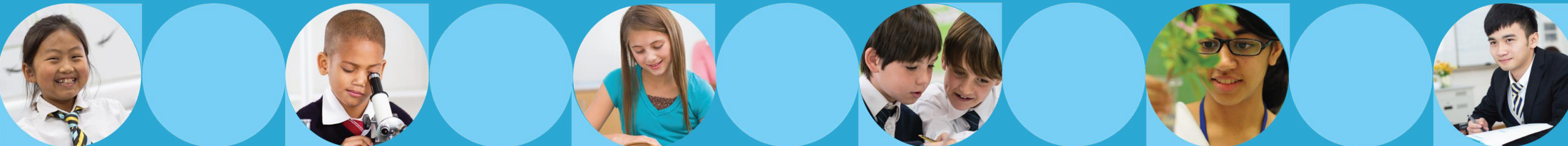


Creating and Sustaining a Professional Learning Culture for Teachers

Sarah Turner
Head of Professional Development Programmes

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What we will cover in this session

- ▶ Consider why professional learning is more effective in some schools than others
- ▶ Consider what the literature says
- ▶ Understand your own experiences
- ▶ Consider what the evidence said
- ▶ Review recommendations

Introduction



- ▶ In-service professional learning is more effective in some schools than others. Why?

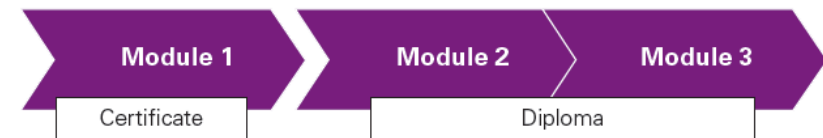
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Rationale

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications



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What the literature tells us – Professional Learning

Professional learning is vital for teachers to ‘broaden and deepen their knowledge, keep up with new research, tools and practices and respond to their students’ changing needs.’ (Boeskens et al. 2020:6)

Activities around teacher learning that are ‘intensive, sustained, collaborative, and focused on materials and problems of practice’ (Opfer, 2016:7) are identified as having the most impact on teachers’ knowledge, their classroom practice and, ultimately, student achievement

Making professional learning available to all of those in the school community can help in ‘building collaborative school cultures and supporting the collective improvement of the teaching profession.’ (Boeskens et al. 2020:6)

Skills for 21st Century living have been identified as:

- ways of thinking
- ways of working
- tools for working
- skills for living in the world (Schleicher 2012:34)

So, professional learning for teachers needs to be:

- ▶ available
- ▶ intensive, sustained, collaborative and focused on practice
- ▶ sited within a collaborative school culture
- ▶ suitable to equip teachers to meet the needs of 21st Century learners

What the literature tells us – Culture

‘Moving towards a culture of continuous professional growth ... has profound implications for the teaching profession ...’ and yet, ‘... many schools have yet to embrace a culture of collaborative learning and to build the structures necessary to sustain it (Boeskens et al. 2020:7).

Supporting and developing teacher efficacy is achieved through collaboration and collegiality, practices which: take teacher development beyond personal, idiosyncratic reflection or dependence on outside experts, to a point where teachers can learn from each other, sharing and developing their expertise together (Hargreaves 1994: 186).

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Stoll et al (2006b) suggest that, ‘whole school communities need to work and learn together to take charge of change’

Continuous professional growth can be found in professional learning communities which typically demonstrate:

- Shared values and vision
- Collective responsibility for pupils’ learning
- Reflective professional enquiry
- Collaboration focused on learning
- Group as well as individual professional learning
- Openness, networks and partnerships
- Inclusive membership
- Mutual trust, respect and support

(Stoll et al. 2006:4)

So, effective cultures for professional learning should be:

- Inclusive
- Collaborative
- Supportive
- Collegiate
- Trust-based
- Formed by whole school communities working together

What the literature tells us – Leadership

Leaders are key in helping to spread good practice. Fielding et al. identify that, ‘spreading good practice from one school to another is important in improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school system’ (2005:2)

‘One of the primary tasks of school principals is to create and maintain positive, and healthy teaching and learning environments for everyone in the school, including the professional staff.’
(Bredeson 2000: 386)

Leaders require a 21st Century understanding of pedagogy which ‘is cultivated by the quest for understanding the being of the learners (the ecology of their community), the experiences of the learners and their community and the meaning making and problem solving required in that context for creating effective educational interactions and relationships.’

