to self-assess their professional growth but not all grew to know themselves in terms of their professionalism. Rebecca and Hannah observed themselves by critically scrutinising their knowledge and practice, and bringing about decisions based on their deeper understanding of their previously held assumptions (double-loop learning, Argyris and Schon, (1978)).

During this undertaking, I underwent transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), coming to learn and grow as a leader of learning (Barth, 2001). My experiences in conducting action learning/action research projects (for example the TAR Project, discussed in Chapter 4) had provided me with the understanding of how valuable that approach was in building learning communities in schools and improving teachers' abilities to cater for

diverse learners. The focus of my learning from those experiences was restricted to enhancing teachers' knowledge and change to practice. This study involved researched action, what Tripp (2003) terms 'action enquiry', an approach to reflection on practice that Clarke (2016) suggests resembles the process of double loop learning. During this study, I became more self-reflective, self-aware, and came to understand the important role leaders play in collaboration, and building authenticity and trust within any learning environment and organisation. Through critical reflection on my experiences as both a learner and a leader during this study, I gained a heightened metacognitive awareness of who I was as a leader.

To this end, I realised that in taking a pro-active approach to seeking to find a solution to the teacher's problem in representing their growth within their teaching portfolios, I had developed an innovative means to growing the school in terms of enhancing professional learning and improving the quality of teaching. At this time during the study I was inspired by an article by Simon Clarke (2016, pp. 47-58) entitled *We Think, Therefore We Are: Teachers connecting leadership and learning*. Clarke suggests that the set of five principles from the *Carpe Vitam* international research project between 2002 and 2005 conducted at the University of Cambridge can be used as a lens to reveal connections between leadership and learning. I used the principles in an attempt to uncover any such connections from the work carried out in this study as shown in Table 7.2.

Learning was an activity in this study and I was the leader of the teachers' learning. I came to perceive the powerful connection between leadership and learning. The individualised approach to self-assessment allowed for time for a leader of learning to listen, be open to ideas and understand each teacher's practice and where they wanted to go in their learning journey. The completed PGSA Guides provided information that could be used for management tasks, but from a leadership perspective that data could generate critical reflection on practices, motivating teachers to instigate change. However, for middle level leaders to step forward and take the role of leaders of learning, I posit that the school context must support that undertaking.

Table 7.1

Connecting Leadership and Learning in this Study

Principle involves:	Leadership for learning practice
Maintaining a focus on learning as an activity	The teachers within the Junior School, and I were learners in this study as a result of undertaking the self-assessment of professional growth activity. The teachers were provided with the opportunity to construct meaning from their interactions with me during discussion and professional dialogue as they completed the PGSA Guide.
Creating conditions favourable to learning as an activity	Established trusting professional relationships with Sally, Hannah, Helen and Rebecca influenced the collaborative learning that took place during Phase Two. The teachers felt safe to reveal their thinking about their PDO experiences and practices. I came to understand the importance of building a culture of relational trust Bryk and Schneider (2003) within a school.
Creating a dialogue about leading for learning	I engaged in collaborative and reflective thinking about learning during the self-assessment process. During my growth as a leader, I engaged in critical reflection about leading for learning. To move this work further within the context, I would need to ensure that a dialogue about leading for learning among middle level leaders and senior leaders in the school was created. Rebecca and Hannah developed agency over their professional growth, stating that the self-assessment process enabled them to take responsibility for their learning and set goals for their learning journey. They stated they needed a leader in their process of learning.
Sharing of leadership	The existing leadership model within the school might not have fostered the sharing of leadership for learning. I could not do this alone. A reframing of the way in which leadership was distributed within the school might enable leaders (and particularly middle level leaders) to learn together.
A shared sense of accountability	Rebecca and Hannah felt the self-assessment process made them accountable for their professional learning. The Principal was committed to a sense of accountability for the moral purpose of the school. A clear moral purpose that focuses on learning improvement should be articulated and shared, engendering respect, trust, shared understanding and mutual support as suggested by Earl (2005).

Note. Adapted from Five principles from the *Carpe Vitam* international research project between 2002 and 2005 conducted at the University of Cambridge, as cited in "We think, therefore we are: Teachers connecting leadership and learning" by S. Clarke, 2016, *Leading and Managing, 22*(2), pp. 48-49. Copyright 2016 by ACEL.

The Principal viewed middle level leaders as potential agents of change. An emergent realisation from the analysis and interpretation of the findings from this study is that dialogue about leading for learning among middle level leaders and senior leaders should be created within the school. I also came to recognise the need for the establishment of a shared sense of accountability for improvements to the quality of teaching amongst the leaders within the school. The Principal saw himself as culture builder within the College by considering his senior executive team as his 'class', trusting them with the task of building leaders within their own areas of responsibility. In light of the findings from this study, I questioned the potential impact that this top-down approach to building culture, would have on building productive and trusting relationships within the school.

The *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework (Figure 6.2) provides teachers with the opportunity, through dialogic interaction, to be heard during the process of learning about, and how to, self-assess their own professional growth. As knowledge was shaped through continual self-criticism, as the teachers dialogued with the trusted middle level leader, power was given to the learner's voice.

In reflecting finally on leadership for learning within the school, I suggest that there was a need to build a culture of relational trust in order to create a learning environment conducive to bringing about open and honest dialogue. Building supporting and trusting relationships across the school is what is required to bring about change, and advance leadership development and improvement to the quality of teaching and student outcomes. After critically reflecting upon my own growth as a leader of learning, together with my recognition, during this study, of the powerful connection between leadership and learning, I saw the potential for me to widen the cone of silence. Any effort to do so must be enabled by the Principal, in recognising middle level leaders as authentic leaders of learning within the school, and as potential drivers and motivators for building a culture of relational trust within the Junior School.

Other middle level leaders, within the school, would employ the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework. As I modelled the use of the framework, middle level leaders would learn then to lead groups of teachers through the process of self-assessment. This in turn, supported by the culture building and enabling processes of

the principal, may enable middle level leaders to build relational trust within the school. This approach would instil a sense of purpose across the middle level leadership team within the school, driving consistent quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility and fostering greater collaboration and sharing.

7.6 Conclusion

I have related the story of my own growth as a leader of learning in this Chapter. In this study, I came to understand how the teachers thought about their work and the reasons behind that thinking, aspects suggested by Trumbull (1990) as necessary to understand teaching in a meaningful way. I underwent the process of transformative learning as I came to know myself as a leader of learning, becoming more self-reflective and self-aware. The answer to the research sub-question: *What role can a middle level leader take in leading teachers to self-assess their professional growth?* emerged from this understanding. As a leader of learning in this study, I assumed the following four roles: trusted critical friend, supporter, educator and enlightener.

Four key learnings were revealed from my critical reflection on what I had learnt about leadership in the course of conducting this research:

1. **The need to build a culture of relational trust** within the school through collaborative leadership. The importance of creating a non-judgemental, trusting environment for learning, so as the teachers felt safe to dialogue with middle level leaders about their perceptions and feelings regarding their professional growth, emerged from the findings. Examination of current literature suggested that middle level leaders are positioned to build a culture of relational trust through collaborative leadership.

2. **The importance of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework as a mechanism for teacher and leadership learning**, and as a valued way of learning within the school. I posit from this study that the framework could not succeed in a culture in which it was not viewed as a valuable way in which teachers and leaders might learn, requiring support from the senior leadership team within the College.

3. **The need for shared dialogue about leading for learning** amongst middle level leaders and senior leaders within a school, so as to establish a shared sense of accountability for the quality of teaching and leading learning.

4. **The culture building and enabling processes of the Principal** are necessary for the implementation of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework within the school. The Principal must provide teachers and leaders of learning adequate time to invest in utilising the framework.

