

Summary of Findings from the evaluation of the
Effective Literacy Strategies: Pasifika Focus
professional development project

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Introduction and Executive Summary

The “Effective Literacy Strategies Professional Development: Pasifika Focus” project ran from early 2004 to early 2006 in 20 secondary schools with high numbers of students from Pasifika backgrounds in Auckland and Wellington. The project used the Ministry of Education’s resource “Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9-13” (Ministry of Education, 2004a). In each school the use of the resource was to be tailored to the needs of individual schools by facilitators employed for the duration of the contract.

The goals for the professional development project were to increase students’ engagement in school and to increase their literacy achievements through the development of teacher knowledge about their students’ backgrounds and needs and through increased skill in student centred teaching about literacy across the content areas. While the outcomes of the overall project were not met, there were, across schools, pockets of change recorded, where a number of exemplary practices were developed and teachers, schools and facilitators learned a great deal about professional development and about the unique needs and skills that students from Pasifika backgrounds bring to their schooling. While not sufficiently frequent in their appearance to affect the overall outcome, these findings were credible (Eisner, 1991) given the frequency with which they appeared in our data, trustworthy in that evidence supporting these points arose across different data sources and cogent to the extent that they concurred with the literature on professional development, literacy and the experience of Pasifika learners in New Zealand schools.

For the evaluation of the *Effective Literacy Strategies Pasifika Focus* professional development programme, five schools were invited to act as case study schools over the two years of the professional development project. These schools were selected in association with the facilitators employed to deliver the professional development and were intended to represent a cross-section of the 20 schools involved in the project. All of the schools were located in urban areas and their Pasifika student population ranged from approximately 30% to 85% of the school population. The schools were a mix of state and integrated, they ranged in decile rating from one to four and had between 325 and more than 2000 students.

Once schools had agreed to participate in the evaluation they were asked to identify teachers who were to participate in the professional development in some depth. For the most part these teachers were members of the in-school literacy teams in existence in each case study school. In addition, groups of year nine and ten Pasifika students that they taught and whose progress would be assessed at each of three data collection points over the two years of the evaluation were identified. Additional teachers who had become involved in the professional development were identified in the second year along with further groups of the Pasifika students they taught. These students were assessed on two occasions. In total and over the two years of the evaluation project, more than 500 students participated in assessments and their teachers participated in three interviews and numbers of observations.

Further groups of students from across year levels in each school were also invited to participate in a focus group interview in which they were asked to discuss literacy, literacy learning and being a Pasifika student in secondary schools. In three case study schools, groups of Pasifika teachers and community members were also invited into focus groups to discuss their perceptions of Pasifika students' literacy needs along with the challenges they perceived students to encounter in school. In addition, these people were asked to comment on the ways in which they thought schools could better support Pasifika communities. A fuller methodological discussion including the rationale for the research design and data analysis is included in Appendix one.

At each point in the evaluation, milestone reports were prepared for the Ministry of Education from findings and, using a number of approaches, formative findings and recommendations were fed back to facilitators and schools. The aim of feedback was to inform the development of the professional development project, to provide benchmarks of students' achievements, to identify the development of the literacy knowledge and skills held by teachers, to document overall progress and to identify key indicators of change.

In relation to the professional development undertaken, facilitators and schools adopted a number of approaches which were supported to a greater or lesser extent by

a range of in-school conditions and accommodations. Across schools a variety of methods for working with teachers were used, locally gathered student achievement and other data informed some of the work, and there was variable recourse to the research literature to underpin the development of literacy teaching and learning. What became clear over the course of each of the case studies was that there were numbers of elements that must underpin the provision of supports to schools and teachers charged with addressing issues of the achievement of Pasifika students.

A central component to any project must be the recognition, reflection on and addressing of, the disadvantages that many Pasifika students encounter in New Zealand secondary schools. The issues that students face can include:

- The individual and group experience of prejudice and discrimination;
- Low expectations;
- Too few opportunities to engage with challenging texts and materials;
- Lack of recognition of the experiences, skills and needs of students;
- Lack of provision of language and literacy opportunities that foster achievement.

There were a number of themes that were common across the literature and the experiences of schools, teachers, students and their families in this evaluation project. In part, this commonality was arrived at when the professional learning in individual schools failed to meet the expectations of participants and when some analysis was completed as to why this had happened. Where, especially at School One, the professional development project was realigned to more closely reflect the Ministry's original goals, positive changes did occur and they are recorded here to illustrate how professional development for teachers can assist in unravelling the challenges faced by many students in our schools. The key findings summarised here and discussed in more detail further in this report relate to teacher knowledge and practice, to students and their needs and to professional development.

Teachers are central to the learning of Pasifika students and their impact cannot be overstated. Teachers who have a positive impact on students are those who:

- Understand what it is like to be the “other,” know about the pressures on students’ out-of-school lives and experiences and can link teaching and learning with those experiences;
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to clarify their learning;
- Use assessment data from numbers of sources to understand students’ reading and writing in content areas;
- Can use assessment data to locate their students’ skills and needs within the context and content of their curriculum area;
- Canvas the views of students about their learning and about their learning needs;
- Use data with students to measure success;
- Have in-depth knowledge of the literacy challenges in their curriculum area.

Successful students:

- Have learned about the ways schools work (in terms of expectations, hierarchy, curriculum and the hidden curriculum) and they can negotiate a successful way through the system;
- Have had numerous opportunities in which they have learned about and practiced the skills necessary for gathering and processing information for a variety of purposes and as a result are increasingly independent in accessing the content of a curriculum area;
- Feel a sense of connectedness with teachers who support them in building their confidence as learners;
- Engage in activities to assist them in learning the language of school;
- Participate with their peers and teachers in challenging literacy activities that provide a means of access to the curriculum, to critique, to analysis and to the synthesis of new learning;
- Are increasingly independent in their learning.

Effective Professional Development provides opportunities for teachers to:

- Engage in professional learning activities that are supported in terms of resource and in respect of the strategic direction of schools;

- Explore and challenge their own expectations, attitudes, beliefs and knowledge;
- Identify those practices already present in a school that positively impact on the learning of students;
- Explore the elements that distance students from their learning, serve to disadvantage them in terms of achievement, or make negotiating a path through education challenging from the perspective of students and their families;
- Develop their own pedagogical practices, build their knowledge base of literacy and of what it is like to be a Pasifika student in a New Zealand school;
- Build their confidence and support for students to become independent problem-solvers;
- Generate solutions for, and overcome, problems of practice in their teaching and in their students' learning;
- Engage with facilitators in numbers of activities which include but aren't limited to knowledge building, in-class modelling, coaching and mentoring. Such activities have as their central focus the contextualising of theories of teaching, learning and literacy to the context of their classrooms;
- Engage in professional learning activities that take account of the needs of the school and are focused on the educational and social needs of students in the widest sense;
- Engage in post graduate qualifications such as the Dip TESOL course which provide invaluable supports for teachers in meeting the needs of Pasifika students.

