

## ERRATA

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P.248 line19 add Hargreaves,A.,&Fullan,M.(1998). *What's Worth Fighting for in Education?* Buckingham: Open University Press.

P.251 line8 add Louis,K.S.,Detert,J.R.,& Schroeder,R.G.(2001). A Culture Framework for Education:Defining Quality Values and Their Impact in U.S. High Schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*,12 (2),183-212.

P.254 line5 add Smyth,J.(1991). *Teachers as Collaborative Learners: Challenging Dominant Forms of Supervision*. London: Open University Press.



**A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATION OF  
TEACHER COLLABORATION:  
CONDITIONS AND THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN TEACHER COLLABORATION  
AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING**

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## TABLE OF PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT** 3

**DECLARATION** 6

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT** 7

**INTRODUCTION TO PORTFOLIO** 9

A ISSUES BEING INVESTIGATED 9

B THE RESEARCH PORTFOLIO 13

### **PART I**

#### **COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE 20

B CONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL  
CULTURE 35

C CONDITIONS FOR STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND LEARNING IN AN ORGANISATION 40

D SCHOOL-LEVEL FACTORS THAT SUPPORT TEACHERS'  
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH 45

E TEACHERS' WORKPLACE LEARNING 57

F THE ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS FOR TEACHERS'  
COLLABORATION AND LEARNING 63

G THE SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS FOR TEACHERS'  
COLLABORATION AND LEARNING 82

H OVERVIEW 89

I RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR PARTS II AND III 92

**PART II****THE ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL  
CONDITIONS FOR TEACHER COLLABORATION**

- A THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 110
- B RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE INVESTIGATION 121
- C THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS 122
- D DISCUSSION 166

**PART III****THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER  
COLLABORATION AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING**

- A THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 177
- B RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE INVESTIGATION 185
- C THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS 186
- D DISCUSSION 226

**CONCLUSION TO PORTFOLIO 232****APPENDICES 241**

- A QUESTIONNAIRE
- B INTERVIEW GUIDE

**BIBLIOGRAPHY 246**

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the conditions that promote or inhibit teacher collaboration, and its implications for teachers' professional development and learning by using a qualitative case study approach. The investigation is based on research studies (Leonard & Leonard, 2001; Leonard, 1999; Hargreaves, 1997, 1994, 1993; little, 1993, 1990, 1987), which indicate that cultures of collaboration have positive and systematic connections to teachers' sense of efficacy, professional standard of practices, and students' learning. Understanding the conditions that encourage or inhibit teachers' collaboration in their work is essential to teachers' workplace learning and the improvement of their professional practices.

The outcomes of teachers' professional learning, as indicated by the findings of this study, depend to a large extend on the capability and efforts of teachers to engage in joint work and consultation with colleagues and the school culture that values and facilitates teachers' professional learning. Creating collaborative learning opportunities that encourage the free exchange of ideas among teachers through joint work, collegial interaction, dialogue, and participation, are important for developing teachers' capacity in cognitive reasoning and critical reflection.

This study adopted a multiple data gathering approach which include using open-ended questionnaires and in-depth, focus interviewing as a means for gathering data about the issues being investigated. St. Aloysius College in Adelaide, which was considered to have the capacity for developing a collaborative school culture, was chosen as the site for conducting the field work. Seventy-six copies of the

questionnaires were distributed to all teaching staff in the school, and about half of the staff members completed the questionnaires. The participants for interview included the school Principal, a Deputy Principal, a year-level coordinator who taught in different subject areas, and two teachers who taught different subjects at different year levels. The researcher adopted approaches of inductive analysis, constant comparison and typological analysis throughout the data analysis and writing-up process.

This research portfolio comprises of three parts with an introduction and conclusion to the whole portfolio. Part I of the portfolio includes the review of literature and the research methodology for part II and III. Part II is the investigation of the conditions that promote or inhibit teacher collaboration. Part III of the research portfolio is the investigation of the relationship between teacher collaboration and teachers' professional development and learning.

The findings support the claims that teachers' collaboration can be fostered by the organisational structures and leadership practices through delegating decision making authority for teachers to take on leadership responsibility. One significant aspect of the findings is that teachers need to model and practice <sup>a</sup>collaborative style of working with colleagues, in order to set examples for students to engage collaboratively in group work. In addition, school leaders also need to model the collaborative style of working in order to inspire teachers to be involved in collaborative practices. The modelling of collaborative practices by teachers and administrators in the school helps in creating a conducive learning environment that benefits both teachers' professional practices and students' learning.

This study suggests that a safe, cooperative, and unthreatening environment in which teachers feel safe to voice their concerns without fear of disapproval, is an important condition for teachers involvement in collaborative practices. The findings also suggest that assuming shared responsibility for teaching and students' learning encourages teachers to work together as a team, where they can discuss issues, contribute ideas, plan, assess and evaluate teaching programmes together for the best possible learning outcomes for students.

In terms of the relationship between teachers' participation in collaborative practices and their professional development and learning, this study concludes that being involved in a variety of collaborative activities, the opportunities for exposure to a wider range of educational and instructional problems, accompanied by an open, supportive, visionary, and committed leadership, and a safe and collaborative work environment, are key factors for teachers' collaboration. They established the norms and social context for teachers' involvement in collegial interaction and collaborative practices that helped in promoting teachers' practical knowledge, skills and expertise, as well as critical thinking and reflective practice in their work.

## Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Signature:

Date: 18-2-04

## Acknowledgment

I would like to express my profound gratitude for the principal and staff at the St. Aloysius College for participating in the research project. In particular, my appreciation for the participants, including the school principal and the Deputy Principal, who have been involved in the process of interview, for their efforts in providing time, sharing professional experiences, and contributing ideas, insights, and practical knowledge which are invaluable to my research work.

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

### A ISSUES BEING INVESTIGATED

" If we want better classroom learning for students, we have to create superb professional learning for those who teach them" (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 108).

A collaborative school culture has long been seen as essential to the improvement of practice and professional growth of teachers. Research evidence (Lee & Smith, 1996, Senge, 1990) has shown that the collaborative school culture is also related strongly to the outcomes of students' learning and the work of the school. Such researchers argue that a school organisation that values teachers' continuous learning for their own professional growth, and its significance for change and school improvement would be oriented to developing a collaborative school structure that creates opportunities for teachers to work together with colleagues in order to facilitate change.

Hargreaves (1997) indicates that there is increasing evidence that cultures of collaboration have positive and systematic connections to teachers' sense of efficacy about being able to make a difference with students. Little (1982) discovered that in a collaborative school setting, teachers would frequently engage in talk about teaching, regularly observe and critique each other, work together to develop curriculum material, and teach each other pedagogy. A school culture that encourages the collaborative and interactive style of working relationships among teachers, has the potential for successful implementation of staff development programs (Hargreaves, 1994;

Little, 1987), and thus positive outcomes in school improvement and teachers' professional practices ( Hargreaves, 1997).

A collaborative school culture is created by a structure and a climate that encourages teachers working together to improve their practice of teaching, and teachers working with the principal in implementing goals for school improvement and teachers' professional growth (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). According to Finn (1989), a collegial work structure and a strong sense of purpose among teachers and administrators, are main conditions that contribute to developing a culture of teacher collaboration. These views have implications for teachers' professional learning which depend to a large extent on the capability and efforts of teachers to engage in collaborative practices and the collective examination of their teaching practices.

There is evidence from research studies (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Anderson, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Finn, 1989; Owen, 1987) which indicates that organisational structures and leadership practice are key conditions in creating a conducive environment for teachers to engage in collaborative practice. The school organisation that establishes structures and leadership practices to provide opportunities for teachers to interact and collaborate with colleagues in relation to the practice of teaching and the work of the school would assist in creating a collaborative work environment that promotes teachers' professional learning and growth.

This study investigates the conditions that promote or inhibit teacher collaboration and its implications for teachers' development and learning in a particular school setting. In order to cope with the intensive demands on the practice of teaching, teachers are beginning

to value the collaborative style of working ( Kruse & Louis, 1997). As Hargreaves (1997) indicates, in this age of increasing uncertainty, teachers are starting to turn more to each other for professional learning and consultation for a sense of direction and mutual support. The nature of teachers' work has expanded to include consultation and collaborative planning, and other kinds of joint work with colleagues for meeting students' learning needs and the improvement of professional practices.

School organisation which is oriented to developing norms and expectations for collaboration among teachers, most often has leaders who create structures and opportunities for teachers to interact and collaborate with colleagues. Such a school context encourages teachers' commitment to continuous professional learning. By engaging in the process of decision-making, joint-planning, problem-solving, collegial assistance and feedback, and the sharing of ideas, information and resources in relation to teaching practices and students' work and performance, it is the researcher's view that teachers develop closer collegial interactions, mutual respect and understanding, and they boost morale and self-esteem, as well as expand knowledge and skills in the practice of teaching. Kruse and Louis (1997) also indicate that as a result of participation in team work, teachers gain greater job satisfaction in the school community which is focused on teaching and learning.

In addition, Kruse and Louis (1997) and Louis (1992) indicate that team work increases teachers' sense of affiliation with the school, and that their responsibility for the effectiveness of instruction is increased by collaborative work with peers. Teachers working in teams can benefit from emotional and moral support, intellectual assistance, and

personal encouragement, as the team structure provides a place for teachers to meet regularly, try out new ideas, share insights from attending in-service courses and workshops, and to talk about issues relating to their practices. Such a reflective dialogue fosters the collaborative efforts of teachers (Kruse & Louis, 1997).

Hargreaves (1997) observes that cultures of collaboration have positive connections to teachers' work performance and practices. Such culture also influences teachers' willingness to take risks and the likelihood of their being committed to continuous improvement. When there are more open and supportive relationships among staff, teachers are generally more receptive to serious reviews of their work (Hargreaves, 1990). By providing the opportunity for teachers to frequently interact, and receive feedback in relation to their performance in teaching, the school as a professional community has the potential to improve teachers' classroom practice.

This study examines organisational structures and leadership styles and practices that facilitate or inhibit the development of a collaborative work culture in a particular school setting. This study also examines the extent to which collegial support, assistance and the provision of feedback, as well as the collaborative style of working which includes teachers' involvement in joint planning, group problem-solving, and participatory decision making, and leadership support in the form of personal assistance, encouragement and funding can have impact on teachers' development and learning from the personal experience and perspectives of teachers in a particular school setting.

## B THE RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Part I of the research portfolio begins with a review of literature in relation to conditions for establishing a collaborative school culture and its implications for teachers' professional development and workplace learning. This part ends with a detailed discussion of research methods adopted, and the rationale for it. The investigation of organisational and sociocultural factors that are identified as key conditions for teacher collaboration are discussed in Part two of the Research Portfolio. The examination of organisational factors includes the decision making approaches in the school; the organisational structures, processes, and resources of the school; and leadership role, qualities, and practices that may promote or inhibit teachers' involvement in collaborative practices.

The investigation of sociocultural factors includes the intrapersonal and interpersonal factors, such as beliefs and perceptions of teachers and school leaders with regard to the values of collaborative work practice, the collaborative working relationships among teachers, and teachers assuming collective responsibility and accountability for teaching and students' learning that may contribute to developing a culture of teacher collaboration.

Part three of the Research Portfolio examines the relationship between teacher collaboration and teachers' professional development and learning. The investigation is based on the assumptions made in Schunk's (1991) adult social learning theory, Marsick and Watkins' (1990) informal learning theory, Vygotskian sociocultural theory (in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) and research studies on teachers' development, which indicate that the social context, norms of collegiality and feedback, and collaborative working relationships

among teachers, are essential for achieving positive outcomes for teachers' development and learning. The investigation includes a consideration of the nature and forms of teacher collaboration, the values of the collaborative style of working, and the outcomes of involvement in collaborative practices in relation to teachers' professional development and learning from the perspective and personal experience of teachers and school leaders in a particular school.

This introduction has indicated the potential importance of the relationship between collaborative school cultures and improved teaching practices. In the following section of Part I of the portfolio, I review literature that examines issues related to a collaborative school culture and teachers' professional development.

## PART I

### **COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

## Part I: Table of contents

<b>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1 The definition of school culture</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2 The definition of collaboration in schools</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3 Benefits of collaboration</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4 The collaborative school culture and teachers' workplace learning</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5 Barriers to teacher collaboration</b>	<b>30</b>
5.1 Culture of individualism	30
5.2 Pragmatic barriers to collaboration	31
<b>6 Construction of a culture of collaboration</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>B CONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>1 Developing norms of collegiality and collaboration that foster teachers' development</b>	<b>35</b>
1.1 Requests for and offers of professional advice and assistance	
1.2 Teachers' learning as collective aspect of school life	37
<b>2 Supportive and collaborative leadership</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3 Developing an environment for a community of professional practice</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>C CONDITIONS FOR STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING IN AN ORGANISATION</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>1 The organisational culture that supports continuous learning</b>	<b>41</b>

**2 Factors that promote growth and innovative capacity in members of the organisation 44**

- 2.1 Creating a supportive culture 44
- 2.2 A supportive and participative management 44
- 2.3 Intensive communication and security 44

**D SCHOOL-LEVEL FACTORS THAT SUPPORT TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL GROWTH 45****1 Factors that promote teachers' professional development 46**

- 1.1 Teachers' responsibility for their own professional growth 46
- 1.2 Teacher collaboration 46
- 1.3 Time and the restructuring of school schedules 47
- 1.4 Values and norms for professional development 48
- 1.5 The nature of teachers' work 49
- 1.6 School-level goals, leadership, structure and resources for teachers' development 49

**2 Social and cultural context for teachers' development 51**

- 2.1 The environment conducive for teachers' professional development 52
- 2.2 The development of a learning organisation 55

**E TEACHERS' WORKPLACE LEARNING 57**

- 1 The informal or experience-based learning 57
- 2 Adult learning theories underpinning teachers' professional development and learning 59
- 3 The construction of pedagogical knowledge 61

**F THE ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS THAT SUPPORT TEACHERS' COLLABORATION AND LEARNING 63**

<b>1</b>	<b>Participatory decision making</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Leadership roles and practices in promoting teachers' learning and collaboration</b>	<b>69</b>
2.1	The principal's roles and strategies in promoting teachers' growth	72
2.2	The role of teacher leaders in promoting teachers' growth	77
2.3	The role of delegated leaders in building a culture of professional development for teachers' learning	79
<b>G</b>	<b>THE SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS WHICH ENCOURAGE TEACHERS' COLLABORATION AND LEARNING</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>The development of a collaborative work environment for students' learning</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The teacher community's role in fostering shared knowledge for teaching and teachers' learning</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>The importance of teacher dialogues</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>The provision of feedback, shared language and guided reflection through the process of collegiality</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR PARTS II AND III</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>The application of qualitative research approach</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>A case study investigation</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Negotiation for the entry to the school</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Data gathering strategies</b>	<b>96</b>
4.1	A multiple perspectives and integrative data gathering approach	96
4.2	In-depth, focus/guided interview	97
4.3	Open-ended questionnaire	99

**5 The process of fieldwork** 100

**6 Data analysis** 101

6.1 Coding the data 101

6.2 Generating theory 104

## PART I

# COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the following review, I present research that has examined: (a) factors related to the establishment of collaborative school cultures, and (b) the relationship between such cultures and teachers' professional development.

### A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

#### 1 The definition of school culture

The definition of 'culture' often includes reference to knowledge, attitudes, preferences, values, and expectations (Hatton, 1994) that are manifest in the behaviour and action of the group members in the organisation. Norris (1994) defines culture as the beliefs, values, and practices accepted by the group members who operate within a common set of assumptions about the ways things are done. Culture has also been defined as the socially shared and transmitted knowledge of what is and what ought to be symbolised in an act (Rossman, 1988). More explicitly, DuFour (1991) argues that culture sometimes interchangeably used with climate, can be defined as the collective set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that make up the group norm which represents shared expectations for what is to be done, how it is to be done, and by whom.

Owens (1987) proposes that the concept of organisational culture is helpful in understanding the attitudes and behaviour of teachers with regard to their learning in the workplace. The culture of a school shapes and moulds how people think, feel, and behave. It is communicated through customs, traditions, expectations, common meanings, norms and habits, and manifested in words and behaviour as people go about their daily activities. The culture of a school is a constructed reality, and it requires a strong, skilled, and dedicated leadership to construct a vision of reality that motivates students and teachers in a move towards a higher level of excellence for the learning of both students and teachers in the school community (Owens, 1987).

The school culture involves the beliefs and expectations which are reflected in a school's daily routine, including how colleagues interact with each other and it is manifested in the norms or values shared by participants within a school (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Gleave (1994) argues that school culture is shaped by people's unconscious assumptions or taken-for-granted beliefs about school vision, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and the organisational structure. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), Gleave (1994), and Hatton (1994) indicate that the organisational culture of the school is an essential condition in meeting the school's needs, teachers' professional growth in practice and learning, and the quality of service to students. Such investigations suggest that teachers' sense of identity and commitment to the school organisation can be created and maintained by the school culture.

In the following sections, I define and explore the nature of collaborative school cultures.

## 2 The definition of collaboration in schools

Collaboration in schools is reflected in the discourse of communities and cultures of professional teachers. Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that collaboration reflects the notion of a school as a community which is characterised by opportunities for one-on-one interactions based on common values and expectations, commitment toward interpersonal caring, and support to promote meaningful collegial interaction in an organisation (also see Louis & Kruse, 1995).

Collaboration depends on the voluntary effort of teachers and administrators to improve their schools and their own instructional practices through collegial consultation and team work. Collaboration has often been defined as 'people getting along with each other' (Barth, 1990), 'advice giving' (Pugach & Johnson, 1995), or 'a concrete technique' (Sheridan, 1992). In reality, collaboration manifests itself in collaborative consultation, team teaching, or various forms of problem-solving teams (Pugach & Johnson, 1995).

West (1990) defines educational collaboration as an interactive planning or problem solving process involving two or more team members. Team interactions are characterised by mutual respect, trust, and open communication; consensual decision-making; pooling of personal resources and expertise; and joint ownership of the issue or problem being addressed. Wood and Gray (in Welch, 1998) identify common features in the various definitions of collaboration that include stakeholders of a problem domain: autonomy; interactive processes; shared rules, norms and structures; action or decision; and orientation toward the context or setting of the problem. They synthesise these common elements to create their definition of

collaboration, proposing that collaboration occurs when a group of stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms or structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain.

In true collaboration, there is a commitment to shared resources, power and talent, no individual's point of view dominates, authority for decisions and actions resides in the group, and work products reflect a blending of all participants' contributions (Minnis, John-Steiner, & Weber, 1994). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) examine two different types of collaboration. They suggest that in product-oriented collaborations, the collaborators' roles tend to be clearly delineated, with efficiency being a primary objective. In contrast, in more integrated collaborations, the emphasis is on process, dialogue, and empowerment, which results in more flexible roles and division of labour.

A collaborative school culture involves shared values, beliefs, common purposes, and understanding of teachers and school leaders with respect to the practice of teaching and the work of the school. Teachers and administrators in the collaborative school setting are able to pool resources, expertise, and talent from individual staff members for the development of educational programs and the improvement of services to students.

A collaborative school culture is characterised by a structure and climate that encourage teachers working together to improve their practice of teaching and teachers working with the principal in developing and implementing common goals for school improvement and professional growth (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Finn (1989) indicated that effective schools usually have a 'collegial'

staffing structures and a strong sense of common purpose among teachers and administrators. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) also indicate that the development of a collaborative school culture is based on the belief that teachers are professionals who should be given decision-making responsibility for the instructional process and held accountable for its outcomes.

In the following two sections, I examine the relationships between collaborative school cultures and teachers' professional development and learning.

### **3 Benefits of collaboration**

The act of collaboration calls for the pooling of knowledge, skills and resources from a group of individuals with diverse experiences that allow a broader conceptualisation of problems. Because more facets of an issue can be explored, collaboration can provide an increased understanding of the complexities of a situation (Phillips & McCullough, in Welch, 1998).

Collaboration promotes an increased range of possible solutions to school-based management and instructional problems. The range and diversity of expertise and resources available will be greatly enhanced. The purposes of collaboration extend beyond brainstorming ideas and allocating and sharing of resources to monitoring, evaluating, and refining educational programs and services (Welch, 1998).

According to Hargreaves (1993), collaboration in dialogue and action provides sources of feedback and comparison that prompt teachers to reflect on their own practice. It helps in increasing organisational responsiveness by pooling the collective knowledge, expertise and capacities of the teacher workforce to enable it to view and respond

swiftly to changing constraints and opportunities in the surrounding environment.

Collaboration, by helping to foster mutual understanding among teachers, develops a community of practice and support. Through collaborative projects, teachers overcome their isolation by helping one another, sharing, planning, and reflecting on their classroom experiences. John-Steiner, Weber, and Minnis (1998) argue that increased teaching satisfaction is one of the major motivations for teachers continuing to collaborate. Increasing opportunities for teachers to learn from each other, encourages teachers to see change as an unending process of continuous improvement.

Collaboration and collegiality that take the form of shared decision-making and staff consultation are among the process factors which are frequently identified as correlating with positive school outcomes in the school effectiveness research literature (Hargreaves, 1994). Norms of collaboration and collegiality are often advocated as fruitful strategies (Hargreaves, 1994) for enhancing teachers' development. They provide the context that allows teachers to learn from each other, to share and develop their expertise together. Hargreaves emphasises that as a consequence of collegial interactions, teachers increase their confidence, leading to a greater readiness to experimentation and risk taking, and a continuous improvement among them.

Little (1987) suggests that norms of collegiality and experimentation are important to successful school change. Hargreaves (1994), Rosenholtz (1990), and Little (1987) reveal that staff development programs are more successful in schools in which a strong sense of collegiality and a commitment to change have become norms.

Teachers are likely to feel competent if they have good professional partnerships with colleagues and possess strong instructional skills (Rosenholtz, 1990).

There are claims by Hargreaves (1994) that the effective implementation of more centralised curricular reforms also depends on the development of collegial relationships and joint planning among teachers, which allows central guidelines to be interpreted and adapted to the context of each particular school. The creation of productive and supportive collegial relationships among teachers has long been seen as a prerequisite for effective school-based curriculum development. The collective responsibility of teachers to implement centrally defined curriculum places even greater emphasis on the development of collegiality and collaboration at the school level (Hargreaves, 1994).

The benefits of collaboration and collegiality for organisational health and effectiveness include the improvement of teachers' morale and job satisfaction which ensures teachers benefit from their experiences and continue to grow throughout their careers. The success of school improvement, curriculum reform, teacher development and leadership development are also dependent on the building of positive collegial relationships (Hargreaves, 1994).

#### **4 The collaborative school culture and teachers' workplace learning**

There are many ways in which teachers learn and develop professionally in the workplace. Hargreaves (1992) indicates that teachers may learn informally from discussions and meetings relating

to the planning and the introduction of a new program. They may also learn informally through assuming leadership roles as master teachers or mentors. As indicated by Hargreaves, teachers may also learn from structured processes of feedback and review of their own practice as in systems of performance appraisal or peer coaching.

It is understood that much of teachers' learning in the workplace is informal and day-to-day in nature (Hargreaves, 1992). Teachers' on-the-job learning is greatly affected by the outlooks and orientations of their colleagues with whom they work. The common features of teachers' workplace learning are non-routine, experiential, situational, and reflective that are based on day-to-day incidents and circumstances. Teachers develop their styles and strategies of teaching over years of working with colleagues in developing ways of doing things in response to the specific problems and circumstances they might face in their work (Hargreaves, 1992).

The school culture is an influencing factor that may affect teachers' workplace learning. The beliefs, norms, and values shared by teachers in a school provide a powerful foundation for members' understanding of the ways members operate together. In addition, they convey routines; provide meaning for events, conduct and language, and determine peoples' actions (Rossman, 1988).

Research on staff development (Pearce, Stewart, Garrigan, & Ferguson, 1996; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Little, 1987, 1990) indicates that school culture powerfully influences teachers' practices and learning as well as what does or does not occur during a staff development program. These investigations indicate that teachers believe their most effective learning occurs through on-the-job experience and reflection.

Pearce, Stewart, Garrigan, and Furguson (1996) suggest that the school culture has a positive effect on teachers' practice and learning, as it is the embedded systems, beliefs, and structures which form the ideological basis for the organisation's work. They propose that the culture of an organisation is a highly significant factor in determining the outcome of an innovation in the area of teaching and learning. It is indicated that understanding the evolving nature of a school culture is imperative for effecting change and improvement in teachers' work.

Certain cultural norms that include collegiality and collaboration, shared responsibility for individual and collective learning, shared decision-making, and teachers' professional dialogue have been shown to foster teachers' change and learning (Little, 1982, 1984). Little asserts that the school culture which promotes peer interaction and collaboration is seen as an important factor for teachers' learning in the school community.

For the development of a professional learning community in schools, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) propose various ways for the school to provide opportunities for teachers to work with their peers, to learn from each other, and to develop their expertise as a professional community. They suggest that schools should establish opportunities for teachers to confront their own assumptions and the beliefs that guide their practice; encourage and support teachers to share responsibilities for both their own development and that of the school; empower teachers to regain decision-making responsibility for curriculum development; and develop a common sense of mission amongst staff through 'dialogue'.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) indicate that the nature of teachers' interaction and the degree to which they assume a shared responsibility for the development of a positive learning environment are important factors for educational reform and teacher development. They argue that in a collaborative school culture where teachers are keen to share ideas with colleagues, there is likely to be more workplace learning occurring than in individualistically oriented cultures. The school culture in which teachers have ownership and control of professional development activity, owned and controlled by teachers themselves or by the system, is more likely to promote teachers' professional growth (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992).

A study conducted by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training in Australia, (1993) indicated that a school's capacity for on-going change is an important feature of the school culture and has implications for teachers' learning. It was found that in schools where teachers, administrators and parents share the responsibility of decision-making, the collaborative school culture which is conducive to teachers' workplace learning is developed.

There are several cultural factors in a school organisation that contribute to teachers' learning. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992), and Little (1990) indicate that schools with norms of collaboration, cohesive relationship, and tolerance for diversity effect more change in teachers' learning. Rosenholtz (1989) identified four factors which include principal-teacher collegiality, effective evaluation practices, teacher collaboration, and effective and consistent management of student behaviour as aspects of school culture that contributed to teachers' learning.

There are increasing efforts to build a strong culture of collaboration which include strategies such as developing a common purpose; responding effectively to change; creating a climate which values risk-taking and continuous improvement; developing stronger sense of teachers' efficacy; and creating a learning oriented culture for teachers' development (Little, 1990). Little emphasises that when the ties between teachers are strong and professionally meaningful, then the benefits of collaborative practice and joint work among teachers that would effect changes in individuals' and organisational learning are likely to be positive.

But not all schools embrace a sense of collaboration. In the following sections, I examine some of the barriers to collaboration and how a culture of collaboration might be established.

## 5 Barriers to teacher collaboration

### 5.1 Culture of individualism

Many teachers, however, are still working alone behind closed classroom doors in an isolated environment characterised by traditional school egg-crate-like structures (Lortie, 1975). In the culture of individualism, teachers develop what Lortie (1975) calls presentism, conservatism, and individualism. Lortie (1975) argues that teachers working in the individualistic culture tend to concentrate on short-term planning and they avoid discussing, thinking about or committing themselves to more fundamental changes which might affect the context of what they do.

In the staffrooms of these individualistic-oriented schools, Hargreaves (1992) found that educational theory, long-term plans, discussions

about basic purposes, and underlying assumptions of different learning theories are virtually absent from teachers' talk. Sharing is confined to stories, tips, and news (Hargreaves, 1992), which do not intrude upon or challenge the autonomous judgement of teachers. Rosenholtz (1989) also found that in individualistic settings, teachers feel that they must learn everything on their own. They have little access to knowledge of alternate ways of working, and little peer support for attempting to gain or apply such knowledge. Hargreaves (1992) indicated that since the publication of Lortie's influential work, research studies drawing on much larger and more randomly spread samples indicate the persistence of individualism as the overwhelmingly dominant form of the teachers' work culture.

There are, however, indications that teachers are beginning to value collaboration in order to cope with the intensive demands on the practice of teaching (Leonard & Leonard, 2001; Hords, 1997). As Hargreaves (1997) suggests, in this age of increasing uncertainty, teachers are starting to turn more to each other for professional learning and consultation, for a sense of direction and mutual support. The nature of teachers' work has expanded to include consultation and collaborative planning, and other kinds of joint work with colleagues. This kind of collaborative style of working helps teachers to pool resources, to make shared sense of responsibility and develops collective responses towards intensified demands on their practice (Hargreaves, 1997).

## **5.2 Pragmatic barriers to collaboration**

Leonard (2001, 1999) has proposed a number of structural and pragmatic barriers to teacher collaboration that are embedded in the school culture, such as time constraints, conflict avoidance, and team

competitiveness. Schools have been described as segmented institutions in which teachers are isolated (Lortie, 1975). McLaughlin and Yee (1988) also emphasise that schools are fundamentally organised as bureaucracies in which a division of labor operates in relation to rules and procedures.

In examining the relationships between workplace controls in the social organisation of schools and teachers' classroom practices, Bidwell (in Marjoribanks, 2002) indicates that in bureaucratic settings, teachers accept the need for an emphasis on rules and order, and consider the boundary of their classrooms as providing optimal conditions for students' learning. In contrast, teachers in collegial-controlled schools tend to be more flexible and adaptive in their teaching methods.

In addition, Nias (1998) argues that working in a hierarchical and authority-dependent environment, teachers had little training in the discussion of ideas. The divided and bureaucratic management structures of many schools create difficulty for teachers to meet one another in an atmosphere which invites tension rather than consensus.

There are more examples of structural and practical barriers in the school organisation that seriously prevent professionals from working together. Lack of time, demanding workloads, scheduling problems, and competing and overwhelming responsibilities are reported as the most pervasive impediment to implementing consultation and collaboration (McLaughlin and Yee, 1988).

The challenges that are associated with establishing the culture of collaboration in schools arise from the fact that not all teachers

recognise the substantive values of team work (Leonard, 2001). Leonard (1999) reported that a majority of teachers actually considered collaboration by imposition, when undertaken in formal structures, such as school committees, to have minimum effect in terms of promoting innovation and program improvement. In an examination of the collaborative process in the implementation of team work at an elementary school, Leonard (2001) uncovered a number of inhibitors to collaboration that included issues of teacher efficacy, time constraints, fragmented vision, and competitiveness. These data indicate the range and intensity of the problems teachers face when they are involved in collaborative activities in schools.

## 6 Construction of a culture of collaboration

The collaborative teachers' work culture which Hargreaves advocates, is characterised by routine help, support, trust, and openness which operates almost imperceptibly on a moment-by-moment, day-by-day basis (Hargreaves, 1992). The construction of a culture of collaboration has long been called for to counter the inhibitions of cultures of individualism and isolation. However, the collaborative work culture has been difficult to create and sustain, due to the fact that teachers have traditionally had almost no scheduled time to work and plan with colleagues (Hargreaves, 1992). Consultation has had to be undertaken outside normal classroom duties and such time constraints are not conducive to the creation of a collaborative work culture.

Hargreaves (1992) argues that even in schools where collaboration does exist, it is often not particularly wide-ranging, since most teachers focus their collaborative energies on relatively immediate, small-scale activities. This is the 'bounded collaboration' which is restricted in its

depth, its scope, and its frequency or persistence, and it features routine advice-giving, trick-trading and material sharing of a more immediate, specific and technical nature (Hargreaves, 1992). In order to rectify teachers' conservative avoidance of large-scale, fundamental planning and change, Hargreaves suggests that modifications in programming, accountability, and in the whole process of curriculum development are needed.

For the development of a collaborative school culture and to overcome the pragmatic and structural barriers to collaboration, Welch (1998) suggests that organisational structures must be modified to facilitate the occurrence of formal collegial interactions. Whereas systemic factors generally contribute to pragmatic barriers, Welch proposes that cultural factors such as strong belief systems, can exert pressures that may ultimately change the systemic framework for internalising norms of collaborative culture and practice in the school.

In the following section of Part I, I examine conditions that are related to the construction of a collaborative school culture. Such conditions include the development of norms of collegiality and collaboration, supportive and collaborative leadership in promoting teachers' collaboration and growth, and developing an environment for a community of professional practice, which will be discussed in turn.

## B CONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

### 1 Developing norms of collegiality and collaboration that foster teachers' development

Hargreaves (1994) indicates that collegiality and collaboration may take the form of team-teaching, collaborative planning, peer coaching, mentor relationships, professional dialogues, and collaborative action research. It may also find expression informally as staffroom talk, conversation outside the classroom, help and advice giving regarding resources. However, Hargreaves argues that those forms which are most compatible with the widely claimed benefits of teachers' empowerment and reflective practice are not common.