In addition, I came to understand the powerful connection between leadership and learning, and that leading for learning from the middle may drive improvements, focused not only on the quality of teaching but leadership development, thus building capacity of both teachers and middle level leaders within the school. Chapter 8 presents a conceptual framework to support this endeavour.

CHAPTER 8: Connecting Leadership and Learning: A Role for Middle Level Leaders

8.1 Introduction

This research has resulted in the application of a unique learning process to self-assessment of professional growth, and the development of a role for middle level leaders as leaders of learning in an era in which enhancing the quality of teaching is a global priority. Pressures placed upon teachers to meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) may involve paradigmatic shifts in their thinking about their own teaching. The analysis and interpretation of the data from this study found that authentic self-assessment of professional growth requires collaborative knowledge building with a trusted middle level leader, using a reflection tool based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). Chapter 6 presented the *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework (see Figure 6.2) in answer to the first three research sub-questions. The framework was found to be a learning and knowledge-creating entity.

To answer the overarching research question: *How can a middle level leader lead teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?* it was essential that I gain a greater understanding of the school context as discussed in Chapter 7. The roles I adopted in leading the teachers to self-assess their professional growth have been discussed in answer to the fourth research sub-question. My self-discovery as a leader of learning and the development of my understanding of the powerful connection between leadership and learning were also depicted in Chapter 7. The findings from the three-phase case study, and the findings from my reflections on my learning to lead learning, discussed in Chapter 7, provide a response to the overall research question.

8.1.1 The emergence of the conceptual framework.

Through the discussion and presentation of the findings from the study, a second framework has been developed to depict these findings and provide a response to the

overarching research question. The framework: *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leadership for Learning* (Figure 8.1) has three components: Leaders of Learning; Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Creation; and Sharing New Knowledge and Reflection-on-action.
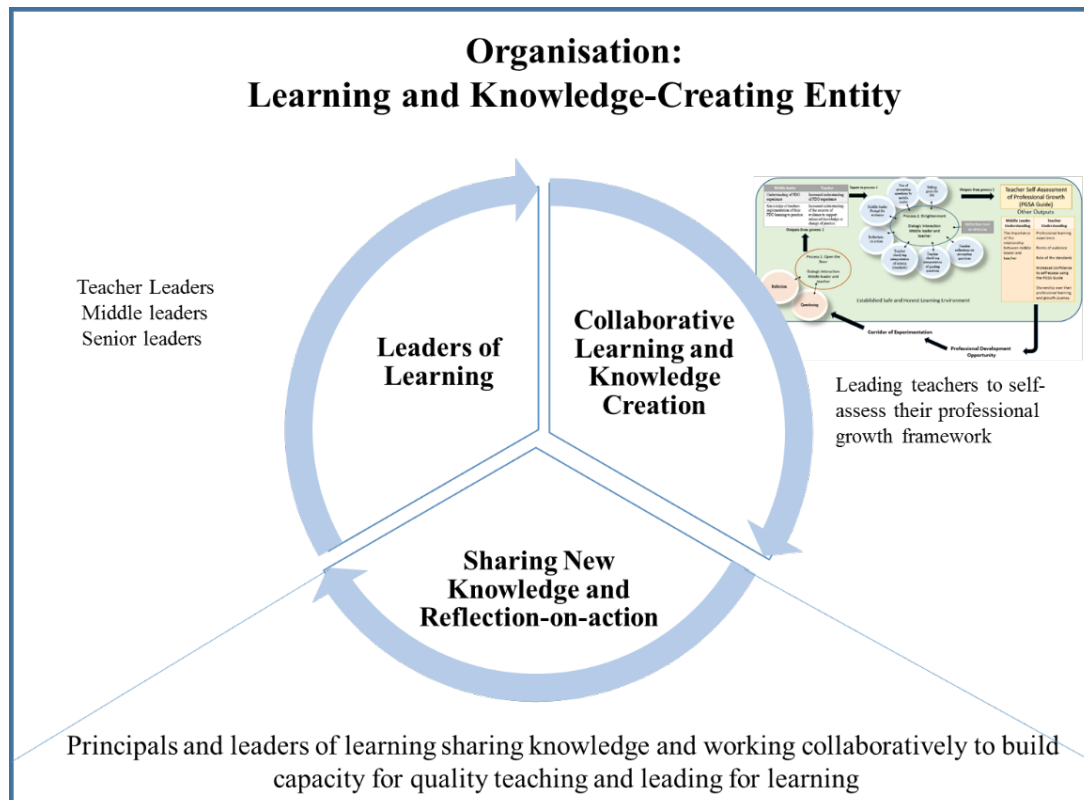

Figure 8.1. Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning

Recently there have been calls (ACER, 2016; OEDC, 2016) to apply the concept of the learning organisation to schools, originally discussed by Senge (2000). A report by the OEDC (2016), designed to develop a shared understanding of this notion, contends that the learning organisation is viewed in the literature as a "multi-level concept involving individual behaviours, team work and organisation-wide practices and culture" (p. i). Within the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning* framework (Figure 8.1), the school is viewed as a learning organisation and knowledge-creating entity within which knowledge is created, affirming the notions of Nonaka and Toyama (2003) and Takeuchi (2006).

> Knowledge creation is conceptualized as a dialectical process, in which various contradictions are synthesized through dynamic interaction among individuals, the organization and the environment. … [Within this view the school is] …an organic configuration of Ba. Ba, which is conceptualized as a shared context in motion, can transcend time, space, and organization boundaries to create knowledge (Nonaka & Toyama, 2003, p. 2).

Nonaka, von Krogh, and Voelpel (2006) suggest that Ba, although significant in organisational knowledge creation theory, is empirically under-explored. This framework incorporates an adaptation of Nonaka and Toyama's (2003) notion of Ba and may further illuminate our understanding how this notion can be applied in a school context.

The first of the two components emerged from the findings from Phases Two and Three of the study. The third component began to emerge from my learnings about leadership as I progressed through this study. While my research questions did not focus on exploring capacity building, my reflections on my learnings enlightened me to the significance of the use of leading self-assessment of professional growth as a means of building capacity for quality teaching and leadership for learning within a school. From my learnings, I have therefore put forward the third component of this framework: Sharing New Knowledge and Reflection-on-action. I posit that through the continuous process within the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leadership for Learning* framework, principals and leaders of learning can work collaboratively to build capacity within a school. In conceptualising the framework I have adopted Andrews and Associates (2011) definition of capacity building in this study:

> Capacity-building in schools is a generative, professionally-led process that inspires the creation of a vibrant workplace culture, relationships and identity and results in sustained levels of enhanced school achievement in areas of school priority. (p. ix)

The framework highlights the role that leaders of learning can take within this process.

This chapter has been structured in accordance with Figure 8.2. The chapter also includes a discussion of my reflections on my position in the research as an insider participant