A significant contribution to this evaluation has been the importance of the voices of students and their families. As described by Kershner (1999), these voices have taken us beyond the “taken for granted” in terms of the functioning of schools and classrooms. They have alerted us to the language, social and educational needs of students, they provide a platform from which the professional learning of teachers and others can proceed and they can be used to measure change over time. However, achieving the needs articulated by students is not easy. It requires time and resource and it demands that school leaders take an active role in ensuring the availability of

practical support and in assisting teachers to maintain the focus on professional learning.

Thus, where professional development focusing on the literacy achievements of students from other than dominant backgrounds is to take place, our findings would indicate that it must focus on:

- Developing teachers' knowledge of their students, their students' needs and on the pedagogical content knowledge relevant to literacy in their curriculum area;
- The immediate and longer term needs of students and teachers;
- The identification and provision of supports and resources by senior school managers;
- A commitment to address the "hard questions" of the achievement of Pasifika students.

Findings from the Research Evaluation of the Effective Literacy Strategies: Pasifika Focus Professional Development

The following discussion is divided into sections describing professional development, teacher knowledge and student learning. In each instance the discussion is intended to highlight practices, understandings and experiences that either positively impacted on the progress of each project or, were seen to have the potential to do so where they were congruent with, or exemplified, the literature.

Professional Development

Across the four milestone documents produced for this project, key issues relating to the role of the facilitator, in-school supports and the process of professional development emerged. It is argued that these elements have a positive impact on the success of any programme that has, as a central component, the raising of the achievement of students who have been marginalised within the larger education system.

In several instances, and as the professional development progressed, the plans that case study schools had adopted changed. In some of the instances where change to the professional development occurred, changes (anecdotal and assessed) in student achievement were reported and through interviews, the knowledge of participating teachers was seen as having increased. In addition to the changes schools made to their professional learning programmes, the research evaluation also identified the importance of engaging with students about their learning and with adult members of students' home communities. These people provided a wealth of knowledge about learning, school, their lives, aspirations and expectations and while students and family voices were not used in any of the case study schools, the information provided by them for the evaluation provided a strong base for learning about the ways in which schools do or don't support their Pasifika learners.

The Role of the External Facilitator

Late in 2005 and after more than a year on the professional development project, the principal at School One took a number of steps to refocus and revitalise the work. First among the changes he made concerned the role of the external facilitator. In a practical sense these changes meant that the facilitator's primary role was to provide professional learning support in assessment analysis, planning and teaching for a focus group of teachers around a target class of students. In adopting such a focus, increases in the achievement of the involved students were assessed as having occurred over a relatively short period of time as were the skills of the teachers who in the next phase of the work became in-school leaders.

This facilitator was also charged with providing supports and guidance to the Principal in his work in leading the whole-school literacy professional development. This included the provision of:

- Leadership and direction to support the school in identifying its own needs through the analysis of data it already collects and through the collection and analysis of supplementary data such as student and community voice;
- Guidance on the ways the school can best support a professional development initiative;
- Research resources and advice that describe “effective” professional development and how such information can be applied in a school setting;
- Professional development expertise for designing the programme with school leaders;
- Regular data rich evaluation reports and feedback to participating teachers and school leaders on the progress of the professional development;

In-School Supports for Professional Development

Along with the role of the external facilitator, a number of conditions leading to the success of some parts of the professional development initiative were observed. The most important of these conditions was *leadership* and the engagement of leadership in the work of the initiative. The principal at School One talked about his work in the project:

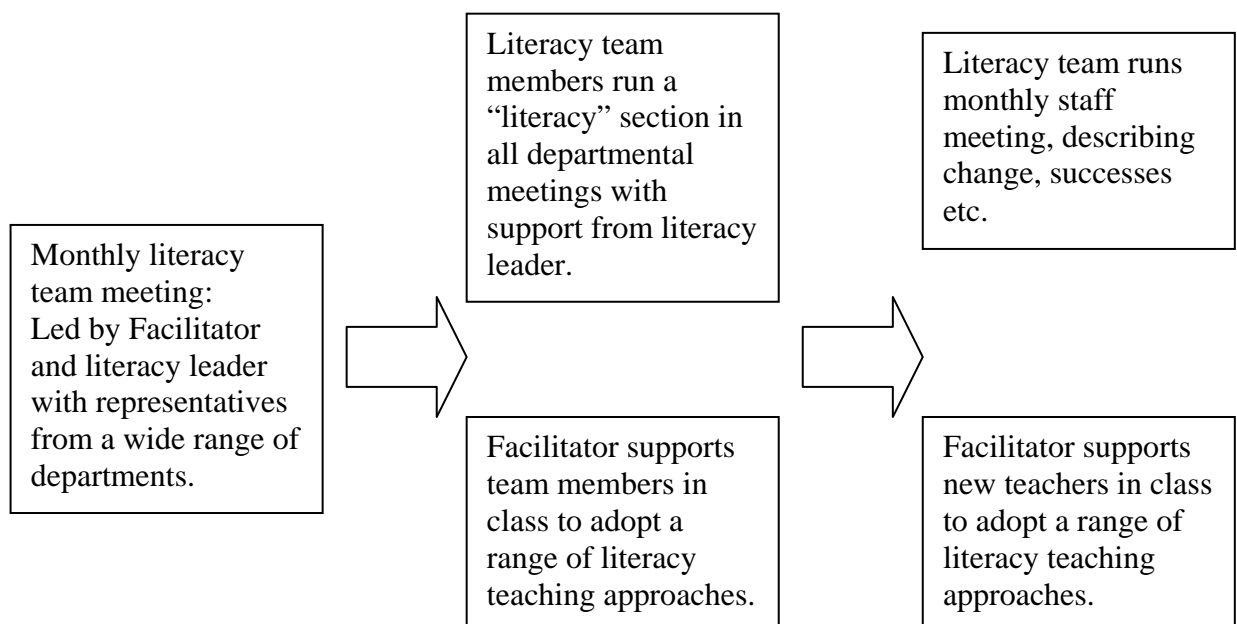
We believe it's really about effective teaching and of using some of the tools that are available to do the effective teaching... What we've got in place this

year is a whole multi-level, piles of strategies to support that key thrust. Focus groups are a key one. We've also had our literacy team that was charged with school-wide literacy initiatives and a key part of that is simply to have literacy activities in front of us all the time.