Teacher collaboration and collegiality, rather than teacher autonomy, have also emerged as characteristics of schools that nurture teacher innovation. Teachers' autonomy and isolation appear to inhibit teachers' growth and learning, as autonomy though important for teachers' sense of control and the exercise of professional judgement over their work, tends to foster caution and conservatism rather than change (Little, 1993, 1981). In addition, isolation tends to deprive teachers of the stimulation of working with peers and the close support they need to improve throughout their careers (Bird & Little, 1986).

In order to resolve the apparent contradiction between autonomy and collaboration, Little (1987) suggests a collective conception of autonomy can be established. She substantiates this argument by saying that teachers feel autonomous as a group of teachers when they share beliefs about what constitutes good teaching practice, what is best

for students, and the common purposes of the school. These shared beliefs constrain autonomy by holding each teacher accountable to the community.<sup>6</sup>

In the following sections, I examine characteristics of norms of collegiality which include the offering of professional advice and assistance, and teachers' learning as a collective aspect of school life.

### 1.1 Requests for and offers of professional advice and assistance

Teachers working in isolation where they seldom see or hear each other teach rarely communicate about task-related matters, nor request or offer professional advice and assistance in efforts to improve instructionally. These symptoms occur, according to Rosenholtz (1989), at least in part due to teachers acting to protect their self-esteem. They avoid situations where conclusions about a lack of professional adequacy may either be publicly or privately drawn.

Integrating leaders' interaction with colleagues into regular workday activities heightens teachers' awareness of learning as a continuing process (Rosenholtz, 1989). Rosenholtz suggests that if teaching is collectively viewed as an inherently difficult undertaking, it is both necessary and legitimate to seek and to offer professional assistance. Requests for and offers of assistance among colleagues set the conditions under which teachers improve instructionally (Rosenholtz, 1987).

## 1.2 Teachers' learning as collective aspect of school life

The view which regards teachers' learning as a collective recurrent aspect of school life seems equally important for both new and experienced teachers (Rosenholtz, 1989). New teachers who see requests and offers of assistance being continuously exchanged among colleagues become socialised to the ways in which one learns to teach. Norms of collaboration establish where members of the school community engage in some mutually accepted definition of the way teaching is done. Experienced teachers view requests for advice and assistance from teacher specialists and leaders as approaches to gain a repository of new ideas, techniques and models that would lead them toward a mission of professional improvement (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Establishing norms of collegial interaction in the school organisation is important to teachers' change. Bryk (in Marjoribanks, 2002) indicates that effective Catholic schools in the United States can be characterised as communal organisations with norms of collegiality and shared values for students' learning. Hamilton and Richardson (1995) argue that the effectiveness of a staff development program may be related to the school norms that encourage teachers to discuss their beliefs and practices. Little (1987) also argues that staff development programs attempt to improve teachers professional practices, beliefs and understanding in ways that lead to changes in their thinking and classroom behaviour would have positive results if teachers were to work with fellow teachers in such a way that they would develop collegial relationship.

## **2 Supportive and collaborative leadership**

A supportive and collaborative leadership is seen as an important factor in developing collaborative school culture. Principals in collaborative school settings help promote staff collaborative practices by providing resources and support (Little, 1987). The working relationships between principal and teachers must move toward a far more collaborative, and shared relationship. The emergence of more adversarial relationships among all levels of school community, aiming to protect the right and privileges of teachers stands in the way of building collaborative structures needed to support teachers leadership. A new dialogue and a new set of organisational arrangements must be established so that all members of the community can be involved in building a collaborative school culture (Leithwood, 1994).

In the next section, I examine the development of a community of professional practice through workplace restructuring.

## **3 Developing an environment for a community of professional practice**

Creating a conducive environment is an essential condition for establishing a community of professional practice necessary for teachers' development. Little (1987) argues that a school with a good working environment in which teachers have freedom to change and are supported by a culture with norms of positive teacher-principal relationships, teacher collegiality and collaboration, as well as high expectation for students' learning, might be considered the ideal context for staff development. In addition, Little (1993) emphasises that the environment which the management creates to promote

norms of collegiality and peer review of the quality of teaching and learning is crucial for students' learning.

Louis and Marks (1996) define professional communities as those characterised by shared professional standards, deprivatisation of practice, a focus on students' learning, reflective dialogue, and collaboration. According to Chadboune and Ingvarson (1998), a professional community is characterised by trust, team work, and high morale among school staff . It is the outcome of time, deliberate effort and support, and interpersonal compatibility (Placier & Hamilton, 1994). However, Lieberman and Miller (1990) argue that this kind of community will not emerge unless there is an attempt to create a conducive environment in the school.

Lieberman and Miller indicate that little will happen unless attention is paid to the necessity for building an ethos, a climate for collective effort through strategies that involve teachers in experiences where they can work together as colleagues, where they can be involved in the plans, and where their concerns can be made primary (Lieberman & Miller, 1990).

Louis and Smith (1990) postulate two strategies for improving the conditions of the school as a workplace. One is to adopt a management approach, aiming to improve the workplace conditions of teachers through award and organisational restructuring. The other is to focus on the teacher's role in schools by increasing teacher collegiality, providing professional growth opportunities, improving the school's ethos, and adopting the practice of participative management. Louis and Smith indicate that the effect of improvements to the teachers' workplace is an enhancement of teachers' job-satisfaction,

commitment, and effectiveness and thereby an increase in pupil learning and progress.

There are assumptions that are made of the relationships between the school structure, teachers' practices and students' learning. Leithwood (1994), and Leonard and Leonard (2001) propose that by changing the ways in which schools are organised, educators can change how teachers' teach, and increase the opportunity for students' learning. Such a view implies a connection between structural changes, teachers' practices, and students' learning by asserting the need to change a top-down bureaucratic organisation into one that is based on professional practice, and suggesting that change involves altering the long-standing patterns of decision-making, resource allocation, the nature of teachers' work, and the working relationships between principal and teachers.

The link that has been established between collaborative school culture and teachers' behaviours explains the need to establish programs of staff development. In the following section, I examine conditions for staff professional development and learning in an organisation.

## C CONDITIONS FOR STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING IN AN ORGANISATION

In the next two sections, I examine strategies that promote learning in an organisation, and factors that enhance growth and innovative behaviours in staff members of an organisation.

## **1 The organisational culture that supports continuous learning**

In order to generate continuous innovation and learning, the organisation needs to develop fully and use the capacity of its personnel and to promote the development of new ideas. These requirements have implications for management practices, which must create the conditions in which innovative behaviour is possible. In this regard, Rouhotie (1996) indicates that specific management practices can provide additional incentives by rewarding managers for supporting the development of their subordinates, and rotating personnel into new positions where they have the opportunity to learn new skills.

Learning to learn involves the control and application of various learning strategies which include skills in practical thought, including creative-critical-analytical thought and logical decision-making; the ability to control resources, such as use of time, learning conditions and one's own strengths; the ability to apply knowledge in new circumstances, and skills in various problem-solving methods (Ruohotie, 1996). Innovative organisations consciously seek to develop the learning skills of their personnel and thus to increase their inclination to growth and ability to take advantage of the growth opportunities which exist (Ruohotie, 1996).

According to Tracy, Tannenbaum and Kavanagh (in Rouhotie, 1996), a culture which supports continuous learning is characterised by the following five factors: (a) each individual is personally accountable for renewal of knowledge and skills required at work, (b) the working community supports development of skills, (c) operating systems reward on the basis of performance and encourage professional

growth and development, (d) the community supports innovation, and (e) the members of the organisation view learning as an important part of daily work life.

In addition, Brown, Hitchcock & Willard (in Rouhotie, 1996) propose various learning strategies which include organisational, management and team strategies that can assist in the promotion of learning in an organisation. The organisational strategies involve the creation of a learning infrastructure, the promotion and enhancement of experimentation, and the empowerment of employees. On the job learning requires a functioning support system-the learning infrastructure, which provides the conditions and opportunities for growth, to allow the exchange of information and the provision of feedback. The learning organisation can be created by encouraging the free sharing of information, so that it can be used by teams and their members for the benefit of the organisation. An organisation which values experimentation and encourages risk-taking for innovation and growth, invites the contribution of new ideas from employees.

The management strategies include developing a shared vision and being a model learner. A clear, shared vision should inspire all members of the organisation to commit themselves and to work energetically. It is based on the collective inspirations that helps individuals to accomplish something of significance to them. Supervisor and managers can become exemplar learners to others in the organisation by working openly on their own development and spending more time on their learning activities (Brown, Hitchcock, & Willard, in Rouhotie 1996).

Team strategies in professional learning involves personal learning and change. Brown, Hitchcock, and Willard (in Rouhotie, 1996)

indicate that there is an increasing awareness that collective skills are more important than individual ability in effecting personal change. The understanding of professional growth has moved beyond the individual to include the inter-personal dimensions. They suggest that everyone in the organisation can enhance personal and collective learning by the use of the following three strategies:

(a) Practising the art of dialogue

Dialogue as a learning strategy enables people to find new insights thus creating new understanding which they would not have achieved on their own. Senge (1990) indicates that dialogue involves the free flow of ideas based on collaborative and critical thinking.

(b) Developing reflective skills and habits

Argyris (1992) suggests that individuals do not really learn until they are able to reflect critically on their own actions and understand their own cognitive rules and reasoning. Thus, reflection skills lay the foundation of self-directed growth.

(c) Controlling change

Understanding the process of professional development has progressed beyond technical interpretations to include personal learning and change. Individuals need to develop the skills for self-directed growth which will allow them to shape rather than simply react to change.

Self-directive learning helps individuals in understanding self and thus promoting personal change. According to Marsick (1987), self-reflective learning emphasises critical reflection about oneself as a member of larger social units in order to ask questions about one's identity and the need for self-change. This change usually involves a transformation in perspective, including dimensions of thought, will

and feeling, which represent the way a person looks at self and relationships (Marsick, 1988).

In order to promote continuous learning in an organisation, it is also necessary to examine factors that promote growth in members of an organisation.

## **2 Factors that promote growth and innovative capacity in members of the organisation**

According to a research study conducted as part of the Growth Needs Project in American (Rouhotie, 1996), the following factors are identified as keys to the creation and maintenance of growth and innovation in members of an organisation.

### **2.1 Creating a supportive culture**

In a supportive environment, innovation becomes a part of everyday work. Other features include cooperation, promoting elaboration of ideas, emphasising equality and democracy, encouraging change and the freedom of choice. In innovative organisations, learning, initiative and experimentation are prized as inherently valuable.

### **2.2 A supportive and participative management**

A supportive and participative style of management is characterised by the provision of opportunity for innovation, inspiration of a collective vision, enabling activity in fostering growth and the provision of appropriate role-models.

### **2.3 Intensive communication and security**

Mechanisms that allow for the rapid dissemination of ideas and immediate feedback are essential to intensive communication, in

order that new ideas and alternative points of view can be shared and developed. Organisations which create a secure and confident atmosphere for employees are more successful in achieving growth and innovation in their members..

Rouhotie (1996) argues that these requirements have considerable implications for management style, which must create the conditions in which innovative behaviour is possible, then nurture it when it occurs. The professional growth of employees is more likely to be realised if the organisational culture emphasises learning and management practices supporting the systematic development of individuals.

The general theoretical factors that have been discussed in relation to organisational cultures and innovation in organisations are applied to schools in the following section. In particular, I examine school-level factors that promote teachers' professional development.

#### **D SCHOOL-LEVEL FACTORS THAT SUPPORT TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**

There is a need to consider teachers' professional development in school-wide, institutional terms. School-level factors include individual and cultural factors, such as teachers' individual responsibility for their own professional growth; norms of collaboration; and the school culture that value teachers' professional development and learning; and organisational factors which include the school's structures and policies that facilitate opportunities for teachers' professional growth; time and resources; and the nature of teachers' work. Such factors are considered crucial for the

improvement of teachers' professional practices and learning. In addition, the social and cultural conditions in the workplace, which include the development of a learning organisation, and creating an environment conducive for teachers' professional growth, are contextual factors that promote teachers' development and learning.

In the following sections, I examine individual, cultural, organisational, and contextual factors that are related to enhancing teachers' professional development.

## **1 Factors that promote teachers' professional development**

### **1.1 Teachers responsible for their own professional growth**

Wildman and Niles (1987) reveals that good problems, information-rich-environments and requisite cognitive skills are crucial to professional growth. Individuals need sufficient latitude for exploration and the independent testing of alternatives. When learners exercise responsibility for their own growth, the expected outcomes are improvement in cognitive growth, positive self-esteem, and a feeling of power over one's own learning.

Elmore (in Wildman & Niles, 1987) supports this view of teachers' autonomy with respect to their own professional growth, by arguing that the delegation of intellectual control at the level of teacher has the potential to promote and sustain real learning because it fosters individual motivation and builds self-confidence.

### **1.2 Teacher collaboration**

Wildman and Niles (1987) indicate that learning to teach is a complex, time-consuming and difficult process, for teachers have to cope with cognitive, as well as emotional demands. A collaborative work

environment provides conditions for learning that address both problems that arise in complex learning. Little (1982) and Shulman (1987) also suggest that participation in cooperative collegial groups can expand teachers' level of expertise by supplying a source of intellectual provocation and new ideas. Additionally, collaboration breaks the grip of psychological isolation from other adults that characterises teachers' work place (Sarason, 1971), and creates a forum for teachers to publicly test their models and ideas about teaching (Lortie, 1975). Similarly, Nemser (in Wildman & Niles, 1987) emphasises that colleagues can demonstrate to one another that they value attempts at growth and reassure group members that the effort and pain are worth it.

### 1.3 Time and the restructuring of school schedules

Time for teacher learning is one of the most important investments a school system can create to maintain and improve quality educational programs. With respect to the implications of the provision of time and the restructuring of school schedules for teachers' professional learning, Shanker (1990) indicates that school structures which support continuous examination of practice in terms of providing adequate time for teachers to meet for purposes of planning and discussing pedagogical and organisational issues, individual and group learning problems, is integral to the improvement of practice. If teachers are to be afforded the opportunities to meet, discuss, solve problems and do research, then the school day needs to be structured to accommodate these activities. These activities are to be supported and viewed as integral to providing quality schooling. Little (1987) investigated the process by which collaborative school culture that developed when teachers worked together toward common goals. She

suggests that teachers who had time and opportunity to discuss the details of work with colleagues, developed the skills necessary to carry out their plans, and in doing so, they could fashion new ways of working together.

In a restructured school, teachers would have access to education and related fields to advance their knowledge and expertise in professional practices. A school that values teachers' learning would structure time to permit observation of peers, joint-work in curriculum planning, and other collaborative activities. Teachers would legitimately spend time in research, peer assistance, professional dialogue, and the experimentation of new practices (Shanker, 1990).

#### 1.4 Values and norms for professional development

Promoting continuous growth and innovation requires the organisation to fully develop and use the capacity of its personnel and to encourage the development of new ideas. Little et al., (1987) indicate that the values and norms of the school culture create the context for teachers' interest and involvement with professional development. They establish expectations, supports and rewards for teachers' professional growth and reflection.

Teachers in Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach's study (1999) frequently identified specific features of school culture that fostered their workplace learning processes. Such culture was described as collaborative and collegial. Norms of mutual support among teachers, respect for colleagues' ideas, and a willingness to take risks in attempting new practices were aspects of culture that teachers associated with their own learning. Receiving honest, candid feedback

from colleagues was also indicated as an important factor for teachers' learning.

Teachers' commitment to their own learning appeared to be reinforced by shared celebrations of successes by staff and a strong focus on the needs and achievements of all students. Collaborative and collegial cultures resulted in informal sharing of ideas and materials among teachers, which fostered organisational learning, especially when continuous professional growth was a widely shared norm among staff (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

### 1.5 The nature of teachers' work

The nature of teachers' work also plays a part in either promoting or discouraging professional growth. Challenging, varied, and independent work motivates professional growth (Rouhotie, 1996). Similarly, the nature of work such as the required level of technical skills, knowledge, uncertainty about how to reach goals, and the degree of self-determination in one's work may encourage participation in professional growth programs. The challenging nature of work, when combined with opportunity and support for reflection, may provide opportunities for continuous learning and growth.

### 1.6 School-level goals, leadership, structure and resources for teachers' development

Schools vary in their goals. In collaborative school settings, shared goals, problems and values set the ground for teachers' common interests in working toward shared goals for the improvement of instructional practice and students' learning (Wildman & Niles, 1987).

Guskey (1995) indicates that in schools where principals are able to establish the norms, values and expectations for professional practices, provide essential conditions for teachers' growth. The school organisational structure that incorporates ways for teachers to receive feedback about their performance, information about their students, their own practices and practices in other classrooms, and to communicate with colleagues, has the capacity to maximise staff development resources for the continuous professional learning of teachers.

In addition, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) indicate that school structures that allow for greater participation in decision making are factors that support teachers' learning. These structures include brief weekly planning meeting; frequent and often informal problem-solving sessions; flexible and creative timetabling; regular scheduled professional development time in school; and common preparation period for teachers who needed to work together. Other structures associated with organisational learning are the cross-departmental appointment of teachers, integrated curriculum teams and team teaching. Leithwood et al., (1999) argue that when decisions were made by staff through consensus, more learning is to occur. The physical space of schools also has some bearing on teachers' learning, when it either encourages or discourages closer physical communication of staff.

In Leithwood's investigations of professional learning in schools, teachers reported that sufficient resources to support essential professional development in aid of such initiatives were a contributing factor to their learning. The resources that were available to teachers in these schools included colleagues as professional

development resources, along with professional libraries and any professional readings that were circulated among staff.

In addition, access to relevant curriculum resources and to computer hardware and software helped teachers' learning, as did access to technical and program assistance, such as, consultant or technology site administrators, for implementing new practices. Teachers also noted that access to some community facilities contributed to their learning (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

## **2 Social and cultural context for teacher development**

Lieberman and Miller (1990) in their investigations of staff development, emphasise the importance of the factors of social context to the professional development of teachers. The social conditions in the workplace are important factors affecting teachers' attitude to change and innovations. Blase (1995) indicates the importance of the micropolitics in a school organisation that could affect teachers' attitude to change. He argues that rational orientations to school improvement which focus on attitudes and beliefs of individual teachers and small groups, without paying attention to the politics of a given situation, may result in failure.

Anderson (1990), and Blase (1991) have shown that high-stress working conditions in some schools may encourage teachers to seek control and routine, rather than change and experimentation. Teachers may be sceptical of innovations that depend on 'ideal' conditions or resources that do not exist in their school. In view of these factors, staff developers, therefore, must consider physical conditions and resources, teachers' duties and schedules, and the

micropolitics of the school as potential barriers to change (Blase, 1991; Greenfield, 1991; Anderson 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1990).

The success of a staff development process is closely related to social and cultural norms within a school. Hamilton and Richardson (1995) indicate that the interaction of school culture and the expectations for participation embodied within the staff development process strongly affect group collaboration and teacher empowerment. The effectiveness of such a process is related to social norms within a school that encourage teachers to discuss their beliefs and practices. Their findings also indicate that careful documentation of such teachers' discussions and the culture in which they take place can contribute to new understanding on the relationship between school culture and school improvement process and therefore to the success of staff development.

In the next two sections, I examine contextual factors which include the characteristics of school environment, and the development of a learning organisation that are related to the development of on-going teachers' professional development and teachers' collective learning

## 2.1 The environment conducive for teachers' professional growth.

Lortie (1975), and McLaughlin and Yee (1988) attributed greater importance to intrinsic motivation or reward for teachers' career development. They suggest that the strongest incentives for teachers are that they are able to reap psychic, intangible benefits for making a difference in their classrooms. Opportunities to improve performance particularly in the context of collegial interaction, according to these researchers, are also valued rewards in themselves. They propose that teachers with rich opportunities to grow and learn are more

enthusiastic about their work, and are motivated to find ways to do even better.

McLaughlin and Yee (1988) argue that moving on to the subjective view of professional development requires rethinking the design of the school environment that nurtures individual opportunity and capacity. Five interrelated qualities of school environment emerged from the McLaughlin and Yee's (1988) research are seen as central to enabling teachers' professional development. The characteristics of these five types of environment include a resource-adequate, integrated, collegial, problem-solving, and investment-centred environment.

A resource-adequate environment is one that provides the minimum tools and conditions necessary for teaching. The environment which is resource-adequate is essential to teachers' professional growth and learning, for the absence of minimum resources would bring frustration and have a demoralising impact on many teachers.

An integrated school environment is characterised by the unity of purpose, clear organisational guidelines and goals, and a collective sense of responsibility. These features set the stage for professional challenge, growth and accomplishment, because they establish shared expectations and a sense of group purpose (McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). Ratter (in McLaughlin & Yee, 1988) emphasises that the 'atmosphere' of any particular school will be greatly influenced by the degree to which it functions as a coherent whole, with agreed ways of doing things which are consistent throughout the school.

In the integrated school environment, teachers can gauge their performance not only against individual goals, but also against goals

established for the school as a whole. In a school where the group's purpose is framed in terms of improving the quality of education, then innovation, challenge, and experimentation become the norms (McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). Having common goals and objectives creates a sense of solidarity around a shared purpose (Mitchell in McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). Consequently, motivation is fostered in a cohesive environment because individual growth is considered integral to institutional achievement.

A collegial environment provides multiple opportunities for interaction, creates regular sources of feedback, ideas and support, and promotes high standards of performance through shared professional norms. Rosenholtz (1989) found that in schools with high levels of collegial interaction, discussion among teachers centred more around instructional planning and improvement of practice.

A problem-solving environment assumes constant change and revision as the norms, and thus establishes conditions central to high level of opportunity for teachers' learning. A problem-solving environment is characterised by a strong sense of group purpose that encourages teachers to reflect on their practice and explore ways to improve it on an ongoing basis. In such an environment, individual problems are treated as a group responsibility. Many teachers in a school characterised by problem-solving norms identified problem-solving activities as the most rewarding aspect of teaching (McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). Rosenholtz (1989) describes a similar phenomenon in what she calls a 'learning-enriched environment'. In such a setting, she found no teachers willing to view ineffective practices as one individual's problem; rather they were approached within the purview of the group.

In an investment-centred environment, teachers are rewarded for growth, risk taking and change rather than only for successful past practice. Berman and McLaughlin (in McLaughlin & Yee, 1988) emphasise that rewards such as extra pay actually depress a teacher's involvement, removes the spirit of voluntarism and the sense of self-efficacy that are important intrinsic motivations. Investment in teachers implies a long-range view of nurturing the development of teachers and their interest in continuous improvement. And it rewards teachers by making possible personal satisfaction for a job well done.

The school environment which is characterised as resource-adequate, integrated, collegial, problem-solving, and investment-centred, according to McLaughlin and Yee, is important for the development of a dynamic, developmental, and on-going professional development that is based on a system of multiple rewards and opportunities for continuous stimulation and development. The provision of multiple sources of opportunity for teachers learning and the design of school settings that enhance the capability of teachers' learning are imperative for teachers' growth.

## 2.2 The development of a learning organisation

Shaw (1998) argues that the development of a learning organisation is imperative to teachers' professional development and learning. It requires a new, more pervasive infrastructure, including the rethinking of the use of time in schools, the school personnel to work in new ways, to form close and more collaborative working relationships and networks. It also depends on the development of a school culture that goes beyond personal learning expectations, in

valuing and supporting collective learning of school staff as they develop their own capacity with respect to the work of the school.

Building a learning organisation that values participation and teachers' collective learning requires administrators who listen, model, demonstrate, encourage and value inquisitiveness, adversity of ideas, openness, and who are adept at designing and facilitating a process of participation where participants contribute in informed manner to the core decision making and learning of the schools. It is also necessary for teachers to demonstrate and engage in the same kind of behaviour (Shaw, 1998).

Shaw (1998) indicates that participation in a learning community requires developing high levels of trust, tolerance, shared purpose, values, openness, respect and inclusiveness. It is necessary for schools and educational authorities to rethink teacher development in the light of the importance of the collective examination of classroom practice within the school, the creation of the necessary infrastructure for on-site learning, and the attention to the development of norms, values, knowledge and skills of participation and action. The shared inquiry with respect to classroom practice within the school requires attention to the guiding ideas which were informed both internally by the work of students, and externally by the modelling of best practices and the learning from current research that underpin the work of the school.

In the following sections, I examine the nature of teachers' workplace learning, the relevance of adult learning theories to teachers' professional development and learning, and the construction of pedagogical knowledge through the process of collaboration.

## E TEACHERS' WORKPLACE LEARNING

The importance of teachers' collaborative practice to school improvement, teachers' development, curriculum reform, and leadership development has been supported by much research literature (Hargreaves, 1997, 1994; Hamilton & Richardson, 1995, Lieberman & Miller, 1990). These studies indicate that teachers believe that their most effective learning occurs through on-the-job experience and reflection. The school community that has developed a culture which consists of norms of collegiality, shared values and expectations is an influencing factor for enhancing teachers' learning in the workplace.

The notion of workplace learning is derived from the concept of learning from experience or experience-based learning. Usher (in Hager, 1996) suggests that experience-based learning ranges from learning from experience to experiential learning which is part of a more highly selective and refined discourse. Among other meanings of experience-based learning that have been acknowledged is the recognition of the role of on-the-job learning in continuing professional development.

In the next section, I examine the nature of teachers' workplace learning.

### 1 The informal or experience-based learning

The notion of experience-based learning and the notion of reflection-on-action have been combined in the literature that is relevant to professional practice (Hager, 1996). Marsick and Watkins (1990) use

experience and reflection as major concepts in their well-known analysis of 'informal learning', and its supposed sub-set 'incidental learning'. The characteristics of informal learning, according to Marsick and Watkins (1990), include that it is 'experience-based, non-routine, and often tacit' with 'critical reflectivity', 'proactivity' and 'creativity' as key conditions which enhance the effectiveness of such learning (Hager, 1996, p. 238 ).

Argyris and Schon (in Hager, 1996) highlight the importance of non-routine circumstances as conditions for stimulating significant experiential learning. They suggest that it is the non-routine that forces the professional into the kind of reflective thinking which changes beliefs, values and assumptions (Hager, 1996).

Teachers' learning in the workplace is often informal, incidental, implicit, experiential, and contextual. Hager (1996, p. 240 ) suggests several principles about learning from professional practice which characterise teachers' learning in the workplace. They include:

- Knowledge and practice are integrated in a seamless whole of 'know how'.
- This know-how grows and develops with appropriately structured experience of practice.
- This know-how is often implicit and tacit.
- Learning from professional practice is often collaborative and contextualized.
- Learning outcomes are relatively unpredictable.

This set of principles about learning from professional practice emphasises professional knowledge as an integral part of practice, and that it is different from the traditional disciplinary knowledge. In

emphasising the relevance of professional practice to learning in the workplace, Eraut (in Hager, 1996) argues that significant knowledge and know-how exists about and is created within, the practice of occupations.

In the next section, I examine theories of adult learning in relation to teachers' professional development and learning.

## **2 Adult learning theories underpinning teachers' professional development and learning**

There are several theories of adult learning and change in organisations including social learning, incidental learning theory and organisational socialisation theory which examine relationships between specific dimensions of school workplace environments and teachers' learning. Social learning theory (Schunk, 1991) suggests that much human learning is grounded in social context. Individuals develop knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes by observing and interacting with others. Individuals also learn values, attitudes and behaviours by assessing the consequences of others' actions as well as the consequences of their own actions. Bandura (in Hager, 1996) suggests that the development of learning outcome expectations and self-efficacy is dependent upon the social conditions in the individual's environment. Such learning is enhanced if individuals have opportunities to observe the performances, successes and failures of others, and are provided with specific feedback about their performances and consequences.

Incidental learning, according to Marsick and Watkins' (1990) definition, is a by-product of some other activity, such as task accomplishment or interpersonal interaction. It takes place in

everyday experience and occurs without intention, under conditions of surprise and non routine circumstances. Marsick and Watkins (1990) suggest that proactivity, critical reflection, and creativity are the learning outcomes of incidental learning. These learning capacities are enhanced by participation in organisational decision making, shared authority and power, and opportunities for collective examination of individual and institutional expectations and beliefs.

Organisational socialisation is the process by which an individual is taught and learns about a particular organisation and his or her role in that organisation. It is also a process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to perform the role well (Van Maanen & Schein in Hager, 1996). Socialisation may occur through formal, planned educational programs or through the opportunities to be involved in self-guided, informal, experiential or incidental learning. Individuals develop an understanding of organisational reality through work role performance and interaction with co-workers (Louis, 1990). The workplace environment that encourages the development of organisational socialisation is dependent upon the provision of greater choice in work, freedom from close supervision and individual experiences with complex, non routine, and challenging tasks.

The demands of continuous learning for teachers in the workplace cannot be met by the training offered in the organisation. In fact, it is the informal and independent learning experiences that are viewed to be more relevant to teachers' workplace learning. Butler (1996) argues that the training solution has with it the seeds of its own limited effectiveness because it is an externally prescribed skilling process rather than a problem-correcting process that focuses on personal

beliefs, values, and experiential knowledge. Learning to promote and use independent learning is a much more significant category of professional reorientation and self-transformation for teachers' workplace learning.

The ideal organisational context for the professional development of practitioners is a learning organisation (Senge, 1994) which places organisational and individual learning at its core. Individual educators model learning through their own reflection on their practice and develop ways of enhancing learning all around them (Butler, 1996). Butler (1996) indicates that the learning organisation weaves a continuous enhanced capacity to learn, adapt, and change into the norm of its character through the professional development of its practitioners. The characteristics of a learning organisation includes values, policies, programs, systems and structures that support and accelerate individual and organisational learning.

In the next section, I examine the construction of pedagogical knowledge through the process of collegial interaction and team work.

### **3 The construction of pedagogical knowledge**

Hargreaves (1992) contends teachers construct their pedagogical knowledge through working collaboratively with colleagues in the form of collaborative planning, group problem-solving, participating in research and decision making, giving and receiving feedback, sharing of ideas, information and materials, acting as mentor to colleagues and coaching others. It is in the context of actually doing the job that a teacher practices and develops teaching skills and acquires and consolidates knowledge.

Hargreaves (1992) argues that culture forms a framework for occupational learning. The relationships between teachers and their colleagues are among the most educationally significant aspects of teachers' lives. It provides a vital context for teachers' growth. Through daily practices and interactions with colleagues on issues relating to teaching and work practices, teachers acquire new knowledge, develop the skills to meet the tasks and the situations they encounter.

Bird and Little (1985) indicate that in schools where team work are seen as the teachers' obligation to propose new ideas and materials, to improve the development of curriculum, there is evidence that variation in materials and instructional methods have been improved. Little (1990) also indicates that press toward improvement of schools, teaching, teachers' education lends urgency to the continuing study of professional relations among teachers as colleagues.

Shanker (1990) argues that collegial interaction among teachers that allow them to discuss, observe, analyse and study problems together as a group, is important if teachers are to be able to generate the kind of practical knowledge needed for the improvement of practice. Teachers need to develop new skills if they are to assume new roles and responsibilities. They need to develop skills in group problem-solving, time and resource management, work co-ordination and communication skills. Shanker (1990) indicates that if teachers are to participate in the school decision making team, they need to have access to a wider range of information, research data and technical assistance to be able to work successfully in their newly expanded roles.

Vygotskian sociocultural approach (Symlie, 1995) indicates that interaction between teachers as well as between them and the social and cultural environment, are crucial for teachers' conceptual change. The assumptions made by sociocultural theorists in relation to learning and development are based on the concept that human activities take place in cultural context, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Sociocultural research on collaboration examines the importance of mutual dependence of teachers through engaging in collaborative activity and dialogue in the process of curriculum innovation (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). It has been observed that teachers traditionally do not have the opportunity to interact with colleagues, thus providing opportunities for teachers to receive assistance through modelling and feedback, are crucial to the acquisition of pedagogical knowledge.

In the next section, I examine the organisational conditions which include participatory decision making, and leadership roles and practices in relation to teachers' collaboration and learning.

## F THE ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS FOR COLLABORATION AND LEARNING

It has been proposed that participatory decision making and leadership roles and practices are important organisational factors for effecting teachers' collaboration. Participation in school decision making can lead to closer collegial relationships, the exchange of information, and better coordination among staff (Anderson, 1998; Conley, 1991).

However, authentic participation requires a school leader who is capable of building a process of participation that allows the sharing of power and control, broader jurisdiction, and policy making authority (Symlie, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994). Hargreaves argues that the outcomes of genuine participation are the strengthening of the habits of direct participation and the achievement of greater learning outcomes for all participants.

Teacher leaders play an important role in building and modelling collaborative work, and promoting collaborative working relationships among teachers (Lieberman, 1990). A study by Law (1999) proposes that teacher leaders who hold senior administrative positions in schools are considered most suitable to take on the responsibility of 'delegated leaders' in building a culture of teachers' professional development.

## **1 Participatory decision making**

The discourse of participation has become popular in the United States and in fact worldwide. There is a common view that those closest to the action and those with a stake in the enterprise should have a greater voice in decisions and be accountable for them (Anderson, 1998). Participation in school decision making benefits individual teachers in job satisfaction, boosting morale and self-esteem. It helps in improving knowledge and skills in group problem-solving. At the organisational level, it helps to improve the co-ordination of activities between different departments (Conley, 1991).