observer. The research conclusions and limitations to the research, together with suggestions for future research are presented in this chapter.
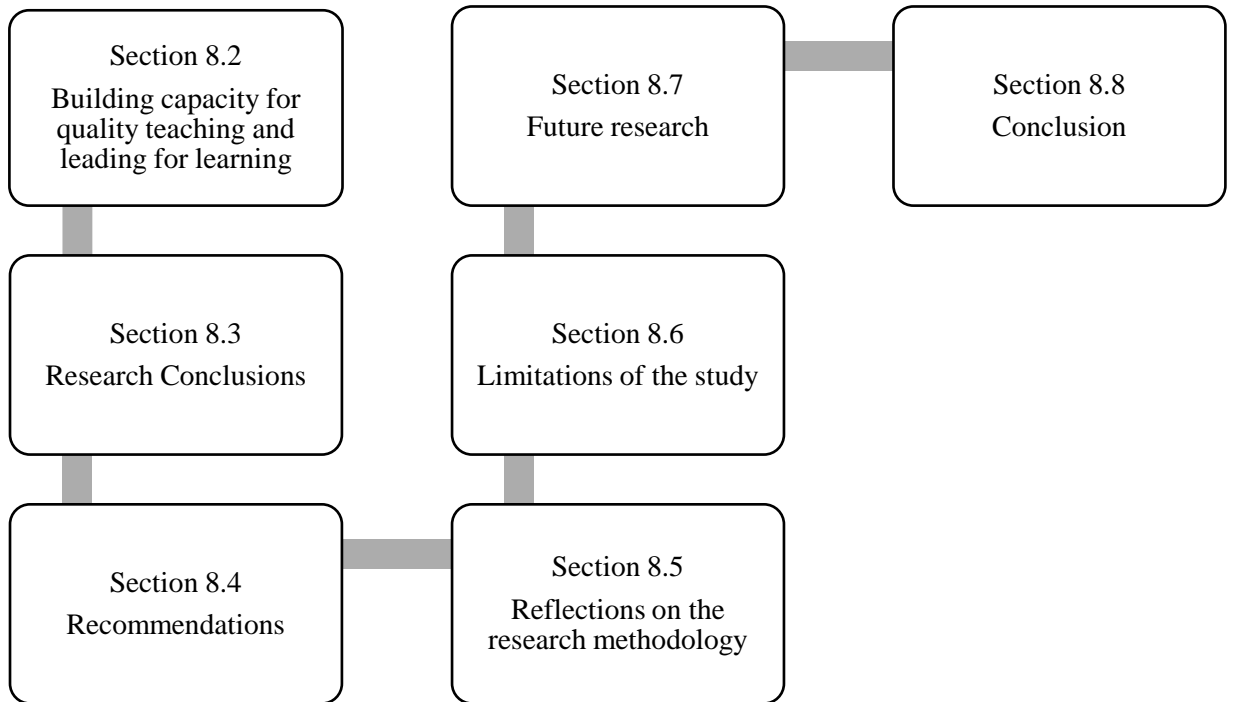
Figure 8.2. Chapter Structure

8.2 Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning

Each of the three components of the framework (as presented in Figure 8.1), Leaders of Learning, Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Creation, and Sharing New Knowledge and Reflection-on-action, are discussed in this section. The first component focuses on harnessing the power and potential influence of all leaders within a school as leaders of learning. Therefore, leaders of learning may encompass teacher leaders, middle level leaders through to senior leaders. The *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework (Figure 6.2) is embedded within the second component, Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Creation. I propose that within the third component, Sharing New Knowledge and Reflection-on-action, principals and leaders of learning work

collaboratively to develop a shared sense of accountability for building capacity for quality teaching and leading for learning.

Table 8.1

Elements within the Three Components of the Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning Framework

Leaders of Learning	Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Creation	Sharing New Knowledge and Reflection-on Action
Principals: **-** view leaders as agents of change and leaders of learning; and	Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth Framework	Principals and leaders of learning working collaboratively sharing knowledge and building a culture of relational trust
- establish trusting relationships with teachers; **Leaders of Learning**	*Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework valued as an authentic way in which teachers and leaders learn	A shared sense of accountability for teacher quality and leadership for learning
- have prior knowledge of teachers' practice;	Roles adopted by leader of learning: supporter, educator and enlightener	Shared dialogue about leading for learning amongst middle level leaders and senior leaders

The following sections describe each of the components of the framework, discussing the elements shown in Table 8.1.

8.2.1 Leaders of learning.

The first of the components of the framework relates to the initial level of the multi-level concept of the learning organisation, individual behaviours. Leaders of learning within a school may encompass teacher leaders, middle level leaders through to senior leaders. So as leaders can embrace the role of leaders of learning it may also be necessary for principals to adopt a different type of leadership position. In reviewing the literature for this study, I encountered extensive research into the move away from leadership hierarchy to a shared and collaborative approach to leadership in schools (Diamond, 2001; Elmore,

2000; Spillane et al., 2001). According to Lambert (1998) within the distributed leadership model the purpose of leadership is "the ability of those within a school to work together, constructing meaning and knowledge, collectively and collaboratively" (p. 5), making way for "the possibility of all teachers becoming leaders at various times" (Gronn, 2000, p. 333). In Australia, an important approach, focused on leadership within a whole school improvement framework, is that of parallel leadership (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Crowther & Associates, 2011; Crowther et al., 2009).

I suggest that by adopting the parallel leadership approach the organisation will be best placed to develop capacity within the school since this model of leadership emphasises mutual trust, where "leadership acknowledges the professionalism of teachers through its sense of moral purpose, as well as teacher-principal relatedness and its established links to enhanced school outcomes" (Conway & Andrews, 2016, p. 175). In order to enable the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning* framework, principals must view middle level leaders as agents for change and leaders of learning. The findings from this study support the need for a leader of learning to devote time to establishing relationships with the teachers and developing and understanding their teaching practice prior to leading them through self-assessment of their professional growth.

8.2.2 Collaborative learning and knowledge creation.

The *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework (Figure 6.2), viewed within the school as a valuable way in which teachers and leaders learn, is embedded in this second component of the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning* framework (Figure 8.1). This component aligns with the second level of the learning organisation, team work. The middle level leader's leadership in this study was socially constructed, understood through the shared meanings as the participants and I learnt together, constructing knowledge about self-assessment of professional growth collectively and collaboratively. We engaged in collaborative reflective practice, "which cannot only be professionally empowering but also enables elements of effective learning and good teaching to be aligned and explicit" (Clarke, 2016, p. 49).

This self-assessment process provided me with the opportunity to understand "the process of learning from the learner's own perspective" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 260) which is considered to be important in the cognitive and constructivist perspective of adult learning. Within this component of the framework, other middle level leaders within a school, as leaders of learning, would employ the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework, leading each member of groups of teachers to self-assess their professional growth. The study supports the need for an individual approach to self-assessment of professional growth, where the culture of the learning environment is one in which people feel secure to take risks to expose their inner-most feelings, in order for true critical reflection and self-analysis about their beliefs and practice to take place.

I adopted three distinct roles as a leader of learning as I led the teachers through the process of self-assessment of professional growth: supporter, educator, and enlightener (discussed in section 7.l, Chapter 7). In the role of supporter, I acted as a guide, encouraging reflection within a trusting environment. As an educator, I widened the teachers' frame of reference and within my role as enlightener I challenged the teachers to delve deeper into their understanding of their professional growth. Leaders of learning form a relationship with each teacher which incorporates critiquing, guiding, supporting, reflecting and educating, enabling the middle level leader to adopt an approach, dialogue as a critical friend and create an environment for learning so as to improve the quality of teaching and leading for learning within the school. Specific explanation of these three enablers are:

- Adopt an approach: Breaking down the process of self-assessment into two distinct processes: *Open the Door* to understanding of the professional development opportunity (PDO), and *Enlightenment* of the PDO experience in terms of teachers' professional growth;
- Dialogue as a critical friend: Guide teachers in the use of a reflection tool based on the APST; and
- Create an environment for learning: Safe, honest and trusting learning environment, incorporating factors, which enable learning.

When a school is viewed as a learning organisation and knowledge-creating entity, it is also considered to be "an organic configuration of Ba" (Nonka & Toyama, 2003, p. 7) as stated earlier. What this means is that ba is created as a place where information is assigned meaning through interpretation to become knowledge (Nonaka & Toyama, 2003). In this second component of the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning* framework Ba is created through the employment of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework, a space within which reflection on teachers' professional development experiences is assigned meaning, becoming knowledge of their professional growth. Within the notion of Ba, Nonaka and Toyama indicate members of a group reflect upon and share their viewpoints taking various roles: innovator, coach and activist. Although they state that each role is played by a different person within a group, the aims of each of the roles the authors identify have some similarities to the three different roles taken by me during the process of self-assessment of professional growth: supporter, educator and enlightener.