When discussing his role, this principal noted that he had taken control of the work, merged, linked and instructed staff and the *ELS* Facilitator as to what he expected in terms of outcomes and involvement. However, he also stressed the point that along with strong leadership, good communication about the rationale behind and reasoning for a particular direction was essential to the success of the intervention.

The second key element of effective professional development identified in this evaluation has been the provision of *time and resources* to support the work of teachers. In four of the schools time was provided through the provision of a late-start day, through release for individuals and groups to meet and plan, or for opportunities for teachers to observe each other's work and to engage in the reflective discussions necessary for a *de-privatisation of practice* and sharing of ideas to take place. To this end, the professional learning teachers engage in needs to be supported in terms of the school's *strategic planning* (to ensure the availability of resources) and there is reason to suggest that the inclusion of desired teacher-related outcomes from the professional development in *teacher appraisal* may have value.

In three schools, measures to encourage the *dissemination* and sharing of information have also taken place. In the instance of School Four where the principal was concerned that the findings of the professional learning should be available to the whole staff the following model was enacted:



At School Four, the approach to dissemination adopted was supported by the provision and sharing of teaching resources on the school's intranet.

In addition to the elements of effective in-school supports, the literacy leader at School One established a group that had the responsibility for raising the *profile of literacy* across the school. She said that the motivation for this was “to help with enthusiasm...to build in from the outside...to bring it into the classroom and to encourage a real focus.” This group has organised a number of activities such as a book week and associated in-class activities, staff and student literacy quizzes, Pasifika story tellers and authors at assemblies, student presentations and a regular silent reading time. While the school recognises that these activities alone will not make a difference to students' literacy achievements, they are adamant that as a result of the profile of literacy across the school, teachers have increased their engagement in the professional learning in the school, and students are much more aware of the importance of good literacy skills to their success as learners.

The Process of Professional Development

Across a number of the case study schools and as the professional development initiatives in those schools developed, a number of elements came to be seen as essential components in ensuring that the professional learning of teachers could lead to increases in the achievement of students. Unfortunately, the recognition of their importance came, in most instances, too late to impact significantly on the progress of the professional development. The following section outlines the key features of what the leaders of professional learning in case study schools identified as significant elements of effective professional development.

First and foremost, the most frequently cited element to a successful professional learning initiative was the need for an on-going *focus on the needs of students*. Ironically such a focus was a central goal identified by the Ministry for the professional development and the importance of such was frequently cited in feedback

from this evaluation. While a small number of facilitators and teachers were concerned with the collection and use of achievement data from the outset, it took some time for others to recognise the centrality of students to professional learning for teachers.

The range of achievement data sought and the purposes for its collection included:

- The use of achievement data and its interpretation for making teaching decisions;
- The use of school-wide data to inform staff about need and about change;
- Accessing student voice through surveys or focus groups to canvas students' views of classroom experience, their learning and their learning needs;
- The evaluation of teaching and learning in order to determine the efficacy of a particular teaching approach.

In addition to a direct focus on students, the principal at one school has established a Pasifika parents' group as a forum for the sharing of information. While this group has taken time to become established, the principal noted:

It comes and it goes and we get different parents at different meetings but it's becoming more of a thing, parents come and they are free to talk. Last year and this year we're seeing in the parent meeting some really good discussion about what's happening in the school. There might not be hundreds of parents but it's really quality stuff happening about what, how they feel about the school and them asking lots of really good questions about why you do that and why is that happening.

Secondly and in association with the need for professional development to be focused on the needs of students, numbers of teachers and facilitators, particularly those who had or were undertaking the Dip TESOL qualification, came to see the importance of a strong *research base* to support the work being undertaken. Interestingly, at the outset of the project, numbers of teachers and the facilitators stressed the importance of the professional development having a very practical orientation. While "practical activities" remained important, many participants came to see that unless they understood pedagogical or literacy theory, they would not be in a position to adopt, adapt or reconfigure literacy teaching approaches to the needs of their students. Similarly, a number of teachers identified the importance of knowing more about the

experiences, skills and needs of their students and of the ways in which they were positioned as young Pasifika New Zealanders.

In relation to the importance of a research base and in support of the previous points, many facilitators, literacy leaders and a number of teachers spoke about the value of receiving regular feedback and feed forward using the findings of, and research base developed for, the research evaluation. These people stressed the need for information on students (through assessment, observation, interview and analysis), on literacy practice (what schools were doing in relation to the literature in the field), “effective” professional development practice and on the progress of their work

Further to the previous points, a number of teachers and facilitators expressed reservations about the utility of the *ELS* resource to support the literacy needs of secondary school learners. A number of these people felt that the resource did not address the demands of the curriculum, especially the senior curriculum, nor did it represent the needs of learners, particularly, those learners from other than the dominant culture.

While beyond the scope of the *ELS* resource a number of other comments related to the recognition of the needs of Pasifika students resonated with the work of Stanton-Salazar, Vasquez, & Mehan (2000) who suggested that along with instruction in meeting curricular demands, students needed support in learning about the habits (such as study and note-making) and effective ways to negotiate a way through the system (through examination of the hidden curriculum, conflict resolution skills, etc).

The third major point related to the students spoken with for this project who identified the need to read age and curriculum appropriate texts more frequently. They said that they needed instruction on how to work through and use such texts in ways that were relevant to their curricular goals. Given these and the previous points and in addition to a focus on students and on the research, it would seem important for professional development to be located within the demands of the *curriculum and school/system*.

Fourth, and in a number of instances, facilitators reported on the work of exemplary teachers in case study schools. Indeed, as the evaluation work proceeded, observations were completed in the classes of a small number of teachers who, while not using *ELS*, had developed a wide range of resources and supports for students, and were able to successfully meet students' literacy needs within the context of their curricular areas. Interestingly, many of these teachers had also completed, or were completing, the Dip.TESOL. In other instances, teachers struggled to identify the literacy demands of their subject and when they did identify literacy challenges, many teachers felt powerless to address them. This and the previous point highlight the importance of identifying *teacher prior knowledge* and in describing *current successful practice* as a precursor to any professional learning initiative.

The fifth point in relation to effective professional development concerns the opportunity for teacher reflection. At Schools One and Four the professional learning programme was relatively structured and at various times, teachers engaged in learning activities, they introduced new teaching approaches to their classrooms and they fed back to their colleagues about their experiences. At School One, teacher implementation of new approaches was supported by observations and feedback from other teachers. In each instance, involved teachers spoke about the importance of the opportunity for time to *reflect* on their own and on their colleagues' teaching as an aid to understanding more about literacy and as a means to think about the implications of their learning to their own practice.