Given the insular nature and physical layout of the school structure, the infrequent contact and interaction among teachers, teacher collegiality is viewed as a primary benefit for teacher participation.

Conley (1991) suggests that the needs for greater collegial interaction and the exchange of information and ideas constitute another benefit of enhanced teacher participation.

The importance of coordination among peers, and the capacity of teachers, individually or collectively, to assume responsibility for coordinating their work activities reframe the issue of participation. Conley (1991) argues that participation includes not only vertical influence, but lateral influence as well. The view of participation is shifted from merely addressing downward methods of supervision and control to addressing multi-directional organisational coordination.

Teachers feel the needs for interdependence for there are shared purposes and obligations for assisting each other, accommodating strengths and weaknesses, improving knowledge, skills and expertise, reducing uncertainties and alleviating stress from high demands of work (Conley, 1991).

Smylic (in Conley, 1991) argues that assistance among teachers of the same status promotes greater equality and reciprocity in interaction. The absence of status difference encourages a more informal tone of interaction. However, the sharing of problems may violate teacher autonomy and privacy norms, for teachers may feel that receiving assistance display their inadequacies through public exposure of problems.

The political, analytical framework of participation contains the dimensions of authority and influence. Authority deals with the final decision making power, whereas influence stems from the capacity to shape decisions through informal and non-authoritative means,

including personal characteristics, expertise, informal opportunity and resources (Bacharach in Conley, 1991). Increasing teachers' authority or influence in decision making serves to expand teachers' participatory role. However, according to Conley (1991), a structure of participation should be designed that allows teachers to broaden their decision making beyond the domain of their immediate classroom, without necessarily threatening the authority structure of schools.

Conley (1991) proposes a newer structure for teacher participation which involves the forming of interdisciplinary teaching teams which would result in enhancing closer coordination of teachers' efforts through student scheduling and subject-matter integration (Conley, 1991). Teachers in the team assume shared responsibility for grouping students, integrating content and instruction. Thus, such teams may develop closer working relationships among teachers, as well as teachers' influence on the policies on student scheduling and disciplinary issues.

Nevertheless, participation reform has encountered many problems. Participatory structures may not result in genuine participation in decisions but produced contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994) and even create a tighter cage of control for participants (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998). Hargreaves suggests that teachers' participation that were resulted from the exercise of organisational power by control-conscious administrators, can become cooptation. There is also evidence that they may be costly, time wasting, and lead to inefficiency and lower productivity (Beare in Anderson, 1998).

In Hargreaves' (1994) view, a genuine form of participation includes relevant stakeholders, creates relatively safe, structural spaces for multiple voices to be heard. Authentic participation should result in

both the strengthening of habits of direct democratic participation and the achievement of greater learning outcomes and social justice for all participants.

According to the findings of Malen (1994), the lack of teacher and parent involvement in school decision making can result in the situation that principals control knowledge and resources in the school, defend administrative turf, and view council as a vehicle for dispersing information, moderating criticisms and garnering support, not as arenas for redefining roles, sharing power and making policy.

Symlie (1996) found that well-implemented participation structures resulted in new enthusiasm and effort among teachers, while poorly implemented ones resulted in work overload, role conflicts and tensions with other teachers and administrators. In order to provide greater decisions making power to teacher participants, the structure for participation should provide participants with broader jurisdiction, policy making authority, equal representation and the provision of training.

Hargreaves (1994) argues that it is important to create a new social ground within which a clear set of rules, norms and identities regulate social interaction. The attempt to create a new institutional space is achievable through the roles of leaders and teachers in the creation of authentic participation.

There is much current evidence that courageous democratic leaders in schools can foster conditions that open up spaces for authentic participation (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase, Anderson & Dungan, 1995). These researchers report that teachers tended to develop patterns of social interaction that were often in direct response to

principals' leadership styles. Principals who were seen as honest, communicative, participative, collegial and supportive, provided institutional spaces in which a micropolitical culture of authentic participation was sustained.

Anderson (1998) indicates that authentic participation moves beyond concerns with legitimacy and public relations to shared control. It is important for the development of the individual, the creation of democratic institutions, and as a means to increase learning outcomes.

Regarding the issue of teachers' expectation for participation in school decision making, Imber and Neidt (1990) in their studies, found that most teachers believed that they had greater influence over what went on in their own classroom and few teachers believed that either their work life or their schools would be improved if they participated more in school-level decision making.

While it is undeniable is that teachers are the professionals with close day-to-day involvement with students and the curriculum, it does not follow that teachers will be effective educational decision makers. Administrators might turn out to be better decision makers because of their training, their focus on the larger picture rather than the needs of the single classroom and their greater time available to work in decision making (Imber & Neidt, 1990).

It has been observed that the hypothesised association between teacher involvement in participative decision making, teacher job satisfaction and school productivity is psychologically based. It holds that teachers who are involved in decision making, and who are thus more satisfied with their jobs will care more about the implementation of the decisions they have helped to formulate, and generally will try

harder in their work. If teachers care more about their work and try harder, presumably students will benefit. However, the specific associations postulated here await empirical verification (Imber & Neidt, 1990).

These researchers argue that in the absence of empirically based knowledge of how participatory decision making works and the chequered reception that participatory decision making has received from teachers, it becomes apparent that participatory decision making cannot work unless teachers find it satisfactory.

In the following sections, I examine principals' roles and strategies in promoting teachers' growth and learning, the roles of teacher leaders in promoting teachers' growth, and the role of delegated leaders in building a culture of professional development and learning.

## **2 Leadership roles and practices in promoting teachers' learning and collaboration**

The meaning of school leadership for teachers' learning can be defined as the practices of those in formal administrative roles that help determine the direction of improvements in the school and that influence the nature and extent of efforts by school members to learn how to bring about these improvements (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). The role of leadership for teachers' learning was viewed by Senge (1990) as school leaders acting as stewards, designers and teachers to help build organisations where people expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify visions and improve shared mental models.

According to Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999), there are eight dimensions of leadership practices that are associated with teachers'

learning in the whole school. These practices resonate closely with the conceptions of transformative leadership for which there was preliminary evidence of effects on organisational learning. These dimensions of leadership include practices aimed at identifying and articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals and providing individualised support for staff members.

Leadership practices aiming to stimulate organisational members to think reflectively and critically about their own practices, and to provide appropriate models of the practices and values considered central to the organisation, can also have effects on teachers' learning. Holding high performance expectations, building shared norms and culture and structuring the organisation to permit broad participation in decision making can have important consequences for individual and organisational learning.

The principal who helps staff develop individual growth plans, and encourages staff to reflect on the activities of the past years and the extent to which these activities have moved them closer to their goals, according to teachers in these studies, fosters teachers' professional growth. Encouraging teachers to be creative, and to try new strategies is an indicator of high expectations of teachers. One teacher in these studies indicated that her principal's expectation that staff would try new strategies influenced her to learn about them.

Many teachers believed that their principals were good role models, and that this fostered their collective learning. These principals set an example by working hard, having lots of energy, being genuine in their beliefs, modelling openness, having good people skills and by showing evidence of learning by growing and changing themselves (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999).

Providing individualised support is one of the important principal's actions that would foster teachers' learning. A principal provides support for the professional learning efforts of staff by providing resources to aid professional learning in the forms of money, books, furniture or materials. Other kinds of support for professional learning include providing release time or other scheduling help, sharing information or finding speakers and encouraging participation in decision making.

The principal can also provide moral support by showing an eagerness to listen, and by being accessible, fair, open and sympathetic. Offering positive reinforcement which makes staff feel appreciated encourages further learning. According to teachers in these studies, support was also shown in the form of encouragement to take risks, and leaders' signs of appreciation, which were reported to further encourage collaboration among teachers (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999).

Providing intellectual stimulation is another important principal's action that fosters teachers' learning. The ways of providing intellectual stimulation include passing on information from journal or other sources, bringing new ideas into the school, and providing professional development at staff meetings. Other forms of providing intellectual stimulation include organising and chairing professional development sessions, finding out what staff needed to learn, encouraging staff to put on workshops or to lead staff meetings and discussing individual teacher's progress in achieving personal growth (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999)

The principal's strong belief in the value of open and honest communication, collegiality and a willingness and ability to be flexible, according to Leithwood et al., (1999), were considered to be

characteristics conducive to a collaborative culture in which collective learning was fostered. Teachers in these studies also valued principals who showed them respect, treated them as professionals, and who were an integral part of the staff. Hiring staff who shared the same philosophy or who could work well with existing staff was mentioned by some teachers as a way that their principals contributed to a collaborative culture.

Restructuring the school to enhance participation in decision making is one of the important characteristics of principal's action that foster teachers' learning. Leithwood et al., (1999) indicate that principals' actions in enhancing participation in decision making include encourage teachers' participation on committees and support the committee structure by being actively involved, and by organising and spearheading activities. The principals demonstrate the sharing of power and responsibility by asking teachers to give workshops, lead staff meetings, and help manage the budget, and by delegating many duties to the vice-principals.

Principals could facilitate teacher collaboration by altering working conditions to make changes to the school's space and building, such as creating convenient meeting rooms, restructuring the timetable, and by arranging for leadership positions specifically designed to foster teachers' learning (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999).

## 2.1 The principal's roles and strategies in promoting teachers' growth

Much of the leadership literature subscribes to the view that although there may be tensions between leadership and collegiality when they must co-exist, the 'collegial' school offers the most attractive and persuasive basis for the provision of educational experience of the

highest quality (Johnston & Pickersgill, 1992). The successful school heads who possess the personal and professional determination, clarity of vision, courage and personal and interpersonal skills to interpret and use the considerable powers and duties of the office wisely, are able to bring these quality to the development of a managerial stance. They have succeeded through and with other staff in moving their schools in the direction of collegial structures and processes and to practices that are grounded in co-operative team work. The translation of this stance into practice involves the interaction of personality, experience, values, dispositions, attitudes, and coping strategies (Johnston & Pickersgill, 1992).

In a study conducted by Schwille and Melnik (in Leithwood, 1990), teachers identified positive, non-threatening teacher-principal relationships as the factor that nurture their professional growth. Teacher-principal relationships emerge in this study as crucial to the ethos of the workplace. The principal as cultural leader leads by calling forth shared values rather than enforcing bureaucratic rules.

Leithwood (1990) characterises the principal's roles and strategies in promoting teachers' growth in the following aspects.

(a) Promote teacher growth in professional expertise

Principals could promote teacher growth in professional expertise by helping them to expand their instructional repertoires, respond more flexibly to classroom circumstances, and take responsibility for the welfare and growth of students and their colleagues. Providing opportunities for teachers to master an expanded, flexible repertoire of instructional techniques would ensure that teachers experience a sense of professional self-fulfilment.

(b) Establish a school culture based on norms of collaboration

Typically, school cultures are characterised by informal norms of autonomy and isolation for teachers, as well as entrenched routines and regularities (Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Lortie, 1973). It is indicated that norms of collegiality and experimentation are important for altering the condition of teachers' isolation in the school, and ensuring the successful implementation of staff development efforts (Little, 1987).

Rosenholtz (1989) identifies teacher evaluation, school goal setting, shared values and collaboration as organisational factors that contribute directly to teachers' learning opportunities in school. Teachers' instructional competence and self-esteem, shared teaching goals, involvement in school decision making and team teaching opportunities are factors that create the need to plan and carry out instruction with colleagues, and they are conditions upon which teachers are likely to engage in collaboration. Based on the understanding of what beliefs, norms and values teachers share, principals should be able to redesign their schools as collaborative learning environments for teachers as well as students.

(c) Strategies for teacher development

It was found that highly effective principals based their decisions and actions on a consistent set of criteria. McEvoy's (1987) study illustrates six teacher development strategies found to be used by effective principals:

- informing teachers of professional development opportunities;
- disseminating professional and curriculum materials to teachers with personal follow-up and discussion;

- focusing teachers' attention through meetings and informal contacts on a specific theme in order to expand teachers' concepts and practices;
- soliciting teachers' opinions about their own classroom activities as well as school and classroom issues, thereby contributing to a sense of collegiality among staff;
- encouraging teachers experimenting with innovative practices and supporting their efforts;
- recognising the achievements of individual teachers.

Leithwood (1990) in the review of literature in relation to teachers' professional development, provides other examples of teachers development strategies used by effective principals:

- working alongside individual teachers in their classes to resolve problems or implement changes;
- helping staff to gain access to outside resources;
- helping teachers to arrange observation of other teachers in other schools.

McEvoy (1987) indicates that teachers seem to appreciate the informal mode of supervision. It is the brief, broken and spontaneous nature of principal's conversation which appears to be more appealing and acceptable to teachers. Through daily informal interactions, principals use their brief and fragmented conversations to encourage and inspire teachers.

McEvoy (1987) suggests that principals can actually stimulate and reinforce professional growth within their schools by persuading teachers to reflect on their teaching processes, attending workshops, taking advantage of learning opportunities in their communities, experimenting with new ideas, and learning from each others.

In addition, Hough & Paine (1997) indicate that the effective principal shows a genuine commitment, is prepared to train people, and to lead in the collaborative process. This is a process by which stakeholders work together to solve problems, developing and improving new structures as they strive to produce the desired outcomes.

For the development of a collaborative structure in school, Hough & Paine (1997) suggest that the principal could form a task learning team within the school for the purpose of empowering members of the school community to be involved in continuous improvement. A teaching and learning team could be formed by a group of two or more teachers working together in the process of curriculum delivery. Such team allows teachers to personally master their own learning, to be innovative in the development of teaching methods, sharing the responsibility of teaching a larger group of students from two traditional classes. These teachers work collaboratively as a team by planning together, assessing, evaluating, teaching together, and helping each other as they strive for team as well as individual achievement.

Teacher leaders also play an important role in promoting teachers' growth. In the following section, I examine the actions and skills required of teacher leaders in stimulating teachers' growth.

## 2.2 The role of teacher leaders in promoting teachers' growth

Lieberman (1990) argues that under new educational reform, teachers are assuming new roles with more discretion, autonomy and responsibility than before. Teachers with specific expertise are participating in a variety of leadership roles, providing professional development for other teachers in their specific areas.

Teacher leaders provide powerful models of professionalism for their peers, offering leadership in a variety of content areas and helping to create a positive climate in difficult environments. Lieberman asserts that teachers in an expanded leadership role may involve in a comprehensive series of actions which include, building a set of supportive working relationships, making an organisational diagnosis, building skills and confidence in others, using resources, dealing with the change process, and managing the work (Lieberman, 1990).

Teacher-leaders could help to build a set of supportive working relationships by beginning to build a support group, to allow teachers to come to see that they could work, struggle collectively, and feel comfortable working as a group rather than alone. Teacher-leaders need to have skills in understanding the school culture and the ability to diagnose it so that they know how and when to intervene to mobilise teachers to take action and begin to work together (Lieberman, 1990).

Lieberman indicates that it is crucial for teachers' leaders to understand the skill in managing the change process, while working toward the building and modelling collaborative work and promoting collaborative relationships in schools. She emphasises that

collaboration does not come as a natural consequence of working in a school. It must be coached, taught, learned, nurtured, and supported until it emerges as a working culture in school.

The use of resources refers to the use of people, ideas, materials and equipment in the pursuit of collective goals. Teacher-leaders should be able to build a resource network, which includes developing linkages between teachers and other members of the community for enhancing the opportunities for teachers' professional growth (Liebermen, 1990).

Teacher leaders need to be proactive, modelling specific new techniques as well as promoting a general vision of more productive ways of working together. They need to possess work management skills in managing time, delegating tasks and authority, taking initiative, monitoring progress, and coordinating the many strands of work in school (Lieberman, 1990).

In addition, teacher leaders need to possess skills in the continuing monitoring and individual diagnosis of teachers' learning needs and concerns. They should be able to socialise a whole staff so that individual teachers look at themselves critically and take action on their own behalf, while continuing to build supporting structures for the improvement of teachers' work (Lieberman, 1990).

In the next section, I examine the role of delegated leaders in building a supportive professional development culture that assists both students' and staff learning.

### 2.3 The role of delegated leaders in building a culture of professional development for teachers' learning

Research study in the U.K. has acknowledged the need for an effective professional development culture with the kind of leadership which supports both pupils and staff learning ( Law, 1999). Law examines the literature of school leadership in the context of professional development environment, concentrating on the developing role of the professional co-ordinator as 'delegated leader'.

Law (1999) asserts that with the heightening interest in policies and processes of professional development and the development of a more market-driven managerial schooling system in England and Wales, concern has been expressed over the change of the school leader's role. An effective head teacher should be capable of combining both 'chief executive' and 'leading professional' roles for effective learning in the school.

It is indicated that individual personal school experience is vital for life-long learning and school needs to be a forefront learning organisation (Senge, 1990). The learning organisation which is defined by Handy (1991) as one which is capable of encouraging learning in its people, and knows how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in the organisation. In such a school organisation, the principal becomes a 'lead learner', a catalyst in assisting teacher growth and modelling the importance of on-the-job learning (Barth, 1990).

The importance of teacher development as a strategy for institutional and student success has been emphasised by many school effectiveness and improvement research studies (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Sammons,

1995). Rubin (in Law, 1999) argues that any attempt to improve students' learning depends on some form of teacher growth. Stoll and Fink (1996) assert that the personal and professional growth of teachers in a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self confidence and classroom behaviour.

Law (1999) indicates that teacher development strategies require a supportive climate and professionally oriented culture. There are organisational elements that link to a supportive professional development culture. According to the findings of Keele Effective Educators Project, schools which manage their professional development most effectively are frequently utilising five fundamental organisational elements to manage and secure a supportive professional development culture (Law & Glover, 1996).

These key organisational elements that support professional development culture comprise:

- the effective management of information communication flows;
- the development of shared and open planning processes;
- the operation of clear resource allocation procedures;
- the establishment of a clear evaluation strategy used as basis for ongoing review and development;
- the development of open networking opportunities to facilitate mutual support and reflection.

Law (1999) argues the importance of the role of 'delegated leadership' in teacher development. In response to Warwick's (in Law, 1999) argument that the head teacher role is incompatible with the level of counselling, help and informality required to support teachers' professional development, Law indicates that there is increasing

evidence that success in teacher development can come through a policy of delegated leadership.

The delegated leader effectively utilises what might be called the 'bridging abilities' of a relatively senior member of staff who has significant leadership skills and professional credibility within an institution. Law (1999) indicates that professional development coordinators who work closely with, or as part of, senior management teams are often highly effective team leaders, change agents and facilitators.

Law (1999) argues that the role of the 'personal deputy' is crucial to the shaping of a professional culture of a school. The duties of personal deputies incorporate key aspects of staffing responsibilities including professional development and appraisal. They are listened to because they have sufficient management seniority, showing what might be termed 'situational empathy' with colleagues. They control the appropriate professional development budgets, facilitating links and offering opportunities for both internal and external networking, and through membership of key development committees or working groups, they can actively influence and shape the professional culture of the school.

In the next section, I examine the sociocultural factors which include developing a collaborative school environment, the role of teacher community, the importance of teacher dialogues, shared language, and guided reflection, and the provision of feedback in relation to teacher collaboration and learning.

## **G THE SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS FOR TEACHER COLLABORATION AND LEARNING**

Developing a collaborative school culture is imperative to enhancing both students' and teachers' learning. It has been indicated that when teachers modelling the responsibilities for their professional practices and learning, can result in creating a conducive learning environment that encourages students' learning (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998). Norms of collaboration provide moral and emotional support for teachers which contribute to a sense of professionalism and security among teachers. A strong teacher community where teachers gather frequently to reflect, discuss, review and share information about students' progress, their own strategies and effective practices of teaching, is important to teachers' sense of achievement and commitment to the work of the school (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1990). Other sociocultural factors that facilitate teachers' learning include the provision of feedback, the development of shared language and involvement in guided reflection through a process of participation and interactions. Through engaging in frequent, reflective and continuous talk about their teaching practices, and receiving honest and accurate feedback from colleagues, teachers are more likely to experiment with new practices and more willing to take on new tasks and challenges (Arnord, 1995; Guskey, 1995; Symth, 1991).

In the next section, I examine the role of teachers in creating a collaborative learning environment for students.

## **1 The development of a collaborative work environment for students' learning**

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) argue that the development of a supportive and collaborative school culture is imperative to the creation of a better learning environment for students. They argue that pupils become good learners when they are in the classes of teachers who are good learners themselves. Teachers would be more likely to involve in professional learning if they see teaching as being intrinsically difficult in which improvement is always possible and necessary, especially in a culturally diverse and technologically complex society. They argue that time invested on teachers' learning, if integrated with the development of collaborative culture, is time that ultimately pays off for pupils' learning. Teachers are essential to the creation of a better learning environment for students, they can scarcely do this well if they are not good learners themselves.

Collaboration provides moral and emotional support for teachers which would lead to a sense of security and professional interdependence among teachers. Teachers would then be more likely to be involved in risk-taking and experimentation for new practices. If teachers model or demonstrate the responsibility for their own learning through working collaboratively with colleagues, it is more likely that they would help create a collaborative learning environment that encourages students' learning.

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) assert that teachers need interaction with and support from colleagues to avoid becoming exhausted. All teachers need to inspire each other through collaborative work, to take advantage of the power of emotional resources and to provide

interpersonal safety nets when the going gets tough. The development of a collaborative work culture among teachers and with communities require different and more supportive internal structural conditions, as well as very different external relationships. To accomplish this, Hargreaves & Fullan( 1998) suggest that it would require pushing for expecting and demanding those who make new policy frameworks to alter incentives and structural conditions that currently frustrate reform.

In the next section, I examine the role of teacher community in developing teacher professionalism and a community for teachers' learning.

## **2 The teacher community's role in fostering shared knowledge for teaching and teachers' learning**

Talbert and McLaughlin (1990) argue that teacher communities foster shared knowledge base for teaching, set professional standards for practice, engender shared commitment to meet students' learning needs and the work of the school organisation. Without opportunities to acquire new knowledge, to reflect on practice, and to share successes and failures with colleagues, teachers are not likely to develop a sense of professional control and responsibility.

A strong teacher community where teachers gather frequently to reflect on practice, review students' accomplishment, to share information on resources, ideas and strategies, promotes teachers' sense of commitment to teaching and school organisation. It also helps to develop teachers' collegial role and relation, and develop the collaborative school culture (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1990).

The extent to which teachers subscribe to norms of ongoing professional growth and development, collegiality and professional interaction, according to Talbert and McLaughlin (1990), contributes powerfully to school culture and a community for teachers' learning. They also argue that norm of privacy which characterises teachers' work life, undermines teachers' capacity for learning. Conversely, a professional teacher community which promotes professional discourse and collaboration, sets conditions for teacher professionalism to emerge.

In the next section, I examine the significance of teacher dialogues in creating the conditions for collegial interaction and experimentation with new techniques.

### **3 The importance of teacher dialogues**

Arnold (1995) indicates that teacher dialogue involves four or five teachers meeting together on a regular basis to discuss instructional issues in a collegial way. This constructional model provides opportunity for teachers to develop ideas, and make changes in their teaching. Teacher dialogue is an on-going process of making connections to previous learning, interacting with others, and deriving personal meaning from materials and concepts.

A sensitive leader creates situations for teachers to assist one another, guides the individuals toward discovering successful techniques, and helps the better teachers expand their leadership potential (Arnold, 1995). The leader facilitates the direction and degree of learning of the group by stimulating thinking, discussion and learning. The leader guides the group discussion by posing reflective questions, offering

ideas, allowing teachers to think, expand, and build on one another's ideas in a non-threatening collaborative manner (Schein, 1992).

Teacher dialogue creates the conditions for collegial interaction. Through the interaction with colleagues, teachers work together for finding solutions to common problems, and elevating their instructional performance. It could lead to reducing the degree of stress due to the high demands that had places on them (Arnold, 1995).

This constructivist approach reduces teachers' isolation and facilitates experimentation with new techniques. Arnold (1995) discovered that as a result of teacher dialogue, teachers become more knowledgeable about curricula goals, more articulate, more confident and better able to communicate with staff, students and parents.

In the next section, I examine the importance of the provision of feedback, the development of shared language, and involvement in guided reflection in relation to teachers' on-the-job learning and the implementation of new practices.

#### **4 The provision of feedback, shared language and guided reflection through the process of collegiality**

Research studies (Smyth, 1991; Little, 1982; Joyce & Showers, 1980) indicate that the provision of feedback about the in-class performance of teachers is important for teachers to transfer the acquired new repertoires of teaching strategies into the classroom situations. Through the process of collegiality and the involvement in building a shared language and continuous talk about teaching practice, teachers would be able to transfer large bodies of practice into their teaching tasks.

For teachers to acquire new repertoires of classroom practices, Joyce & Showers (in Smyth, 1991) suggest that it is necessary that a number of elements be present in the staff development strategy. They propose that an effective staff development program should include the presentation of a theoretical component or the description of a skill strategy, accompanied by a demonstration of teaching strategy and followed by extensive practice by teachers in actual classrooms. In particular, they found a need for teachers to be assisted in making the transfer of strategies to the classroom situation, especially through the provision of feedback about the in-class performance of the strategies.

The provision of feedback could occur in the form of coaching by local resource personnel, consultants or colleagues. They could provide practical on-the-job assistance by guiding teachers to adapt the new practices to their unique contextual conditions, helping them to analyse the effects of their efforts, urging them to continue despite minor setback. Simply offering opportunities for teachers to interact and share ideas with one another, also can be valuable (McLaughlin & Marsh, in Guskey, 1995).

Little (1982) found that continuous job-embedded professional development was most likely to occur when teachers engaged in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice. By such talk, teachers build up a shared language adequate to the complexity of teaching, capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtues from another, and capable of integrating large bodies of practice into distinct and sensible perspective on the business of teaching.

It has been observed that teachers engage in practical reflection through the development of collegiality for enriching and

transforming their understanding of what is feasible in teaching. Knowles (in Smyth, 1991) suggests that adults learn in situations where they are provided with opportunity for continuous guided reflection based on experiences. The changes most likely to succeed are those that acknowledge the practicality and immediacy of classroom issues by starting from where teachers are at in their understanding of themselves, paying due regard to their own histories and their particular work context.

In addition, McNergney and Carrier (in Smyth, 1991) propose a personalised teacher development model which acknowledges the interactive effects of teachers' histories and learning environments in which they work. This model has a predominant focus on contemporaneous issues or those of interest and immediacy to teachers. Above all, this model stresses the importance of practicality and reciprocity, so that the lives of students and teachers within classrooms can be enriched through the process of teachers assisting each other to identify individual strengths and weaknesses.

Sprinthall and Sprinthall (in Smyth, 1991) suggest a number of elements as being important in teachers' on-the-job learning.

- Role-taking experience: This involves the performance in a direct and active way in situations involving new and more complex interpersonal tasks. Teachers may act as observers and counsellors for each other or demonstrate to colleagues new methods or models of teaching.
- Qualitative aspect of role-taking: Recognition is given to the capacity of individual and the complexity of new tasks and roles.

- Guided reflection: This acknowledges the importance of not only providing adults with new and real experiences, but also the need to assist them in making sense of these new experiences.

Guskey (1995) argues that in a context which is characterised by isolation, the control of classroom norms is only a matter of survival which would not result in the development of teacher and the improvement of professional standard of practice. If new practices are to be successful, and changes are to endure, teachers need to work together with colleagues, and to receive regular feedback on the effects of their programs. According to Guskey, teachers' primary rewards come from feeling certain about their capacity to affect students' growth and development. In the absence of any evidence of their positive effects, new practices are likely to be abandoned.

## H OVERVIEW

Understanding the more informal aspect of the school organisation, the building of cultural norms which include the development of a trusting and collaborative work environment, as well as shared values and responsibilities for teaching practices and students' learning, is important for teachers' involvement in collegial activities that foster teachers' growth. Willie and Howey (in Smyth, 1991) argue that the cornerstone of effective staff development should be a knowledge and understanding of adult development. The nature of human relationships and issues of reciprocity and trust are crucial to what teachers do among themselves as professionals.

The building of a collaborative work culture based on shared goals and experiences, is important for the development of teacher and the improvement of professional practice. A successful teachers'

professional development program should be characterised by small group of teachers who trust one another, work together on an extended basis to deepen that sense of trust and respect by providing each other with accurate, precise, and humane feedback about their performance in the classroom (Smyth, 1991).

The importance of collegiality among teachers to their professional development were supported by empirical evidence based on Joyce and Showers' (in Smyth, 1991) analysis of models of effective teaching strategies. It has been observed that colleagueship among teachers is typically ignored and often inhibited by the school's formal structure, consequently, teachers are isolated. This isolation combined with lack of leadership support would impede the professional development of even the most conscientious and dedicated teachers (Alfonso & Goldberry, in Smyth, 1991).

Research evidence (Berlak & Berlak, in Smyth, 1991) suggests that teachers learn the craft largely from one another. This provides a valuable, often overlooked potential for a range of natural forms of teacher socialisation and collegial interactions. Traditionally, school authorities have undermined the potential of teachers as a valued resource for each other in learning about teaching. Failing to acknowledge the reality of teachers using each other as resource persons is paramount to denying teachers the opportunity to develop professionally (Alfonso & Goldsberry, in Smyth, 1991).

Teacher collaboration provides sources of moral and emotional support for teachers in order to avoid becoming isolated, and to provide interpersonal safety nets when they are encountering tough situations. Culture of collaboration provides a context for teachers' professional learning and growth. Through involvement in the

process of joint planning, group problem-solving, collaborative action research, participatory decision making, feedback and reflective practices, teachers acquire practical pedagogical knowledge and the skills to meet the tasks and challenges they may encounter in their teaching situations.

Leadership roles and actions play a major role in shaping a school culture that values collaboration, participation, shared purposes and responsibilities for the provision of effective educational programs and the improvement of teaching practices. Developing a school culture that is embedded with shared values, beliefs and expectations for both students' and teachers' learning, serves as a guiding force that motivates the whole staff to work collaboratively for students' learning and the work of the school. In order to encourage a collaborative style of working among teachers, the style of leadership needs to move from the top-down, bureaucratic style of supervision toward a more open, consultative and collaborative style of leadership. School leaders can also act as exemplar learners through demonstrating a consultative style of communication with staff and engaging in their own professional development activities.

It has been proposed that understanding the interpersonal dynamics of the teachers involved and the culture of the organisation is the key to finding the optimal mix for successful implementation of new practices. The key to a greater success in professional development rests not so much on the discovery of new knowledge, but in the capacity to develop a clear vision of goals, and a thorough understanding of the process by which these goals can be obtained (Guskey, 1985). The implications of this view for teachers' development and the adaptation of new practices is that it is

important to establish norms of shared values and responsibilities for educational goals and purposes, accompanied by a visionary and supportive leadership, a collaborative work environment and a participatory decision making structure for creating the opportunity for teachers' involvement with and commitment to the improvement of practices.

The review of research literature related to studies on collaborative school culture as well as teachers' professional development indicates that it is important for future research to attend to the investigation of organisational structures and processes that may promote or inhibit teachers' collaboration. The effects of teacher collaboration is considered to have strong connection to teachers' professional development and learning also warrants attention. In particular, the process of building cultural norms which includes the importance of developing shared goals and vision for both students' and teachers' learning, and the building of trusting, supportive and collaborative working relationships among teachers, is essential for further understanding of the relationships between teacher collaboration, the school culture and teachers' professional development and learning in the context of a particular school.

## I THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR PART II AND III

### 1 The application of qualitative research approach

This study adopts qualitative research methods to investigate the conditions for promoting teachers' collaboration and its implications for teachers' professional development and learning. The qualitative research approach allows the researcher to understand how the

circumstances look to the people in the study, how they act in those particular situations and why. The variety of responses and information that can be gathered from the participants allows the researcher to understand the phenomena being investigated from the participants' point of view, to document them, and to provide an explanation which is derived from, or emerges from the data (Cohen, 2001). From this standpoint, knowledge is the product of culture, and the meanings assigned by the individuals (Krathwohl, 1998).

By adopting qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires, the researcher is able to access the personal knowledge, feelings, attitudes, and direct experiences of the participants as resources to assist in understanding and interpreting the issues under investigation.

For the purpose of discovering teachers' working relationships and the characteristics of the teacher collaboration and teachers' learning in this study, the application of qualitative research approaches is also considered appropriate as it allows the researcher to have more continuous reflection on the research process and more direct interaction with the participants in the research (Patton, 1989).

The form of research in this study was naturalistic, aimed at understanding the conditions for teacher collaboration in a given site or context, the impact of collaboration on teachers' learning , and the nature of teacher collaboration and professional learning from the perspectives of the participants. By using the naturalistic research approach, it is possible to reflect accurately the issues being investigated with rich detail, and understanding the individual's interpretations of the world around them from the inside.

