Extending teacher repertoires

Professional development and research in TESOL

Lynda Yates
Acknowledgments

Many dedicated teachers contributed to this report through their actions and reflections. It is their hard work and creativity that make projects of this kind not only successful but also motivating, and ensure that their impact is exponential. Very special thanks are due to Howard Nicholas and Jacky Springall for their work in coordinating parts of the project, and to Jill Scholfield for her assistance with data collection. Heartfelt thanks must also go to Julie Deblaquiere for her meticulous help with various versions of the final manuscript, and to Dai Harris for the various support roles he fulfils so ably.
Chapter 1

Introduction

An experienced teacher told a professional development gathering of how, as a beginner teacher, she had once been exasperated by how little she knew compared to her colleagues. ‘When will I learn how to teach?’ she lamented out loud in exasperation. ‘The day you stop learning how to teach,’ fired back her boss, ‘is the day I stop employing you.’ This was not a threat, but an encouragement – good teachers are good learners, and effective teachers continue learning throughout their careers. Ongoing opportunities to develop as reflective practitioners are essential, not only for those new to the profession, but also, even particularly, for experienced teachers, so that they can renew their skills and enthusiasms and challenge any bad habits that may develop as a matter of survival.

The provision of ongoing quality professional development support can, however, be quite a challenge in current climates of demanding workloads and exacting budget constraints. This is particularly the case in adult TESOL, where the plethora of programs, funded by different bodies and in a mix of public and private institutional settings, means that large-scale, government-funded in-service programs are almost unknown. Therefore, as Freeman (2001) and Bailey (2001) argue, investigating how we can offer ongoing support to practising teachers is an urgent research priority. In this report, I address this issue through an investigation of one productive and exciting way of providing professional development – small-scale collaborative projects with university-based researchers. By bringing together research and teaching expertise in this way, such projects can offer teachers a whole range of targeted and context-relevant professional development benefits, both in terms of the outcomes produced by the project and the processes involved in the collaboration itself, at relatively little cost. In particular, I examine the processes and outcomes of the Extending Teacher Repertoires project, which was designed to encourage as many teachers as possible to engage with the insights gained from a previous empirical project.

Professional development and research

Teachers are, understandably, closely concerned with their own practice, and have sometimes been sceptical about the relevance of research conducted by university-based researchers. Their research can appear so focused on the general that it is remote from the messy complexity of real-life teaching and can thus be easily dismissed as of limited use in addressing the day-to-day practical issues of the classroom. This scepticism may arise, in part, because university-based researchers and teachers are often seen as serving different masters, and therefore socialised into different cultures. While teachers see their primary responsibility as the learning of the students in their classes, university-based researchers are frequently driven by publish-or-perish imperatives that propel them to publish in theoretically-oriented journals rather than professionally-oriented ones, and to address teaching and learning issues in ways that contribute to theoretical debates within their field (Freeman and Johnson, 1998). The outcomes they pursue may therefore differ in emphasis from those of the teachers, and the products of their research are sometimes expressed in ways and forms that are less accessible to practitioners and appear remote from practice. Thus the two groups can appear to have different research agendas and questions, different ways of approaching these, and different views on how the fruits of their research should be disseminated (Crookes 1993; Burton 1998; Hoban 2002).
While this dichotomous view of the nature of knowledge is somewhat simplistic, it does highlight a culture gap that has underwritten a distrust among practitioners of the ‘technical-rational model of professional training’ based on the products of decontextualised research (Reeves et al 2002: 59). In Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), as in other areas of teacher education, a ‘quiet revolution’ has taken place that has emphasised the complex, sophisticated and socially constructed nature of teaching (Johnson 2000: 1; Freeman and Johnson 1998: 40). This has led to an increasing acknowledgment of the value of teacher-generated experiential knowledge in professional development, and the limitations of professional development directed merely at informing teachers of a supposed best practice relevant to all teachers in all places without regard to context and individual experience.

As is often the case, however, debates over the relative value of researcher-generated and teacher-generated insight are unproductively divisive. These two sources of knowledge are by no means incompatible. On the contrary, both the ‘wisdom of practice’ and the ‘knowledge substantiated in research’ are invaluable in the professional development of teachers (Loucks-Horsley et al 1998: 27). In the chapters that follow, I argue that collaborative projects involving researchers and teachers can combine both the insights of experienced practitioners and the research-based evidence to provide rich and powerful professional development activities and outcomes. I illustrate this point using a case-study of a collaborative project designed to promote active engagement with the findings from a previous, basic descriptive research study conducted in the same context.