8.2.3 Sharing new knowledge and reflection-on-action.

The third level of the multi-level concept of the learning organisation refers to organisation-wide practices and culture. Within this component of the framework the knowledge concerning the capabilities of teachers and leaders within the school from the collective learning that took place in component two, becomes shared and distributed within the school.

A key finding from this study is the definition of authentic self-assessment of professional growth shown in Figure 8.3.

> **Authentic self-assessment of professional growth is a collaborative knowledge building process in which a trusted leader of learning, through dialogic interaction and reflection stimulated by a reflection tool, enables teachers to learn about themselves, how they learn, and how they grow professionally.**

Figure 8.3. Definition of Authentic Self-Assessment of Professional Growth

The importance of creating a non-judgemental, trusting environment for learning emerged from the findings of this study. The findings from this study further support the view of others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cosner, 2009) that trust is a critical organisational resource in terms of its relationship to the achievement of learning through the interaction between colleagues. In order to enable the implementation of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework (Figure 6.2) a culture of relational trust should be built within a school. In Chapter 7, I extrapolated, from current literature findings, the potential for middle level leaders to create a culture of relational trust within a school by engaging in the process of self-assessment of professional growth (Cosner, 2009; Edwards-Groves et al., 2016). Creating such a culture also requires the enactment of the culture building and enabling processes of the principal: cultivate the school as a learning and knowledge creating entity; empowering middle level leaders as agents of change and leaders of learning; and establishing trusting relationships with teachers and leaders within the school. When enabled by the principal, leaders of learning within a school can develop a culture of relational trust through the use of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework. These findings further illuminate Edwards-Groves et al.'s (2016) work on the role of middle level leaders in building a culture of relational trust through collaborative leadership.

Within this study, there was evidence of both single-loop and double-loop learning (Argyris, 1978) by the teachers and the middle level leader from conducting the process of self-assessment of professional growth. The emergent framework of this study provides a means through which leaders of learning engage in collaborative learning and knowledge creation with teachers focused on whole school knowledge sharing and reflection on action. I suggest that through knowledge sharing and reflection-on-action among middle level leaders and senior leaders, a shared sense of accountability for teaching quality and leadership for learning within a school may be established. In addition, I posit that the iterative nature of the framework has the potential to foster both teacher and leader single-loop and double-loop learning and afford a means of building capacity for quality teaching and leadership for learning.

8.3 Research Conclusions

Based on the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* Framework, developed from the findings reported in Chapters 4 and 5, authentic self-assessment of professional growth has been defined (Figure 8.3). The *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework (Figure 6.2) was developed from the findings of Phases Two and Three in this study. The supporting processes found to enhance teachers' self-assessment of their professional growth with respect to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) were Process 1: *Open the Door* and Process 2: *Enlightenment.* Both processes took place within a safe, honest and trusting learning environment with the leader of learning.

Self-assessment of professional growth, in this study, promoted both teacher and leader learning and through the collaborative interaction and dialogue, supporting this process, the teachers in this study came to know themselves in terms of their professional growth. There was evidence of both teacher and middle level leader single loop and double loop learning. The teachers came to understand their professional learning experience and made meaning of that experience through dialogic interaction and reflection, stimulated by a reflection tool, with a trusted leader of learning. Through the process of self-assessment, it became evident that the teachers' ways of knowing were based on constructive-developmental theory (Kegan, 1982, 1995; Kohlberg, 1969). They constructed meaning from their experiences of a professional development opportunity, and examined the core and implicit values, assumptions and beliefs underpinning their teaching, through reflection and introspection (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Huberman & Miles, 1984; Senge, 1990). Through recapturing and evaluating their experiences, the teachers came to know themselves in terms of their professional growth.

During this research, as a leader of learning, I adopted four roles as I led the teachers to learn to self-assess their professional growth: trusted critical friend, supporter, educator and enlightener. The following four insights emerged as I critically reflected on my learnings about leadership:

1. the need to build a culture of relational trust within a school through collaborative leadership;

2. the importance of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework as a mechanism for teacher and leadership learning, and as a valued way of learning within the school;

3. the need for shared dialogue about leading for learning amongst middle level leaders and senior leaders within a school so as to established a shared sense of accountability for the quality of teaching and leading learning; and

4. the culture building and enabling processes of the principal are necessary to the implementation of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework within a school.

The findings from my reflections on these four key insights led to the conceptualisation of a second framework, *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leadership for Learning* (Figure 8.1), as a response to the overall research question. There are three components to this conceptual framework: Leaders of Learning; Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Creation; and Sharing New Knowledge and Reflection-on-action.

8.4 Recommendations

There are four recommendations that emerge from this study:

> **Recommendation One:** Principals should work collaboratively with middle level leaders as leaders of learning, to enable teachers to learn about themselves, how they learn, and how they grow professionally.

As evidenced in this study, teachers came to learn about themselves, how they learn, and how they grow professionally as a middle level leader led them through the process of self-assessment of professional growth. So as middle level leaders are able to embrace the role of leaders of learning they need to be given agency by the principal. An emergent realisation from the analysis and interpretation of the findings from this study is that dialogue about leading for learning amongst middle level leaders and senior leaders should be created within a school so as a shared sense of accountability for teacher learning is established.

Recommendation Two: The *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework must be viewed as a collaborative learning and knowledge creating entity within a school.

As evidenced in this study, self-assessment of professional growth is a collaborative learning and knowledge building process with a trusted leader of learning. As such, the process was found to promote both teacher and leader learning, through collaborative interaction and dialogue, stimulated by a reflection tool, as teachers came to know themselves in terms of their professional growth and understand the role of professional standards in supporting this process. As learners in this process, the teachers and the leader of learning engaged in critical reflection which fostered a deeper level of learning about the process of self-assessment of professional growth itself. The safe, honest and trusting environment in which the teachers came to learn was one in which knowledge reproduction and understanding was emphasised, thoughtful and critical reflection on their experiences was encouraged, and collaborative construction of knowledge was supported.

Recommendation Three: During collaborative learning and knowledge creating pursuits within a school context, a leader of learning should adopt the roles of trusted critical friend, supporter, educator and enlightener.

Recommendation two states that The *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework should be viewed as a collaborative learning and knowledge creating entity within a school. In enacting the framework, I adopted four roles as a leader of learning: trusted critical friend, supporter, educator and enlightener. I employed the latter three roles interchangeably throughout the process of self-assessment of professional growth. I created trusting relationships with the teachers and supported them in their learning. As the educator, I fostered teacher learning using a constructivist approach to knowledge creation. Leaders are likely to lead diverse collaborative learning and knowledge creating pursuits within schools and should adopt the supporter, educator and enlightener roles.

This suggests that leadership training for leaders of learning in schools is essential to the implementation of the framework. Leaders of learning should be provided with professional learning opportunities to develop the essential skillset and address the following aspects found necessary for the implementation of the *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework (Figure 6.2):

- Building trusting relationships with colleagues;
- Dialoguing as a critical friend;
- Strengthening interpersonal skills; and
- Creating a safe, honest and trusting learning environment.

Recommendation Four: The reflection tool should only be used as a stimulus for dialogue within the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework.

The reflection tool cannot be used in isolation, it should always be used as part of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework. The reflection tool acted as a stimulus for dialogue and reflection between the leader of learning and teachers. It should be used within a trusted relationship with a leader of learning, enhanced by undertaking the processes of *Open the Door* to a professional development experience and *Enlightenment* of that experience in terms of professional growth. Evidence from the completed reflection tools demonstrated the teacher's learning progression, captured the teacher's professional growth and outlined future goals within their learning journey.

8.5 Reflections on the Research Methodology

8.5.1 My position as insider participant observer.

As a researcher, in the position as insider participant observer, I have been able to acquire in-depth insight into a real-world situation, which may not have been afforded to a researcher from the outside. I also had the advantage of ease of accessibility to the case study site and participants; I was entirely supported by the Principal and the Junior School executive team. Whilst this has been a small-scale research study within a single research

site, I believe that this research has been enriched by my own experience as a practitioner, providing insights into the topic area in a school context.