## 2 A case study investigation

The particular qualitative approach adopted was the case study, with its emphasis on the interpretation dimension of one particular site. This approach helps to understand and interpret the world in terms of the actors in the site. A case study enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth investigation of real people in real situations and recognises the importance of context as a powerful determinant of both causes and effects (Cohen, 2001).

A context such as a school community is unique and dynamic, and the case study approach investigation enables the researcher to investigate and report the complex dynamic of the situation, and helps in unfolding the interaction of events, human relationships and other factors in a particular context (Cohen, 2001). In order to understand and explain the issues under study from the insiders' perspective, the researcher needs to have direct and personal contact with the people and context of the school. The case study, which is process oriented and attentive to the specific school context, was considered most suitable for the purposes of collecting, organising, and analysing data for this study.

The objectives of this study included the investigation of organisational and sociocultural conditions, forms and values of teacher collaboration, as well as collegial interactions and working relationships among teachers in a particular school context. A case study which focussed on individuals or groups of actors, and attempted to understand their perceptions of events and situations was considered most appropriate for portraying the richness of the case, and for generating theoretical statements based on the evidence presented (Cohen, 2001).

By adopting the qualitative case study in one school setting, this study could not claim to be representative of the entire school population, or to achieve predictability from this group of respondents to the whole teacher community. Because of the uniqueness and individuality in the nature of this case study, the findings may not be generalised to other cases in different contexts. However, this study aimed to develop findings that could be compared and contrasted with other cases of collaborative school culture and its impact on teachers' learning.

The research was focused on one particular school. The choice of the school site for doing the field work was based initially on the conditions that the school had demonstrated the vision and potential in developing a collaborative school culture for teachers' learning. On the basis of these criteria, St. Aloysius College in Adelaide, was chosen as the appropriate site for the gathering of systematic and in-depth information about the topics under study.

### **3 Negotiation for the entry to the school**

An initial meeting with the Acting Principal and the Deputy Principal of St. Aloysius College was set up by my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Secombe. During the meeting, we discussed the possibilities of conducting field work in the college. The Deputy Principal indicated that the school valued teacher learning and teachers in the school were willing to collaborate either formally or informally on various projects. While expressing interest in this research project, the Acting Principal indicated that a formal application would be required in order to gain access to the school.

After the initial meeting, the formal application was applied to the school for approval to undertake the investigation. The objectives of the research, the process and the possible length of the field work were indicated in the application letter for the school's approval. About two weeks later, the school granted permission to pursue the investigation.

#### **4 Data gathering strategies**

##### **4.1 A multiple perspectives and integrative data gathering approach**

The study adopted a multiple data gathering approach as the best means of gathering reliable information across the range of issues being investigated. This multiple data gathering approach was critical to obtaining a fuller picture of the situation under study, as each data source provided a set of perspectives which could be used in understanding and interpreting the total informations that had been collected. According to Krathwohl (1998), the advantage of using multiple data approach is that we may complete a picture that would be incomplete without any one of them.

The multiple data source gathering approach, which included open-ended questionnaires and in-depth focus interviewing, was used for the gathering of data about various topics and issues under study from different sources. Open-ended questionnaires were used for the data gathering from teachers in relation to the organisational and sociocultural factors that promote their collaboration and its effects on their professional development and learning.

The approach of in-depth interviewing with some of the teachers and those in leadership roles in the school was used for the examination of the nature of collaborative working relationships and inter-

personal relationships among teachers in the workplace, the organisational structures and resources, and leadership styles and practices in the school under study. Specifically, the participants' personal experience in collaborative work practice and the ways this collaborative experience impacted on their professional development and learning were the main focuses of teachers' interviews. In the case of the school principal and the deputy principal, the interviews were focused on the decision making structures and processes of the school and the leadership style and policy on teachers' professional development. Using the integrative data gathering approach not only ensured the internal validation of data through the means of data source triangulation, but also provided greater insights and a more comprehensive picture of the issues under study.

#### 4.2 In-depth, focus/guided interview

The use of in-depth interviewing as a means of gathering information had direct relation to the objectives of this research, which included the exploration of site-based conditions for teacher collaboration and the nature of teacher collaboration in a particular context. As Cohen (2001) maintains that in-depth interview provides access to participants' view, values, preferences, attitudes and beliefs. The in-depth interview helped in exploring participants' feeling, knowledge, and experience and the reasons for their responding as they did in greater depth.

The use of in-depth or focus interviewing technique in which open-ended questions were adopted in order to gain insights and explore participants' responses to these questions. The open-ended, in-depth interviewing was carried out in a way that allowed both the researcher and the participant to maintain a sense of focus and maintaining a

balance between providing enough openness for the participant to tell their stories and enough focus for the interview structure to work (Seidman, 1991).

The in-depth interviewing was guided by an interview schedule that listed key questions to be asked or topics to be examined in the interview. It provided the greatest opportunity to find out what the participant thought or felt and how they reacted to various issues and situations (Bouma, 1996). There was a second interview with one of the participants due to technical problem, which allowed the researcher to double check some of the responses given, and explore other matters in greater depth (Bouma, 1996). The researcher's personal experience in conducting the second interview was that because of the full cooperation and support of the principal, she was able to organise a second interview with the teacher. Each interview with the participant was tape-recorded with the prior consent from the participant. A transcription which formed the analytical record of the interview was then written for each participant.

The participants for interview included the principal, the deputy principal, one year level coordinator who taught several subjects including religious studies, society and the environment and English and two teachers from different subject areas, representing different grade levels in order to achieve a good representation of all staff in the school setting. The questions for interview were categorised into six different areas which included the mission and goals of the school, decision-making approaches, school structural arrangements and resources in the school, leadership style and school culture, staff collaboration and collegiality, teachers' attitudes and responsibilities for collaborative practice and reward and recognition. This guided

interviewing allowed participants the freedom to talk about what was significant to them, while the structured questions ensured that all topics which the researcher considered important to the study were covered (Bell, 1987). The questions for the semi-structured interview which were used in this study have been included in the Appendix A.

#### 4.3 Open-ended questionnaire

By using the approach of open-ended questionnaire, I aimed to achieve the purpose of data source triangulation for the validation of research data. There were other advantages for applying this method, as Cohen (2001) indicated that it tends to be more reliable. Because it is anonymous, it also enables greater accuracy, and it is more economical than the interview in terms of time and money.

A set of open-ended questionnaires was distributed to members of staff who might be willing to participate in this research study. Seven open-ended questions which related to the school decision-making approaches, teacher's experience in school decision-making, teacher's personal experience in team work and collaborative practices, leadership role and action in promoting teacher collaboration, the school's policy and resources in enhancing teachers' professional development and learning and teachers' preferred style of working were included in the questionnaire. This open-ended questionnaire was distributed to all participating staff members in the school before the commencement of the interviews. I spent more than one term in the school to gather the data through the interviewing of participants and the collection of open-ended questionnaire. There was about a fifty per cent return of the completed questionnaire being collected. Thirty-five copies of completed questionnaires out of a total of

seventy-six questionnaires were collected from the participants. A copy of the open-ended questionnaire is included in the Appendix B.

### **5 The process of field work**

A second meeting with the Deputy Principal was set up for the discussion of the arrangement of the questionnaires' distribution and the interview of teachers. It was estimated that the field work might take more than one school term for its completion.

Seventy-six copies of the questionnaires along with the same number of self-addressed envelopes were distributed to all teaching staff in the school. The teaching staff were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire. At the end of the third week, I had collected almost half of the questionnaires that were completed by way of the collection from the school's office or direct mailing to the School of Education at the University of Adelaide.

I planned to engage a minimum of five teachers in the in-depth interview. The principal and the administrative team were very supportive of this study in participating and making time for the interview. Most of the interviews were conducted after the school hours in the meeting room or the administrator's office in the school building. There were five participants for the in-depth interview which included the principal, one deputy principal, one year level coordinator and two teachers. Each interview was tape-recorded with the prior consent of the participant and lasted for approximately forty-five minutes.

## 6 Data analysis

According to Cohen (2001), the process of data analysis in qualitative research involves making sense of the data in terms of participant's definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. The process of data analysis in this study began with the reviewing and interpreting of both the interview and questionnaire data that had been collected from the field work. While reviewing these data, the researcher attempted to identify the most important aspects of the data.

### 6.1 Coding the data

In the process of identifying the significant aspects of data, I assigned a set of preliminary code of entries for the interpretation of data. These code of entries included:

- DMSTR-decision-making structures;
- DMPRO-decision-making processes;
- LDSTY-leadership styles;
- LDACT-leadership actions;
- LDPRA-leadership practices;
- RESO-school resources;
- TWR-teachers' working relationships;
- TCOLLPRA-teachers' collaborative practices;
- SCUL-school culture;
- COMPRA-the community of practice;
- SMISS-the school mission;
- TSHARESP-teachers' shared responsibility for learning;
- COLLWCUL-collaborative work culture;
- TPERC-teachers' perception of collaborative work;

- FOCOLL-the forms of collaborative work;
- FB-feedback,
- JP-joint-planning;
- PS-problem-solving.

In the process of sorting through the data, some initial entries were found to be redundant, and they were combined with other categories. For example, the initial entry of community of practices was merged with the entry of teachers' collaborative practices, to form a new category which was constructed as teachers' shared responsibility for professional practices. The entry of teachers' working relationships was combined with forms of teachers' collaboration, and a new category which was named as the nature and forms of collaborative work practice was created.

The coding of data was an important part of the data analysis for it provided access to the data, and helped in examining the characteristics and relationships among the coded data. By coding the data from the different respondents, the researcher was able to detect frequencies and patterns. Each unit of coded data was a fair representation of the social phenomena being investigated, and each unit was treated as discrete as possible, whilst retaining fidelity to the integrity of the whole (Cohen, 2001). I needed to go through the data set several times to ensure there was consistency, refinement, modification and accuracy of coding (Cohen, 2001). The process of coding helped me to learn what was most significant for the respondents as there were aspects in the data that repeated themselves which became redundant, and others needed to be merged into new categories.

I constantly sorted through and interpreted the coded data in order to find the connections and relationships among the views expressed. As a consequence, various themes and sub-themes emerged for further interpretation. The main themes and their sub-themes which were developed from the processes of sorting and interpretation of coded data included:

- (a) the organisational structures and processes of the school, with sub-themes including decision making structures and processes; staff professional development policy and resources; and leadership styles, qualities and practices;
- (b) the mission and goals of the school, with sub-themes including the impact to teaching practices; the impact to teachers' working relationships; and the impact on the school culture;
- (c) the collaborative work culture, with sub-themes including collaborative style of teaching; socialising new staff into the existing culture of working; collegial support and feedback; and a climate of trust and mutual respect;
- (d) the nature and forms of collaborative work practice, with sub-themes including leadership funding and support; teachers' involvement in collaborative project; joint-planning of curriculum work; norms of collegiality; and teachers' perception of collaborative practice.

By examining the relationships among the themes and sub-themes, and the interpretation of the relationships among them, I was able to organise and develop a relational structure or a grounded theory that fitted these data. This process, according to Cohen (2001), ensured that the richness and 'context-groundedness' of data were retained.

## 6.2 Generating theory

For the generation of theory from the data, I combined the methods of analytic induction, constant comparison, and typological analysis, in order to develop the explanation of the situation being studied, or the grounded theory. Analytic induction was a term that was introduced by Znaniecki (in Cohen, 2001), to describe the process of moving from the analysis of specific examples to more generally applicable theory. It involves similar steps to those adopted for the process of data analysis in this study, including the scanning of data to generate categories of phenomena; the searching for relationships between these categories; the writing of typologies and summaries on the basis of coded data; and the subsequent refinement of analysis.

I also found it helpful to adopt typological analysis (Cohen, 2001), which is essentially a classificatory process where data are put into groups, subsets or categories. It was this process of secondary coding where descriptive codes were drawn together and put into subsets. According to Cohen (2001), typologies are a set of phenomena that represent subtypes of a more general set or categories that can be used in the process of theory generation.

In addition, by using the procedure of constant comparison, I was able to compare social phenomena across categories in a way that led to the emergence of new dimensions, codes and categories. As a result of using the procedure of constant comparison from the early stages of data collection, several new categories were identified, including collaborative learning environment, collaborative work culture, a climate of trust and mutual respect, and teachers' shared responsibilities for practices and students' learning. Glaser (in Cohen,

2001) indicated that constant comparison can proceed from the moment of starting to collect data, in order to seek key issues and categories, discover recurrent events or activities, and expand the range of categories.

I used the approaches of analytic induction, constant comparison and typological analysis throughout the process of data analysis in sorting, interpreting and organising data into categories and subsets. These approaches continued to be used during the writing-up process to develop theoretical explanation of the phenomena which accounted for the conditions for teacher collaboration and the effects of collaboration on teachers' learning and professional development in the case of the particular school being investigated.

**PART II****THE ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL  
CONDITIONS FOR TEACHER COLLABORATION**

## Part II: Table of contents

<b>A THE THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b>	110
<b>1 The school culture and teachers' professional development</b>	111
<b>2 Benefits of teacher collaboration</b>	112
<b>3 The investigation of organisational factors</b>	114
<b>4 The investigation of sociocultural factors</b>	117
<b>4.1 Developing an environment for a community of professional practice</b>	117
<b>4.2 Teachers' shared beliefs on collaborative practice</b>	119
<b>4.3 Collective responsibilities for professional practice and students' learning</b>	120
<b>B RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF CONDITIONS FOR TEACHER COLLABORATION</b>	121
<b>C THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS</b>	122
<b>1 Organisational conditions for teacher collaboration</b>	122
<b>1.1 The decision making structures of the school provide essential conditions for teacher collaboration</b>	123
<b>1.2 The decision making processes facilitate teacher collaboration</b>	129
<b>1.2.1 The effective formal and informal communication among staff</b>	129
<b>1.2.2 A collaborative working relationships among staff</b>	131
<b>1.3 Leadership quality and styles that foster teacher collaboration</b>	132
<b>1.3.1 Open, accepting and supportive leadership quality</b>	133
<b>1.3.2 The leadership styles of collaboration and delegation</b>	134

<b>1.4 Leadership role and actions in creating a collaborative learning environment</b>	136
<b>1.5 The provision of time, funding and expertise</b>	140
1.5.1 The time constraints on teacher collaboration	140
a) Time for reflection, dialogue and joint-planning	141
b) Time to work as a whole staff or a faculty	142
c) Time to attend meetings and writing up materials	142
d) Recognition of the time needed for collaboration	143
e) Common release time for teachers to do joint-planning, and to observe classroom teaching	143
1.5.2 The provision of funding and expertise for teacher professional development	144
<b>2 Sociocultural conditions for teacher collaboration</b>	148
<b>2.1 The mission and shared goals that guide teachers' professional practices and relationships</b>	149
<b>2.2 Creating a collaborative working environment that fosters teacher collaboration</b>	155
2.2.1 Teachers model and practice collaborative work with colleagues	156
2.2.2 Shared responsibility for teaching practices	156
2.2.3 Shared responsibility for students' learning outcomes	157
2.2.4 The school organisational structures support collaborative work culture	159
2.2.5 Collegial support for collaborative projects	160
2.2.6 Socialising new staff into the collaborative style of working	160
2.2.7 Teachers' access to professional journal and research	161

2.2.8 The adoption of a collaborative style of teaching	162
<b>2.3 A safe environment, personal qualities of team members and teachers' perception of collaborative practice</b>	<b>163</b>
2.3.1 A safe and unthreatening school environment	163
2.3.2 Personal qualities of team members	164
2.3.3 Teachers' perception of collaborative work practice	164
<b>D DISCUSSION</b>	<b>166</b>

## PART II

### THE ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONDITIONS FOR TEACHER COLLABORATION

Part II of the portfolio is the investigation of the organisational and sociocultural conditions for teacher collaboration. In the following two sections, I examine the theoretical framework and propose research questions for the investigation. The findings and the discussion of the findings are presented in the subsequent two sections.

#### A THE THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach, 1999; Anderson, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Finn, 1989; and Owens, 1987 indicate that organisational structures and leadership practice are key conditions in providing a conducive environment for teachers to engage in collaborative practice. The school organisation that values and supports teachers' professional learning would provide ample opportunities, adequate time and resources for teachers to interact and collaborate with colleagues for the improvement of the practice of teaching and the work of the school.

This study investigates the organisational and sociocultural conditions that promote or inhibit teacher collaboration in a particular school setting. The investigation of the organisational factors includes examining the extent to which decision-making approaches in the school, organisational structures, processes, and resources of the school, and leadership styles, qualities and practices

that promote or inhibit developing a culture of collaboration essential for teachers' development and learning.

The study also examines the sociocultural factors, which include the extent that teachers' shared beliefs on the values of collaborative work practice, the collaborative working relationships among teachers, and teachers assuming collective responsibility and accountability for teaching and students' learning, impact on their involvement in collaborative activities.

The framework outlined below represents the essence of the more detailed discussion contained in Part one of this research portfolio. The key areas of school culture and teachers' professional development, benefits of teacher collaboration, and the investigation of organisational and sociocultural factors that promote or inhibit teacher collaboration, are considered in turn.

### **1. The school culture and teachers' professional development**

The school culture involves the beliefs, expectations, school vision, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and organisational structure (Gleave, 1994), that are reflected in a school's daily routine, including how colleagues interact with each other, and is manifested in the norms or beliefs shared by participants within a school (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). The concept of school culture is helpful in understanding the attitudes and behaviour of teachers with regard to their learning in the workplace (Owens, 1987). The organisational culture of the school that is oriented toward participation and learning is important for promoting personal and collective learning of teachers, and thus leads to positive students' learning (Hargreaves, 1994; Owens, 1987).

It has been indicated that the cultural life in school is a constructed reality. School leaders play an important role in building a culture that encourages and supports excellence in teaching and learning. The quality of what people do in schools, especially the quality of interaction among teachers, is crucial for the development of a positive, learning oriented school culture (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Hargreaves, 1997, Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991, Gleave, 1994, and Hatton, 1994 indicate that the organisational culture of the school is essential in meeting the school's needs, teachers' professional growth in practice and learning, and the quality of service to students. Teachers' sense of identity and commitment to the school organisation are created and maintained by the school culture. In a collaborative school culture, teachers and administrators are able to pool resources, talent and expertise for the development of high quality educational programs and the improvement of services to students.

## **2. Benefits of teacher collaboration**

The act of collaboration is based on common values and expectations, and a commitment toward interpersonal caring and support that promote meaningful collegial interaction in an organisation. Collaboration can be defined as shared knowledge of an emergent form in which shared views, construction of new knowledge and joint work are significant consequences (John-Steiner, Weber & Minnis, 1998 ). Collaboration in relation to a school organisation, depends on the voluntary effort of teachers and administrators to improve their schools and own instructional practices through collegial consultation and team work (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Educational collaboration, according to West (1990), is an interactive planning or problem-solving process involving two or more team members. Team interactions are characterised by mutual respect, trust and open communication; consensual decision-making; pooling of personal resources and expertise, and joint ownership of the issue or problem being addressed.

Collaboration calls for the pooling of knowledge, skills and expertise from individuals with diverse experiences and thus allows a broader conceptualisation of problems, and increased understandings of the complexity of a situation. Teacher collaboration results in producing a wider range and diversity of expertise and resources, and provides an increased range of possible solutions to school-based management and instructional problems. Through collaborative projects, teachers overcome their isolation by helping one another, sharing, planning and reflecting on their classroom practices (Welch, 1998). It is assumed that creating a collaborative environment for teachers to share their professional experience with one another, not only can result in promoting greater collegial interaction among teachers, it can also help in developing a professional community that is embedded with norms of mutual respect, trust, shared values, and understandings essential for teachers' professional development and learning.

In order to cope with increased work demands and responsibilities for diversified students' learning needs and improved knowledge in the practice of teaching, teachers need to collaborate to expand their expertise, knowledge and skills in teaching and assuming leadership responsibility. Mitchell (1997) argues that teacher professional collaboration encourages teacher leadership, promoting greater

intellectual engagement in teaching, more commitment to group goals and more experimentation with new pedagogy.

There are indications that teachers who work in teams benefit from a source of much needed psychological and academic support, as well as a structure that moderates the structural isolation of teachers (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Working in teams allows teachers to engage in informal decision-making processes, and to have greater access to data and supporting information that gives them more autonomy and control in conducting their work, and helps encourage a sense of ownership of, and responsibility for students' learning (Newman & Wehlage, 1995).

### **3. The investigation of organisational factors**

The investigation of organisational factors is based on the assumption that the principal's role and practices and the school organisational structures, policies, and resources are essential conditions for teachers' collaboration. Leonard and Leonard (2001), Shaw (1998), and Mitchell (1997), suggest that teacher collaboration depends largely on new and modified organisational structures and leadership practices that assist in shaping a collaborative work culture that promote teachers' professional development and learning. Schools have been described as segmented, egg-crate institutions in which teachers are isolated (McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). The fundamental organisation of many schools seriously prevent professionals from working together. In order to establish a collaborative school culture and to overcome the pragmatic and structural barriers to collaboration, Welch (1998) suggests that organisational structures must be modified to facilitate the occurrence of formal collegial interactions.

The organisational conditions that foster teacher collaboration involves the common goal for developing a learning organisation. Teachers' on-site learning requires a functioning support system-the learning infrastructure, which provides the conditions and opportunities for growth, to allow the exchange of information and the provision of feedback. Shaw (1998) argues that the development of a learning organisation requires school personnel to work in new ways, to form close and more collaborative working relationships and networks, and to attend to the development of norms, values, knowledge and skills of participation and action. It requires a new, more pervasive infrastructure, including rethinking of the use of time in school. It also depends on the development of a school culture that goes beyond personal learning expectations in valuing and supporting collective learning of school staff, as they all develop their own capacity with respect to the work of the school.

It has been suggested that teachers' participation in the school's decision-making process leads to benefits such as increased collegial interaction among teachers, collaborative working relationships, and increased coordination between teachers and school leaders and amongst teachers. Such a view of participation is shifted from merely addressing downward methods of supervision and control to addressing multi-directional organisational coordination. Teachers feel the need for interdependence, for there are shared purposes and obligations for assisting each other, accommodating strengths and weaknesses, improving knowledge, skills and expertise, reducing uncertainties and alleviating stress from high demands of work (Conley, 1991). This study examines organisational factors that include the extent to which teachers' participation in the school's decision-making process, the principal's styles, qualities, and practices, and the

school structures, policies and resources that facilitate the development of a learning community. In particular, this study examines the school structures that provide opportunities for joint activities and dialogue among teachers, that promote teacher collaboration.

A number of barriers or inhibitors to team work and collaboration have been uncovered by Leonard (1998), including issues of teacher efficiency, time constraints, fragmented vision, and team competitiveness. Mitchell (1997), and Kruse and Louis (1997) indicate that barriers to increased collaboration include certain aspects of school culture. A lack of scheduled planning time, few professional development opportunities, and non-supportive leadership are barriers embedded in school culture that impede collaboration. Other inhibitors to teacher collaboration include larger schools, schools with more specialised faculty members (Kruse & Louis, 1997). In addition, schools with traditional governance arrangements in which teachers do not participate in school decision-making create situations that hinder teacher collaboration (Mitchell, 1997). These investigations underscore the range and difficulties teachers face when confronted with collaborative initiatives.

Leonard and Leonard (2001) found that not all teachers recognised the value of team work, particularly if it was perceived to have been externally imposed. A majority of teachers actually considered collaboration which was undertaken in formal structures such as school committees as having minimal effect in terms of innovation and program improvement. These findings have implications for the study of teacher collaboration, suggesting the need to examine the values of collaborative practices and the factors that promote or

constrain the occurrence of collaboration from the perspectives of teachers in a particular school context. This study explores the contributing organisational factors and constraints in relation to teachers' collaborative practices from the perspectives and personal experience of teachers and school leaders in a particular school setting.

#### **4. The investigation of sociocultural factors**

The investigation of sociocultural factors is based on the assumption that creating an environment supported by norms of collaboration, shared values and purposes, and an ethos or climate that values collaborative efforts and peer review in relation to the practice of teaching, is important to the development of a teacher community. Teachers' shared beliefs and commitment to collaborative practices, and shared responsibilities for students' learning, have important consequences on teacher collaboration. Leonard and Leonard (2001), Louise and Louis (2001), Hords (1997), and Louis (1994) have shown that when teachers truly believed in the values of collaboration, they are more likely to commit to collaborative practices.

In the next section, I examine the importance of developing a professional community for teachers' learning.

##### **4.1 Developing an environment for a community of professional practice**

Creating a conducive environment is an essential condition for establishing a community of professional practice. Little (1987) argues that a school with a good working environment in which teachers have freedom to change, and are supported by a culture with norms of positive teacher-principal relationships, teacher collegiality and collaboration, and high expectation for students' learning, might be

considered the ideal context for staff development. In a subsequent study, Little (1993) argues that the environment the management creates to promote norms of collegiality and peer review of the quality of teaching and learning, contributes to students' learning.

The effects of creating a professional community and improving teachers' workplace relates to the enhancement of teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and effectiveness, which subsequently increase students' learning and progress (Louis & Smith, 1990). Louis and Mark (1996) define professional communities as those characterised by shared professional standards, deprivatisation of practice, a focus on students' learning, reflective dialogue and collaboration. According to Chadbourne and Ingvarson (1998), a professional community is characterised by trust, team work, and high morale among staff. Placier and Hamilton (1994) indicate that a community of professional practice is the outcome of time, deliberate effort and support, and interpersonal compatibility. The effects of creating a professional community and the improvement to teachers' workplace, would be the enhancement of teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and effectiveness, which would subsequently increasing students' learning and progress (Louis & Smith, 1990). However, according to Lieberman and Miller (1990), this kind of community will not emerge unless there is an attempt to create a conducive environment in the school.

Establishing a professional community that supports norms of collegial interaction, and the collective examination of practices in the school organisation is important to teachers' change. Hamilton and Richardson (1995) confirm this view by indicating that the effectiveness of a staff development programme may be related to the

school norms that encourage teachers to discuss their beliefs and practices. Little (1987) also argues that developing a collegial relationship in which teachers work together with colleagues that may lead to changes in their thinking and classroom behaviour.

In the next section, I examine teachers' shared beliefs and values on educational goals and involvement in collaborative practices as conditions for teacher collaboration.

#### **4.2 Teachers' shared beliefs on collaborative practice**

Research has shown that teachers' shared values and commitment are vital for achieving a collegial and highly collaborative school culture. Leonard and Leonard (2001) argue that if teachers are truly committed to collaboration, as opposed to merely complying, they are more likely to work together. Welch (1998) indicates that systemic factors generally contribute to pragmatic barriers, whereas cultural factors such as strong belief systems, can exert pressures that may ultimately change the structural framework of the school for establishing norms of collaborative practice among teachers. Other studies (Hord, 1997; Louis, 1994) indicate that when teachers hold shared beliefs and values about educational goals, they are more likely to commit to collaborative practice.

Louise and Louis (2001) examined the relationships between teachers' perception of the value of collaborative practices and its actual occurrence in schools. The findings demonstrated that the extent to which teachers valued collaborative practice, as well as how they assessed its prevailing manifestations, had important consequences for the realisation of teacher collaboration. In addition, the study indicated strong support for the concept that teacher's professional

practice and activity should be highly collaborative. Teachers in the study articulated that they firmly believed in the benefits of professional collaboration, and that collaboration could be enhanced if there was greater affinity among the teachers.

In the next section, I examine the relationships between teachers' assuming collective responsibilities for professional practice and students' learning and their involvement in collaborative practices.

#### **4.3 Collective responsibilities for professional practice and students' learning**

Kruse and Louis (1997) reveal that good teachers usually view themselves as accountable for students' learning even when there are no external systems that hold them to a performance standard. Little (1990), Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992) argue that when ties of collegial relations between teachers are strong, teachers are professionally interdependent, and they conceive of their work as a joint enterprise, instruction becomes more than the endeavours of individual teachers working alone in isolated classrooms. Teaching emerges as a collective enterprise in which teachers strive together toward common goals for students' learning. The emphasis on the relationships between teachers' collective sense of responsibility and improvement of teachers' practice and student's learning are consistent themes in recent studies (Lee & Smith, 1996; Senge, 1990).

Based on the assumptions indicating that teachers' shared beliefs and values about educational goals, teachers' shared responsibilities for students' learning, and the development of a professional community which are considered as sociocultural conditions that enhance teachers' involvement in the collaborative activity in the school, this

study examines the extent that teachers shared beliefs and purposes about the educational goals of the school enrich the collaborative practice among teachers. The investigation of sociocultural factors also includes examining the ways in which teachers' assumption of collective responsibilities for students' learning and the creation of a collaborative work environment effect their involvement in collaboration.

From the theoretical ideas, I develop the following research questions for the investigation of conditions for teacher collaboration in the next section of Part two.

## B RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE INVESTIGATION

There are three research questions that guide the investigation of this study.

- 1 To what extent does the school organisation contribute to teacher collaboration in the school under investigation?
  - To what extent do the decision making structures of the school provide opportunities for teacher collaboration?
  - How does participation in the school's decision making processes contribute to teacher collaboration?
  - In what ways do the school leaders support and facilitate teachers' involvement in collaborative practices?
  - How does the school organisation provide opportunities, resources, and support that foster teacher collaboration?

2 How far do the following sociocultural factors encourage teacher collaboration?

- To what extent does the development of a collaborative work environment contribute to teacher collaboration?
- How do teachers' beliefs and values about joint work contribute to teacher collaboration?
- To what extent do teachers' shared responsibilities for educational goals and students' learning enhance teacher collaboration?

3 What changes in the school management practices that could encourage more collaboration among teachers?

## C THE PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

### 1 Organisational conditions for teacher collaboration

In the following sections, I presents a number of organisational factors that enhance teacher collaboration. They are the decision making structures and processes in the school, the collaborative and consultative styles of leadership, leadership quality and action, and the provision of funding, time, and expertise that are seen to be important for teachers' engagement in collaborative practices. In particular, the school leader's role that focuses on developing a culture of teacher professional development and participation, has a strong impact on teacher collaboration.

Actual teachers' and school leaders' comments are quoted whenever appropriate in the findings of Part I and Part II. The sources are

indicated by I as interview data, Q for questionnaire comments, T for teacher, DP for deputy principal, and P for principal.

### **1.1 The decision making structures of the school provide essential conditions for teacher collaboration**

Anderson (1998) indicates that those closest to the action, and those with a stake in the enterprise should have the greatest voice in decisions and be accountable for them. The decision making structures of the school in this study provided essential conditions for teachers' involvement in collaborative practices in allowing the sharing of power and responsibilities, and the delegation of duties and decision making authority for the staff to have input in the school-wide policy and decision making.

The school had a fairly flat decision making structure where almost half of the teaching staff were responsible for the school decision making at different levels, rather than just the principal and the administrative team. The school focused strongly on the professional, and leadership development of staff, and this was reflected in the school's structure and policy where staff were encouraged to share power and authority in the school's decision making.

According to the school principal, a great amount of funds had been invested in the professional development of staff, and it was this vision that guided the structuring of the school decision making. There were three deputy principals who were appointed to different areas of responsibilities which were considered as having a high degree of importance, including the school administration, the management of curriculum and staff professional development, and

the pastoral care and services for students. The Deputy Principals were financially rewarded for taking on these specific responsibilities.

The principal stated:

We have a very strong focus on professional development, and the way that I have structured the school is that I have three deputy principals, ....and I have chosen that model because I believe the three areas that I have designated as areas of responsibility for the deputies, have with them a high level of responsibility, and I believe that they should be recompensed financially for taking on the burden of responsibility. (IP)

Over the years, the school had developed an open, consultative model of decision making structure, receptive to new and diverse ideas from members of staff. Teachers involved in the school decision making through participation in the formal committee meeting and the year level forums. The major decision making structures included the executive committee, the consultative committee, and the year level coordinator committee. The members of executive committee included the Business Manager, three Deputy Principals, and the Principal who chaired the executive committee. Another parallel structure of the school decision making was the consultative committee, which included the Principal and three Deputy Principals. The three Deputy Principals separately chaired several committees which included the administrative committee, the curriculum management committee, staff professional development committee, and the year level coordinator committees. Within each faculty, there was a faculty meeting which had the decision making responsibility, and the annual staff meeting which was not considered by teachers as a formal decision making body. The annual year level forums represented the informal school decision making structure where

every staff member was involved in the process of school decision and policy making.

Staff were encouraged to participate in the process of school decision making through involvement in the school's committee meetings and annual year level forum. In particular, all staff were expected to participate in the forums which were organised at all year levels and attended by all who taught at the particular year level. Teachers who attended the forum were given the opportunity to discuss matters which included individual concerns, group issues, expectations of students' performance, resolving issues, formatting and integrating new rules. Providing teachers the opportunity to participate and share responsibility in the school decision making is one of the important features of the school's organisational structures which encourage teacher collaboration.