Along with opportunities for reflection at Schools One and Four, and at School Three also, the *regular evaluation* of the content and process of the professional learning was seen as important for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided actually met the needs of participating teachers, students and the school generally. Along with the provision of the materials described previously that built teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, reflection and evaluation provided an important support in the development of *teacher ownership* of their teaching and of the supports and opportunities the school provided. To this end, teachers need to see that new learning offers them an insight into the needs of students and to the demands of the curriculum.

Given the previous points in this section, *time* is an important element of the change process. In addition to time however, teachers need to see that their learning has *relevance* to their work. To ensure the relevance of professional learning to the problems of practice teachers encounter, such learning must:

- Be located in the classrooms of teachers;
- Organised such that teachers can see an immediate pay-off but is focussed on the long term;
- Involve a number of approaches such as coaching, mentoring, demonstration, developing models of exemplary practice problems of practice.

In the words of two teachers:

...having someone demonstrate was good. It would stimulate my thought and how I could use it. And the review was good as well.

...if you gave them [literacy facilitators] a particular lesson or something like that and say, okay, I'm finding it difficult to make my kids understand this concept, can you actually teach the class for me to observe you doing those techniques that you're trying? So that then as teachers, we can look at it and go, 'Oh, it does work. I've noticed Tom understood that a lot better because they did it that way'.

Teacher Knowledge

Over the course of the research evaluation for the *ELS Pasifika* project, a number of key themes emerged as impacting positively on a number of teachers' thinking and practice and on their students' learning. These teachers said that they had become more "learner focussed", they were more explicit in their teaching and that this had happened because they were more familiar with their students and their needs and with the research and theory on learning, on teaching and on literacy. In this section, the themes relating to teacher pedagogy, teacher knowledge about literacy and teacher knowledge about students are discussed.

Teacher Pedagogy

A significant number of the teachers who identified positive outcomes for themselves and their students from the project were either undertaking, or had undertaken, a Dip.TESOL course. There would seem to be a number of reasons to explain the link between positive feelings about the professional development and participation in a

TESOL course. The first is that the convenors of the TESOL course most commonly completed by teachers used resources and materials that were readily available to teachers in New Zealand schools to exemplify the teaching and learning approaches they advocated. This being the case, these teachers felt somewhat familiar with elements of, and understood the rationale behind, numbers of the activities in the “*ELS in yrs 9-13*” resource. Secondly, and more importantly, a significant part of the TESOL course was given over to language theory and research into literacy, learners and pedagogy.

For those teachers taking lead roles in their schools, the potential for going back into their TESOL learning was extremely important. A number of these people said that without the TESOL focus on theory and research and the application of that learning to classroom practice, they would not have been able to take on the role of supporting their colleagues.

Further evidence of the importance of pedagogical knowledge came from teachers at Schools Two, Three and Four. These teachers talked about the importance of being explicit with the students about both the content of their learning and the purpose for that learning. To do this, however they needed a depth of knowledge about literacy and about literacy teaching and learning. At School Three (where the proportion of TESOL trained teachers was greater than at any other case study school), a number of pedagogical approaches to supporting students’ learning were identified as common elements to teaching and learning in the school. They were:

- Explanation of the purpose (content and literacy) for the lesson and concurrent activities;
- Discussion about the specific learning needs of students and of how these needs link with the lesson;
- Explanation and demonstration of the steps involved in the lesson;
- Opportunities for scaffolded and independent student practice in a number of contexts;
- Teacher monitoring of student work, further modelling where necessary and feedback.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of a teacher focus on pedagogical theory was the recognition of the importance of providing a challenge for students and as in the previous points, of scaffolding that challenge in ways that students could and did, succeed:

But I also believe in stretching them and not just keeping them in there, you know. I, I feel that's a good starting point [using Pasifika literature] but then I've got to take them out of that and, because I mean if they live in New Zealand, they've also got to deal with that umm, that Western world and live in it and, and work in it and if they aren't getting the skills to do that, then they're going to, they're going to suffer at the end of the day.

Knowledge of Literacy

In relation to effective literacy teaching, three broad issues appeared to affect the quality of the learning experiences students engaged in. The first of these concerned the knowledge teachers needed to make informed decisions about the literacy activities they engaged their students in. The second and not unrelated issue concerned teacher knowledge of the literacy demands of their curriculum area and the third concerned the knowledge teachers had of the complexity of the challenges their students faced. Not surprisingly, and as was the case with respect to knowledge about pedagogy, teachers require a deep knowledge base of the research into literacy teaching and learning.

A number of teachers in the professional development project identified the literacy challenges students faced in their curriculum areas as being related to concepts, to the abstraction of those concepts and to the generation of new ideas on that basis. Similarly, and as a result of increasing familiarity with NCEA, many teachers recognised that literacy skill is a necessary component of learning in all curriculum areas. In some instances this had led such teachers to reassess their knowledge base in relation to both the literacy and the pedagogy of their curriculum area. In order for their students to achieve academic success, these teachers understood that their teaching needed to ensure that students could independently read, gather and synthesise information from complex, subject specific texts and present their knowledge in response to carefully defined questions.

The literacy leader at School One added to these points in saying that the Pasifika students she worked with needed explicit, intensive, embedded literacy teaching that

focused on improving their knowledge of text and language structure in ways that would support them in achieving curriculum objectives. She also made the point that only through constant recourse to her curriculum documents, could she ensure that she was focussed on the creation of teaching and learning opportunities that would meet her students' needs.

In addition to the literacy leader at School One, a small number of teachers across schools used a number of approaches to teaching about the literacy challenges in their curriculum areas. Such approaches included:

- Teaching reading and writing skills in the context of the relevant curriculum area;
- Focussing on the way in which information is presented and organised in content area texts as a means to making meaning;
- Using Pasifika literature which has themes that resonate with Pasifika readers as a bridge into literature reflecting others' experience;
- Using a range of materials, including website resources to support students in using and evaluating information;
- Teaching of grammar in context;
- Teaching the structures of essays and paragraphs for writing in social science subjects;
- Paired reading and group work to support comprehension and vocabulary development;
- Modelling note-taking and other writing skills;
- Demonstrating the use of flow-charts, bullet points and other text features to organise and record notes;
- Telling stories to explain concepts and to locate information in students' lives and experiences;
- Providing one-to-one support for literacy skills in class and at lunchtimes;
- Reducing the pace of delivery to accommodate student language needs;
- Encouraging students to believe that they can meet the reading and writing demands of the subject;
- Using humour to encourage engagement in lessons.