During the course of the research I became more critically self-reflective, increasingly aware of my 'reflection-in-action' (Schon, 1991), providing me with the ability to more effectively reflect upon and articulate the tacit knowledge about the topic held by myself and the participants. As such, through the use of self, I have attempted to make clear how the knowledge has been co-constructed with the Principal and the teachers in the study. Relationships with the participants were well established prior to undertaking the study and revealed within the study. I have sought to make explicit my role as insider in my interactions with participants in the production of knowledge in this study. I have been entirely transparent throughout the research process and I believe that all the participants, including the Principal, were very honest and self-reflective during our interactions. I posit, that they may not have been so forthcoming if the interviews had been conducted by an outsider, who may not have been able to establish a trusted relationship with the participants.

There has also been critique in the literature about the insider role in terms of the potential for undue influence of the researcher's perspective and the perception on the part of the participants of relative power. I believe I have made explicit my role as 'insider' in my interactions with participants in the production of knowledge in this study by adopting the stance of a reflexive researcher. I used a methodology based upon reflexive epistemology (constructivist), continually questioning the social process of knowledge production as I led the teachers through the process of self-assessment of professional growth. Reflexivity has been considered at every stage of this research from formation of the research questions, development of the research design, collection and analysis of data and addressing the research questions, to consulting the literature throughout the writing of the dissertation as I examined and made explicit the decisions I made during the research process. I kept a reflective journal as a personal story of progress throughout the research, recording my critical reflections on the research, and my self-discovery as a leader of learning.

8.5.2 Focus group participation.

Two members of the Junior School executive team, who had also taken part in the TAR Project, expressed the desire to attend the focus group session for this study but did not take part in the self-assessment process. I had hoped that since the focus group members had all experienced the TAR Project together, anonymity would not be an issue. The degree to which the teachers were willing to expose their inner most thoughts about their learning was affected by the group situation, particularly due to the presence of the executive team members. Role conflict has been identified (Adler & Adler, 1987) as a potential problem with the insider researcher role. In my position as a middle level leader within the case study school, I experienced role conflict with respect to not wanting to offend the Junior school executive team members by: a) excluding them from the focus group session; and b) not making the data from the completed reflection tools available to them. As a researcher, I was responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the participants' data.

Ultimately the quality of the research ought to be assessed based on the appropriateness of the research method to the scope of the investigation. I selected a mode of enquiry to fit the topic, my own skills and style. Participant observation and my "insider" role in this study allowed me, as a practising middle level leader, to capitalise on my unique circumstance to produce academic research which is current, accessible and relevant to educational practitioners and researchers.

8.6 Limitations of the Study

This has been a small-scale research study within a single research site. The teachers volunteered their time to take part in the focus group session, fully aware of the amount of time required. The session took place at the conclusion of the final workshop for the TAR Project, and as such, the teachers' release time was funded by that project. It was not easy to assemble ten teachers together during school hours and this should be considered by future researchers. When it came to seeking volunteers from the TAR Project to take part in Phase Two of the study, I encountered difficulties. The time

allocated, by the Principal, for participation in Phase Two of the research was during teacher collaborative planning release time and the TAR Project teachers preferred to use that time with their planning teams. Furthermore, the study may have benefitted from the inclusion of a larger number of voluntary participants in Phase Two, particularly if some were members of the TAR Project learning community as those teachers had already experienced the use of the reflection tool.

During the focus group session, I began to develop my understanding of the importance of a trusting learning environment for self-assessment of professional growth. Perhaps the design of the composition of focus group should have only included the presence of myself as middle level leader and the ten teacher participants.

Various issues arose towards the end of this study and before I was able to answer the overarching research question, I sought to explore my interpretation of the school context with the College Principal. It was important that I gained insight into potential inhibitors to creating the learning environment needed to progress this study across responsibility boundaries within the Junior School. The leadership of the Junior School underwent change during the time Phase One of this study was being conducted. Despite being new to the school, the Head of Junior School may have been able to contribute significant insights into the Junior School from his own perspective, particularly those associated with the role of middle level leadership within the school. However, the context was not explored with the Head of Junior School as this was not part of the research design.

8.7 Future Research

At the conclusion of the research it became evident that there were two key areas for future research: 1) examining the relevance of the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning* framework in achieving sustained change within school contexts; and 2) exploration of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework as a means of enhancing professional learning within schools.

Whilst this has been a small-scale study, the nature of my data have allowed me to conceptualise the *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching and Leading for Learning*

framework (Figure 8.1) as a means of building teaching and leadership for learning capacity. Further research might usefully focus on examining the relevance of the framework within school contexts, both within Australia and internationally.

Another avenue of future study would be to explore further the use of the *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework as a means of enhancing professional learning across various school contexts.

I posit that the innovative research design and methodology I have employed in this study, might well be utilised by other future qualitative researchers to investigate other phenomena in education and other areas of social research.

8.8 Conclusion

In summary, a framework of how self-assessment of professional growth, viewed as a learning and knowledge-creating entity, can be used as a continuous process to build capacity for quality teaching and leading for learning, has been conceptualised from the findings and my critical reflections on my learnings from this study. There are three components to the framework: Leaders of Learning, Collaborative Learning and Knowledge creation, and Sharing Knowledge and Reflection-on-action. A means of enhancing professional learning in schools, the *Leading Teachers to Self-Assess their Professional Growth* framework, developed from Phases Two and Three of this study, is embedded within the second component. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) have been critiqued for not requiring teachers to make links between knowledge and professional practice (Bahr & Mellor, 2016). The *Leading Teachers to Self-assess their Professional Growth* framework provides teachers with the opportunity to engage with the standards through self-reflection and critical reflection on their practice, making meaningful links between the knowledge gained from participating in professional development, their teaching practice, and professional growth.

There has been a scarcity of empirical work in the literature regarding the use of the APST. Loughland and Ellis (2016) concluded from their extensive review of the existing works that there is no empirical foundation to "support the claims of any of the benefits of the

standards … promoted in the literature" (Loughland & Ellis, p. 59). This research, although a small-scale study, contributes to the prevailing body of knowledge of the use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers by teachers themselves to understand their professional growth.

Four recommendations have emerged from this study and two potential areas for future research have been suggested. I have reflected upon the research methodology used to explore the research question, my position as an insider participant observer, and have identified the limitations to this study.

Whilst this is a small-scale study, in that it was conducted within one school within Australia, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were used as the criteria for self-assessment of professional growth, the general findings and recommendations have significance for junior and senior schools within Australia and internationally. Consideration and implementation of the two frameworks, developed from the findings from this study, have the potential to build capacity for quality teaching and leading for learning.

The leadership in this study went beyond coaching or mentoring, it was about developing a professional relationship which enabled people to learn about themselves, how they learn and how they grow professionally, challenging their predispositions, their assumptions and their beliefs. This study has been about the whole journey of learning about oneself (teachers and middle level leader) in a school context with respect to professional trusted relationships.

In an era when improving the quality of teaching is a global priority, I have now come to realise the need to harness leadership for learning to drive teacher learning initiatives within schools. When I embarked on this research, I had no notion that I would gain such extensive insight into the powerful connection between leadership and learning. For that I am truly thankful.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Teacher Growth and Professional Development Framework

11h April 2014

Teacher Growth and Professional Development Framework
Teacher Annual Review
Junior School 2014

Learning Community The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. The IB works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. The PYP encourages students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. In order to achieve this Leaders and Teachers at the College have a joint responsibility to:

- Aim for excellence against agreed standards in their own roles
- Monitor performance
- Give and receive objective feedback
- Set agreed goals for development (personal and organisational)
- Develop plans to achieve these agreed goals
- Provide and engage in professional development relevant to goals
- Share professional learning with colleagues
- Affirm and motivate each other

The **Annual Review** is based on providing an opportunity for each staff member to reflect on their current practice and to identify areas where further professional development may be necessary through seeking and analysing various forms of feedback and promoting reflection. The Annual Review also provides the opportunity for teaching staff to sit with members of the Junior School Executive team to discuss future plans and professional goals.