According to one teacher:

I have been involved in Administrative Committee, Professional Development Committee, Curriculum Committee, and After School Care Committee. Staff are encouraged to participate in the school decision making process. It is a fairly flat organisational structure, where many are responsible rather than just the principal and the deputies. This has developed an open, communicative environment, receptive to new and diverse ideas. (IT1)

Another teacher indicated:

I have been involved in annual forums which are held at all year levels and attended by all who teach at the particular year level. I participated in Staff Consultative Committee where we have informal discussions with the principal and the administrative team. I also participated in the Professional Development Committee which arranges staff

meetings and workshops throughout the year. Staff are encouraged to attend professional development activities outside of the school

Besides participating in the year level forum, a majority of teachers participated in at least one of the decision making committees in the school. The decision making structure was based on an open, empowering and consultative model as opposed to a top-down, hierarchical one. This consultative model of decision making allowed the sharing of power and authority with staff which resulted in staff assuming expanded roles and responsibilities. As a result of participatory decision making, teachers felt they were consulted, empowered and valued as part of the wider school community.

One teacher expressed her experience in the school decision making:

All staff are invited to be part of the school decision making. There has always been discussion....so whether it's through staff meetings or committees, I've never had to say, "well, why is this happening when we haven't been consulted?". So, it is very open, all discussions are open for the staff to respond to...., it is very much my experience here that it isn't a top down imposition of decisions, it is shared responsibility with staff to have input into that. (IT1)

The organisational structure of the school provides opportunities for collaborative practices to take place regularly. The consultative model of the school organisational structure with its emphasis on teachers' participation in the process of school decision making, allows groups of teachers to have the opportunity to work on different collaborative projects.

The year-level coordinator who participated in the interview indicated:

The way that the school is structured lends itself to groups of teachers working on different things, for example, there are year level teams that are set up, so that the structure itself facilitates collaboration....there are curriculum groups that are set up, so there are very formal ways the collaborative practices are able to take place here. (IT3)

Teacher collaboration could also occur in an informal way through teachers' own initiatives. The leadership team in the executive committee provided support and funding for the collaborative practices which were initiated by a group of teachers to work collaboratively among themselves or in association with specialists from related fields or teachers from other schools.

The year-level coordinator indicated:

There are also informal ways and that's probably not as easy to describe, but just as important from my own experience. Telling J that you've got an idea to do something, her response is always encouraging and positive, more of the 'can-do' approach.....so most of those are group initiatives, not always, but most of them are group initiatives. (IT3)

The school policy promotes leadership development by providing the opportunity for teachers to participate and share responsibility in the school decision making. The research data reveals that almost half of the staff members are appointed as leaders in their own capacity. The school is working towards the ideal that every one on the staff has the capacity to be a leader. It is expected that every member of the staff would practice and share the ethos and missions of the school. The success of this participatory decision making model is very much dependent on the capacity of the school leaders to trust the staff and delegate to them the opportunity to take on the leadership responsibility.

The Deputy Principal who participated in the study indicated:

The leadership structure in this school, where people are actually appointed as leaders. We actually have thirty people who are in positions of leadership out of a teaching staff of about, probably about seventy. So that's a bit under 50%. It fits in very well with my thoughts about leadership. I think leadership in the future is not about a few people having an employment and a title of being a leader. In fact, we work on the basis that everyone on the staff is a leader, and what we want to develop is the skills that everyone can come to a leadership role depending on the situation. (ID)

Leithwood et al., (1999), and Anderson (1998) indicate that collaborative decision making can be fostered by the principal's and vice-principal's willingness to delegate considerable authority to others, and that such delegation makes for a good working atmosphere. Teachers in these studies indicate that participation in the school decision making empowered them to make recommendations in relation to school policies and curriculum matters. As indicated by Hargreaves (1994), a courageous, honest and open principal creates a participatory structure that opens up organisational spaces that encourage genuine participation. Such authentic participation includes all stakeholders in the school organisation and goes beyond concerns about legitimacy and public relations to shared control (Anderson, 1998). The findings of my study support the claims that participatory decision making structure provides opportunities for the development of teacher, and teacher leaders, through delegating duties and authority for teachers to assume expanded roles and responsibilities. The participatory school structure promotes better coordination between different levels of the organisation that encourages collegial interactions and joint practice

among teachers, and as a means to improve teachers' professional practices.

## **1.2 The school decision making processes facilitate teacher collaboration**

### **1.2.1 The effective formal and informal communication among staff**

My study showed that teacher collaboration was enhanced through the constant flow of communication between the principal and the executive team, and between the principal and the deputies who headed the various decision making committees. Whenever the executive team had come to a decision regarding the change of school policy or curriculum matters, the decision would be communicated to the coordinators who headed the various year level committees. The coordinators were responsible for relating the responses of their groups back to the executive team.

There was a consultative mechanism that had been built into the school's decision making process. This consultative process ensured that not only were the school leaders able to make informed decisions, but also the decisions being made were supported and implemented by the teachers. In this respect, research studies (Imber & Neidt, 1990) also indicated that teachers who were involved in decision making, and who were thus more satisfied with their jobs would care more about the implementation of the decisions they had helped to formulate, and generally would try harder in their work.

The principal indicated that:

We are forever asking for information, then passing it on to the relevant groups. CS [the Deputy Principal] works regularly, and meets regularly with the year level coordinators who are responsible for the pastoral care of a year level, and again she would be feeding back information at the weekly executive meetings. So I meet every Monday with the three deputies and the business manager. They keep me informed, and it might be that we have come to a decision that we ought to be changing some ways in which we do things, and then she would take that back to the coordinators, and then bring their response back to the executive group. So there is a constant moving back and forward of information. (IP)

There was also an excellent informal communication process through the approaches of teacher interviews and the forums that encouraged teachers' participation in the discussion of school-wide issues and their own professional development. During the annual staff interview, the principal asked each staff member to discuss the professional development activities he/she had been involved in over the year, and to comment on the work of the professional development committee. The suggestion and ideas that had been provided by teachers would then be communicated to the professional committee for the planning for the next year.

The principal indicated:

We organise what we call forums [for each year level]. Every teacher must attend at least one forum and I go to all of those forums, and that's an open discussion where people can put any agenda item forward that they think is an issue....and everybody who works with that particular group of students has a chance to put forward frustrations, criticisms of the way we've done things, how we might better improve the delivery of the curriculum to students, or how we might give more support to staff.....I am involved in working with the business manager and the three

deputy principals in looking at all the information that came from the forums, looking at the suggestions that teachers have made, looking at the interview sheets from August, when I have had interviews with all teachers in the school....so we would take all these information into account when we do our planning for the next year. (IP)

The school organised these year level 'Forum' for teachers to put forward their individual concerns, frustrations or criticisms about the way the school operated and managed the daily schooling matters. The administrative team then takes all these suggestions and concerns into account when they did the planning for the following year. Through attending the forum, every teacher had the opportunity to participate informally in the school decision-making process. This informal communicative process enhances the collaborative efforts among teachers and allows greater input from all teachers in the school.

### **1.2.2 A collaborative working relationships among staff**

The school decision making process encourages a collaborative working style as there is better coordination between the administrative team and the year level coordinators. The coordination between the administrative team and year level teachers is also improved because the decisions that have been made by the administrative team have been discussed in each year level group. This communicative process helps create collaborative working relationships among teachers.

According to one teacher:

I think the decision making process does actually encourage a collaborative working style, because I think in our school...each faculty really is given a fair amount of

permission to make decisions, so even though you have got the administrative team, then, you know, there is the year level coordinators, and so the administrative team relate to the coordinator a fair bit....and so that the process of making decisions then filters down to us, and I feel that that does actually encourage a collaborative working relationship. (IT2)

### **1.3 Leadership quality and styles that foster teacher collaboration**

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) indicate that the qualities and styles of leadership are imperative to teacher collaboration and learning. Leaders who are seen as open, fair, sympathetic, accessible, and are able to provide moral support and positive reinforcement that made staff feel appreciated encouraged teacher collaboration and further learning. Many teachers believed that their principals were good role models, setting an example by working hard, having lots of energy, being genuine in their beliefs, having good people skills, and modelling their own professional development and learning by growing and changing themselves. These leadership qualities were seen to encourage teachers' involvement in collaborative practices and their own professional development.

The teachers in my study indicated that the leadership team was collaborative, open and trusting, not dictatorial or imposing. The school leaders were always available for discussion, and accepting of insights and input from teachers, which contributed to generating more new ideas and creativity among staff. The leadership team was seen as open and willing to discuss particular issues, and providing support for particular ways of resolving difficult issues.

Teachers expressed their views on the leadership team:

I suppose the leadership team here is always available for discussion, and insight and input, but it has never been one to set directives . I think that would be restricting the ideas and the creativity if they do so. (IT1)

I find the leadership team really open, and they are happy to discuss what staff think about particular issues, and particular ways to go in relation to an issue. (IT2)

### **1.3.1 Open, accepting, and supportive leadership**

The leadership quality of the principal in the school has contributed to shaping a trusting, developmental, and collaborative work environment. The leadership qualities of the school principal revealed in the data were firm but fair, visionary, compassionate, collaborative, and creative. The principal was seen to lead by example, and she was well liked and respected by many of the teachers. She was always venturing into new territory and taking her staff with her. The principal was an excellent communicator; this specific quality, according to the teacher in this study, contributed significantly to her success as a principal.

One teacher commented on the leadership qualities:

The principal leads by example, she has vision, she is compassionate. She doesn't make decisions and impose them on staff, she has the needs of her staff first. Her style of leadership is firm but fair, and certainly visionary, and I think a lot of people really like it. It's really exciting to work in a place where the principal isn't stagnant, is actually always going into new territory and taking her staff with her. I work very well with her, because I know that she has respect and great confidence in me, and I think that she is a great communicator, and I think that that is one of the keys to her success as a principal here. (IT3)

The principal was seen as very open and accepting, good at listening to people's ideas and happy to take on board ideas. It was indicated that the leadership team was always available and willing to provide time for staff to discuss particular issues or voice their concerns. This particular practice helped in generating new insights and ways of resolving problems, fostering the collaborative efforts among staff, and facilitating the process of group problem-solving.

Another teacher commented:

I find the principal,...um...she is really good at listening to people, and I find her very open and accepting, she is happy to take on board ideas, she loves people coming up with creative ways in doing things. (IT2)

### **1.3.2 The leadership styles of consultation, collaboration and delegation**

The school leaders adopted an open door, consultative policy, allowing greater input from staff members in the school decision making. At the same time, the principal and the administrative team also believed that they had the responsibility to make the final decisions. The success of this consultative mode of leadership was dependent on the mutual trust and belief that existed between the administrative team and staff, in believing and trusting each other to do the right things and make the right decisions.

The principal indicated:

I always believe that...it is about...an open door policy...sharing and letting people make decisions, but at the same time, I think that administration really needs to have a voice...there is trust by the administration in staff that they can do their job well. At the same time, I think that there is trust and belief that administration is doing the right job,

and sometimes they have to make difficult decisions and they are made. (IDP)

The fundamental styles of leadership in this school were those of collaboration and delegation. The school principal involved teachers in the decision making process whenever the decisions or changes to be made directly affected that particular teacher or group of teachers. The principal believed that the collaborative style of leadership would result in better decisions being made. She also believed in engaging teachers in the process of problem solving, in order that the pooling of resources and expertise could contribute to better solutions. Her style of delegation was based on trust that she had in her staff, trusting that others would do the right things and be responsible for the outcomes. If problems became tough or complicated, she was always there to support the teacher who might make an error of judgement, and to assist with arriving at a solution. The principal felt that by engaging teachers in decision making and problem solving, teachers would grow professionally, and be empowered in the process.

The principal indicated her styles of leadership:

As principal of the school, I can't get involved, nor should I get involved, in every level of decision making. The model that we have here tries to involve people wherever something is going to directly affect a person, we would want that person to be involved in decisions about any possible changes that might occur. The particular style that I am comfortable with, is a collaborative style. So if there is any problem that surfaces, I would engage other people to looking at the problem, and in the problem-solving. The particular style that is, again one that I am comfortable with, is to delegate. My style of delegation is one where I trust that people are going to do the right thing, that they are going to be responsible, but..you know...occasionally things come unstuck and I have to be there in the background ready to

support a person who may make an error of judgement, and where something may then become an ongoing problem. I would then get involved with the person in assisting with the resolution. But, generally I find that when you really trust people, they then grow themselves as educators. (IP)

#### **1.4 Leadership role and actions in creating a collaborative learning environment**

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) indicated that principal's action for teachers' professional development was important for teachers' learning. Providing individualised support was one of the important principal's action that fostered teachers' learning. The Principal in their study provided support for staff development efforts in the form of money, books, furniture or materials. Other kinds of support for professional learning included providing release time or other scheduling help, sharing information, providing professional development at staff meetings, finding speakers, and encouraging participation in decision making.

Professional development for teachers appeared as a significant feature and strength of the school in my study. The school invested a great amount of resources in the professional development of teachers. Teachers were encouraged to attend conferences, workshops and engage in further studies based on their own interests. Teachers also expected to keep up-to-date their knowledge of the recent educational research in the areas of teaching and learning in order to make modifications and improvements to their practices.

The principal interviewed every member of staff every year in August for the purpose of identifying the needs and areas of professional development teachers would like to undertake in future, and to

review the professional development activities they had undertaken over the past year. Teachers were encouraged to participate in their own professional development through pursuing further study for upgrading their skills in a particular area and improving their professional standard of teaching.

The principal indicated:

Every year in August, I interview every member of staff, and they complete a little survey sheet for me and on that sheet they tell me what professional development they had undertaken in their own time in the past twelve months and in school time. If they haven't done much professional development, I would then be talking to them about what they might need to do. (IP)

The principal set an example of modelling professional learning by engaging in further study herself. According to the principal, the school had invested the greatest amount of funds into the professional development of teachers, in comparison to other Catholic institutions in the region.

The principal expressed her view on professional learning:

I believe that the leader needs to lead from the front with staff, and I am currently two-thirds of the way through a professional doctorate at Flinders University. So I am able to say to staff "if I can do it, you can do it". So, I think that modelling of that is very important. (IP)

The principal supported staff professional development through providing funding and personal encouragement for teachers who wished to do the extra learning. It was evidenced from the findings that the support and funding provided by the school leader enabled members of staff to participate extensively in their own professional

development, and thus helped in extending the knowledge and skills of teachers in relation to their practices.

The professional development day within the school was considered important for teacher collaboration and learning. It provided an opportunity for all staff to work together either as a faculty or as a whole school in a way that helped in creating a collaborative learning environment that promoted teachers' professional development and learning.

Teachers indicated leadership support for their professional development:

Well, I think in relation to the support I get from the admin...I feel that I am well supported in my learning...they certainly provide for me financially to go to those things and if there is any thing I want to talk about with the principal or the deputies, they are happy to make time for me to talk to them. The principal has been very supportive over the years and very encouraging...she always thinks that it is a good idea for me to develop my skills all the time. (IT2)

They [the leadership team] have been very supportive of me personally, and I know other staff as well, to go out and have in-service [courses]...go to workshops...to develop skills in specific areas, or in general for the students that we have in that year. (IT1)

The school is very good at supporting that [teachers to attend workshops]...they will always pay for me to go those workshops, so that it is part of my extra curricular development. (IT2)

In order to create the opportunity for teachers' collaborative learning, the principal always sent two teachers to a particular in-service course. There was evidence that the whole staff had been sent to attend an in-service course. For example, the school staff was currently attending

the Format Course, which was a method of programming according to students' learning styles. The school was supporting the entire staff to attend this course.

This specific leadership practice provided the opportunity for teachers to share their learning experience and skills in a specific area. Consequently, the input and outcomes from the in-service training were demonstrated in the development of learning programmes for improving students' learning. Such leadership practice also created the opportunity for teachers to collaborate on the planning of school-wide educational activities for achieving the positive outcomes of students' learning.

The year-level coordinator indicated:

To my knowledge, no one who ever wants to go on a conference or to do a course is denied that opportunity. The principal supports staff to do the extra study and the extra learning, much of that learning is then shared with other teachers...you know...maybe two teachers go on a course together or sometimes it's the whole staff. For example, our staff is currently doing the Format Course, which is a method of programming according to students' learning styles, and so the school is paying for the entire staff to do that. (IT3)

The professional practice of leadership in the school was seen as open, accessible, collaborative, trusting and supportive. The leadership team was always happy and willing to provide support, directions and resources, and to assist by bringing in specialists in support of teachers' classroom practices, and the provision of specific service and care for students. All teachers were trusted as leaders who possessed the ability and skills to contribute to individual classes and the whole school community. Teachers were provided with opportunities to lead, to

collaborate, and to work with various leaders as teams, as partners, or as a whole school community.

One teacher indicated;

I think that is part of the Mercy tradition too...in that we are trusted all as leaders, we all have something to contribute as leaders, we all have skills that can contribute towards the teams, the class, or the whole school in a leadership capacity. It has always been very open...yeah...we've had free reign to create, motivate and work with various leaders, teams and as partners or as a whole school, and it has always been that way. (IT1)

## **1.5 The provision of time, funding and expertise**

As indicated by most of the teachers in the study, they valued the opportunity for collaborative practices. However, in order to work collaboratively with colleagues as a team, or as a whole school, time was one of the important resources that was required. Finding time to collaborate with colleagues in joint-planning or other collaborative projects was difficult due to the busy schedules of teachers' work. A majority of teachers suggested that recognition of the time needed for teachers to work as teams, to have continued dialogue with colleagues, was important to teacher collaboration. More release time and other scheduling help was needed if teachers were to engage in continuing collaborative practices.

### **1.5.1 The time constraints on teacher collaboration**

The research data from this study revealed that collaboration with colleagues was perceived as highly valuable to teachers' professional learning and the improvement of practice. However, time constraints was one of the main inhibitors preventing teachers from engaging in

collaborative practices. Many teachers felt that time was an important element for collaborative work. Time was needed for collaborative planning, continued dialogue, discussion and reflection in any collaborative work or project. Most teachers used their own time for on-going collaboration, however, they felt that more time was needed to collaborate with colleagues as a whole staff or as a faculty. They needed more time to work collaboratively as a team, to share ideas, experience and resources, and to be involved in the joint-planning of the curricular or extra curricular activities.

In the following sections, I present findings in relation to teachers' views of time for their involvement in collaborative practices

**(a) Time for reflection, dialogue and joint-planning**

Teachers expressed the importance of time for reflection, to have dialogue with colleagues, and to share ideas, methodology and resources in joint-planning with colleagues.

I feel, to be working as part of a responsible group, be it mentoring or reassurance, or just time for reflection...say 'this worked really well for me', or 'that one just bombed'...so having time for that dialogue, I find sustains me, very much so. (IT1)

Having time to listen and share ideas about curriculum planning and teaching methodology would be valuable. (Q)

The primary staff desperately need more time for collaboration, a half day per term for collaborative planning would be highly beneficial. (IT1)

Collaboration has always been a part of the primary classroom practice, but collegial planning here is more difficult. Resources have always been readily available, and

support is offered, but it is often a question of time available to do collaborative planning. (IT1)

**(b) Time to work as a whole staff or a faculty**

Teachers indicated that more time was needed to work collaboratively as a whole staff or a faculty for curriculum planning or the sharing of ideas, resources and expertise for the improvement of classroom teaching. They indicated that if those teaching the same subject were scheduled at the same time, and were facilitated with time for joint work, would result in promoting and encouraging more involvement in collaborative practices among teachers.

I would like to see more time given as a whole staff where we get together, and we are intentional about listening to each other about the way we each work in our classroom or even as a faculty together...because I think we have our own faculties that we work with...so I would like us to have more time where we could share our ideas with each other...even you know teaching methodologies, the way that we plan our work together, our ideas. (IT2)

It is very difficult to work in team when only one meeting per term scheduled for faculty or year level meetings. If teachers teaching the same subject were time-tabled at the same time, then 'team teaching', or other collaborative projects would be more available. (Q)

I believe more time should be allowed for the whole school, faculty, and year level planning. (Q)

**(c) Time to attend meetings and writing up materials**

One teacher indicated that she was given additional time to attend meetings and prepare materials for students' learning.

During the Literacy Project, I was given additional time, and allowed time to attend meetings, set up time with teachers to write up materials. (Q)

**(d) Recognition of the time needed for collaboration**

In order to resolve the problem of the lack of time for collaborative activities, teachers suggested that there needed to be a recognition of the time needed for collaboration and the provision of common release time for teachers who taught the same subject for joint-planning and to observe classroom teaching. One teacher emphasised that allowing time for the development of work teams to discuss issues and concerns, and identifying key areas or topics that were the priority for the school in allowing a group of teachers to engage in team work, were important factors in the implementation of collaborative practices.

Time is essential element for teacher collaboration. There should be recognition of the time needed to work collaboratively. Allowing meeting times to allow 'natural groupings' of work team or subject area time to discuss issues. It is important to identifying key areas that are a priority for the school, and provide time allocation, money and resources to support the initiatives. (IT1)

**(e) Common release time for teachers to do joint planning, and to observe classroom teaching**

Teachers indicated that while the school provided support for collaborative projects in permitting teachers to swap times for classroom teaching, collaboration needed to be done in teachers' own time. Teachers' collaborative activities tended to be held after the school day's work which meant that there was less creativity and productivity in their work. Common release time was necessary for

co-ordinating activities that were group initiated, and allowing teachers to work together in the planning of curriculum and discussion of issues. Providing time and opportunities for teachers to observe one another in their classroom teaching, and to assist one another with the forms of feedback and critique on the performance of classroom practices, were seen as important for teachers' involvement in collaborative practices and enabling more creativity and productivity in their collaborative efforts.

Much of the collaboration needs to run outside of official school hour. Where possible, teachers are given non-contact time for collaborative planning. (Q)

Collaboration at school needs to be done in our own time or faculty time, most teachers use their own time for on-going collaboration. Lighter teaching loads, and common non-contact time for teachers of given subjects would be ideal for collaborative work. (Q)

Time for collaborative activities tends to be after the day's work, which means there is less creativity, people are less productive. (Q)

Common lesson release is necessary to co-ordinate activities that are group initiated. The school seems reasonably well set up to facilitate teacher collaboration. (Q)

The school provides support for collaborative projects, permits teachers to swap times for class teaching. Common release time is needed to work together in planning and discussion. Opportunities should be provided to assist, observe, and learn in a lesson given by another teacher. (Q)

### **1.5.2 The provision of funding and expertise for teacher professional development**

Many teachers indicated that the availability of resources was good. There were ample opportunities and support for teachers to attend in-service courses, workshops or other professional development activities outside the school. In particular, the internet newspaper project that was initiated by two teachers, was fully funded and supported by the school leader. The expertise in specific areas were also available for providing support, guidance and direction to individual teacher or a group of teachers who were involved in a particular project.

There were examples of specific leadership practices in the provision of funding for teacher professional development. In this regard, the principal indicated that:

We have a very strong budget for professional development, so we invest a lot of our funds into the professional development of staff...so that's a very important aspect. (IP)

One teacher in the study talked about her involvement in professional learning, and fundings were provided for her to pursue these courses:

As far as my learning goes, I think that I often need to improve my skills, I do that by mainly attending lessons, and by going to workshops. The school is very good at supporting that...they will always pay for me to attend those workshops, so that is part of my extra curricular development. (IT2)

One of the teachers had coordinated an internet newspaper which was a collaborative project that involved two teachers and a journalist in residence. The project was successful due to the fact that it was fully supported and funded by the school. In addition, the teachers involved

in the project were like-minded, inspired, and able to complement each other in skills and strength.

We decided that we would go to China last year, we actually were successful in getting a \$3000 grants each to present a workshop in Shanghai last year about the project. And we were so excited about that in terms of giving this to a global audience. (IT3)

One teacher mentioned that she had been provided with professional development opportunity through training, which resulted in extending her skills that enabled her to provide better service to students. Without the opportunity and support for her continuous professional development, she could not have provided the high quality of service to students.

They have been very supportive in allowing me to have training, people coming in to observe, my going out to workshops...so...I think without that continuous professional development, we wouldn't be doing the students a service, so it is very much understood that it has to be ongoing and continuous. (IT1)

According to this teacher, the expertise was also available for providing support, guidance and direction.

Yeah, if we had wanted support or instruction or direction then the expertise is there, and the school is more than willing to share and guide us to bring specialists in to support us. (IT1)

The opportunity to work collaboratively with outside expertise enhanced teachers' professional development in terms of expanding knowledge and skills in a particular area. The extra learning that teachers' gained through involvement in a collaborative project also benefited students' learning.

One of the teachers who was involved in the internet newspaper indicated:

We wrote a submission to employ a journalist for one day a week, so he works with our students one day of the week, he's actually a part of the collaboration as well, because it wouldn't be possible in the same way without the work of our journalist...it has been terrific to work with the journalist which has been paid off in terms of us working with students in classes as well. So we have actually developed quite a lot of knowledge about writing for a newspaper, which we can then transfer to the kids we teach. (IT3)

The school supported teacher collaboration by holding regular staff and faculty meetings, and providing professional development for teachers throughout the year. There were excellent resources available through access to the library, easy access to information technology, a good administrative team, and a positive and supportive principal as well as staff community.

The head of teacher librarians indicated:

We (teacher librarians) provide training sessions during staff meeting with practical tasks to work through. The library staff introduce new resources, structures and programmes to assist students' learning. (Q)

School structures that support the continuous examination of practice through the provision of resource, funding, and expertise is important to the improvement of practice. Shanker (1990) argues that a school that emphasises the importance of professional practice would provide adequate time for teachers to meet for purposes of planning, and discussing pedagogical and organisational issues, individual and group learning problems. McLaughlin (1990) and Guskey (1995) also argue that a school that establishes a structure that involves measures

for teachers to receive feedback about their work performance, and to communicate frequently with colleagues in the exchange of information about their work practices and students' performance, has the potential for maximising staff development resources, because learning can be integrated into on-going practice and shared with colleagues.

The organisational structures and leadership practices in the school under study provided ample opportunity and support for the development of teacher leadership, and teachers' professional development in practice and learning. However, time constraints was considered as one of the major inhibitors to teachers' involvement in collaborative practices. Modifications in the planning of teachers' time-table and work schedule, and recognition of the time needed for teacher collaboration are necessary if teachers were to engage in continuing collaborative activities and joint planning with colleagues.

## **2 Sociocultural Conditions for Teacher Collaboration**

The development of a collaborative school culture is imperative to creating a collaborative learning environment that enhances both the professional learning of teachers and students' learning. This study discovered that if teachers modelled the collaborative style of working with colleagues, they would be able to inspire and promote students' learning. The findings of this study also discovered that the mission and share goals of the school, a safe and unthreatening environment and shared responsibility for students' learning, were important sociocultural conditions for creating a collaborative working environment that fostered teacher collaboration.

The mission and shared goals of this school served as a motivating force that guided teachers' daily practices and their professional relationships with colleagues. Norms of collegiality and collaboration provided moral and emotional support for teachers, which contributed to a sense of professionalism and security among teachers. A supportive and cohesive teacher community where teachers gathered frequently to reflect, discuss, review, and share information about students' progress, their own strategies and methods of teaching, contributed to teachers' sense of commitment and job satisfaction. A collegial environment with the opportunity to frequently engage in reflective, and continuous talk about teaching, and receiving honest and accurate feedback from colleagues about the performance of practices, and a safe and unthreatening environment that allows teachers to celebrate success and sharing concerns and frustrations without fear of disapproval, are important conditions for teachers to continue in their involvement in collaborative activities with colleagues and to experiment with new practices.

## **2.1 The mission and shared goals that guide teachers' professional practices and relationships**

The mission and goals of the school, as indicated by the principal, was to educate young women with sense of responsibility, to live in harmony with others in the community, to achieve the best results academically, and to be developed in every possible way. The mission of the school was shaped by the tradition of Mercy, aiming to empower young women to play a vital role in, and making contributions to the community. The values of social justice, equality, reciprocity and inclusivity were embedded in the school's mission statements, which encouraged young women to build positive

relationships with others, and to become lifelong learners in the wider community.

The aim of the school is to educate young women and to educate them in every possible way. We would hope that at the end of their time here, they would achieve academically to the best of their ability and that they would be young women with a strong sense of responsibility for reaching out to other people. So it's an education that develops them in every possible way, and that leads them to establish right relationships with other people. So that's a very important goal of the school to learn to live in harmony with other people. (IP)

These goals were shared by members of staff and reflected in their teaching practices and relationships with colleagues and students. Members of staff upheld the shared responsibility and vision for their professional practices by demonstrating the collaborative style of teaching and learning in the school. They believed that it was ineffective to work in isolation, and sought the opportunity to plan and work collaboratively with colleagues in achieving the objectives and outcomes of students' learning. It was these shared goals and responsibility that served as a guiding force for what teachers did and what they had to deal with in everyday situations. With the school staff embracing the values of social justice, equality, and inclusivity, a culture of cohesiveness, support, trust and collaboration had been established in this school.

One of the teachers indicated that the shared responsibility that staff held for their teaching practices was vital for the development of cultures of cohesiveness and togetherness in the school, and ensuring that every staff was going in the same direction and working towards the common goals of the school. The shared responsibility for the

outcomes and goals for students' learning helped in promoting the collaborative efforts of teachers. The teacher also emphasised that it was through the team planning and collaborative efforts among teachers that they were able to contribute to the work of the school.

So it is a shared responsibility-a shared mission or vision that we have... I think that it would be very dangerous to work in isolation and do not have the cohesiveness amongst the staff, and going in the same direction, having the same outcomes or...goals that we wish to achieve so I think establishing a staff that at a given time talk, and plan together...is important. (IT1)

There has been an enormous amount of change in the last few years...and without the team planning and collaborative effort, we really wouldn't do, I think, the major and fantastic things that we are doing in the school...I think getting new staff into the school and showing them how we do work as teams...as much as we can, is an important day-to-day aspect of the teaching in the school. (IT1)

According to this teacher, the mission and goals of the school were the guiding force for her in dealing with daily work situations and the approaches she adopted for meeting the diverse learning needs of students who came from different socio-economic background.

We've got a very wide socio-economic group of parents and students that come to us and I think we are catering to those various needs. So for me personally that mission is a guiding force for what I do and how I...deal with every situation every day--it's at the forefront of how I teach in the school. (IT1)

Teachers embraced the shared values and goals of the school in providing a high quality of education and care through the values of Mercy, social justice, equality, and inclusivity, and demonstrating them in their teaching practices and working relationships with

colleagues and students. For example, one of the school's educational goals was to practice the value of social justice. One of the teachers indicated that she had integrated the values and practice of social justice into her teaching programmes by incorporating the charity activities for students. The integration of the values and practice of social justice into the teaching programme ensured that students not only understood the values of social justice but also given the opportunity to practice them.

We try and get teachers as well as students to be aware of those Christian values of mercy and justice and equality and inclusivity in the school. So I think then that is really the main focus and providing a very high quality of education and care through those aspects. I believe in those values and uphold those in my own personal life. So as a teacher it is easy for me to be aware of that in the way I treat my colleagues, in the way I treat my students...you know...the way I want them to become aware of what's happening in the school community, in the local context, in the world. (IT3)

So in terms of my professional practices as a teacher of religion, not only did we look at say social justice issues in the world of various natures, you are looking at where justice is, where the social action can be. So in terms of curriculum that ethos sits really nicely with the school-the school ethos... We have a lot of work, for example, that we do for Mercy Charities, and so we talk to students and then start planning the activities that we will do, that model that social justice for the students, I mean we model it but we also practice it. (IT3)

The shared values and goals were also reflected in the relationships among teachers and between teachers and school leaders in the school community in which teachers and administrators treated colleagues with trust, respect and reciprocity. Teachers in the school community

shared the goals and purposes for educating young women in the school to become life-long learners and making contribution to the wider community. A climate of mutual respect and trust among teachers, a strong sense of shared responsibility and high expectations for student learning were established as the common features of the culture in this school community.

The teacher and the deputy principal expressed their views in relation to professional relationships in the school:

In terms of our relationships with each other...I mean...we are a positive community of staff and we have, we share the goal of educating these young girls to become young women, who will make a contribution and we celebrate their achievements. (IT3)

I work very well with her [the principal], because I know that she has great confidence in me. (IT3)

There is trust by the administration in staff that they can do their job well, at the same time, I think that there is trust and belief [from teachers] that administration is doing the right job. (IDP)

The principal expressed her views about trust and respect for teachers:

Generally, I find that when you really trust people, they then grow themselves as educators and they become freer...so there is always a group of people working on an issue, and people have good ideas about how we should solve a problem. (IP)

Duignan (1987) indicates that a clear, articulated vision of what the school stands for is important for giving shape and direction to a school culture. The role of school leaders play an important part in creating the cultural norms, and establishing school structures, policies, processes, rules and procedures that help to promote and

sustain the vision of the school, and to serve the purposes of schooling as articulated.