Although numbers of teachers were working to address the challenges students faced, there was over the course of the project, an increasing awareness that in relation to achievement, the importance of data from a range of sources including in-class monitoring, work samples and more formal assessments that assisted teachers to see the progress of their Pasifika students could not be overlooked. One teacher in particular felt that this was one of the single most important factors in considering his effectiveness:

What I believe helps us lift Pasifika and Maori achievement is firstly, the collection of their achievement data from year to year to year. Unless we have that, how can we measure whether we are effective or not? So the ELS programme has highlighted to me the need to collect achievement data for my individual classes.

Student Learning

Over the two years of the research evaluation, approximately 500 students were assessed on three occasions using standardised assessment tools (asTTle). While making progress over time, these students continued to perform at a rate that was on average 24% below the New Zealand norm. To go some way towards an understanding of this situation, the remainder of this section discusses the issues raised by the 37 students who participated in student focus groups.

While more than 50% of the students participating in the focus groups had been born in New Zealand, many continued to identify strongly with their Pasifika communities through out-of-school activities, family interactions and through language and cultural tuition. However, they also described themselves as Pasifika New Zealanders, saying that being born and/or growing up in New Zealand set them apart from their families and peers who continued to live in Pacific countries. These students were also clear that even though they all identified with their Pasifika backgrounds, their experiences could not be said to be same as each other's and that this was a point often missed by their teachers. They said that as Samoan or Cook Island Maori, or Niuean, they had different languages, cultural traditions and histories. One group made the point that this diversity was the strength of Pasifika people in New Zealand, "our uniqueness as Pasifika peoples is our best asset."

Students commonly said that their parents and communities wanted and expected them to achieve academically. While there was a feeling amongst the students that their parents were open about the direction their children's career choices would take, each student talked of the sacrifices their parents had made to ensure they made the best of their educational chances. The students we spoke with also had significant out-of-school commitments which included sport, looking after younger siblings, household tasks, language and culture classes and for those involved, church. English was spoken in the vast majority of students' homes although many also spoke a Pasifika language there. While many students described themselves as fluent in a Pasifika language, all of those in the focus groups whether born in the Pacific or New Zealand, identified English as the language they were most fluent in.

A range of views were expressed in relation to the underachievement of Pasifika people in secondary education in New Zealand. Common themes included the "*mentality of underachievement*" prevalent amongst many Pasifika students that arose from too few academically successful role models, too little motivation to succeed on the part of some students and the recognition by students that they needed to take "responsibility for getting there on their own."

It would appear that many students felt that success was in their own hands in part because of the perception that there were different sets of rules for Pasifika students from those for Palagi students. The students who spoke about such rules suggested that as Pasifika students they "didn't measure up," sometimes weren't encouraged to share their learning in class and weren't expected to achieve at the same level as their Palagi peers.

The Pasifika students in the project had had varied experiences in schooling. Some had spent all of their educations in schools that were largely made up of other Pasifika students and others had been in schools where they were the minority. While the size of the Pasifika student population in a school affected the experience of prejudice and discrimination, all of the students spoken with said that for them as Pasifika students, learning was more complex than for their Palagi peers. Despite feeling most fluent in English, many students recognised that there were challenges associated with learning academic English. They also said they had to deal with the fact that secondary

schools very much mirrored the dominant Palagi culture and that this was reflected in both curriculum and learning and teaching.

Virtually all of the students spoken with were articulate about their literacy needs. They said that they needed time and opportunity to *read and study in extended text*. In addition and in relation to other texts, students suggested that teachers should take short sections of a text and analyse the language and structure. Additionally, students talked about the need for background information to assist their reading and sense making. A number of students were aware that they needed these skills for success in external examinations. In relation to writing, students said that they needed support in conveying “big ideas” or in using language effectively. To this end they suggested the use of essays and such like to *show good examples of how writers build an argument, use language or engage in analysis*. In essence these students said that, similar to reading, they needed opportunities to “break down” the writing process, to learn the detail of being a good writer.

However, the teaching needs students identified that would assist them as readers and writers were somewhat different from their experiences as learners. Many said that overall they were not expected to read at school and that what they were given was usually in the form of photocopied notes or in the case of extended text, read aloud by teachers. They also said that although teachers sometimes talked students through the analysis of written texts, it was often difficult to see how they arrived at the points they did.

In respect of writing, the single most frequently cited activity students engaged in was copying notes from a white board or overhead transparency. This activity was followed in frequency by worksheet completion. In subject English in particular, students said that they sometimes wrote reviews or responses to text. Further to this, students said that although they were given supports to do their writing, such support was often limited to broad structural descriptions such as introduction, body, conclusion, or in the case of paragraphs, acronyms such as ‘**S**tatement, **E**xplanation, **eX**ample.’ These students said that what they needed was more *specific instruction on writing technique*, on breaking down the writing process.

Ironically, most students said that they didn't struggle with reading or writing at school. A number of reasons were cited for this. By and large students said that their learning experiences were often repetitive and focused on the "easy bits." When students were asked to read they said that generally they were required to read only short sections of text and that much of what they did read posed little challenge. Students noted also that they were frequently bored by what they were asked to read and that as a result, few of them read for pleasure or to complete the out-of-school work teachers expected of them. All students said that they would appreciate greater access to literature at school that reflected their lives with one student stating:

We don't like, we're not being racial or anything but we're kind of bored of the Palagi stories.

In this respect a number of students were quick to state that such material didn't have to be exclusively Pasifika in orientation but that it had to be relevant to them as New Zealanders as well.

The previous points highlight a major issue raised by all of the students spoken with, the relevance of their schooling to their lives. A number of those students said that although there were numbers of resources to help them, success remained elusive to many simply because it was difficult to align the things teachers asked them to do with any teaching or instruction they had experienced. Given this situation they said that they often felt alone in undertaking new learning as the supports simply "weren't there" and that this was exacerbated because there was little link for students between school and the context of their lives. These students said that the few Pasifika teachers they had were invaluable in this sense because they could locate learning within the contexts of students' lives as Pasifika peoples in New Zealand. Similarly those Palagi teachers who took the time to find out about their students' lives and who adapted materials to reflect the experiences of Pasifika students helped them to feel safe in their learning and to take risks as learners. To this end, the teachers who created *multiple opportunities for clarification and discussion* were highly regarded.