The Annual Review forms part of the overall Teacher Growth and Development Framework. As part of the process teachers are asked to develop a Professional Portfolio of their work which incorporates, amongst other things their; Professional Goals for the year, Professional reflection and feedback based on student results, surveys and peer observations, a record of CPD activities and exemplars of initiatives/practice that support their reflections and demonstrate the impact their work has had on students learning.

We will begin our meetings in week 4 of Term 3. A PDF version of your portfolio needs to be sent to the Head of Junior School one week before your meeting time. Teachers are also asked to bring their portfolio to that meeting that has included in it

a. The PD, including our book study, that you have completed this year. Reflect on how this has helped you grow as a teacher.
b. Include your professional goals for this year. Reflect on what you have done to try and achieve these goals.
c. Look at the teacher standards below and how you have implemented them this year. Reflect on your practice this year and record what you have done well and in what areas you might like to do differently next year.
d. If you held a position of responsibility this year, please also reflect on the work that you have done in that role and how you plan to grow that position next year.
e.
f. Have you undertaken in Post Graduate study this year? Include that in your portfolio.
g. Your responses to these questions
   i. at St Andrews lly good at .....
   ii. In the past year, St Andrews i nproved at ....
   iii. Areas where I think we need to improve further include ....
   iv. Initiatives and ideas that I think would enhance the St Andrews ....

Teacher Annual Review

The TAR is designed to support and recognize individual achievement and provide direction for future teacher development. You are encouraged to provide as much information as is relevant to your current position within the College, and also to extend your thoughts to the College as a whole. As a member of the teaching/learning team, your input is greatly valued.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this portfolio.

NB: You are asked to respond to each section but do not need to answer each individual question.

Please respond to the following Professional Teaching Standards in your portfolio by making reference to your goals, practice and feedback.

http://www.qct.edu.au/Publications/ProfessionalStandards/ProfessionalStandardsForQldTeachers2006.pdf

Learning and Teaching (Standards 1-5)

Please discuss how your professional goals and teaching practices have impacted on students' learning. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

...ve examples of how you have designed and implemented learning experiences that demonstrate some of the following:
- effectively integrate ICLTs that enhance learning.
- are engaging and flexible for individuals and groups.
- differentiation – demonstrate how you have differentiated for your students.
- develop language, literacy and numeracy skills in line with the Australian Curriculum.
- are intellectually challenging and value diversity.
- incorporate strategies that teach students to think and encourage Higher Order Thinking.
- are motivational and encourage students to see the relevance of their learning.
- embrace concept driven inquiry.
- encourage student initiated action.
- helped to develop a growth mindset
- are evident in your documentation:
  - planning
  - assessment records

`ersonal Development of Students as Responsible Citizens (Standards 6/7)

Please discuss how your professional goals and teaching practices have impacted on the development of your students' wellbeing and personal skills. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting question

Give examples of how you have implemented some of the following:
- ~~further developed your spiritual and theological understanding of working in a Lutheran school and brought that with you into your classroom~~
- created a productive, safe and supportive environment in your classroom.
- fostered lifelong learning as well as responsible and active citizenship.
- promoted the health and well-being of your students.
- actively participated in and supported the cocurricular programme of the College.
- developed the IB Attitudes.
- provided opportunities for your students to develop the Transdisciplinary Skills.
- developed the student's knowledge and understanding of the IB learner profile.
- begun to teach and embed Positive Education into your classroom.
- Encouraged high expectations amongst your students.

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APPENDIX 2: Portfolio Evidence Workshop Summary

<u>Professional Standards for Teachers</u> - This is the QCT professional standards for teachers. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with this document. The headings and dot points are taken from this document.

Learning and Teaching (Standards 1-5)

Please discuss how your professional goals and teaching practices have impacted on students' learning. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

Give exemplars of how you have designed and implemented learning experiences that:

- effectively integrate ICTs that enhance learning.
- are engaging and flexible for individuals and groups.
- develop language, literacy and numeracy skills in line with the Australian Curriculum.
- are intellectually challenging and value diversity.
- incorporate strategies that teach students to think and encourage Higher Order Thinking.
- are motivational and encourage students to see the relevance of their learning.
- embrace concept driven inquiry.
- encourage student initiated action.
- are evident in your documentation:
- planning
- assessment records

Examples:

Examples of how you use assessment data for class groupings (library rotations)
Copy examples of feedback given to students
Photos
Learning Journey - visual
Student feedback to students
Parent emails
Examples of action
Differentiation
Test results (students selected responses)
Real life use of skills as applied to worldly needs - eg. students create tuckshop roster - staff
██████████████████████████████████████ - Check out this video
on getting real feedback.

Personal Development of Students as Responsible Citizens (Standards 6/7)

Please discuss how your professional goals and teaching practices have impacted on the development of your students' wellbeing and personal skills. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

Give exemplars of how you have:
- ~~further developed your spiritual and theological understanding of working in a Lutheran school and brought that with you into your classroom.~~
- created a productive, safe and supportive environment in your classroom.
- fostered lifelong learning as well as responsible and active citizenship.
- promoted the health and well-being of your students.
- actively participated in and supported the cocurricular programme of the College.
- developed the IB Attitudes.
- provided opportunities for your students to develop the Transdisciplinary Skills.
- developed IB learner profile.

Examples:

Student of the Week
Assembly Awards
Emails to parents/students
Students lead the Assembly eg. School Captains
Student examples
Unit of Inquiry reflections
Engage with community eg. Aged Care etc
Photos (etc) of students taking action
Staff devotions/class devotions
Kubiks
Counseling students - behaviour reflections - growth

Fostering Positive and Productive Relationships (Standard 8)
(with Colleagues, Parents and the Wider Community)

Please discuss how your professional goals and teaching practices have impacted on the relationships you have developed with others in the community. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.
Give exemplars of how you have:
- established and maintained respectful, productive and collaborative relationships.
- supported and implemented the Restorative Practices framework for resolving conflict
- employed strategies; including the use of ICTs to establish and maintain communication.

Response:

Year level EA (Essential Agreement)
Intro letter to parents/Term newsletters

Parent Night information
Parent Helpers
Fete
Think wider community eg. network meetings
Referrals ████████ tc - Families
Positive parent emails
Open door policy
Restorative Practice
Record of time spent counselling
Show & Tell
Guest Speakers
Copies of post-restorative chat agreement(s)
Wiki it

Effective Contribution to Professional Teams (Standard 9)

Please discuss how you have met personal work-related goals and priorities which have contributed to meeting personal, team and College objectives. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

Give examples of how you have:

· planned, supported, monitored and evaluated students' learning in partnership with colleagues.
· enhanced the performance of professional teams through regular reflection and discussion.
· managed professional change encountered throughout the year
· collaborated effectively with colleagues including single-subject teachers.

Examples:

Single Subject Collaborative Planning Assessment eg. Unit of Inquiry report showing PSPE assessment
Staged Photo with SS teachers
Photos of learning teams
Unit of Inquiry Planners
IEP's
Updating Year level Essential Agreement
Example of product of collaboration
Articulate the collaborative journey
Teachers as Researchers
Moderation

Professional Development, Reflection and Renewal (Standard 10)

Please discuss how your professional development, reflection and renewal practices have modelled lifelong learning and the importance of seeking to focus on continued development as an educator. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

Give examples of how you have:

·   gathered, analysed and used feedback data (assessment, surveys, and peer observations) to inform your practice.