The mission and goals of the school in this study were clearly articulated and shared by members of staff, and they were reflected in the teaching practices and working relationships among colleagues in the school. The shared purposes among the school staff that were established, were crucial for the school to operate as a coherent community, and set the direction for what it should be in the future. The ethos of any particular school is greatly influenced by the degree to which it functions as a cohesive whole, with agreed ways of doing things which are consistent throughout the school. These features set the stage for professional challenge, growth and accomplishment, because they establish shared expectation, and a sense of group purpose (McLaughlin & Yee, 1988).

The data collected in this study revealed that a climate of trust and openness in which professional colleagues felt comfortable in working together was essential for creating a collaborative working environment for teachers' growth and learning. The school culture which was characterised by norms of cohesiveness, openness, trust and collaboration, was important for developing collaborative working relationships among teachers for achieving the positive outcomes of students' learning and the professional growth of teachers.

McLaughlin and Yee (1988) indicate that individual capacity in teaching and professional growth can be enhanced by the collective, cohesive nature of the shared purposes which have been created by the school community. In a school where innovation, learning and experimentation with new ideas become the norms, a shared sense of

purpose can be created among teachers, as teachers perceive their individual growth as integrated to the institutional growth. The findings of this study indicate that a clearly articulated vision that is embedded in the school's mission and goals that are shared by the teacher community, and the school culture that establishes norms of collegiality and shared responsibility for teaching practices and students' learning, are important conditions that enhance teachers' efforts and motivation for collaborative practices. These conditions are imperative for developing a culture of collaboration essential for teachers' growth.

## **2.2 Creating a collaborative working environment that fosters teacher collaboration**

The collaborative work environment which was created by the school culture and leadership practice that valued collaboration, trust, and mutual respect was important for teachers to work formally or informally as a team, to discuss instructional or administrative issues, individual or group learning problems. As indicated by one teacher in this study, the school leadership team had worked conscientiously to create a collaborative work environment for teachers to work as a team, as a faculty or as a whole school community. Teachers and school leaders in the school community shared the responsibility for creating a collaborative work environment by modelling and practicing joint work with colleagues, and adopted a collaborative style of teaching which were seen to be important factors in fostering students' learning and teachers' professional growth. The support and encouragement from colleagues, according to teachers in this study, were also important factors in creating and maintaining a collaborative working environment.

In the following sections, I present findings that are related to conditions that help create a collaborative work environment.

### **2.2.1 Teachers model and practice collaborative work with colleagues**

Teachers expressed the view that no one could work in isolation in the real world, especially in teaching situations when students were taught to do group work or partner-work, and engaging in a variety of group learning situations. If teachers were contradicting what they had taught by using individual style of work practice, students might fail to understand the real purpose of group work. In order to set examples for students to work collaboratively in group work, teachers needed to model and practice joint work with colleagues, which contributed to creating a collaborative working environment.

One of the teachers indicated:

I think that in any working situation, in the real world you don't work in isolation. We teach our children not to work in isolation, we get them to do group work, partner-work, so we are expecting them to work in a variety of situations. And yet if they just see us doing one mode of teaching, then we are just contradicting what we try to teach them. (IT1)

### **2.2.2 Shared responsibility for teaching practices**

Assuming similar responsibility for teaching practices or teaching the same subjects was seen to be an essential condition for teachers' involvement in collaborative practices. One teacher in this study indicated that working in collaboration is a natural way of working with colleagues who shared similar responsibility in teaching the particular year level or the same subjects. Sharing similar responsibility for teaching practice and students' learning was seen as

an important condition for teachers to be engaged in collaborative practices.

The teacher indicated:

Whereas in the work force, in an office or wherever it might be, you are not working independently, so it seems to me a natural way of working in collaboration with those whom are sharing similar students or responsibility or subjects, but it's not across the board and we do as much as we can. (IT1)

### **2.2.3 Shared responsibility for students' learning outcomes**

This study would suggest that teachers assume shared responsibility for the outcomes and goals for students' learning is important for teachers' involvement in collaborative practices. It encourages collaborative efforts among teachers for creating a conducive and cooperative learning environment in which members of staff share the common purposes for achieving the educational goals and the positive outcomes for students' learning.

One of the teachers indicated:

So it is a shared responsibility, a shared mission or vision that we have... I think without the team planning and collaborative effort, we really wouldn't be doing the things that we are doing in this school. (IT1)

Teachers in this study were working in a positive school community with shared goals and responsibilities for educating young women in achieving the best possible learning outcomes and making a contribution to the community. The shared responsibility for students' learning outcomes emerged as an important condition and motivation for teachers to be involved in collaborative practices that allowed them to share information about students' progress and

performance, and to share ideas, materials and resources for the improvement of practices.

Another teacher indicated:

We are a positive community of staff, and we share the goal of educating these young girls to become young women who will make a contribution and we celebrate their achievements. (IT3)

Teachers in this study upheld collective responsibility for students' learning through involving in on-going discussions among themselves concerning students' progress, engaging in the exchange of opinions and information about individual students' learning needs and useful strategies for the improvement of learning outcomes for that student.

The deputy principal talked about shared responsibilities for students' learning:

The goals and mission of the school talk about ensuring that all students---are challenged to reach their ultimate potential. So accountability, whether it's at this school or any other school, is one that is a very broad factor of life. So collective accountability is essential. It is not about some teachers just working with their own class, it is a collective responsibility that students do well right across the board...so...the teachers value that as a very important thing and they work on it together so there is a lot of discussion from teacher to teacher about students. There is not a day goes past when you go into the staffroom and teachers are talking about students, forming opinions, passing on information about individual students and it's all for the best possible outcomes for that student. (IDP)

Teachers assumed responsibility for students' learning when they were taking composite classes, for example, the combined classes

within a year level or across two year levels. Teachers who shared the responsibility for students' learning had a sense of ownership of, and control over the outcomes of students' learning. These teachers worked together as a team, planning, teaching, assessing and evaluating the teaching programmes together. In the process of working together, they learned from one another, which contributed extensively to their pedagogical knowledge and practices.

One teacher indicated:

I feel that it is obvious that we are all responsible...and we have had composite classes, so the ownership is the group one. And I think that if anyone comes to teaching thinking that it is not then...they are misguided. That's why I think it is important to have some kind of induction for new staff into the way that we like to work that we feel fits well with the ethos of the school. (IT1)

#### **2.2.4 The school organisational structures support collaborative work culture**

Research data in my study had shown that there were opportunities provided by the school organisational structures for teachers to work as a team. Teachers were provided with ample opportunities to work formally or informally as a team in the school decision making processes. The collaborative work culture was created through the efforts and inspiration from the school's leadership team in providing opportunities for teachers to participate in collaborative projects. However, it was indicated that it would be beneficial if teachers had more days to work as a faculty or as a team, and to be given more time at the professional development day to engage in team work.

One teacher indicated:

I think the school does do very well in creating a collaborative environment, the admin team, I think they work really hard to create that by providing opportunities for us to get together as a faculty and as a whole staff, though I would like more time as a faculty. I think it would be good to have more days...sometimes when we have a professional development day, it would be good to use that time to work together as a faculty. (IT2)

#### **2.2.5 Collegial support for collaborative project**

A teacher participated in the interview suggested that the collaborative work culture could be developed and maintained when there was support and encouragement from teachers who were not directly involved in the project but shared the interests and responsibility, and were willing to work around and support the project. The findings also revealed that the effective operation of the group was dependent on the size of the group which should be relatively small, and the collaborative culture of the school.

When you get groups of people, there will be times when it doesn't function as a group and that's just human nature, I think. By and large, I have found that generally the smaller the team, the more effective the outcomes, whatever it may be. In the case of the Internet Newspaper, the team is me and another teacher and a journalist. So it's been a small group but it's so successful because, not only is the culture of this school, and the principal actively supporting that by funding it, but there are a small group of teachers who work around us and with us, and that has supported the project. (IT3)

#### **2.2.6 Socialising new staff into the collaborative style of working**

Inducting new staff into the collaborative style of working was important so that the new members could fit well into the work culture of the school. One teacher indicated that teachers' progress in

their work were dependent on the efforts that had to be made to get to know one another, and to work well either within year levels or across year levels. In order to promote collaborative work practices, it required that everyone on the staff focussing on the right direction, sharing the same purposes and interests, seeing the value of doing it, and also recognising that working collaboratively not only would benefit their own professional learning but also students' learning.

Being aware of the big change over we have had in staff we've had this year, the focus has really been on working collaboratively in our year levels to support teachers' progress in methodologies and the student learning. But it is difficult, unless you have everyone focussing in the right direction, and wanting to do the same thing and seeing the value of it for the team, and how that will also benefit the student. (IT1)

#### **2.2.7 Teachers' access to professional journal and research relating to collaborative teaching and learning**

The importance of up-dating and improving professional knowledge in relation to the theories and practices of collaborative teaching and learning through access to the most recent educational research was emphasised by one of the Deputy Principals in the school. Understanding the principles and practices of collaborative learning, according to the Deputy Principal, was important for the outcomes of students' learning and the development of the love for learning in students. Frequent access to professional journals and research, not only could promote teachers' professional growth in teaching and learning, but also enhance teachers' understanding of the rationale and practices of joint work.

The deputy principal indicated:

An educator in a school like this needs to know that the philosophy of teaching is about learning together. So learning together means that what we want to do is to develop young people to be equipped for the love of learning. And in doing that teachers need to be up-to-date with best practices and strategies to teaching and learning. (IDP)

#### **2.2.8 The adoption of a collaborative style of teaching**

The Deputy Principal also indicated the importance of creating a collaborative learning environment for students' learning through adopting a collaborative style of teaching in which teachers were not seen as authority figures but working collaboratively with students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. He emphasised that encouraging young people to build positive relationships with others for learning to happen was essential to developing a collaborative learning environment. Building positive interpersonal relationships with others, which was part of the mission of the school, helped in encouraging teachers to adopt a collaborative style of teaching and working with students.

At the same time, it is also very important that teachers work with students in a way that is collaborative...that is nurturing...so it is not about a hierarchical system where teacher is the authority figure and the student is the recipient of knowledge and other things. So it is very much a cooperative working environment where we develop in young people the love for learning. (IDP)

The most important component of learning is relationships. Relationships between people and those relationships have to be very positive for learning to happen, so that is a big focus in learning practice here in this school. (IDP)

## **2.3 A safe environment, personal qualities of team members and teachers' perception of collaborative practice**

### **2.3.1 A safe and unthreatening school environment**

Teachers in this study engaged in collaborative practices through meeting informally to talk about issues or voice their individual or group concerns. They indicated that the opportunity to attend the school's year level forum, which was open to every teacher to discuss school policies or raise any individual or group concerns, provided the context for teacher collaboration. The provision of time and opportunity for teachers to attend meetings, and engaging informally in discussions about pedagogical and administrative matters, encourage collaboration. A safe and unthreatening environment in which teachers feel safe to air their concerns without fear of disapproval was also found to be important for enhancing teachers' collaboration. Many teachers in this study indicated that a safe and cooperative school environment was important for their involvement in school decision making and group problem-solving processes.

The deputy principal expressed his view on a safe and unthreatening school environment:

The way that staff engage in being more collaborative, is through meeting together as a group of people and talking about it. So opportunities to discuss, having the skills to discuss things, and to air concerns without feeling threatened...people don't want to say something in fear. I think it is creating a culture where people can come to the table and disagree with something and that's fine and it's okay to be in disagreement, so I think we do have that, we do foster that opportunity. (IDP)

### **2.3.2 Personal qualities of team members**

Several teachers indicated that the personal qualities of team members was essential for achieving positive results in teacher collaboration. They preferred to collaborate with teachers who were positive, willing to take risk, helpful, cheerful and genuinely enjoying the opportunity to assist others. Team members who taught at the same year level, or were teaching the same subjects, and sharing the common goals and objectives of the work project were also considered as important conditions for teacher collaboration.

Examples of teachers' comments are:

I prefer to collaborate with someone who teaches at the same year level as me, someone who is positive, willing to take risk, and is generally cheerful. (Q)

I like working with groups that share a common objective, group members are helpful and actually enjoying in assisting others. (Q)

### **2.3.3 Teachers' perception of collaborative work practice**

A majority of teachers in this study indicated that they valued the importance of collaborative work practice to their own professional growth and the improvement of teaching practices. The development of collaborative work practice was dependent on the collective efforts of staff to practice the collaborative style of working, to focus on the shared goals of teaching, and the efforts in socialising new staff into the existing collaborative work culture of the school. In addition, the encouragement and support from the administrative team fostered teachers' collaborative efforts. The shared energy and efforts that teachers had put in, and the shared responsibility that they assumed in planning or organising an event or a whole school project needed

to be acknowledged and celebrated by the school authority. The acknowledgment of the contribution that individual teacher or group of teachers had made towards the success of collaborative work would inspire team members to further their collaborative efforts.

Teachers in this study indicated that through the practice of collaborative work, they were able to share the good times and the bad times, putting in the shared energy and efforts in the planning and organising of school-wide collaborative events and activities, and making contribution to its success. The efforts and contributions that teachers had made towards the successful implementation of collaborative practices were rewarded through the recognition and celebration from the school leaders. The involvement in joint activities with colleagues was also viewed as an opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively towards the shared goals of the school for the improvement of quality of services to students and teachers' professional work lives.

With regard to the enhancement of collaborative efforts among teachers, some of the teachers indicated:

We tend to make decisions really well together, we listen to each other, we encourage each other...I guess if there wasn't that encouragement coming from the top...if that admin team was really authoritarian and dictatorial, that project wouldn't be able to happen. (IT2)

I think teachers, certainly at this school...are working towards the same goals...everybody makes an effort...everyone knows that they are working, and they all share in the success, and we are very good at celebrating those things here. (IT3)

By and large, I think teachers, certainly in this school, share the good times and the bad times and that they are working

towards the same goals and I think that there is a shared energy that goes into the preparation and contribution. (IT3)

What we tend to do here in this school, is celebrate and publicly acknowledge the effort of groups of people and individuals within those groups, so there is an acknowledgment that that's been done effectively, and which then of course engender people to go and do other things or repeat things as well, so it gathers momentum in terms of those things. (IT3)

## D DISCUSSION

The findings of the study support the claims that teacher collaboration can be fostered by the leadership practices of delegating decision making responsibility to others. The decision making structures of the school in this study facilitated teacher collaboration in allowing the sharing of power and authority, and the delegation of duties and decision making responsibility for the staff to have input and a greater voice in the process of school decision making. As a result of participation in school decision making, teachers felt consulted, empowered, and valued as professionals in the wider school community.

This study also supports the claims that participation in school decision making would result in promoting closer collegial interactions, better coordination between school leaders and teachers, and among teachers, the creation of a participative and collaborative school community and the empowerment of teachers, all as a means of increasing students' learning outcomes.

The decision making structure of the school in this study was based on an open, collaborative and consultative model which emphasised the

sharing of power and authority that resulted in staff assuming leadership roles and responsibilities. There was constant flow of formal and informal communication in the school decision making process. These patterns of communication came through the consultative model of decision making, ensuring that not only would the school be able to make informed decisions, but also the decisions were supported and implemented by the teachers.

The informal communication between the administrative team and the staff through the forums which were organised for each year level where teachers could voice their individual or group concerns, was essential for promoting the collaborative efforts among teachers. This consultative model of decision making facilitated a collaborative style of working among teachers, and better coordination between the administrative team, year level co-ordinators, and teachers at each year level.

Research studies (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999) have indicated that the supportive and facilitative styles of leadership are imperative for teacher collaboration and learning. Leaders who are open, fair, sympathetic and accessible, able to provide moral support and positive reinforcement, are most effective in encouraging teacher collaboration. This study discovered that the school's leadership which was characterised by openness, supportive, trusting, collaborative and accepting, good at listening to and taking on board people's ideas, and always available for discussions, insights and input from teachers, contributed enormously to shaping a trusting, developmental and collaborative work environment essential for teachers' professional growth and learning.

The success of this consultative mode of leadership was dependent upon the mutual trust and beliefs that existed between the administrative team and teachers in which both parties believed and trusted each other to do the right things, be able to make the right decisions, and to be held responsible for the outcomes.

The strong focus on professional development for teachers was a significant feature and strength of the school in this study which contributed to teachers' collective learning through the sharing of learning experience and outcomes of in-service courses and the joint planning of students' learning programs. A great amount of resources had been invested in the professional development of teachers. Teachers were encouraged to attend conferences, workshops and engage in further study based on their own interests. Teachers were also expected to constantly up-date their knowledge from recent educational research in order to improve their professional standard of teaching and to provide better service to students.

The principal in this study modelled professional learning by engaging in further study herself, and creating opportunity for staff professional learning by sending at least two teachers or, sometimes the whole staff to attend worthwhile in-service courses. This specific leadership practice created the opportunity for teachers to share their learning experience and skills for the benefit of students' learning and the extension of collaborative efforts among teachers.

Shanker (1990) argues that school structures which aim to support the continuous examination of practice would provide adequate time for teachers to meet for purposes of planning, and discussing pedagogical and organisational issues, as well as individual and group learning problems. The findings of this particular study confirm that in school

context generally, time is an important resource that is required for the involvement of teachers in collaborative activities, which include joint-planning, participatory decision making and the observation of classroom practices. Any school structure that seeks to emphasise the importance of participation and empowerment needs to create ample opportunities and provide adequate time for teachers to participate in collaborative practices, this approach most likely can result in positive outcomes for both teachers' professional learning and students' learning.

The findings of this study indicate that a climate of trust, support and cohesiveness in which teachers feel safe and comfortable in working together constitutes key conditions for creating a collaborative working environment that fosters teachers' learning. In particular, this study would suggest that a school culture which is characterised by norms of cohesiveness, openness, trust and collaboration, is essential for creating a conducive learning environment in achieving the positive outcomes of students' learning and the professional growth of teachers.

The mission and goals of the school in this study, which were clearly articulated and shared by members of staff, and reflected in the teaching practices and working relationships among teachers, were important for developing common purposes for teaching practices and encouraging the collaborative efforts among teachers.

This study reveals that teachers need to model and practice collaborative style of working with colleagues in order to create a collaborative learning environment, and to set examples for students to engage in collaborative learning and group work. A conducive environment where teachers frequently engage in collaborative

practices, sets the stage for students to participate in collaborative learning. Therefore, the adoption of a collaborative style of working proved important for the creation of a collaborative learning environment which would benefit students' learning.

Teachers assuming shared responsibility in an particular area, teaching the same subject or year level, or sharing the same objectives and approaches to students' learning were seen to be essential conditions for teacher collaboration. The moral support and encouragement from colleagues who were not directly involved in collaborative projects were also considered important for developing and maintaining a collaborative work culture and sustaining the collaborative efforts among teachers.

The personal qualities of team members were important for the success of collaborative work. Team members who were positive, helpful, cheerful, inspirational, generally enjoyed assisting colleagues and willing to take risks, were seen as important personal qualities which contributed to the positive outcomes of teachers' collaborative work practices. Socialising new staff into the existing work culture of the school was viewed as important for new members of staff to fit well into the school working environment and helped in maintaining the collaborative work culture that was supported by norms of collegiality and collaboration in the school community.

In addition, a cooperative and unthreatening environment in which teachers felt safe to air their concerns without fear of disapproval was crucial for teachers' involvement in participatory decision making and group problem-solving in the school. Working in such a positive school community with shared goals and responsibilities for students' learning can therefore be regarded as an important condition for

teachers' involvement in collaborative practices in other settings. It encourages teachers to share information about students' progress and performance, and sharing ideas, materials and resources for the positive outcomes of students' learning. The sharing of responsibilities for students' learning appeared to make the teachers more enthusiastic and eager to work collaboratively as a team. In the process of joint work, teachers plan, assess, and evaluate the teaching programs together in order to provide education of high quality, and achieving the best possible learning outcomes for students.

To summarise, this study explored the conditions for teacher collaboration from the organisational and sociocultural perspectives. The organisational perspectives which include the decision making structures and processes of the school, the professional development policies and resources of the school and the leadership practices in creating a collaborative work environment are essential conditions for enhancing teacher collaboration. The sociocultural perspectives which include establishing a cohesive, supportive, collaborative and developmental school culture based on the mission and shared goals of the school, norms of collegiality and collaboration, a climate of mutual trust, respect, openness, equality and inclusivity, and shared responsibility for teaching and students' learning, are also complementary conditions for teacher collaboration.

Whilst the factors for successful implementation of collaborative practices have been explored in this study, the researcher would like to recommend that the factors that are detrimental to the successful implementation of collaborative practices are important for future investigation. This study has examined the time constraints which is considered to be one of the inhibitors for teacher collaboration. The

findings suggest that changes in teachers' work schedule, and the reorganising of teachers' time-table are needed if teachers are to engage in collaborative practice. In order to achieve better understanding of teachers' collaboration, and the impact of collaboration on their professional practices, other factors such as tension and conflict, teachers' efficacy and competitiveness, are important aspects of school culture that deserve attention.

Recent newspaper reports highlighted a South Australian school with major problems in staff and students' relationship, as well as the relationships between staff and the administrative team. The result was a hostile and incohesive work environment that contributed to students' absenteeism and the low level of learning outcomes. Such negative school environments warrant systematic study of its effect on teachers' professional practices and students' learning outcomes.

## PART III

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER COLLABORATION AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING**

### **Part III: Table of contents**

<b>A THE THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b>	177
<b>1 The informal or experience-based learning in the workplace</b>	178
<b>2 Norms of collegiality and collaboration</b>	180
<b>3 Theories of adult informal learning and teachers' learning in the workplace learning</b>	181
<b>B RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER COLLABORATION AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING</b>	
	185
<b>C THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS</b>	186
<b>1 The nature and forms of collaborative work</b>	186
1.1 The formal and informal forms of teachers' collaboration	186
1.2 The voluntary efforts of teachers	188
1.3 Joint-planning of curriculum work	189
1.4 Collaborating with the school librarians	190
1.5 Collaborating with specialists from outside the school	190
<b>2 Teachers' perception of collaborative work practices and teachers' professional growth</b>	192
2.1 Teachers' valuing the importance of collaborative practices	192
2.2 Socialising new staff into the collaborative style of working	193
2.3 A valuable experience in expanding knowledge, generating new ideas and broadening outlooks on the practice of teaching	194
2.4 Acknowledging teachers' efforts and contributions to collaborative work	195

2.5 An opportunity to reflect and modify teachers' own practices	196
2.6 Having input in and control of the outcomes and process of collaborative work	196
2.7 Teachers' sense of empowerment	197
2.8 Teachers' sense of belonging and equality in being part of the school decision making process	198
2.9 Teachers' sense of responsibility and self-worth	198
<b>3 The collaborative school culture and teachers' professional growth and learning</b>	<b>199</b>
3.1 Norms of collegiality, support and trust	200
3.2 Excellent working relationships among staff	201
<b>4 Leadership support and teachers' professional growth and learning</b>	<b>202</b>
4.1 An open, supportive and committed school leadership	203
4.2 Moral support, personal encouragement and assistance	204
4.3 Leadership role in developing and extending teachers' skills and understanding	205
4.4 Involving teachers in the school decision making and problem-solving processes	206
<b>5 Feedback, joint-planning and problem-solving and teachers' professional growth</b>	<b>207</b>
5.1 Positive and non-judgemental feedback in boosting teachers' morale and modifying their work practices	209
5.2 The importance of joint-planning in breaking down teachers' isolation and the improvement of practices	210
5.3 Teachers feeling less pressured and more enthusiastic about teaching	211

5.4 Continuity, relevance and enjoyment in teachers' work	212
5.5 Teachers learning new strategies and improving collegial relationships	212
<b>6 Teachers' involvement in collaborative practices and teachers' professional growth and learning</b>	<b>213</b>
6.1 The expansion of knowledge, skills, and understanding of curriculum issues	214
6.2 Assisting professional learning and practices	215
6.3 Developing a feeling of personal success, acceptance and professional competence	217
6.4 Creating a supportive learning environment for better workplace knowledge	218
6.5 Assisting in students' learning	219
<b>7 Participating in school decision making process and teachers' professional growth and learning</b>	<b>220</b>
7.1 Sense of professionalism and empowerment	221
7.2 Supportive working relationships and mutual understanding	223
7.3 Improved teaching practices and professional growth	224
7.4 Enhancing colleagues' professional development	225
<b>D DISCUSSION</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>CONCLUSION TO PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>A Questionnaire</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>B Interview Guide</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>246</b>

## PART III

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER COLLABORATION AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

In the next two sections of Part III of the portfolio, I examine the theoretical framework, and propose research questions for the investigation of the relationship between teacher collaboration and teachers' professional development and learning. The findings of the investigation, the discussion of the findings, and the conclusion to Portfolio are presented in the subsequent sections.

#### A THE THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study investigates the relationship between teacher collaboration and teachers' professional development and learning in a particular school setting. The investigation examines the extent that teachers' involvement in collaborative activities which include joint-planning with colleagues, teacher dialogue, and participation in group problem-solving and school decision making, have effects on their professional development and learning. The study also examines the importance of the development of collaborative working relationships among teachers in relation to their professional development and learning. In particular, this study examines teachers' perception of the values of collaborative practices in relation to their professional growth.

The investigation is based on the assumptions that teachers' expertise, knowledge and skills in the practice of teaching can be enhanced through involvement in collaborative practices, and the exposure to a wider range of educational issues. The implications of adult informal

learning and norms of collegiality in relation to teachers' workplace learning which have been discussed in detail in Part one of this research portfolio, will be discussed in particular in this framework.

### **1 The informal or experience-based learning in the workplace**

It has been indicated that the demands of continuous learning for teachers in the workplace cannot be met by the training offered in the organisation. In fact, it is the informal and independent learning that is viewed as more relevant to teachers' workplace learning (Butler, 1996). Butler argues that the training solution has within it the seeds of its own limited effectiveness because it is an externally prescribed skilling process. A problem-correcting process that focuses on personal beliefs, values and experiential knowledge, is considered crucial for teacher on-the-job learning.

Coffield (2000) claims that there has been no parallel shift in thinking among government, employers, practitioners, or most researchers about the significance of informal learning. Eraut (2000) argues the importance of informal learning to teachers' professional practice, and the need for a better understanding of factors which affect informal or self-directed learning. The evidence from Williams' (2003) investigation of teachers' informal learning in the workplace indicates that both reactive and implicit learning , are likely to be most effective in a collaborative context. Hopkins' (1998) suggests that teachers' development takes place most effectively in schools with the culture of collaboration, which not only counters professional isolation, but also contributes to the enhancement of practice.

Hager (1996) proposes that teachers' on-the-job learning is informal, non-routine, collaborative, contextualised, implicit, and day-to-day in

nature. The common features of teachers' learning in the workplace are experiential, situational and reflective that are based on day-to-day incidents and circumstances. Hargreaves (1994) suggests that teachers' on-the-job learning is greatly affected by the outlooks and orientations of their colleagues with whom they work. Teachers develop their styles and strategies of teaching over years of working with colleagues in developing ways of doing things in response to the specific problems and circumstances they may face in their work.

The notion of experience-based learning and the notion of reflection-on-action have been combined in the literature related to professional practice (Hager, 1996). In their well-known analysis of 'informal learning', and its supposed sub-set 'incidental learning', Marsick and Watkins (1990) use experience and reflection as major concepts in analysing adult learning. They argue that characteristics of informal learning are experience-based, non-routine, and often tacit with critical reflectivity, proactivity and creativity as keys conditions which enhance the effectiveness of such learning ( Hager, 1996).

Argyris (1992) highlights the importance of non-routine circumstances as conditions for stimulating significant experiential learning. This researcher proposes that it is the non-routine that forces professional into the kind of reflective thinking which changes beliefs, values and assumptions. Hager (1996) proposes several principles about learning from professional practice which involves the integration of knowledge and practice that can be developed with appropriately structured experience of practice.

The set of principles about learning from professional practice emphasises professional knowledge as an integral part of practice, in a way that it is different from the traditional disciplinary knowledge. In

expressing the view on the relevance of professional practice to learning in the workplace, Eraut (2000) argues that significant knowledge and know-how exists about, and is created within, the practice of occupations, which has implications for teachers' workplace learning.

In the following section, I examine the development of norms of collaboration and collegiality and their relevance to teachers' professional development.

## **2 Norms of collegiality and collaboration**

The development of collaboration and collegiality are often advocated as important for enhancing teachers' development. Norms of collegiality and collaboration allow teachers to learn from one another, sharing and developing their expertise together. It is indicated that as a consequence of teachers' collegial interactions, teachers increase their confidence that leads to greater readiness to experimentation and risk taking, and with it a continuous improvement among them (Hargreaves, 1994). Hargreaves argues that the collective responsibility of teachers to implement centrally defined curriculum places even greater emphasis on the development of collegiality and collaboration at the school level.

Little (1987) argues that norms of collegiality and experimentation are important to successful school change. Rosenholtz (1990) reveals that staff development programs are more successful in schools in which a strong sense of collegiality and a commitment to change have become norms. Teachers are likely to feel competent if they have good professional partnerships with colleagues, and possess strong instructional skills.

The creation of productive and supportive collegial relationships among teachers has long been seen as a prerequisite for effective school-based curriculum development. Benefits of collaboration and collegiality for organisational health and effectiveness include the improvement of teachers' morale and job satisfaction, and ensuring teachers benefit from their experiences and continue to grow throughout their careers. Success of school improvement, curriculum reform, teacher development and leadership development also depends on the building of positive collegial relationships (Hargreaves, 1994)

There is a need for increased collegiality and collaboration among teachers in this age of rapid change and complex technology, as teachers have to cope with increased work demands and uncertainties. Wildman and Niles (1987) indicate that learning to teach is a complex, time-consuming and difficult process, for the teacher has to cope with the cognitive as well as emotional demands. A collaborative work environment provides a condition for learning that addresses both problems that arise in complex learning. Little (1982) and Shulman (1987) also suggest that participation in cooperative collegial groups can expand teachers' level of expertise by supplying a source of intellectual provocation and new ideas. Additionally, collaboration breaks the grip of psychological isolation from other adults that characterises the teacher's work place (Sarason, 1971), and creates a forum for teachers to publicly test their models and ideas about teaching (Lortie, 1975). Hargreaves indicates that in the context of increased uncertainty, teachers are starting to turn more to each other for professional learning and consultation. This collective style of working enables teachers to share both resources

and responsibility in response to increasing work demands (Hargreaves, 1997).

### **3 Theories of adult informal learning and teachers' learning in the workplace learning**

The investigation of the relationship between teacher collaboration and their professional development is based on theories of adult informal learning. They are Marsick and Watkins' (1990) incidental learning theory, organisational socialisation theory, Schunk's social learning theory, and Vygotskian sociocultural theory, which examine relationships between specific dimensions of social and cultural environment and adult learning. Marsick and Watkins (1990) indicate that teachers' learning can be enhanced by a collaborative school culture, therefore, creating collective learning opportunities that encourage the free exchange of ideas among teachers is important for developing teachers' capacity in critical reflection, creativity, proactive thinking and learning (Smylie, 1995).

Incidental learning, according to Marsick and Watkins' (1990) definition, is a by-product of some other activity, such as task accomplishment or interpersonal interaction. It takes place in everyday experience and occurs under conditions of surprise and non-routine circumstances. Individuals' learning capacities are enhanced by participation in organisational decision making, shared authority and power, and opportunities for collective examination of individual and institutional expectations and beliefs, with regard to the practice of teaching.

Organisational socialisation is the process by which individual is taught and learns about a particular organisation and his or her role in

that organisation. It is also a process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to perform the role well (Hager, 1996). Individuals develop an understanding of organisational reality through work role performance and interaction with co-workers (Louis, 1990). The workplace environment that encourages the development of organisational socialisation is dependent upon the provision of greater choice in work, freedom from close supervision, individuals experience with complex, non-routine, and challenging tasks, and the opportunities to be involved in self-guided, informal, experiential, or incidental learning.

Schunk's (1990) theory of social learning suggests that creating a collegial environment with opportunities for teacher to interact with colleagues, to observe and discuss important issues in relation to teachers' work and practice is essential for teachers' development. Schunk (1991) in his social learning theory indicates that much human learning is grounded in social context. Individuals develop knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs and attitude by observing and interacting with others. Individuals also learn values, attitudes and behaviours by assessing the consequences of other's actions as well as their own. Schunk suggests that individuals' learning is enhanced when given opportunities to observe the performances, successes and failures of others, and provided with specific feedback about their performances and consequences.

Vygotskian sociocultural approach (Smylie, 1995) also indicates that interaction between teachers, as well as between them and the social and cultural environment, are crucial for teachers' conceptual change. Sociocultural approaches to learning and development were first systematised and applied by Vygotsky and his collaborators. They are

based on the concept that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Vygotsky conceptualised development as the transformation of socially shared activities into internal processes. Contemporary research supports the sociocultural claim that the relationships between individuals forms a basis for cognitive and linguistic mastery. In explaining the importance of the context of joint-activities in the construction of knowledge, Vygotsky indicates that there needs to be extended opportunity for discussion and problem-solving in which meaning and action are collaboratively constructed and negotiated. He emphasises that whether in the learning of a young child or in the activities of experienced thinkers, internalization is the fundamental part of the life-long process of the coconstruction of knowledge and the creation of the new (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

The study adopted the assumptions made in the adult informal learning theories, which indicate that the social context, and the opportunity to interact and participate in joint activities with colleagues are important for teachers' conceptual change. Individuals' learning is enhanced when given opportunities to observe and discuss important issues with colleagues. In particular, Vygotskian sociocultural approach which emphasises the interaction between individuals and between them and the social environment are important for the internalisation of socially shared learning experiences and the construction of knowledge, which provide important theoretical basis for the investigation of this study.