(Male and Palaiologou 2015: 220).

So, leadership is vital for:

- ▶ building cultures for professional learning
- ▶ understanding, and helping others to understand, that the nature of pedagogy is changing
- ▶ helping to spread best practice in and between schools

Returning to the question...



- ▶ In-service professional learning is more effective in some schools than others. Why?

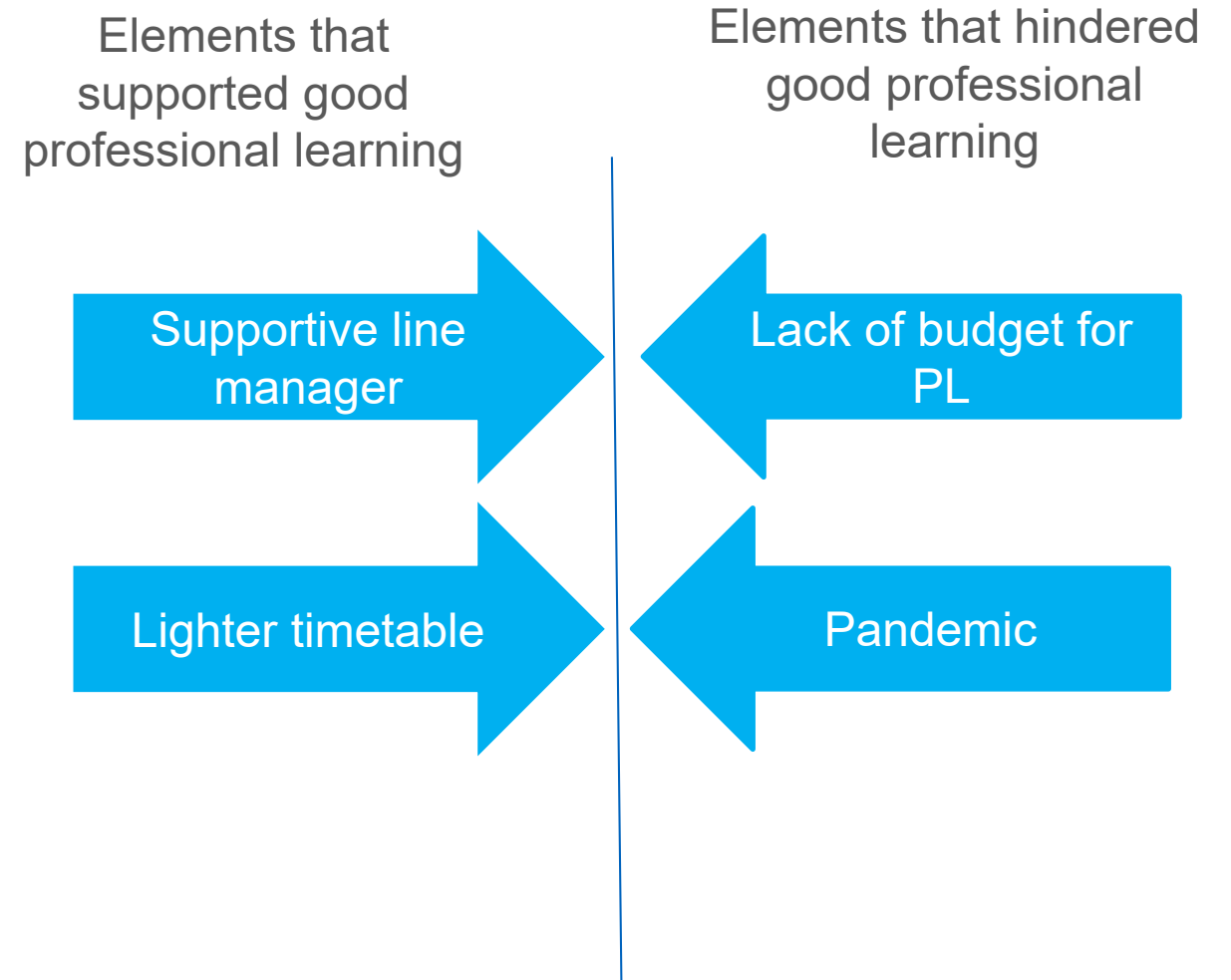
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Activity – Forcefield Analysis (5 mins)

- ▶ Look back at your first drawing and focus on the times that you felt your professional learning was hindered. Try to represent this as a forcefield analysis
- ▶ How many of these elements are within your control or you school's control?