Literature Review: Pasifika Students, Effective Practice and Professional Development

Any form of professional development is predicated on the recognition of the need for change. In this instance change relates to school wide practices and to the teacher knowledge, skills and practices necessary to boost the literacy achievements of Pasifika students in New Zealand secondary schools. This is not the first project aimed at addressing the issues facing many Pasifika students in New Zealand schools. Previous initiatives have included *AIMHI* (Hill & Hawk, 2000); *The Collaborative Learning Programme*; *Strengthening Education in Otara and Mangere*; and the *Pacific Islands School-Parent Community Liaison Project* (Ministry of Education, 1997-1998). Further accommodations have included provisions to employ more bi-lingual and ethnic Pasifika teachers as a means of bringing the cultural capital of underachieving students into the school (e.g. Dickie, 2000); improving the assessment of students, increasing the availability of teaching resources; encouraging teachers to be more positive about the achievements of Pasifika students; and of changing school management practices (Robinson & Timperley, 2004).

There is some consensus in the New Zealand literature that one of the major reasons for the lack of achievement of many Pasifika students is the issue of “cultural capital”. That is, the recognition and bringing into school of the experiences and beliefs of Pasifika learners (remembering that there is no typical Pasifika world-view); an improvement of the interface between home and school; increased bi-lingual provisions and resources and the celebration of achievement. As noted by Robinson and Timperley (2004) though, most of these strategies have been tried in some form or other. Mara (1998) further notes that despite previous efforts, little is known about the actual outcomes of these interventions. Similarly, the Education Review Office’s report (2004) notes that while “cultural” initiatives have been established in many schools, reducing disparity remains something of an enigma, as does any mechanism for measuring it. This raises the important point identified in the literature that a focus on cultural diversity alone will not make a difference to students’ learning unless it is accompanied with a recognition of and focus on, linguistic diversity (Walqui, 2000).

Within the context of professional development Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet (2000), Fullan (2002) and Fullan & Hargreaves (1991) note the importance of strong forms of reflection and searching questions to link teacher's work to the realm of research and data from beyond their classroom. These authors argue that this form of learning must sit within a wider context of learning and development and as part of the recognition of education as a social process. Thus, in relation to the achievement of Pasifika students in education in this country, Mara (1999) stresses the importance of "identifying the barriers to full participation and contribution... (and of) resolving tensions between structures, discourses and agency, to deal with the paradoxes inherent in communities, families and schools (pp9-10)." May (2002) further suggests the importance of addressing issues such as power and of the recognition that Pasifika cultural aspirations and experiences need to be a central part of the organisation, relationships, pedagogy, curriculum and evaluation of schools.

It is argued therefore that in relation to the current project and on the basis of the literature cited thus far, professional development must take account of teacher knowledge of the socio-political nature of education in present day New Zealand. Numbers of attempts have been made to describe why students from other than dominant groups in a society often underachieve in terms of education. These include:

- The process of colonisation (Pasikale, 1999);
- Pressures to acquire the dominant language and assimilate to the majority culture (Stites, 1999);
- The disjuncture between the educational and the cultural experiences of students (Harrell & Ma, 1999);
- Histories of cultural clash and histories of subordination and exploitation and of the ways that those experiences enter into the process of schooling (Gibson, 1991; Postiglione, 1999);
- The belief that bi-lingual education or immersion in a student's home language would impede a student's progress or would act as a detour from the study of the dominant language (Stites, 1999);
- Disadvantages arising from educational inequality and poverty (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1987);
- Racism and discrimination (Gibson, 1991);

- Differing cultural experiences and expectations, discontinuity between the belief systems of dominant cultural groups' educational institutions and other than dominant groups (Eldering & Kloprogge, 1989);
- The homogenising of students under umbrella terms such as Latina/o that obscure the diversity of language, experience and histories (Jimenez, 2001).

Teacher Practice

The impact of teachers on the achievement of Pasifika students cannot be overstated. They are the most influential point of leverage on student outcomes (Education Queensland, 2001-2003; Ministry of Education, 2003) and they are the conduit for:

...pedagogical practices that facilitate for heterogeneous groups of students their access to information, and ability to engage in classroom activities and tasks in ways that facilitate learning related to curriculum goals (Ministry of Education, 2003, p1).

Hill & Hawk's (2000) study of effective teachers identified a number of pedagogical practices that were seen to support the learning of Pasifika students. They included:

- The use of 'sophisticated skills' in teacher dialogue with students that encouraged them to take responsibility for their learning and to think at a deeper level;
- Making the learning process transparent and understandable for students;
- Spending time on vocabulary and language including language structure;
- Planning for differentiated activities which actively engage students in their learning;
- Undertaking direct instruction in small steps;
- Requiring students to construct their own meaning from new information and ideas.

Further, Carpenter, McMurchy-Pilkington and Sutherland (2000) have identified that effective teachers of Pasifika students are also able to understand what it is like to be the "other" and to use that knowledge to reflect on and change their practice. In addition to this effective teachers:

- Are goal driven, plan comprehensively and can adapt when necessary;
- Focus on and learn about children as individuals, have high expectations and reinforce an internal locus of control;

- Are strong in teaching core basics and they bring an interactive dimension to their teaching;
- Extend their classrooms into and draw from local communities;
- Purposefully model successful learning and social interactions.

In addition to the previous points relating to classroom practice, it is essential that teachers focus on exploring with students the processes they must use to access new information or to use such information in novel ways (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Such explorations could include but are not limited to teaching and learning about gathering, synthesising and analysing information from multiple sources (McDonald & Thornley, 2005), or to use literary devices such as metaphor in order to build meaning or to critique an author's work (Delfino, 1998).

Literacy Teaching

There is increasing recognition that language and particularly reading and writing processes facilitate learning in all secondary content areas (Kennedy & Dewar, 1997). This being the case, it is necessary that all teachers teach their students how to process text in the content areas in which it needs to occur (Norrie & Lenski, 1998). Central to such teaching is the assessment of student learning to inform that teaching.

The effective development, collection, analysis and use of assessment data is an issue for many teachers (Daniel & King, 1998; Hager & Gable, 1993; Peddie, 2000). In relation to the literacy needs of Pasifika students specifically, assessment is clearly an issue where schools may know little about students' backgrounds, language experience or experiences of school (Sauvao, Mapa, & Podmore, 2000). In its 2004 review, the Education Review Office has noted that schools need to consider how they can gather information on outcomes for Pasifika students which go beyond Progressive Achievement Testing and external assessment results and consider further training and professional development for teachers focused on improving programme delivery for those students on the basis of assessment (Education Review Office, 2004).