The Extending Teacher Repertoires project

The umbrella project described in this volume, the Extending Teacher Repertoires project, was designed and conducted by a team of researchers and teachers to take on to a professional development stage some of the insights gained from the Clients Project (Wigglesworth 2003), described briefly in Chapter 2. It consisted of three sub-projects, each targeting a particular sub-set of the findings related to the three areas of cultures of learning, focusing on employment and planning speaking activities.

Contents of this report

In Chapter 2, I give a brief overview of the three areas selected for follow-up of the Clients Project and then outline the design of the overall project. This is followed in Chapter 3 by an introduction to the context of the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) where the projects were conducted, and more detailed discussion of the issues and how they were tackled in one of the sub-projects, the Cultures of Learning project. In Chapter 4, I distil from the literature those ingredients that appear to be effective in engaging teachers in professional development and, on the basis of this review, suggest a framework which is then used in Chapter 5 to report on the impact on teachers and their organisation of the Cultures of Learning project. In the final chapter, I reflect on what this study has contributed to our understanding of the ways in which research and professional development can be combined, and consider the implications for the design of future collaborative projects.
Chapter 2

A professional development research project

Background to the project

The Extending Teacher Repertoires project was designed to develop and trial ways of using the findings of the earlier Clients Project (Wigglesworth 2003) in effective professional development activities for teachers working within the same program with similar students.

The Clients Project had explored the needs, perceptions and experiences of adult language learners from the more recent waves of migrants\(^1\) who were studying English in the national on-arrival program, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The project included a series of case studies of individual learners from three of the more recent migrant groups – learners from the Horn of Africa, learners from Iraq and older Chinese clients who had come to join their children. It was conducted over a one-year period in a number of teaching venues in Melbourne, Victoria. Researchers from the AMEP Research Centre (see below) had observed learners in classes, elicited samples of their English and their views of their language learning and interviewed their teachers in order to understand more about their learning experiences and needs (see Wigglesworth 2003: 7–11). The study had provided a number of recommendations for the program, and it was the enthusiasm to translate some of these findings from this context-relevant basic descriptive research into usable outcomes for teachers that motivated the project reported here. The challenge was how to combine the findings of this basic descriptive research with the expertise of experienced teachers in quality professional development activities that were both informative and engaging.

Since the context of both the original research and the current study is crucial, I will first briefly describe the AMEP and its clientele.

The AMEP context

The AMEP is delivered across Australia and offers 510 hours of English tuition free to all recently-arrived eligible migrants who are permanent residents and do not yet have a ‘functional’ level of English\(^1\). It uses a national curriculum and assessment framework – the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) – which can be taken at three levels within the AMEP. Levels range from complete beginner to intermediate and cover all four macroskills. A fourth level caters for those planning further study.

The AMEP Research Centre is a national centre funded by the Commonwealth Government of Australia to provide research, professional development, publications and information services to the Adult Migrant English Program nationally.\(^2\)

The AMEP is delivered nationally by a diverse range of providers including specialised language centres, small, informal community centres, and language teaching departments within larger, more diverse institutions such as colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE).\(^3\)

Learners in the AMEP reflect the diversity of the migrants who come to Australia. They come from an extremely broad range of social, economic, educational and language backgrounds, and arrive with very different approaches to and expectations of language learning. In 2005/6, for example, learners in the AMEP came from 190 different countries of birth.
Of these, 55 per cent had come to Australia to join other members of their family, 32 per cent were refugees and 13 per cent had entered as skilled migrants. While some, therefore, had had long experiences of schooling and tertiary qualifications from other countries, others had had little or no schooling and may have spent long periods in refugee camps or war-torn areas where basic amenities were in short supply.

With such a diverse body of students, catering for individual needs can be quite a challenge and, although centres in the bigger cities such as Melbourne and Sydney can offer different types of classes at a range of levels, in smaller centres this is not always possible. This means that classes in the AMEP can be particularly diverse: a teacher may have together in the same class a mature tertiary-educated engineer from China, a 20-year-old Somali from a refugee camp in the Sudan, a young bride from Turkey, and so on. Moreover, with different waves of migration into Australia come different sets of learners with particular needs and expectations, so that what suits one set of learners may not be appropriate for the next. In this context, there is an ongoing need for research and professional development to explore client needs and support teachers in their efforts to address these through the program.

Findings from the Clients Project

In order to focus our efforts, curriculum developers from the provider involved in both projects selected three priority areas from the findings of the Clients Project (Wigglesworth, 2003) which were each followed up in separate but related components of the Extending Teacher Repertoires project. The three findings chosen were:

- that some learners felt the need to concentrate on job-seeking even though their proficiency in English was still at a relatively low level. (This issue was addressed in the Focusing on Employment sub-project.)