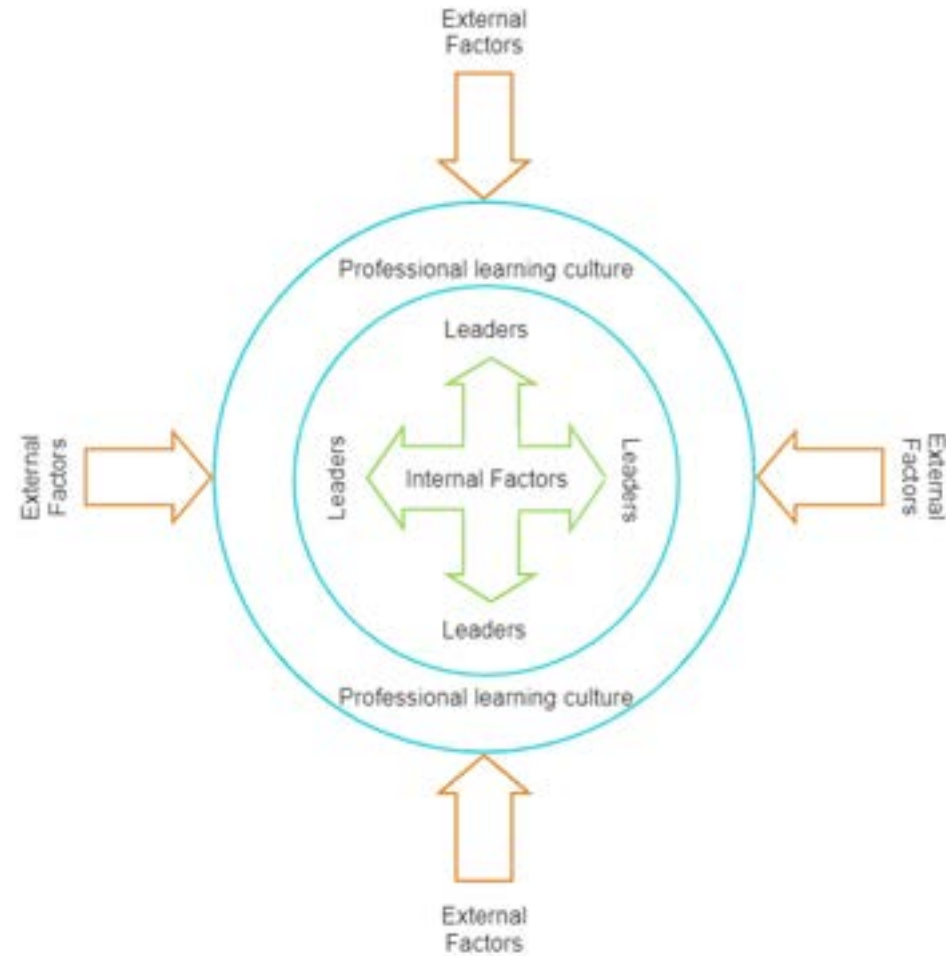
The issues

▶ Internal Factors:

- Staff retention and turn over
- Availability of resources
- Budgets

▶ External Factors:

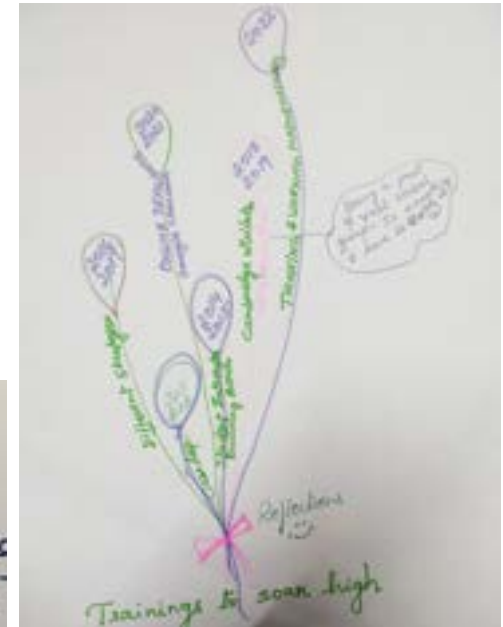
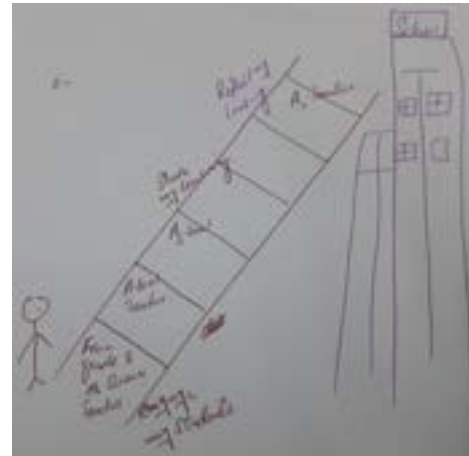
- Accountability measures
- The local 'market'
- Environmental factors, e,g. COVID19



Research Methodology



- Drawing workshops
- Focus groups
- Interviews



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Summary of Benefits and Challenges

Benefits		Challenges	
School A	School B	School A	School B
Collaborative culture	Collaborative culture	Outside training is seen as having the most value	Environmental factors create a need to be 'organic' about the offer
Coaching	Mentoring	Training from outside agencies is not contextualised	Training on methodologies is less available
Peer observation supports development of practice	Teacher-led learning	Teachers' success is largely measured in exam results	Teachers connect better with content
Teachers have developed a 'reflective approach'	Regular review helps to build the learning offer	The demand on teachers' time prevents timely application of learning	A sense of global connection for teachers is missing
Teachers are 'empowered'	The culture raises teachers' 'self-esteem'	Some resistance to change	The pandemic
Teachers can ask for help	The pandemic has created the impetus to upskill	The pandemic	
The pandemic has created a focus on 'how' learning happens	Resistance to change is 'low'		
	Leaders make space and time for professional learning		

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Recommendations

Leadership should:

- ▶ Manage the challenges that can be influenced:
 - ▶ Practice 'skilled pedagogical leadership' (Male and Palaiologou, 2015)
 - ▶ Create a clear vision and goals for professional learning
 - ▶ Understand exactly what teachers need
 - ▶ Encourage collaboration
 - ▶ Encourage participation in professional learning at all levels
 - ▶ Manage external factors as best you can

Devise a professional learning offer to support the school's needs whilst developing the culture to support it.

Plenary

- ▶ Reflect – what have you heard / considered in this presentation that has made you think differently about yours / others professional learning?
- ▶ Extend – how could you use this information to make some changes when you are back in your day to day role?
- ▶ Challenge – how could you use what you have heard today to challenge / change professional learning for you or for your colleagues?

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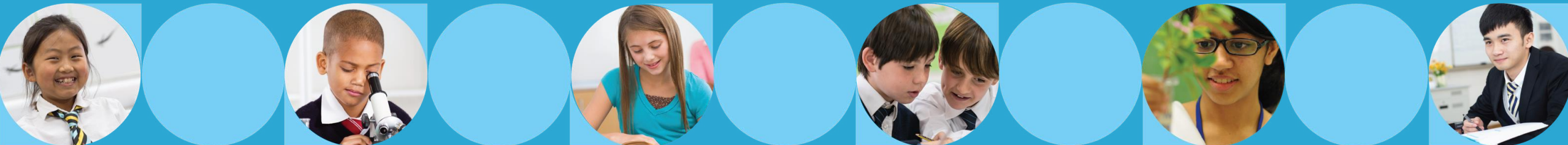
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