From the theoretical perspectives, I develop the following research questions for the investigation of the relationship between teacher collaboration and teachers' professional development and learning in the next section of Part three.

## B RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE INVESTIGATION

There are seven research questions that guide the investigation of this study.

- 1 What are the forms of teacher collaboration in the school under investigation?
- 2 To what extent do teachers' perceptions of collaborative work practices impact on their professional development and learning?
- 3 To what extent does the following aspects of collaborative school culture foster teachers' professional development and learning?
  - norms of collegiality, support and trust
  - collaborative working relationships among teachers
- 4 How do the following leadership factors encourage teachers' professional development and learning?
  - the nature of school leadership
  - the actions of school leaders
  - the roles and practices of school leaders
- 5 In what ways do feedback, joint-planning, and problem-solving contribute to teachers' professional growth?

- 6 To what extent do teachers' involvement in collaborative projects assist in both teachers' professional growth and learning and students' learning?
- 7 How does participation in school decision making process contribute to teachers' professional development and learning?

## C THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The data collected from teachers and administrators indicate different ways in which collaborative practices among teachers, teachers' perception of the value of collaborative practices, the collegial school environment, the role of leadership, the provision of feedback, and participation in the school decision making, dialogue with colleagues, joint-planning and problem-solving, have impacted on their professional development and learning.

### 1 The nature and forms of collaborative work

The findings indicate that the nature of interaction among teachers, the ways they collaborate with one another, and the extent to which they assume shared responsibility for the development of a learning environment, are important for their own professional development and the improvement of the school.

#### 1.1 The formal and informal forms of teachers' collaboration

The organisational structures facilitated teacher collaboration in providing individual or groups of teachers the opportunity to participate regularly in collaborative work. Teachers were encouraged to participate in the school decision-making and problem-solving

process through attending committee meetings and the year-level forum. A majority of teachers participated in at least one of the decision making committees in the school. As a result of involvement and participation in the school decision making, teachers felt a sense of professionalism, empowerment, and job satisfaction. They also felt that they were consulted, respected, listened to, and valued as part of the wider school community.

One of the teachers indicated her experience in the school decision making:

All staff are invited to be part of the school decision making. There has always been discussion...so whether it's through staff meeting or committees, I've never had to say "well, why is this happening when we haven't been consulted?" So, it is very much open, all discussion are open for the staff to respond to. (IT1)

Another teacher indicated benefits of participation in the school decision making:

It is about the rapport and inclusivity, it is important about uniting a whole staff about a whole range of things, and it's also important for the organisation as well, and for communication, so that everybody gets the same information at the same time. So, from a practical point of view, it is an essential things and you must be aware that there is an input and every learning area is valued or every year level is valued, and so being able to have that input is something that I really enjoy doing...I like to have input and I'm really happy that I have these roles, because I get a tremendous amount of professional satisfaction of being able to have that input, and have that listened and respected. (IT3)

Teachers' collaboration was also being organised in an informal way through teachers' own initiatives. The collaborative practices that were

initiated by a group of teachers to work collaboratively among themselves on curriculum planning or in association with specialists from outside the school on collaborative projects, were supported and funded by the school leader..

The teacher indicated:

There are also informal ways and that's probably not as easy to describe, but just as important from my own experience. Telling the principal that you've got an idea to do something, her response is always encouraging and positive and more of the 'can-do' approach, so most of those are group initiatives. (IT3)

## 1.2 The voluntary efforts of teachers

One teacher in this study perceived collaboration as drawing on teachers' strength through working together as a team, but not compulsorily or because of being imposed by the school administration. She indicated that team work was likely to occur if members of staff had an interest or saw the obvious benefits of collaboration with colleagues. When teachers were working as teams within a year level or across year levels, it happened because it was the voluntary effort and commitment of individual teachers or a group of teachers.

The teacher indicated:

Teamwork is not something imposed or expected...yeah...so if the staff have an interest or see the obvious benefits then it will happen...so setting up team right across the school isn't happening now, given the mix and blend of staff that we have...its more of a shared praxis at the moment, but within that there are year levels, where three or four people work together as teams, because it is their style of working, but its

not just a finger waving saying you must work collaboratively. (IT1)

### **1.3 Joint-planning of curriculum work**

Teachers usually worked together within a year level, sometimes as a group across year levels or split into smaller groups when doing their joint-planning of curriculum. In the process of this joint exercise, they planned their work together, sequencing the topics in the curriculum, sharing teaching methodologies and resources, and ensuring that there was ongoing continuity for students going from one class to another.

Examples of teachers' views on joint-planning of curriculum:

Joint-planning happens within year levels, but works best if teachers share common approaches and methodologies. (Q)

Joint-planning is happening in an informal way. Subject meetings tend to focus on administrative matters rather than professional development. This is addressed by attending work group meetings. (Q)

Usually we work together in year levels. What we have done this year is that we have had the R-4s, Reception to year 4 working as a group and then the 5s, 6s, and 7s, working as a group...so we have sort of split ourselves into two, sometimes three groups where you collaboratively plan, sequencing the work, the topic, the curriculum so that there is that ongoing continuity for the girls going from one class to another. (IT1)

#### **1.4 Collaborating with the school librarians**

Another form of teacher collaboration involved working collaboratively with the librarian. When planning a unit of work, teachers usually worked closely with the librarian. The process of collaboration would begin with identifying the key areas for students' learning. Then the teachers and librarian involved collaborate to produce a unit of study by using the resources in the library, and presented it in the form of guidebook as resources to be used for students' learning.

The teacher indicated:

When I am working on a unit, I usually work closely with the librarian. She is able to direct me to the resources in the library, we work out what areas we are going to look at. She does her own research, and I do mine. We get our heads together and plan a unit around the resources we actually had in the library. We put it together, and present it in the workbook form. (IT2)

#### **1.5 Collaborating with specialists from outside the school**

Other forms of collaboration involved using outside expertise to work collaboratively with teachers in a project. One teacher was involved in starting an Internet Newspaper project. The project had full support from the principal, and funding was provided. This project was originally initiated by a teacher who was interested in organising an Internet Newspaper, and the teacher in this study was invited to collaborate in the project. This project was set up with the direct involvement of two teachers and a journalist from outside the school to work with them once a week. With the financial funding and moral support from the principal and a group of teachers who shared

common goals and interests in this particular area, this project had been running for three years since it was started.

The success of this project was partly due to the fact that teachers involved in this project were like-minded, organised, inspired, able to spark off each other, and able to complement each other in skills and strength. Support and funding from the principal and the cooperation of a group of teachers who were not directly involved in the project, also contributed to the success of this project. As a result of collaboration, teachers who were involved in this project had a sense of reward and achievement, because it was a project that they had developed and chosen to do, rather than being imposed externally on them.

The teacher indicated:

I coordinate an internet newspaper that we have a journalist in residence that comes in once a week and its a project that has been ongoing now for past nearly three years. I think that the success of our collaboration has a lot to do with the fact that we think in very similar ways and that we work by sparking off each other...so by working with someone who is like-minded and is inspired and you see a fabulous result of a project...really does give you a very rewarding sense of what collaboration is. I think it was also successful because it was a project that we developed, it wasn't something that we had to do, it was something that we chose to do, and I think that that makes a big difference to the success of a project.  
(IT3)

## **2 Teachers' perception of collaborative work practices and teachers' professional growth and learning**

### **2.1 Teachers valuing the importance of collaborative work practices**

A majority of teachers in this study recognised the importance of collaborative practice to their own professional growth and the improvement of professional practices. However, there were a few teachers who preferred to work on their own. The factors that accounted for their choice of working appeared to be teachers' sense of efficacy, the need for a safe and unthreatening environment, and a full understanding of the objectives and desired outcomes of the collaborative work.

One teacher in this study indicated that he/she would be willing to share his/her experience and knowledge if he/she felt that he/she had had success in that particular area. Another teacher indicated that he/she would share ideas or give information if he/she felt that he/she was valued, safe from negative criticism, and the information and resources he/she had produced would be used constructively. A teacher emphasised that he/she liked to run his/her own 'show', however, if he/she was informed about the development, changes and desired outcomes of what was planned, he/she would be more likely to participate in the project. Another teacher preferred to have a balance between collaborative work from which one could draw on the experience and ideas from colleagues, and the ability to personalise, and make changes in order to achieve the agreed outcome in his/her personal style of working. These particular examples indicating the circumstances which would affect teachers' choice of working, demonstrated the fact that although teachers perceived the

collaborative style of working was valuable to their professional development and learning, their involvement in collaborative practices depended on certain individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors, such as sense of efficacy, self-esteem, compatibility among team members, a secure and collegial work environment, and a need for balancing the collaborative and personal style of working in order to achieve the desired outcomes of the particular project.

Teachers indicated their perceptions on collaborative practices:

I am willing to collaborate if I am asked to share my experience and knowledge in an area where I feel I have had success. (Q)

It is important for me to feel valued and safe from negative criticism when giving information or sharing ideas. (Q)

When I feel that the information or resources I've produced will be used constructively. (Q)

I like running my own 'show'. However, I also like working with others, if I am kept informed about development, changes and desired outcomes that are being planned. (Q)

I like a balance between collaborative work, drawing on others' experience and ideas, and the ability to personalised, make changes to achieve agreed outcomes in own style. (Q)

## **2.2 Socialising new staff into the collaborative style of working**

The development of a collaborative work culture depends to a large extent on the collective efforts of the whole staff to practice the collaborative style of working, sharing the same purposes and interests, and the efforts in socialising new staff into the existing work culture in the school. Inducting new staff into understanding the collaborative style of working of other staff members was important

for the new members to fit well into the work culture of the school. The efforts that had to be made to get to know each other, to work well as a group within year levels or across year levels were vital to teachers' progress in professional practices and learning.

The teacher indicated:

We have had a big turn around of staff this year, so unless at the beginning of the year, the efforts that we have made to get to know each others, to work well together with year levels or across year levels...it would very difficult, very isolating for them. (IT1)

We, certainly with the amount of new staff that we have had, being very much focussed together, working as teams...we don't call them team as such, we talk about collaborative work. But it is difficult unless you have everyone focussed in the right direction and wanting to do the same thing and seeing the value of it for the team, and how that will also benefit the students. (IT1)

### **2.3 A valuable experience in expanding knowledge, generating new ideas, and broadening outlooks on the practice of teaching**

One teacher indicated that collaborative work provided a valuable experience in that it helped in extending knowledge, developing new ideas and creativity, and enabling teachers to work more effectively in presenting work topic to students. She valued collaborative work opportunity for which she was able to share ideas with colleagues, and complementing each other's ways of working. Involving in collaborative work also helped in stimulating divergent points of view, providing different perspectives, and broadening her view and outlooks on the different approaches other teachers might be using in their teaching. In particular, collaborative work experience helped to develop her as a resourceful and competent teacher.

The teacher indicated:

I do think working in collaboration with colleagues is important, if it was just me doing it, then it would be my narrow view that I presenting something. It's important that we share ideas, bounce off each other. I might be thinking of a particular way of doing something that might not be productive in another way. (IT2)

I value that experience for being able to share other people's ideas, not just relying on me own ideas, so it takes me out of myself a bit, or a lot really, and encourages me to look at things differently, and broadens my outlook on the ways I might be putting the units together, the ways I might be presenting it, and other teachers have gathered their own materials that I can share with as well. It's certainly valuable from that experience, it helps me to develop as a teacher. (IT2)

#### **2.4 Acknowledging teachers' efforts and contributions to collaborative work**

One teacher indicated that in the process of collaborative work, teachers working in teams were able to put in the shared energy and efforts, and sharing concerns and responsibility for the outcomes of team work. Teachers' involvement and efforts in collaborative work were acknowledged and celebrated by the school authority. The acknowledgment of individuals or group of teachers in their efforts toward contributing to the preparation and success of collaborative work, contributed to their sense of rewards that would promote their continuing efforts toward collaboration.

The teacher indicated:

What we tend to do here at school is celebrate and publicly acknowledge the effort of groups of people and individuals within those groups, so there is an acknowledgment that

that's been done effectively and the result of that teamwork is very much celebrated and not overlooked, and which then of course engenders people to go and do other things or repeat things as well so it gathers momentum in terms of those things. (IT3)

## **2.5 An opportunity to reflect and modify teachers' own practices**

One teacher indicated that involvement in collaborative work with colleagues provided an opportunity to learn how other teachers approached the planning of work, to reflect on different ways of doing things, and to have a chance to modify or improve her own practices. The benefits of collaborative work included saving time, being able to plan more efficiently, and helped in creating new programmes, ideas or activities, and benefited students' learning.

The teacher indicated:

I think that it is as much as a sounding board as well. So we plan this unit together on Australian Studies, it really did work for me because my strength wasn't geography, so how do I do it better, that sounding board is for me important. Time to reflect...so that for me is probably the most valuable part. (IT1)

Working together always saves time, makes planning more efficient, so you are not sort of reinventing the wheel each time, creating new programs or ideas, or activities...But...I think that students benefit enormously as well. (IT1)

## **2.6 Having input in and control of the outcomes and process of collaborative work**

Participating in collaborative work provided teachers an opportunity to have input and increased responsibility in decision making with regard to the process and directions of group work. Collaborative work

also enabled group members to have a control of the outcomes of the work project, thereby engendering a sense of ownership for the project.

The teacher indicated:

I participated in various groups, that required me to give my input for decisions. For example, in a small project on the Internet Newspaper, I have a lot more say like my decision and my input counts for more, because it's a project that I own-and that means that I virtually have total control in the process and the outcomes, within obvious budget limits.  
(IT3)

## **2.7 Teachers' sense of empowerment**

Teachers who had participated in the school committee meetings indicated that as a result of collaboration with colleagues, they felt a sense of empowerment because they were listened to and respected. In the process of team work, teachers were willing to debate, and put forward alternative strategies or different ideas of doing things. Teachers realised that although individual teachers had a significant role in the process of collaborative work, the keys to the success of team work were the readiness of the teachers to be involved, and the collaborative efforts and contributions of team members.

The year-level coordinator indicated:

In a year level situation, I find that that groups of the primary, year 8,9,10,11, and 12 year level coordinators that work with the Deputy to be very significant in terms of the way the school is run. It's more the mechanics and the process of the school and so when events happen and when we are planning events and when we approach things as a school, each one of us is more than happy, and often we do, debate or put forward alternative strategies or ways of doing things and I definitely feel listened to and respected in that

group. We have a structure in our meetings where the first part of it is we reflect on particular issues which are happening in each of our year levels, so we learn from each other, we give each other ideas. (IT3)

## **2.8 Teachers' sense of belonging and equality in being part of the school decision making process**

In the process of collaborative work, teachers were able to learn from one another, to share ideas, and reflecting on particular issues. They discussed and agreed upon certain actions that needed to be taken, but the final decisions would be made by the school principal. Because of the collaborative style of decision making, every staff member had the opportunity to have an input into the decision making. This collaborative style of decision making provided teachers a feeling of being part of the school community, and also a sense of equality which were important to the success of collaborative work.

The teacher indicated:

When you see that the decisions that you had an input in for a particular event or a problem that was school wide, you realise that...well the role that I had is very significant...so it's not just my ideas, it's a very collaborative effort there and also in terms of evaluating when things that are going to happen in school. (IT3)

## **2.9 Teachers' sense of responsibility and self-worth**

As a result of involvement in the committee meetings, teachers felt a sense of self-worth for being able to make recommendations, and contribute to school decision making. Teachers also felt a sense of responsibility, because they were representing a group of teachers in the faculty and putting forward the perspective of the faculty in the process of school decision making. Having the opportunity to

communicate with other teachers, and the chance to listen to other people's ideas and suggestions, were important aspects of collaborative work that helped to promote teachers' professional growth.

The year-level coordinator indicated:

As a curriculum coordinator...we tend to get a little bit more instruction from the curriculum deputy about when things need to be done. But you can make recommendations and again at curriculum committee meetings, I am very aware that I speak for a broad range of people in a broad faculty...so I am contributing to that meeting but I'm also putting forward the perspective that my faculty has and I think...you know...It's interesting in that meeting that there are times when you do see how other faculties work and you learn from them and they learn from you. As much as everybody hates meetings you know...if you didn't have those meetings, there would be very little contact between the key people in the learning areas as well...so having the communication and getting the chance to listen and basically share ideas with other people I think is really important. (IT3)

### **3 The collaborative school culture and teachers' professional growth and learning**

The school culture functions as an underlying force that helps to promote the understanding, receptiveness, and cohesion of the school members as they work toward the common goals and mission of the school. In a collaborative school culture, teachers plan instruction together, sharing ideas with one another, and they do not hesitate to seek help from other teachers, the principal or parents when they faced with instructional or administrative problems. In a collegial school environment, teacher leaders are identified (Louis & Smith,

1990) as those who promote and help to improve instructional practices of colleagues.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) argue that in a collaborative school culture where teachers are keen to share ideas with colleagues, there is more workplace learning occurring than in an individualistically oriented culture. The teacher community in which teachers subscribe to norms of ongoing professional growth and learning, collegiality and professional interaction, according to Talbert and McLaughlin (1990), promotes a context for teachers' learning. They argue that teacher communities foster shared knowledge base for teaching, set professional standards for practice, and engender shared commitment to meet students' learning needs and the work of the school.

### **3.1 Norms of collegiality, support and trust**

The school in this study adopted a collegial mode of policy and leadership. The school leaders recognised that each staff member had particular strength and expertise to make a contribution. The school community shared a common belief that 'we are all in it together.' There appeared to be norms of collegiality, support and trust among teachers in the school community in which staff were supportive, cooperative, pleased to help, non-judgemental, and willing to share ideas and resources with colleagues.

One of the teachers responded:

Collegial support and the sharing of ideas happen in a good will, ad hoc manner at the initiatives of teachers. It is helpful to be able to discuss ideas, and this is of enormous value when in the process of making difficult decisions. (Q)

Another teacher indicated:

I feel supported and encouraged by my colleagues, and free to discuss any relevant issues with them. It has the most significant impact on my teaching practice through the sharing of resources and ideas. It is good to have some colleagues who I can 'bounce' ideas from. (IT2)

The principal indicated:

Through interviews that I have with every staff member in August, I always gain new knowledge and insight from them. (IP)

### **3.2 Excellent working relationships among staff**

There were excellent working relationships among staff in the ways that they worked together in planning courses, researching, and in sharing workload, ideas and informations. Teachers in this study indicated that the sharing of ideas helped in making difficult decisions, solving problems, and benefited their teaching practices.

There was evidence that the sharing of ideas among colleagues helped to generate new ways of doing things, and to expand knowledge in different areas, which led to the improvement of teaching practices. Colleagues were willing to provide intellectual assistance and moral support when teachers had trouble in understanding or implementing a new teaching strategy or a section of work, or in need of assistance in the organisation of functions, events, or the planning and preparation of unit of work.

Seeking and offering of assistance and advice with regard to the practice of teaching were frequently occurred among teachers. Staff members were seen to be supportive, non-judgemental, open-minded and unselfish in the sharing of ideas and resources that helped in creating collaborative working relationships which were identified as

characteristics of effective schools indicated in research studies (Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Examples of teachers' comments are:

Teachers are cooperative and helpful when I have trouble in understanding a section of work. (Q)

Working together to develop units of work serves as a sounding board and it usually generates something by way of improvement or resolution. (Q)

It is quite noticeable that staff are very supportive of one another. They are pleased to help, non-judgemental, and very unselfish in the sharing of resources. There are excellent communications among staff. (Q)

I realised that everyone has special areas of expertise, the sharing of ideas helps one to expand knowledge in different areas. Keeping an open mind helps in one's development in teaching areas and working relationships. (Q)

#### **4 Leadership support and teachers' professional growth and learning**

Little (1985) and Leithwood (1999) argue that school leaders facilitate teachers' learning through informal interaction, assuming the role of facilitators by way of offering assistance, training and advice to colleagues. The strategies that school leaders can use for facilitating teachers' learning include proposing ideas for joint work, identifying topics or problems that deserve attention, passing on information from research journal and other sources, and helping to achieve a collaborative solution to the problems (Little, 1985).

According to McLaughlin (1990), the school-level leadership is important to the support and benefit of teachers' professional growth. School principals are responsible for establishing the norms, values,

and expectations essential for teachers' professional development. Establishing a school structure that involves measures for teachers to receive feedback about their performance, to interact with colleagues, and exchange information about their students, their own practices, and practices in other classroom, has the potential to maximise opportunities and resources for the professional growth and learning of teachers.

This study discovered that an open and supportive school leader who is committed to providing opportunities and assistance for staff professional development contributed to the extension of teachers' knowledge, skills and expertise in the practice of teaching. It also helped in enhancing the capability of staff members to be involved in expanded roles and responsibilities that would promote the development of teacher leadership.

#### **4.1 An open, supportive and committed school leadership**

Teachers indicated that the school management team consisted of excellent leaders with strong leadership skills. The school leaders were supportive, open, accessible, and willing to both listen and provide assistance. The principal in particular was also an excellent leader, very progressive in her thinking and style of leadership, very supportive and committed to providing opportunities and assistance for staff professional development which contributed to enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and the improvement of practices.

One of the teachers indicated:

The principal is an excellent leader, very progressive in her thinking, supportive and committed to providing assistance where necessary. (IT3)

The faculty leadership is a strong force in providing leadership support and assistance. I have enjoyed support and assistance from the leaders in the sense that they have always shown confidence in my ability to carry out my responsibilities. (IT3)

Another teacher indicated:

School leadership supports teachers' professional development in the form of funding and encouragement. Payment of registration means I have been able to attend many professional development sessions. (IT2)

#### **4.2 Moral support, personal encouragement and assistance**

The school leadership provided support for teachers' professional development in the form of personal encouragement, and the provision of funding for staff to attend in-service courses or workshops. The principal was supportive of any ideas to improve classroom practices. The moral support and encouragement from the school leaders were essential for carrying on tasks and implementing new practices.

Examples of teachers' comments are:

Leadership support is crucial to a feeling of confidence, and to the development of opportunities for professional learning. (Q)

Leadership is supportive of any ideas to improve classroom practices. This is essential for carrying on tasks. (Q)

Deputies and faculty heads are open, accessible and willing to both listen and help. There have been practical outcomes to requests and problems and it is crucial to job-satisfaction. (Q)

It is important to have a team of people who are understanding and supportive of all staff. (Q)

### **4.3 Leadership role in developing and extending teachers' skills and understanding**

One of the deputy principals emphasised that the value of collaborative work could not be underestimated. The opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process, being able to make a contribution, and valued for that contribution were important aspects of personal self-worth. The school leaders needed to recognise these aspects of staff professional growth and be able to direct teachers' enthusiasm and expertise into the specific areas that would allow them to make their best contribution. One of the important aspects of leadership role was the need to help develop teachers' capability, and to extend teachers beyond what they thought they were capable of doing. To this effect, the school had provided ample opportunities for staff to participate in seminars, workshops or conferences for the updating of professional knowledge and to extend the abilities and expertise of teachers for taking on more challenging and specific roles.

The deputy principal indicated:

In most educational activities, there is a degree of collaboration that is needed, and the perceived value of teamwork and collaboration can't be underestimated. It is one of the most important aspects of your own personal self-worth...because every person wants to make a contribution and they want to be valued for that contribution...and I think that a leader needs to recognise that, they need to be able to grab people, and get them to extend beyond that-so they can grow themselves. So if you need something done and you have a great person who's always very good at doing artwork, don't just get them to do the artwork, get them to do something else, because otherwise they will always do the artwork, but they need to extend beyond that, they need to do other things (IDP)

The teacher indicated:

The school has set up necessary days or time for the staff to up-date professional knowledge through seminars, workshops or conferences, to extend abilities and expertise of teachers in specific areas. (Q)

#### **4.4 Involving teachers in the school's decision making and problem-solving processes**

The principal indicated that she valued team work. She believed that involving teachers in the school decision making was absolutely essential since the decisions to be made would have an impact on teachers' lives. In the process of making a policy or planning an event, it was her conviction that it was always beneficial to involve more people in the decision making. If people had been involved in the decision making, then they would more likely support the decision they had helped to make, and the implementation would be easy; otherwise, they would feel alienated from the outcomes, and the implementation of the policy or change might not proceed smoothly. The principal emphasised that while it was important to involve people in problem-solving and decision making, it was also important that at some point in the process, the consultation finished, and the executive team was left to make the final decisions. The final decisions would then be related to the whole staff for them to make any comment.

The principal indicated:

The value of teamwork is absolutely essential, particularly if it involved important areas that had an impact on their lives, and so if something has been planned, the more people that can get involved in it the better - because eventually a decision will be made, and if people have

involved in making the decision, they will support it and the implementation will be easy. So if people are engaged in the decision making process, they will be supportive of the outcome, even if it's not exactly what they wanted. Even if they feel that they haven't been consulted, but if they know that others have had an opportunity to put forward a point of view, they will be supportive of it. (IP)

So it's very important that people get involved in problem-solving, but it's also important that at some point in the process, the consultation finishes and the decision comes back into here, where together with the executive team, we make the final decision, because otherwise if it's too democratic, it can go round and round and people get very frustrated. Generally the staff would be very supportive. So we would then give that decision back to the whole staff and we would invite them to make comment about the final decision. (IP)

## **5 Feedback, joint-planning and problem-solving and teachers' professional growth**

Hargreaves (1992) argues that teachers construct their pedagogical knowledge through working collaboratively with colleagues in the forms of joint planning, group problem-solving, participating in research and decision making, giving and receiving of feedback, sharing of ideas, information and materials, or acting as mentors to colleagues and coaching others. It is in the context of actually doing the job that the teacher practices and develops teaching skills and acquires and consolidates knowledge.

Guskey (1995) indicates that if the implementation of the new practice is to be successful, and changes are to endure, individual teachers need to receive feedback regularly on the effects of their efforts. Feedback can be provided in the forms of coaching and assistance by resource

personnel, consultants or colleagues. They can provide practical on-the-job assistance by guiding teachers to adapt new practices to their unique contextual conditions, and helping them to analyse the effects of their efforts on the implementation of new practices.

The opportunities for teachers to engage in joint-planning, problem-solving are important for developing the practical knowledge that is needed for the improvement of practices. Shanker (1990) suggests that collegial interaction among teachers that allows them to discuss, observe, analyse, and study problems together as a group, is important for teachers' learning and professional growth. A school that emphasises the importance of continuous examination of practices, will provide adequate time for teachers to plan and discuss pedagogical and organisational issues.

McLaughlin and Yee (1988) emphasise the importance of problem-solving for teachers' learning. They suggest that in a problem-solving environment, there is a strong sense of group purpose that encourages teachers to reflect on their practices, and exploring ways to improve it on ongoing basis. A problem-solving environment assumes constant change and revision as the norms, and thus establishes conditions central to promoting teachers professional growth and learning.

Teachers in this study indicated that positive and non-judgemental feedback, as well as the opportunity to participate in joint-planning and group problem-solving, helped in boosting morale, self-esteem, and sense of efficacy. The provision of feedback assisted in their learning, especially in time when they felt uncertain about the implementation of new practices.

### **5.1 Positive and non-judgemental feedback in boosting teachers' morale and modifying their work practices**

The school had a supportive and collegial culture which enhanced teachers' development and learning. Teachers in this study valued the importance of feedback to their professional development and learning. Feedback from colleagues was usually encouraging, positive and non-judgemental. Many teachers felt that feedback from colleagues was invaluable for the improvement of their practices for it allowed them to make modifications to their own practices. Feedback boosted teachers' morale, especially at times when they felt uncertain about a particular issue or a teaching unit. They felt that feedback could be challenging when it was negative, but it was more often a time for learning. One teacher suggested that feedback on a regular basis was necessary for providing assurance and guidance in relation to her classroom practices.

Teachers' comments on the importance of feedback:

Feedback is very useful, especially at time when one is feeling uncertain about a particular issue or a teaching unit. It can be challenging but is more often a time of learning. (Q)

Feedback from colleagues is paramount to any successful collaborative program. Feedback meetings at the end of Resource Based Learning units enable us to make modifications if need be. (Q)

Feedback from colleagues is invaluable, as we are able to improve the teaching and learning. It boosts teacher's morale, especially when you've worked on something for a long time. (Q)

Colleagues are supportive with positive comments, often boost enthusiasm and confidence. (Q)

Colleagues are very keen to help and give positive and constructive advice. Feedback are positive and non-judgemental. (Q)

Feedback is very important for learning. It would be nice to receive feedback on a more regular basis. It gives assurance that we are doing the right thing, providing guidance on the direction we should be heading. (Q)

## **5.2 The importance of joint-planning in breaking down teachers' isolation and the improvement of practices**

Joint-planning happened within year levels, and it worked best if teachers, working together, shared the common approaches and methodologies in their teaching practices. At the beginning of the year, there was joint-planning for each year level in order to work out different themes and objectives for students' learning. Teachers in this study recognised that joint-planning was vital to breaking down the isolation that teachers generally experienced in their job, and improving their performance in teaching practices. However, they felt that it was difficult to find time for joint-planning in their busy work schedules. Teachers indicated that joint-planning provided an opportunity to share ideas, and reducing their work loads. Joint-planning was likely to have positive results when team members shared the same purposes and interests in the work project, or teaching the same subjects. It was indicated that joint-planning was useful in situations where curriculum was changing, and a new emphasis was occurring.

Examples of teachers' comments are:

Joint-planning provides a great opportunity to hearing other people's ideas. It also helps to lesson the load of having to do it all alone. (Q)

We are fairly open to each other. Joint-planning happens within year levels, but works best if teachers working together share common approaches and methodologies. (IT1)

Joint-planning focussing on different themes and objectives is worked out for each year level at the beginning of the year. It is vital for all classroom practices, but it is difficult to find time for this in busy schedules. (IT1)

Joint-planning is very important for teachers teaching the same subject. It has always featured significantly in the subject I have taught, and in non-teaching tasks, such as year level coordination. It is very useful especially when curriculum is changing or when new emphasis is occurring. (Q)

### **5.3 Teachers feeling less pressured and more enthusiastic about teaching**

Involvement in joint-planning of work had made teachers feel less pressured and more enthusiastic about curriculum delivery. It engendered in them a sense of shared responsibility rather than the feeling of taking it all on themselves. Teachers in this study felt that if they have the opportunity to do joint-planning with colleagues, there would be more sharing of information, experience and resources that would result in the improvement of their teaching practices. However, due to the busy schedules of their work, they had limited time to be involved in joint-planning with colleagues.

The teacher indicated:

I have been involved in a small amount of joint-planning of curriculum with colleagues, and I would like to have more involvement, but the school day is too busy and we have limited time to be involved in joint-planning. I feel more enthusiastic about curriculum delivery when planning work

with colleagues. I also feel less pressured with a sense of shared responsibility rather than taking it all on myself. There is more sharing of information on resources and experience in joint-planning. (Q)

#### **5.4 Continuity, relevance and enjoyment in teachers' work**

One teacher in this study indicated that joint-planning provided continuity, relevance and enjoyment for both teachers and students. It contributed to the sharing of workload and resources, allowing them to make personal changes to suit the unique context of individual classes. It was indicated that planning days were occasionally provided, but most collaborative planning occurred in teachers' own time.

Teachers expressed their views on joint-planning of work:

Joint-planning of units of work contributes to the sharing of workload, resources and making personal changes to suit your own class. (Q)

We always plan together in all teaching and extra-curricular activities. This provides continuity, relevance and enjoyment for ourselves and students. Planning days are occasionally provided, but most collaborative planning occurs in teachers' own time. (IT1)

#### **5.5 Teachers' learning new strategies, and improving collegial relationships**

The year level forum is an important feature of the school organisational structures that allow teachers to be involved in the process of problem-solving. Problems in the implementation of school policy and process were identified at year level forums. Involvement in the process of problem-solving helped teachers in learning new strategies from others with respect to how to deal with a particular issue. It also helped in improving interpersonal

relationships among teachers by providing an opportunity for teachers to be open to different opinions, to be able to accept the differences between colleagues, and learning to value the talents, strengths and weaknesses of other people.