·   developed professional learning goals, and discuss your progress towards each, including, how your work towards achieving these goals impacted on your teaching practices?

·   undertaken your teacher duties in a manner that is consistent with the College policies and expectations

·   engaged in personal and collegial professional development to improve teaching practice and effectively manage the other aspects of the role of a teacher.

·   supported and/or mentored other colleagues or pre-service teachers.

·   developed your skills in using technology and integrated technology into your daily teaching practices.

What additional professional opportunities would be helpful in supporting your role ██████and beyond?

Examples:

CPD Log (4)

Year level Peers observing our lessons and discussing

Student Teachers

Use of IPAD's in class

Service learning

Survey ie students, teachers

Timetables

Feedback from PLT

PD ████ moving to Professional Learning Community

Teachers as researchers

Format of the portfolios

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https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/easy-portfolio-eportfolio/id516212900?mt=8 - This might be a useful app for recording your portfolio on your ipad.

Digitally eg. photos and blurb

Video
Blog
Wiki
Hard copy - student samples
Gallery walk with explanations
Notebook
Website
Capsules timeline
Weebly or Wix website
Written reflections
Dance performances
Create a rap
Song

Fostering Positive and Productive Relationships (Standard 8)

(with Colleagues, Parents and the Wider Community)

Please discuss how your professional goals and teaching practices have impacted on the relationships you have developed with others in the community. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

Give exemplars of how you have:

- established and maintained respectful, productive and collaborative relationships.
- supported and implemented the Restorative Practices framework for resolving conflict
- employed strategies; including the use of ICLT to establish and maintain communication.

Effective Contribution to Professional Teams (Standard 9)

Please discuss how you have met personal work-related goals and priorities which have contributed to meeting personal, team and College objectives. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

Give examples of how you have:

- planned, supported, monitored and evaluated students' learning in partnership with colleagues.
- enhanced the performance of professional teams through regular reflection and discussion.
- managed professional change encountered throughout the year
- collaborated effectively with colleagues including single-subject teachers.

Professional Development, Reflection and Renewal (Standard 10)

Please discuss how your professional development, reflection and renewal practices have modelled lifelong learning and the importance of seeking to focus on continued development as an educator. You may like to touch on some of the points and prompting questions that follow.

Give examples of how you have:

- gathered, analysed and used feedback data (assessment, surveys, and peer observations) to inform your practice.
- developed professional learning goals, and discuss your progress towards each, including, how your work towards achieving these goals impacted on your teaching practices?
- undertaken your teacher duties in a manner that is consistent with the College policies and expectations
- engaged in personal and collegial professional development to improve teaching practice and effectively manage the other aspects of the role of a teacher.
- supported and/or mentored other colleagues or pre-service teachers.
- developed your skills in using technology and integrated technology into your daily teaching practices.

What additional professional opportunities would be helpful in supporting your role in 2016 and beyond?

Timeline

1. April – This document shared with teachers.
2. Start work on your portfolios.
3. Two PDL sessions devoted to portfolios.
4. Interviews with Head of Junior School will start during week 4 of term 3.
5. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SISrxwfisYPLFowc0qezbSTFDDc04FzzV0P2ZEJJJieQ/viewform - Future Planning - Due Date End of Term 2.
6. http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VP8PDGT - Program Evaluation - Due End of Term 3

Resource

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuKeeiCvMEg&sns=em

APPENDIX 3: Professional Growth Self-Assessment (PGSA) Guide Templates

Professional Growth Self-Assessment Guide: Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) descriptors as criteria	Understand the relevant and appropriate sources of professional learning for teachers.	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.	Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice and offer quality placements for pre-service teachers where applicable.	Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers.
Guiding Questions	What professional learning areas do you think are relevant to a teacher? (e.g. basic literacy skills, ICT, differentiation)	Do you feel that this professional learning addressed you own professional needs? To what extent do you feel you have learnt from the professional learning? 4. Confirmed you are implementing aspects of best practice within your classroom. 5. Increased knowledge about a topic area. 6. Applied the learning to your classroom practice.	How do you identify what professional learning you need? How do you plan targeted professional learning opportunities to improve your practice? How have you applied your learning to your classroom?	Have you initiated collaborative relationships to expand your professional opportunities? How did you go about it? How have you engaged in research to inform your teaching?
	Evidence …	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) descriptors as criteria	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.	Develop teaching activities that incorporate differentiated strategies to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.	Evaluate learning and teaching programs, using student assessment data, that are differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.	Lead colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching programs differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.
Guiding Questions	What do you consider to be a differentiated teaching strategy? What specific student learning needs are you aware of in your class? Given one of those learning needs (X), can you give an example of a strategy for differentiating teaching that would address that particular learning need.	Have you developed teaching activities that incorporate differentiated teaching strategies? How often do you do this? Why have you found it necessary to do this? What are the indicators o you that it is necessary?	What assessment data do you use to differentiate activities within your classroom? How do you use this data to evaluate the child's learning? How do you use the assessment data to evaluate the teaching program? (e.g. literacy or numeracy) How do you evaluate if the programs have met the differentiated specific needs of the students?	What are some examples of where you have led colleagues to differentiate teaching programs to meet the needs of the range of abilities in their classrooms?
	Evidence …	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) descriptors as criteria	**Know and understand literacy and numeracy teaching strategies and their application in teaching areas.**	**Apply knowledge and understanding of effective teaching strategies to support students' literacy and numeracy achievement.**	**Support colleagues to implement effective teaching strategies to improve students' literacy and numeracy achievement.**	**Monitor and evaluate the implementation of teaching strategies within the school to improve students' achievement in literacy and numeracy using research-based knowledge and student data**
Guiding Questions	What are some strategies you use to teach literacy? What are some strategies you use to teach numeracy?	What are some effective literacy or numeracy teaching strategies you have adopted in your classroom? How do you apply literacy teaching strategies in your classroom? How do you know they are effective?	Describe how you have taken part in collaborative processes with colleagues regarding implementing teaching strategies to improve students' literacy and/or numeracy achievement? How do you continually support colleagues with implementing effective teaching strategies?	How do you monitor the implementation of teaching strategies within the school to improve students' literacy and/or numeracy? How do you monitor teaching strategies? How do you evaluate the implementation of teaching strategies within the school to improve students' literacy and/or numeracy? How do you link this to research-based knowledge?
	Evidence …	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*	*Evidence …*

APPENDIX 4: Interview Questionnaires for Interviews 1 and 3

INTERVIEW 1: (Focus: Professional learning experience)

1. How did this professional development opportunity come about?

2. Can you please describe your feelings about taking part in the professional learning opportunity?

3. What aspects of the professional learning have you found beneficial? PROBES: Why? In what way?

4. In what ways did this professional learning meet your current professional needs? PROBES: Can you please give me some examples? Were some needs not met, please explain?

5. Has your classroom practice changed in any way as a result from your engagement in the professional learning? PROBES: strategy implemented, observing students with new knowledge about a subject area.

6. Can you please talk me through an example of a change you have made?

7. Were there any processes that assisted with the implementation of … ? PROBES: discussing strategy with colleague before implementing, colleague assisted.