Clearly, as the demands of the curriculum increase, teachers must support students to attain high literacy achievement levels through mastery of increasingly diverse and

sophisticated reading and writing behaviours. Equally clearly, the key to providing such support is in the use of meaningful assessment that guides teachers' planning, teaching and learning. To this end and in relation to effective assessments, the following issues are important to address:

- The identification and in some cases, development of tools relevant to the tasks (processes, thinking and content) to be assessed in a range of relevant in and out-of-school contexts (Kennedy & Dewar, 1997);
- The development of effective channels of communication and collaboration between teachers and schools to ensure the effective use of assessment information at transition points (Fehring, 2003; Sutton, 2000);
- Exploring the understandings students have of themselves as literate individuals and their wishes and desires in relation to literacy (Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien, 2000);
- Information relating to the multiple reader positions that students bring to the classroom and use in the interpretation of texts (Roberts, 1995).

Literacy Demands in Secondary Schools

There is increasing recognition in the literature that the literacy demands of the secondary school are different from those of the primary school (Christie, 1998; Ivey & Broaddus, 2000) and that students need to be prepared for dealing with the demands of content area reading (McDonald & Thornley, 2004). Therefore and along with content expertise, teachers must apply theoretical knowledge about the learning processes (including literacy) and an understanding of instructional strategies to negotiate and to make explicit the type of instruction that will be used in the classroom (Lester, 2000).

Teaching must therefore account for students' prior experiences (in relation to content, text and text reading and writing) and must provide opportunities for students that will help them to explore, discover and think critically within specific disciplines (Lester, 2000; McDonald & Thornley, 2004). To engage in meaning-making at this level, students must be able to think beyond the literal recall of content area facts and they must develop the skills to interpret, apply and transact with a wide variety of texts at a variety of levels (Ruddell, 1996). Viewing the teaching and learning process in this way means that building students' skills as readers and as manipulators of

information becomes an act of negotiation overlaid by the teacher's knowledge of the reading process as it relates to their content area. Clearly, the role of the teacher is critical (Moje et al., 2000; Norrie & Lenski, 1998).

Teacher Expectations

The level of expectation held by teachers of students has been shown to be highly variable and based on such things as social background and ethnicity (Alton-Lee, Rietveld, Klenner, Dalton, Diggins, & Town, 2000). Further, it has been shown that the quality of educational opportunity available to students is affected by teachers' attitudes to those students (Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2000). The importance of the holding of high levels of expectation for students has also been well documented (Ministry of Education, 2004b) and central to this need is a shared understanding between teachers and students about what is meant by achievement, what progress means, and what constitutes quality work (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Stanton-Salazar et al (2000) report on a case study undertaken in several urban high schools in San Diego with large numbers of Latino and African American students in which demonstrable changes in student achievement occurred. They argued that success with participating students was achieved through a combination of enrolment in academic courses and through specific instruction in study skills, including note-making.

In the Stanton-Salazar study however, students were also assisted to learn the "rules" of the curriculum and education through explicit socialisation into the hidden curriculum of the school, in order to assist them to understand how schools function to reinforce a particular social capital. This is substantially similar to Nuttal's (1999) point that the cultural context within which learning takes place is just as important to explore with students of "other" cultural backgrounds as are the knowledge acquisition activities and processes being explored.

Relationships and Engagement for Teaching and Learning

Studies in North American elementary and secondary schools consistently show that engagement has strong relational and predictive links with standard measures of academic performance as well as with lower frequency of school deviance and higher educational aspirations (Ostermann & Freese, 2000). Cambourne (1996) and Kirk (2001) suggest that engagement occurs when students can see that they will be able to achieve what is being demonstrated, when what they see has value, when they are free from stress or anxiety and when the demonstrator is someone they like, respect and want to emulate. Similarly, Hill & Hawk (2000) describe engagement as occurring when teachers encourage and establish an environment of inclusion, when they develop positive attitudes amongst their students, when they enhance meaning for their students through an examination of the processes and content of the curriculum, and when they engender a sense of competence amongst those students.

A central element to the process of engagement is the quality of the relationship between students and teachers (Carpenter et al., 2000; Hawk, Tumama Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland, 2002; Heron, 2003; Hill & Hawk, 2000). In New Zealand there have also been efforts to develop relationships between the families of Pasifika peoples and the schools their children attend (Education Review Office, 2004; Pasikale, 1999).

These and other studies have demonstrated the importance of:

- Establishing and fostering communication and information exchange;
- Teaming teachers' participation in activities with community members;
- Developing and maintaining a parent-friendly school;
- Establishing parent centres and providing parent coordinators;
- Focusing on the engagement of students in their learning and inviting parents as participants;
- Building the school environment and culture around students' culture, values and experiences;
- Ensuring that the learning context recognises the diversity of students participating in it.

Professional Development: Effective Models

Hill and Hawk (2000) discussed the need for thorough teacher induction in the appropriate attitudes, qualities and skills for working with Pasifika students and for the development of teacher efficacy in identifying where they needed specific supports and training. The attitudes and skills these authors identified included:

- The use of ‘sophisticated skills’ in teacher dialogue with students that encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning and to think at a deeper level;
- Making the learning process transparent and understandable for students;
- Spending time on vocabulary and language including language structure and the constant checking by teachers of student understandings of words, and concepts, throughout lessons;
- Planning for differentiated activities which take different styles of learning into account and which actively engage students in their learning;
- Undertaking direct instruction in small steps - pausing to check students' understanding, providing opportunities to practice;
- Requiring students to construct their own meaning from new information and ideas.

Further, these authors stressed the need for professional development that focuses on the pedagogy of teaching (Hill & Hawk, 2000).

These findings are substantially similar to those reported by the Education Review Office (2000) and by the findings of the Queensland School Reform Project (Education Queensland, 2001-2003) that suggested that schools adopt a problem-based approach in which teachers built their understanding of pedagogy in order to connect this with their practice through the use of such techniques as critical reflection and case methods. In this respect they also argued a case for taking account of participants’ prior knowledge and experience in the environment in which professional development was to occur.

Kershner (1999) and Little and Houston (2003) have completed studies of teacher change in primary and secondary schools in England and in Florida in which teachers were encouraged to “see beyond what is commonly taken-for-granted in school life” (Kershner, 1999, p. 426). The model of professional learning adopted in these programmes aimed to:

- Assist teachers to identify their own professional challenges, and to develop an action learning model which was then supported by the research literature and a range of “experts” from higher education and local education authorities;
- Encourage participants to examine their own theoretical assumptions and understandings and to apply their thinking to a socio-cultural view of learning contextualized in the educational settings in which they worked;
- Draw on pupils’ views of learning as part of the strategy of school improvement;
- Encourage the development of local networks which could support teachers to reflect on their own practice within the context of the community in which schools were located.