- that learners expressed the need for socio-culturally relevant opportunities for speaking practice. (This need was followed up in the Planning Speaking Activities sub-project.)

- that there appeared to be the mismatch in some cases between the expectations of teachers and learners with regard to classroom management issues and the purpose of some learning activities. This issue was the focus of the Cultures of Learning sub-project described in more detail in the following chapters.

The first issue above relates to a need felt particularly strongly by the working-aged male learners in the study – the need to get a job. They felt strongly that employment and an earned income was crucial to their sense of belonging. As one learner told us: ‘Otherwise I will be just like in a prison’. Many had spent some time in prison or camps of some kind or in other very straightened circumstances, and so felt the need to get on with their lives that had virtually been on hold for years. In addition they needed to provide for their families and send money to relatives overseas, many of whom were living in horrific circumstances. However, many teachers in the AMEP felt that employment issues could not be tackled with new arrivals at beginner level. This feeling seemed to arise, in part at least, from a historically strong emphasis in the AMEP on language and settlement issues rather than employment. The professional development aim of this sub-project was, therefore, not only the development of materials that teachers could use to assist beginner learners with employment-related language and skills, but also a change in teacher attitude about the possibility of such a feat.

The second sub-project addressed the importance of speaking activities. This issue was frequently mentioned by the learners followed in the Clients Project. They spoke of their need to understand and participate in the everyday dialogues that are central to settlement in Australia, and gave examples of their frustration in situations where they felt unable to achieve the most simple of transactions. One learner from China said she did not go out of her house for six months after she arrived because she could neither read nor speak and was afraid of getting lost: ‘It’s like [being] blind and deaf’ (project data). Another commented she
felt ‘I’m idiot, because I can’t, you know, can’t say anything’ (Yates and Williams 2003: 193). Although the teachers felt that they addressed this need in their classes, some students still felt frustrated that they did not get enough relevant practice. The professional development goal of this sub-project was therefore to help teachers plan more effectively and consistently for socio-culturally appropriate speaking practice in the classroom.

The final area selected for attention related to the fact that the students came from learning cultures which were very different from that of teachers in the AMEP. The sub-project in this area was designed to raise the awareness of both learners and teachers of differences in ways of learning and classroom expectations. Since this sub-project is the focus of the analysis presented in Chapter 5, the findings from the Clients Project on this topic and the materials designed to address these are given in more detail in the next chapter.

Some of the researchers involved in the Clients Project collaborated with teachers from the AMEP provider involved to design a follow-up project, the Extending Teacher Repertoires project. Our aim was to develop a range of professional development activities designed to help teachers more effectively meet learner needs in these areas.

**Extending Teacher Repertoires project**

The aim of the Extending Teacher Repertoires project was to ensure that as many teachers as possible (and their students!) benefited from the insights gained from the Clients Project. We also wanted to find out how useful this project would be as a way of feeding back to teachers the results of basic descriptive research; that is, as a form of professional development.

Just as there is no ‘best practice’ for teaching, because it is so context-dependent (see Edge and Richards 1998), neither can there be a ‘one size fits all’ in professional development: different strategies are useful for different contexts and teachers at different stages of their development (Loucks-Horsley et al 1998). We therefore included in the project a number of different professional development strategies designed to allow opportunities for awareness-raising, knowledge-building, and reflection on practice. These strategies revolved around the collaborative development of three professional development packages, one for each of the three major issues selected for attention.

The Extending Teacher Repertoires project consisted of three phases – development, rehearsal and evaluation – which took place over a two-year period. They offered different kinds of professional development experiences for participating teachers and demanded different levels of involvement. An overview of the project is given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**: Design of Extending Teacher Repertoires project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings from Clients project evaluated and three topic areas selected for follow up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Phase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultures of learning (3 teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning speaking activities (4 teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focussing on employment (3 teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including informal trials and feedback (several teachers for each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation Phase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial and evaluation of packages in 3 regions (20 teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rehearsal Phase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops in 3 regions (100+ teachers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The development phase

There were several interrelated steps in the development phase of the project. First, a series of workshops were held to introduce the teachers participating in this phase to the findings of the Clients Project on each of the three major findings targeted – addressing the planning of speaking activities, focusing on employment, and the issue of cultures of learning. In these workshops, the findings were presented, discussed and supplemented by readings related to each area. Teachers then discussed with researchers how to effectively bring these insights to as many teachers as possible. It was agreed that a small group of three to four teachers plus a researcher should produce a professional development package on each area. The package would include both an initial workshop and some resources that could be given to teachers to help them address learning and teaching issues in the classroom.