Teachers' comments on the values of group problem-solving:

Involving in group problem solving helps me to learn how to process a particular problem, to be open to different opinions, to accept the differences between colleagues, and to value the gifts, strengths and weaknesses of people. (IT2)

Discussions are good at year level meetings. Sometimes I learn new strategies from others about how to deal with particular issues. (Q)

I am always amazed by new and creative answers that come from problem-solving. (IP)

## **6 Teachers' involvement in collaborative practices and teachers' professional growth and learning**

Teachers were provided with ample opportunity and support to engage in collaborative projects. Many teachers in this study indicated that they had participated in more than one collaborative project which had helped in developing their skills and competencies in a specific area. The sharing of information and resources among colleagues assisted greatly in the delivery of lessons, and helped them to grow professionally. Teachers also valued the opportunity to work collaboratively with the teacher-librarian in planning, teaching and assessing the unit of work, which enabled them to provide better service to students.

Teachers in this study participated in larger projects, such as the Numeracy Project and the Aboriginal Educational Team which allowed them to work collaboratively with teachers from other schools within the State. These teachers indicated that involving in collaborative projects had benefited them greatly in extending their knowledge, skills and understanding in a particular subject area, and curriculum issues.

Teachers involving in curriculum planning with colleagues indicated that working with colleagues assisted them in their teaching practices and professional learning through the sharing of ideas and sparking off each other's creativity. It also helped in gaining insights into the ways in which other teachers approached their planning, and presenting of topics. Working with colleagues allowed for the emergence of new ideas, and creativity in styles and methods of teaching. It helped in developing teachers' skills, knowledge and competencies, and creating feelings of personal success and acceptance. The involvement in the collaborative work with colleagues also provided an opportunity to exchange information about new teaching methodologies and strategies which would result in better professional knowledge, and more resources for students' learning.

### **6.1 The expansion of knowledge, skills and understanding of curriculum issues**

The sharing of ideas and discussion with colleagues who had undertaken further studies helped teachers in gaining insights into curriculum matters, expanding skills and knowledge in specific areas, and adopting different approaches to deal with particular problem. The free exchange of information among teachers provided intellectual stimulation and new challenge, helped to develop an 'all

in' supportive work environment, and encouraged teachers to grow professionally.

Examples of teachers' comments are:

The opportunities to work collaboratively in a whole range of projects greatly extend knowledge, skills and understanding in a particular subject area, broaden the understanding of curriculum issues. (Q)

Greater understanding of individual problems. New insights gained from the sharing of ideas with colleagues who has undertaken further studies. (Q)

An equal, free exchange of information brings about better workplace knowledge. (Q)

It provides me with constant stimulation and new challenge and encourages me to think outside of my own curriculum area, as a result, my own skills and abilities continue to grow. (Q)

## 6.2 Assisting professional learning and practices

Involvement in collaborative projects contributed to the professional learning of teachers through the presentation of workshops and conferences for others and the discussion and sharing of ideas and with colleagues. Doing teamwork with colleagues also contributed to learning new ideas and approaches to teaching, expanding practical knowledge and skills in problem-solving, developing more resources for students' learning, and fostering a desire to learn more about the students. One teacher indicated that it was difficult to work in isolation, because it tended to be a much slower process. This teacher suggested that the collaborative approach was more challenging and exciting, and helped in gaining insights into better ways of doing things. One of the school leaders mentioned that working together

was important for complementing each other's skills and strengths in a particular area. The evidence from the questionnaire data in which participants responded to the question about their preferred style of working, indicated that many teachers preferred a more collaborative style of working which contributed to the sharing of information and resources, the improved quality of lessons delivery, and encouraged their professional growth.

Examples of these comments are:

Planning curriculum for various year levels and working on school production assist me in my teaching practices and professional learning by sharing ideas and sparking off each other's creativity. It gives me insights into the ways in which teachers in other subject areas approach their planning and presentation of topics. (IT2)

I collaborated with another teacher on the online internet newspaper project which contributes to my professional growth and learning through presenting workshops and conferences in China, and the opportunity to discuss ideas with another teacher. (IT3)

Involvement in collaborative projects such as Justice Initiatives, and Access Asia, allows for the emerging of new ideas, new ways of working, and re-energising. (Q)

Teamwork with colleagues contributes to learning new ideas and methodologies from others, developing new knowledge and more resources, and fostering a desire to learn more about the students because I had someone to discuss the work scenarios. (Q)

Working collaboratively with colleagues in Language Week, Year 10 Day, Language in Campus, and Access Asia, contributes to the sharing of information and resources which assist greatly in the delivery of lessons, and help to grow professionally. (Q)

I am a 'team player' who loves to learn, and I enjoy the stimulation of working with colleagues both in the faculty and in the wider school community. I am open to new ideas which will improve my teaching and benefit my students. (Q)

I am someone who works best by sharing ideas and concerns with others. In leadership roles, I enjoy working with people whose skills complement my own, and it helps to be working with people who have strengths in other areas. (Q)

In recent times, I have taken on board a more collaborative style of working. This tends to be much more efficient and encourages mutual growth. (Q)

My preferred style of working is teaming and sharing ideas. This helps me see better ways of doing things. It is difficult for teachers to learn in isolation for it tends to be a much slower process. I find that collaborative approaches are more challenging and exciting and I am not afraid to share ideas and ask questions. (Q)

### **6.3 Developing a feeling of personal success, acceptance and professional competence**

Teachers indicated that working collaboratively with colleagues not only helped in developing a sense of personal success and professional competence, but also transformed personal character into more flexible, open and receptive.

Examples of teachers' comments are:

Teamwork helps develop my skills, competencies, and feelings of personal success and acceptance. (Q)

The time that I have worked on special projects, and/or as part of a team has greatly assisted my professional knowledge, provided new ideas and methodologies and deepened my professional competence. (Q)

I prefer working collaboratively with colleagues through discussion, joint-planning and sharing of resources. Working in this way, I become more flexible, open and receptive. (Q)

#### **6.4 Creating a supportive learning environment for better workplace knowledge**

Involvement in collaborative practices provided teachers with opportunities to discuss and build on ideas, and developed a feeling of support and collegiality. A strong sense of support and encouragement from colleagues, according to teachers in this study, helped in creating a supportive work environment which encouraged teachers to take on new challenges necessary for their professional growth. Teachers in this study had a feeling of 'all in' in a school community where they were able to share ideas, and often there were better ideas that emerged from the discussion. Teachers were keen to share information and experience with their colleagues, to learn from one another about curriculum planning and classroom practices, seeking advice and assistance from colleagues with expertise in particular areas. It was evident that leadership support and facilitation were necessary for teachers' participation in the process of decision making and joint work in the school.

Examples of teachers' and the principal's comments are:

Coordination in a whole school musical production contributes to having opportunities to share and build on ideas, and a feeling of support and collegiality. (IT2)

Working with a colleague in Art Club, holding afternoon art lessons for both teachers and students, helps create a happy, relaxed learning environment. (Q)

Collaborative involvement gives a feeling of an 'all in' supportive workplace environment. An equal, free exchange of ideas brings about better workplace knowledge. (Q)

The dynamic of working with others can be quite exhilarating, because often better ideas have emerged. (Q)

I am very keen to learn from other teachers about their own perspectives and insights on teaching, curriculum planning, teaching methodology, behaviour management and anything else. I am also open to share my own ideas with other teachers and feel no hesitation in lending my own material and/or resources to colleagues. I am not afraid to seek out advice and assistance from teachers with expertise in certain areas. Whenever I approach other teachers for assistance, they would always willingly take on the job, and together we collaborate effectively on the work project. (IT2)

Nurturing a supportive environment which encourages people to take on new challenges is essential to foster professional growth. (Q)

I enjoy working with a team. I delegate responsibilities whenever possible, allowing others the freedom to operate, but with security that I will support them where needed. (IP)

## **6.5 Assisting in students' learning**

Teachers worked collaboratively with teacher-librarians in developing units of work and teaching resources. They planned, taught and assessed the unit together. After the joint planning, teaching, and assessing of the unit of work had been completed, a feedback session was set up to evaluate the unit, and making necessary changes to improve it. One teacher indicated that working collaboratively as teams was the focus of her faculty in order to support teachers' progress in teaching strategies and students' learning. Collaboration with school librarians in developing unit of work or learning

resources helped to provide better service to students and assisting students to become competent learners and confident users of the library.

Examples of teachers' comments are:

We [in the library] worked collaboratively with the Science faculty to develop a unit of work for year 8 students, introducing research skills in the library. We also worked with two year 8 teachers on a topic named 'Chinese Directions'. We planned, taught, and assessed the unit together. As the unit has been completed, we set up a feedback session with the science teachers to evaluate the unit, making necessary changes to ensure it works better next time. We support the English faculty with regular Book Talks, to foster in students a love of reading, and to broaden students' reading choices. (Q)

Collaboration with teachers enables us to provide better service to students and ensuring that students are taught the skills to locate and use information in the context of a unit of work. By developing students' research skills, we aim to ensure that students become competent and confident users of the library. (Q)

Being very aware of the big change-over which we have had in staff we've had this year, the focus has really been on working collaboratively in our year levels to support teachers' progress in methodologies, and students' learning. (IT2)

## **7 Participating in school decision making process and teachers' professional growth and learning**

Conley (1991) suggests that given the insular nature and physical layout of the school organisation, the infrequent contact and interaction among teachers, teacher collegiality is viewed as the primary benefit for teachers' participation in school decision making.

The need for greater collegial interaction and the exchange of information and ideas constitute another benefit of enhanced teacher participation. Conley (1990) argues that teachers feel the need for interdependence for there are shared purposes and obligations to assist each other, accommodating strengths and weaknesses, improving knowledge, skills and expertise, reducing uncertainties and alleviating stress from high demands of work.

Participation in school decision making, as indicated by teachers in my research study, benefited individual teacher in job satisfaction, boosting morale and self-esteem, and promoting sense of equality, responsibility, and self-worth. Teachers also indicated that participating in school decision making process contributed to a sense of professionalism and empowerment, and helped in building supportive working relationships among colleagues that were essential for creating a collaborative working environment that fostered teachers' professional learning. It also helped to improve teaching practices and professional growth through the sharing of ideas, discussion of teaching practices, and exposure to a wider range of educational issues. Teachers also had the opportunity to provide professional development for colleagues and offering specific programmes for students' learning.

### **7.1 Sense of professionalism and empowerment**

Teachers felt that it was important to feel consulted and to have an input in the school decision making. They felt that working collaboratively in the school community enabled them to make a difference in the work of the school. It allowed them to make recommendations that were acted upon that would enhance their sense of professionalism and empowerment. Teachers generally felt

more valued when involved in decision making, because it provided them an opportunity to voice opinions through discussion with colleagues. Teachers expressed the view that when staff had the opportunity to contribute to the school policies which affected their work lives, they would be more supportive of the policies being made. More importantly, participation in school decision making contributed to a sense of equality and responsibility, and a sense of ownership with regard to school policies, as well as a feeling that one is a part of a wider learning and teaching community. All of which contributed greatly to teachers' job-satisfaction, boosting their morale and self-esteem.

Teachers indicated:

I have been involved in Curriculum Management Committee and various sub-committees, such as Social Justice, Occupational Health and Safety, Training and Development. Working collectively and being able to make a difference in the work of the school, and make recommendations that are acted upon, adds to one's sense of empowerment and professionalism. (Q)

Being involved in decision making in Curriculum Committee, year level coordinators committee, and professional development committee, enables one to voice opinion through discussion with the Principal or Deputies. (Q)

I feel more valued when involved in school decision making, because I am able to contribute to discussion which leads to decision making as I feel so inclined. (Q)

I believe when staff contributes to the policies which directly affect our school day, we will be more supportive of the policies being made. Each argument being aired gives a feeling of openness and goodwill. (Q)

Participation in school decision making contributes to a feeling of belonging and ownership of school policies, and a feeling that one is a part of a wider learning/teaching community. (Q)

## 7.2 Supportive working relationships and mutual understanding

Participating in school decision making helped build supportive working relationships, and greater collegial interactions among teachers through the sharing of ideas, resources and expertise. It also helped to promote greater mutual understanding among teachers. Teachers were able to voice ideas and opinions that they believed would benefit students' learning and the work of the school. It was also believed that building respect and mutual understanding among colleagues, and involving in continued dialogue with colleagues contributed to developing a good, communicative and happy work environment necessary for both teachers' professional learning and students' learning..

Teachers indicated:

Involvement in school decision making helps build positive working relationships with colleagues, and encouraging collegial support and professionalism. (Q)

Being involved in school decision making contributes to opening up dialogue and improving working relationships among colleagues through the sharing of ideas. (Q)

Participation in school decision making assists in continued dialogue among colleagues, and enables to change/adapt school environment for the benefits of staff and students. (Q)

Participation in school decision making contributes to greater mutual understanding, able to voice ideas and opinions that you believe would benefit students. Learning from one another, working together as a team helps build

greater respect. Building respect and understanding among colleagues is important for developing a good, communicative and happy working environment. (Q)

### **7.3 Improved teaching practices and professional growth**

Teachers indicated that involving in the school decision making encouraged additional reading which contributed to own professional growth. Having the opportunity to participate in school decision making allowed the exposure to a broader range of problems that promoted teachers' own professional development. Teachers improved their practice of teaching through sharing of ideas, resources and teaching strategies with colleagues, and discussing issues about the implementation of new practices. Through participative decision making, they were able to learn from one another, knowing what other colleagues were practicing in their own teaching situations, and to try out those which seemed to be useful. As indicated by one teacher in this study, participation in school decision making contributed to gaining a wider perspective on how the school operated, and a more reflective approach to teaching that led to improved teaching practices and professional learning.

Examples of teachers' comments are:

Being involved in decision-making, encourages additional reading and exposure to a broader range of educational issues. (Q)

Being involved in decision-making, provides an opportunity to learn about the ways to improve teaching practices. The sharing of ideas and concerns about teaching practices enable one to learn from others, knowing what others are practicing in their own teaching situations. (IT2)

Participation in school decision-making contributes to improved teaching practices and professional learning as teachers are better informed about new initiatives and directions to trial of new practices. (Q)

Participation in decision-making contributes to increased understanding of other's point of view, and providing opportunities to learn about different methods of teaching practice and ideas, and try out those which seem to be useful. (Q)

Discussion opens up the position of other staff which is important when making informed decisions. One can direct the thrust of both faculty and general practices. (Q)

Involved in school decision-making contributes to keeping up-to-date with latest teaching practices and having many opportunities for professional development in the workplace. (Q)

Participation in school decision-making contributes to getting a wider perspective on how the school runs, and improving teaching practices as a wider understanding leads to a more reflective approach to teaching. This reflective approach also supports our own professional learning. (Q)

I think the decision-making process does actually encourage a collaborative working style, and it does actually help with my own development as a teacher, because I am learning new skills all the time and new ways of managing work. (IT2)

#### **7.4 Enhancing colleague's professional development**

The research data indicated that being involved in the faculty meetings helped teachers in gaining an overview of the decisions being made at a particular year level. Through participating in the school decision making process, teachers were provided with opportunity to assist in the professional development of colleagues

and consequent students' learning in delivering professional development sessions for teachers, and offering the teaching of research skills to students.

The teacher indicated:

Being involved in many faculty meetings provide an overview of decisions being made at particular year level. It provides an opportunity to deliver a professional development session for staff on Information Literacy and the Library and assist in improving students' learning by offering the teaching of research skills within a unit of work.  
(Q)

## D DISCUSSION

Teachers in this study indicated that their involvement in a variety of collaborative activities which included the development of curriculum and unit of work through joint-planning with colleagues, participation in school decision-making and problem-solving, working with specialists from outside the school in collaborative projects, or collaborating with teachers from other schools within the State, were valuable learning experience for them. The opportunity to work with colleagues in joint-planning of curriculum work or collaborative work projects helped to enhance their learning capacity, creativity, the development of insights, and new ways of thinking and managing work.

More than 80% of the teachers who had responded to the open-ended questionnaire expressed the view that they valued the benefits of collaborative practice in the improvement of their practices and professional learning. They reported that collaborative experience

helped in expanding knowledge, generating new ideas, broadening their outlooks on teaching methodologies, and adopting more integrative approach to the practice of teaching. Socialising new staff into the work culture and the climate of the school was important to the creation of a collaborative work environment, which was considered crucial to promoting collaborative efforts among teachers, developing a climate of mutual understanding, support, trust, and respect, and the improvement of practices.

Involvement in collaborative work practice allowed teachers to have input into, and control of, the outcomes and process of work which resulted in increasing teachers' job satisfaction and sense of empowerment. Teachers' efforts and contribution to collaborative work were acknowledged and celebrated by the school leaders who inspired them to put in extra efforts to engage further in collaborative activities. Teachers felt a sense of reward and achievement as a result of celebration of success.

Collaborating with colleagues offered teachers opportunities to communicate with one another, and the chance to listen to other teachers' ideas and suggestions about students' progress and performances which helped in engendering a shared sense of responsibility for students' learning. The sharing of ideas helped teachers in making difficult decisions, generating collective solutions to problems. It also helped in generating new ways of doing things, and expanding knowledge and skills in different areas which would lead to the improved quality of work practices, and providing better service to students.

There was strong evidence indicating that there were excellent working relationships among teachers in the school. The data from the

open-ended questionnaires revealed that 75% of the respondents experienced pedagogical assistance and moral support from colleagues in their daily work situations. Teachers were supportive of one another in terms of sharing teaching experiences, workloads, researching, planning teaching units, and organising events or functions which contributed to improving collegial working relationships. Teachers were seen to be understanding, cooperative, pleased to help, non-judgemental and willing to listen, share ideas and resources which were crucial to developing a cohesive, communicative and positive work environment essential for teachers' growth and learning.

The findings of this study indicated that positive, non-judgemental feedback boosted teachers' morale and self-esteem, and helped in modifying their own practices to the context of individual classrooms. Feedback could be challenging when it was negative, but was more often a time for learning. It was indicated that feedback from colleagues was essential for the successful implementation of collaborative programmes.

Joint-planning was vital to breaking down the isolation that teachers generally experienced in their workplace. Teachers in this study felt confident and more enthusiastic about teaching as a result of joint-planning with colleagues. Joint-planning provided continuity, relevance and enjoyment for teachers' work and students' learning. It contributed to the sharing of workloads, resources and allowing them to adopt a more reflective approach to teaching. In particular, it was indicated that joint-planning with colleagues was useful when there was new emphasis or changes in the curriculum.

The process of problem-solving helped teachers to learn new strategies and approaches to dealing with particular issues. It allowed exposure to a wider range of educational issues that would enhance teachers' own professional development. It also provided opportunities to share informations with colleagues, to consider different ways of doing things, and generating more ideas and different approaches to particular problems or issues. In general, therefore, the findings would indicate that a work situation that offers opportunities for colleagues to debate, discuss and generate collective solutions to problems is most likely to promote teachers' professional growth and learning.

Participation in the school decision making contributed to a sense of professionalism and empowerment, and helped in promoting collaborative working relationships among teachers. Teachers also felt a sense of self-worth for being able to make recommendations that were acted upon, and contributed to the work of the school. Participatory decision making allowed teachers the opportunities to share informations, knowledge and expertise with colleagues which contributed to developing mutual respect and understanding among them. It also provided opportunities for teachers to be involved in continuing dialogue with colleagues which was essential for building a collaborative and cohesive work environment that would enhance teachers' professional development.

Finally, the open, supportive and committed leadership which emerged as a significant feature of the school was vital to teachers' professional growth and learning. Little (1985) asserted that school leaders could facilitate teachers' learning by proposing ideas for joint-work, identifying topics or problems that deserve attention, and helping to achieve a collaborative solution to the problem. This study

revealed that the moral support, personal encouragement, the provision of funding, resources and assistance, and the trust, respect and confidence that school leaders displayed in their relationships with staff, were important for teachers' professional learning. These were the factors that were essential for carrying on new and challenging tasks, strengthening teachers' personal qualities and commitment necessary for the improvement of teaching practices.

## CONCLUSION TO PORTFOLIO

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The findings discussed in the conclusion relate firstly, to the generation of theoretical principles examined in Part I, and secondly, to the identification of issues proved to be important in the practical application in schools.

### **Generation of theoretical principles**

A set of the extension of theoretical principles was generated from the analysis of qualitative research data.

- **Organisational structures that provide opportunities for teachers to be involved in the school decision making process are essential conditions for teacher collaboration and learning**

Leithwood, et al., 1999, Anderson, 1998, and Hargreaves, 1994 indicate that organisational structures and leadership practices are key conditions in providing a conducive environment for teachers' collaboration and learning. The investigation indicated that the organisational structures of this particular school provided essential conditions for teacher collaboration in that it allowed the sharing of power and responsibility in the school decision making. The processes of the school decision making facilitated the formal and informal communication among staff which helped in creating a collaborative working relationships among teachers. The frequent flow of communication among staff also helped in promoting greater collegial interactions, and more effective coordination of programmes and activities between different departments and among teachers in the school community. Allowing teachers to participate and share responsibility in the school decision making was one of the significant

features of the organisational structures of this particular school which encouraged teacher collaboration and the development of teacher leadership. Moreover, participation in the school decision making provided the opportunity for teachers to be involved in continuing dialogue with colleagues that was essential to enhancing teachers' professional development and learning.

- **The availability of resources is essential for teacher collaboration and learning**

A resource-adequate and collaborative school environment is essential for enhancing teachers' professional learning, and the collaborative efforts among teachers (Blase, 1991; Anderson, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; and McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). In the school investigated, there were ample opportunities for teachers to attend in-service courses or other professional training outside the school. The school provided strong support for teachers' professional development through the provision of fundings, access to library and information technology, a supportive administrative team, and the leadership of a committed and visionary principal. Experts from outside the school were available for providing guidance, support, and direction to teachers who were involved in a particular project. Colleagues were also available as resources for planning units of work, or organising the school-wide events and activities.

- **Time is an important resource for teachers' involvement in collaborative practices**

Teachers valued the importance of collaborative practice to their professional development and learning. However, time was one of the important resources that was essential for their involvement in

joint-planning, continued dialogues, discussion, and reflection with colleagues. With regard to the importance of time for teachers to be involved in the planning of curriculum work, Shanker (1990) proposes that the school day needs to be restructured to facilitate these activities. The findings of this study indicate that recognition of the time needed for teachers to involve in joint work, and the provision of common release time for teachers who shared similar teaching responsibility were essential if teachers were to engage in collaborative practices.

- **A climate of trust, support, and openness is essential for creating a collaborative work environment that encourages teacher collaboration**

Leithwood, et al., 1999, Louis and Smith, 1999, and Hargreaves, 1992 identify norms of mutual support and respect among teachers, a willingness to take risks, and teachers' collegiality as features of school cultures that foster teachers' workplace learning. Members of staff in the school investigated upheld the shared goals and mission in their daily work practices by demonstrating the collaborative style of teaching and learning, and supportive collegial relationships among staff. A climate of mutual respect and trust among teachers, a strong sense of shared responsibility and high expectations for students' learning was the main characteristics of the culture in this school community that encouraged teacher collaboration.

The findings of this study indicate that a safe and unthreatening environment in which teachers feel safe to air their concerns without fear of disapproval, is considered important for encouraging teachers to participate in school decision making, group problem solving and other collaborative activities. It is evidenced from the findings that a

climate of trust, support, and openness in which teachers feel comfortable in working together, are essential conditions for creating a collaborative working environment that encourages teacher collaboration and learning.

- **A learning oriented, and supportive school environment with shared goals and responsibilities for teaching and students' learning enhances teachers' professional growth and learning**

The findings of this study reveal that a school organisation that establishes a conducive environment that allows teachers to attend meetings either formally or informally for the discussion of school policies or curriculum matters, provides the context for teacher collaboration. In addition, a learning oriented and supportive school community with shared goals and responsibilities for students' learning encourages collaborative efforts among teachers. It provides the conditions for joint work among teachers that allow them to share information about students' progress and performance. In the process of joint work with colleagues, teachers learn from one another, sharing ideas, materials and resources for the improvement of professional practice and students' learning. This study would suggest that a trusting, supportive, participative, and collaborative school environment in which teachers share goals and responsibilities for teaching and students' learning can therefore be considered as an important condition for teachers' involvement in collaborative practices, and the enhancement of teachers' professional growth and learning in other settings. This particular aspect of the findings has assumed greater importance in this study than has been appeared in any previous investigations.

- **The school leader's role in creating a culture of collaboration and teachers' professional development is vital for teachers' professional growth and learning**

The school leader plays an important role in creating a culture of collaboration and teachers' professional development that enhances teachers' learning (Leithwood, 1990; Senge, 1990). It was evidenced that the principal in this study was very supportive of staff's professional development and training, and provided ample opportunities in meeting teachers' personal learning needs, which helped in creating a conducive learning environment that fostered staff professional development.

The capacity of school leader to develop a culture of collaboration and professional development is crucial to teachers' professional learning, and the improvement of students' learning. The quality of teachers' professional development and learning, which was fostered by the collaborative patterns of work, and leadership practices that focussed on teachers' professional development that were demonstrated in the school under study, could be seen as pointing to an example of good practice that could usefully be adopted by other schools.

### **Findings on issues important to practical applications**

Several practical considerations have emerged from the investigation of teacher collaboration in relation to teachers' professional development and learning in this particular school that can be usefully followed by other schools.

- **Good working relationships among teachers provide the foundation for developing cohesive, supportive, and collaborative work environment essential for teachers' professional development and learning**

The research data revealed that seventy-five percent of the respondents experienced pedagogical assistance and moral support from colleagues in their daily work situations. Teachers were supportive of one another in terms of sharing teaching experiences, workloads, researching, planning teaching units, and organising events or functions which contributed to improved collegial working relationships. The nature of collegial relationships which appeared to be trusting, cooperative, helpful, non-judgemental, sympathetic, and collaborative, were crucial to developing a cohesive, communicative and positive work environment essential for teachers' growth and learning.

- **A work situation that offers opportunities for teachers to be involved in collaborative practices contributes to teachers' professional development and learning**

The findings indicated that positive, non-judgemental feedback boosted teachers' morale and self-esteem, and helped in modifying their own practices to the context of individual classrooms. Teachers indicated that feedback could be challenging when it was negative, but was more often a time for learning. Joint-planning was vital to breaking down the isolation that teachers generally experienced in their workplace. Teachers felt confident and more enthusiastic about teaching as a result of joint-planning with colleagues. In particular, joint-planning provided continuity, relevance and enjoyment for

teachers' work and students' learning. It contributed to the sharing of workloads, resources and allowing them to adopt a more reflective approach to teaching. Joint-planning with colleagues was useful when there was new emphasis or changes in the curriculum.

The process of problem-solving helped teachers to learn new strategies and approaches to dealing with particular issues. It allowed exposure to a wider range of educational issues that would enhance teachers' own professional development. In general, therefore, the findings would indicate that a work situation that offers opportunities for colleagues to debate, discuss and generate collective solutions to problems is most likely to promote teachers' professional growth and learning.

- **Participatory decision making is essential for teachers' professional development and learning**

Participation in the school decision making contributed to a sense of professionalism and empowerment, and helped in promoting collaborative working relationships among teachers. Participatory decision making allowed teachers the opportunities to share informations, knowledge and expertise with colleagues which contributed to developing a climate of mutual respect and understanding among them. The opportunities to be involved in continuing dialogue with colleagues was essential for building a collaborative and cohesive work environment that would enhance teachers' professional development.

- An open, supportive, and committed leadership is essential for teachers' involvement in, and committed to the improvement of teaching practices

The open, supportive and committed leadership which emerged as a significant feature of the school was vital to teachers' professional growth and learning. The findings revealed that the moral support, personal encouragement, the provision of funding, resources and assistance, and the trust, respect and confidence that school leaders displayed in their relationships with staff, were important for teachers' professional learning. Leadership support and practices in creating a collaborative learning environment were essential for teachers to carry on new and challenging tasks, improve their professional skills and knowledge, and strengthen their personal qualities and commitment necessary for the improved quality of teaching.

### **Concluding statement**

By using the qualitative case study approach, the researcher was able to gain theoretical insights, and in-depth understanding of the issues under study. The adoption of a multiple perspective and approach to data source triangulation enabled the researcher to generate theoretical explanations, and establish practical dimensions from the investigation. Based on the investigation of Part II and III, the study concluded that involvement in a variety of collaborative activities, exposure to a broader range of educational and instructional problems through participation in the process of school decision making, informal discussion and teacher dialogues in relation to curriculum planning and instructional matters, an open and supportive leadership, a collaborative work environment, and a climate of

support, trust, and openness, were key factors for teacher collaboration. The culture of teacher collaboration was essential for developing teachers' practical knowledge, skills and expertise to carry out their work. When they were provided with opportunities, support, and freedom to share informations, ideas, and resources with colleagues, discuss issues and problems they encountered in their daily work practices, teachers felt less pressured and more confident about teaching, and consequently more readiness to the experimentation of new practices. As a result of participation and collaboration, teachers felt a sense of job satisfaction, self-efficacy, professionalism, and empowerment that would most likely lead to teachers' involvement in reflective practices and the improvement of professional knowledge and learning.

The investigation of this study has emphasised predominantly the contributing factors for teacher collaboration, and positive outcomes of collaborative practices for teachers' professional learning and development. It would be beneficial if future study of teachers' collaboration would focus on the examination of factors that contribute to the frustration, stress, work overload and job-dissatisfaction in teachers in relation to involvement in collaborative work practices, in order to gain extensive knowledge and further understanding of the nature of teacher collaboration, and the relationship between teachers' collaboration and their professional development and learning.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire

#### **Conditions for teacher collaboration and teachers' workplace learning questionnaire**

This questionnaire constitutes part of my research in investigating the conditions for teacher collaboration and teachers' perceptions of their workplace learning. It consists of a set of seven open-ended questions.

Your individual response will be anonymous and will be treated as confidential. A summary of the findings will be provided to the school and I may use this information in the report of my research.

Please write the information regarding your teaching position, years of teaching, etc., and return the completed questionnaire in the self-addressed envelope provided.

Teaching position: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject areas and levels: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator: Karen Lee, c/o Graduate School of Education, University of Adelaide, Adelaide 5005.

Thank you very much for your participation in this research project.

Please write your response to the open-ended questions in the spaces provided.

Open-ended questions:

1 What areas of the school's decision-making have you participated? What other areas of the school's decision-making you would like to participate in?

In what ways does participation in the school's decision-making process contribute to your a) working relationships with colleagues b) teaching practice and professional learning in the workplace?

2 Please describe the team work or collaborative projects you have participated in the school.

In what ways do opportunities for collaboration assist in your classroom practices and professional learning?

3 In what ways does the school system provide opportunities, resources and support in fostering teacher collaboration?

4 What changes in the school organisational structures or processes could encourage more collaboration among teachers in your school?

5 In what ways do the following factors contribute to your workplace learning?

Please describe your personal experience in these aspects?

- collegial support and sharing of ideas
- leadership support and assistance
- feedback from colleagues
- joint planning
- group problem-solving

6 In what settings or circumstances would you willingly share your learning experiences with other teachers?

7 Please indicate your preferred style of working, and describe how this style of working has contributed to your professional growth.

## **Appendix B:**

### **The interview guide**

#### **The mission and goals of the school**

- 1 What do you see as the mission and goals of the school? How do you personally feel about that?
- 2 How does the shared goals and values of the school impact on your attitudes toward professional practices and relationships with colleagues?
- 3 Please describe your role and responsibilities in the school.
- 4 What are the specific professional development needs that you have in assisting you to achieve your goals in your present role in the school?

#### **Participative decision-making**

- 1 What areas of the school decision making have you participated in?
- 2 In what ways does participation in the school decision-making process contribute to your professional learning and development?
- 3 What changes in the school structures and processes could facilitate teachers' participation in the school decision-making process?
- 4 To what extent does the school principal support the decisions made by the decision-making groups or committees?
- 5 To what extent does the school leader encourage the shared responsibility and participation of staff member in the school decision-making process?

#### **Leadership support and culture**

- 1 How would you describe the ( your) style and characteristics of leadership in this school?
- 2 How would you describe your working relationship with the school leaders ( your members of staff )?
- 3 Please describe the professional development program at your college, and describe how does participation in the professional development program contribute to your professional learning and development.

4 In what ways do the school leaders assist you in your professional development and learning in the school? (In what ways do you assist the professional development and learning of your staff?)

5 In what ways do the school leaders assist in creating a collaborative working environment in the school?

### **Staff collaboration and collegiality**

1 What is your preferred style of working with regard to curriculum planning and the implementation of new practices?

2 Please describe/give examples of your personal experience in team work or collaborative work projects with your colleagues?

3 How does team work benefit you in your instructional areas and your professional development?

4 In what ways do the school leaders support and facilitate teachers' collaboration in team work and joint planning? Specific examples, Positive? Negative?

### **Teachers' perceived needs about collaborative workplace practices**

1 How do you perceive the values of team work and joint planning with your colleagues with regard to curriculum planning or the implementation of new programs or practices?

2 Do you perceive the collective accountability for the outcomes of students' learning an important factor for your involvement in team work and collaborative practices?

### **Reward and recognition**

1 What motivates you to participate in the collaborative team work with your colleagues?

2 Do you view the recognition and rewards from the school leaders for your efforts in team work and collaboration with your colleagues important to your involvement in collaborative work practices?

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