Appendix One: Method

As has been described elsewhere (e.g. Mara, 1999; May, 2002; Nelisi, 1999; Phillips, McNaughton, & MacDonald, 2000; Tertiary Education Commission, 2004), the participation and achievement of many of the Pasifika students in schools in New Zealand has been recognised as a significant issue. While previous efforts to reduce disparities in achievement have involved professional development for teachers, such initiatives have had limited success (Earl & Katz, 2002). Guskey (2000) notes that:

Experience has taught us that you cannot be successful in any endeavour designed to improve student learning by focusing on professional development. Too many other things in the system affect student learning, such as the curriculum, assessment, school organisation, materials, support and leadership (p.69).

The work of the authors cited previously also suggests that the evaluation of professional development must account for a range of issues wider beyond the measurement of changes in teacher practice and student achievement. These wider questions include the degree to which teachers engage in the development of their literacy teaching across content areas, the extent to which knowledge of Pasifika students informs the work of teachers and the degree to which schools reflect the cultures of their students and promote student achievement through the professional learning of teachers.

Given the complexity and interrelatedness of the issues raised, a multivariate model (Guskey, 2000; Schalock, 1995) was developed for the evaluation project. This model involves a four component design which includes a *description of the characteristics* of the teachers, students and communities involved in the professional learning, the *analysis of the social and educational opportunities* available in each involved school, the *description of the context* in which professional learning was delivered and the *identification of outcomes*. In regards the analysis of information gathered under each component, the articulation of links between each component was central to any claim as to the “certainty” and “generalisability” of findings.

Data Collection

Interviews

Data collection and analysis took place on three occasions during the professional learning programme. The initial phase, in late 2004 and early 2005 was concerned with identifying those conditions that were likely to have both an effect on the potential for change, and an understanding of the context within which that potential for change existed. To that end, interviews with principals, literacy leaders, facilitators and teachers took place. These initial interviews were concerned with the development of a set of criteria against which the effectiveness of the intervention could be measured. In order to do this, interviewers asked participants about their perceptions of “effective” professional development, their attitudes and beliefs about their students and about the teaching and learning environment they and others fostered within the school.

Subsequent interviews (late 2005 and mid-way through 2006) were concerned with the identification of those elements of the professional development programme that either had the potential to, or did bring about, changes in both teacher practice and student achievement. These interviews served both a formative and summative function. In a formative sense, interviews provided a snap shot of the work of teachers that facilitators could then use to determine “next steps.” At the summative stage of the evaluation, the focus described above led the evaluator to an understanding of the progress of the professional development as well as providing data on the ways in which levels of new knowledge or practice could contribute to student learning.

Observations

Of major concern in any outcome evaluation is the extent to which an intervention, such as the *ELS* programme could be said to have brought about changes in student achievement. To this end, credible (Eisner, 1991), plausible and reasonable links had to be made between the professional development work and student learning and other behaviours (Schalock, 1995).

In the initial stage of the data collection process, in-class observations were completed to establish a base line from which changes in teaching and learning resulting from the implementation of the “*Effective Literacy Strategies*” programme could be observed. Subsequent in-class observations were completed to identify and describe any changes in teacher practice resulting from the professional development and to identify the extent to which students participated in and learned from a cross-curricular focus on literacy.

Multiple numbers of classrooms across all year levels were visited and revisited to collect data using a “running record” or “participant observer” approach. The data collected from these observations was collated using a summary sheet that was developed using the *ELS* framework. The data generated from these observations was then used to corroborate the findings generated from interviews with targeted teachers as well as providing further information to support generalisations about the adoption of the *ELS* programme in and across schools and in support of the development of “stories” of change in students’ achievement.

Student Assessments and Focus Groups

The collection and analysis of student assessments provided further data to serve formative and summative needs. A curriculum based literacy assessment developed by the principle evaluators and given to students on two occasions provided schools with formative information about their students’ literacy needs and progress across the curriculum (see McDonald and Thornley 2005 for the rationale for these assessments). Target students also completed three asTTle assessments to determine change over time that may have resulted from the professional development intervention.

In each school, a research focus group of students and community members was convened. As noted by Patton (1990), such groups take the researcher inside a phenomenon of interest, in this case, literacy learning and teaching through *ELS*. To this end, focus group meetings were comprised of two parts. The first part of each focus group meeting involved discussions about members’ concepts of literacy and to build a concept map illustrating their understandings about literacy. The second part of each focus group meeting was concerned with the identification of the supports

students received from their teachers and where and how they thought they could be better supported. Similarly, community members were asked for their perceptions of the support provided by the school as a whole. Taken as individual components, different elements of focus group meetings provide important formative data in which the voices of students, teachers and community members are encapsulated. Taken as a whole, they contribute significantly to the development of understandings about the processes of change, about increases in knowledge and about the perceptions of each interest group on the outcomes and impact of the project.

Data Analysis

An important aspect of this evaluation was that the 20 schools participating in the professional development programme had access to data from the evaluation that they could then use to inform their on-going work. The analysis phase began concurrent with data collection and in the case of the qualitative data, followed a grounded theory (Bernard, 2002) approach in which transcripts, and observations were read and themes identified within and across transcripts and observations in each school. It is important to note however, and as discussed by Charmaz (2000) that:

...data collecting may demand that researchers ask questions and follow hunches, if not in direct conversation with respondents, then in the observer's notes about what to look for... (so that) we researchers will see the basic social process in the field through our respondents' telling what is significant (pg.514).

Thus, although data was analysed and categorized using an open ended approach to inform both the building of theory and approaches to further data collection, the researchers were also concerned to gather information related to the research evaluation questions along with an impression as to the impact of the *Effective Literacy Strategies* programme. This being the case, and utilizing a constant comparative approach (Charmaz, 2000), analysis of data was concerned with:

- Comparisons between different people's situations, accounts, and views of the teaching approaches advocated by the *ELS* programme (including student and community engagement);
- Comparisons of change over time for individual people (in terms of teacher knowledge and practice, student practice, knowledge and achievement and community knowledge and engagement);

- Comparisons between incidents of teaching and learning within and across curriculum areas;
- Comparisons between data and theory building;
- Comparisons between theories.

Further, evaluation in qualitative case studies must be concerned with the extent to which one set of findings can be seen as fair, thorough, ethically appropriate and ultimately, applicable to other settings (Donmoyer in Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In thinking about transfer, it is essential to consider the following:

- The hypotheses generated by experience (presumably of all of the players) in one setting;
- The multiple interacting characteristics of that setting;
- The multiple interacting characteristics at work in a second or subsequent settings;
- The similarities and differences between the settings.

It is our contention therefore, in using a grounded theory approach, and in light of the constraints discussed above, data collected at each point in the research process (multiple interviews, classroom observations, focus groups and student work samples and assessment results) was sufficient to respond to the research questions.

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