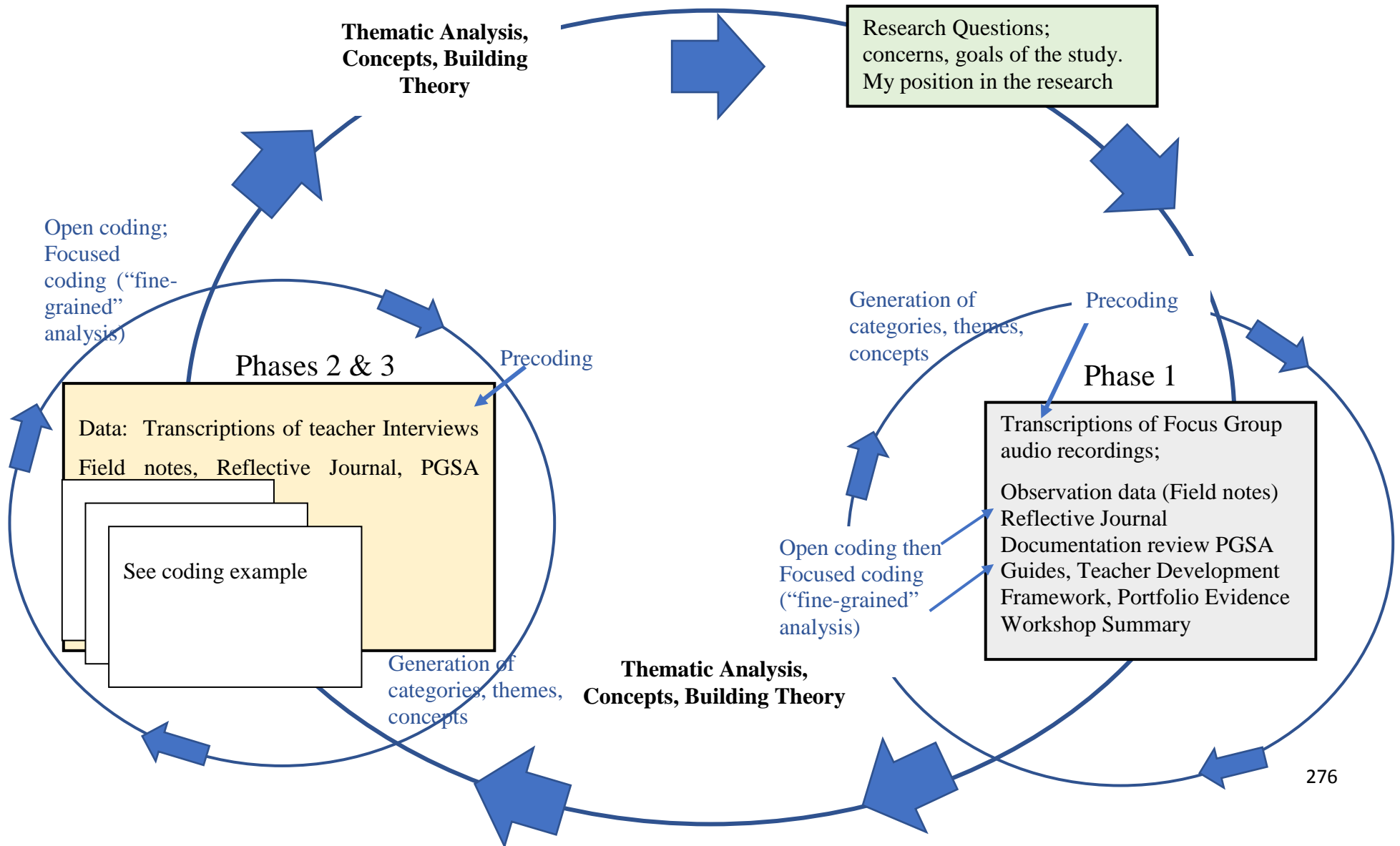**INTERVIEW 3: (Focus: Perceptions of the PGSA Guide and the Self-assessment Process)**

1. How did you feel about using the PGSA to capture your professional learning experience? PROBES: Was it useful? Did you experience any difficulties, particularly in mapping your experience to the instrument's format?

2. What weaknesses can you see in the process and/or the instrument?

3. Can you suggest any potential improvements to the instrument and/or process? PROBES: examples?

4. To what extent do you believe the self-assessment process is an accurate means of evaluating your competence? Please explain your answer.

5. In what ways has your experience of self-assessing your own professional growth provided a means of identifying your teaching approach and examining the effectiveness of your teaching? What have been the most valuable aspects of that process and why?

6. Can you please describe your experience of identifying supporting evidence of your teacher performance in terms of professional growth as you completed the PGSA?

APPENDIX 5: Principal Interview Questionnaire

1. Thinking back to two to three years ago, as a Principal, what was your vision for building capacity within the Junior School in terms of enhancing the quality of teaching?

2. What are your thoughts about the extent to which that vision has or has not been met to date?

3. What are the primary aims of the Teacher Development Framework?

4. How are the teachers' professional development needs recognised? PROBES: annual review? Linked to staff goals?

5. Is there some mechanism in place that enables the collection and analysis of data about the teachers' PD experiences?

6. How do you know if teachers have implemented changes to practice as a result of attending PD?

7. How important is that to the success of the Teacher Development Framework as a mechanism for promoting teacher professional growth?

8. How would you define Middle Leadership in this school context?

9. Taking the view of distributed leadership as a model for school leadership, how might the effectiveness of middle leadership be maximised in this context?

10. What do you see as your responsibilities, as Principal of the College, in teacher development and building the capacity of middle leaders within the Junior School?

APPENDIX 6: Cyclic Data Analysis and Interpretation Process used in this Study

Thematic Analysis, Concepts, Building Theory

Research Questions; concerns, goals of the study. My position in the research

Open coding; Focused coding ("fine-grained" analysis)

Generation of categories, themes, concepts

Precoding

Phases 2 & 3

Precoding

Phase 1

Data: Transcriptions of teacher Interviews

Field notes, Reflective Journal, PGSA

See coding example

Transcriptions of Focus Group audio recordings;

Observation data (Field notes) Reflective Journal Documentation review PGSA Guides, Teacher Development Framework, Portfolio Evidence Workshop Summary

Open coding then Focused coding ("fine-grained" analysis)

Generation of categories, themes, concepts

Thematic Analysis, Concepts, Building Theory

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Extract from Interview 3 with Rebecca - Analysis and interpretation of the Process of completing PGSA with PYP Conference and Observation and Feedback

	Findings Interpretations	Literature	Beyond Literature
Q- "How do you feel the PGSA has captured your experience from the PYP conference and observation and feedback PLO? "Really well. It has made it very specific and it has brought things up that I might have lost touch with as I have got back into the business of school. It has highlighted all the things I have got out of it and given me a really good tool to refer back to. This really itemises it and makes it really specific." Rebecca's response when discussing the PGSA's usefulness. It would be good to go back and hone in on a particular point and follow it through. Write notes further on it and making sure you are using what you have learnt. I would love to do this again for further professional development. It is a great process.	PGSA may be used as a working document self-reflection tool Also to use as a tool to discuss PLO with management Potential uses	Relating the guidelines section to Loughran,2010, p200 professional learning definition "assumes that we have some commitment to the change. ...is more about the learning that occurs through the process and	

Rebecca's response to the question- Did you find one PGSA more useful than the other? The one we did about the PYP conference has been really useful. Particularly because that PD was so valuable for me and gave me so many really good ideas and so much I can use. Therefore to sit down and do something that is very in-depth about that has been extremely beneficial and it gives me something to refer back to and brought out things that I might have forgotten at the time. Actually it refocused me back on it because it was PE and PYP specific it was right when I needed the professional development and then to do this has made it clearer and sharper in my mind about what I can then do with it. Reflection – interpretation: This aligns with Hannah's- the richer the PL experience the more beneficial this process is and the both teachers have said they got more out of it depending on the PL experience. Contribution of PGSA document itself as a tool for reflection of professional growth? When I meet with management this will be a great tool to talk about what I got out of the PLO experiences.	I wonder if adding to the guidelines for the PGSA's usefulness is an in-depth learning experience is the pivotal starting point to gain as much out of the PGSA process- optimum usefulness.	how that learning the then applied to our practice". Important to use this definition rather than PD definition. Also link PGSA guidelines to adult learning theories- schon double loop learning as part of the reflection process through completing the PGSA with me.- social learning theory Bandura	

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