The rationale for the decision to work in this way was that if the package of materials plus an introduction as to why they might work proved to be useful to teachers, then they would use them, and once they started using them, changes in thinking might follow, since changes in belief and attitudes may sometimes follow changes in action (Guskey 1986; Loucks-Horsley et al 1998: 38–9). It was hoped, in this way, that all three dimensions of educational innovation identified by (Fullan 2001(a): 39) – that is, the introduction of new resources, new approaches to teaching and changes in teachers’ beliefs and attitudes – might be tapped at least at some level by some of the teachers some of the time.

We then developed a workshop to introduce the materials. Although workshops have become the target of much criticism as a simplistic and ineffective mode of professional development (see, for example Freeman and Johnson 1998; Short and Echevarria 1999; Crowther and Cannon 2002; but see also Kennedy 1998 for a contrary view), we nevertheless felt that if properly targeted and used in combination with other strategies they offer a cost-effective way of providing the conceptual inputs that we hoped would stimulate outside-in learning (Turbill 2002: 97–100; see Chapter Four), that is, learning from external sources, as well as providing networking opportunities. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the workshops were, in fact, rated by the participants as very useful.

Thus, a package consisting of a workshop together with some resources was produced by each group. In the case of the group working on speaking issues, the resources consisted of a framework to help teachers plan cycles of speaking activities; in the case of the group working on employment-related themes, a package of job-focused materials for beginner learners was developed; and to address issues of a potential mismatch of learning cultures, a package including a number of activities for the classroom and an introductory session for teachers was developed (see Chapter 3).

The development groups worked both independently on their topic and together so as to ensure some similarity in the approach taken by each. As they created and refined their packages, other teachers trialled the materials and activities informally through colleagues who offered insights that were fed into the development process.

The development phase, then, was designed so that teachers involved could become actively engaged in reflecting more profoundly on the topic than those who simply used the materials in their classes. Participants took part in regular meetings and collaborated with researchers in considering issues as the various packages took shape. They were actively involved in developing and refining the packages over an extended period. While largely they already had an awareness of the issues they were working with, it was hoped that involvement in developing the packages would help them to build on that knowledge and that they would use the feedback provided by informal trials to reflect on how to communicate what they understood to other teachers and to translate it most effectively into practice.

However, only a relatively small number of teachers (10) with the relevant experience and expertise were involved at this level: not all teachers have the time, energy or commitment
that this kind of responsibility demands (see Yates and Wigglesworth, 2005). As we wanted to involve as many teachers as we could, including those who could only make a short-term commitment to the project, we invited a larger number of teachers to comment on the materials, in the informal trials in the development phase and the more formal evaluations of the rehearsal phase.

The rehearsal phase

In this phase, over a hundred teachers participated in one of three sessions (one for each component) held at a regional professional development day in which they tried out the workshop part of the package and were introduced to the materials. Although, of course, they were not as deeply involved in the project as the teachers in the earlier phase of the project, we nevertheless felt that they would have the opportunity to suggest adaptations and changes, and so would be involved in reflection rather than simple implementation. Reactions to the workshop and initial reactions to the materials were collected and fed back into the completion of the ‘final’ version of the package used in the evaluation phase.

The evaluation phase

Evaluation has been argued to be an important part of the professional development process for teachers as it promotes and encourages reflection on experience (Loucks-Horsley et al 1998: 220). In the evaluation phase of the project, a different set of 20 teachers across three regions volunteered to trial the packages. They attended an initial workshop on their chosen topic where they were introduced to the materials, the ideas underpinning their development and some strategies for using them. The teachers then undertook to trial the materials in their classrooms over a period of seven weeks and to participate in various data collection activities in which they reflected on the package, in many cases incorporating or suggesting modifications. They also participated in a series of interviews and focus groups conducted by researchers.

Types of teacher learning facilitated

Thus, teachers had various options for participating in the project at different levels. Obviously, less commitment was demanded from those attending short workshops in the rehearsal phase or participating in informal trials of sample materials in the development phase, than from those teachers who developed the packages in the development phase, or trialled the whole package in the evaluation phase.

By using a combination of strategies in this way, it was possible to address all five types of teacher learning identified by Loucks-Horsley et al (1998) – developing awareness, building knowledge, translating into practice, practising teaching, and reflecting. Table 1 summarises how these types of learning were addressed in the different phases of the project and the numbers of teachers involved in each phase.
### Table 1: Types of teacher learning addressed in the Extending Teacher Repertoires project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of project</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
<th>Teacher learning outcomes</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop awareness</td>
<td>Build Knowledge</td>
<td>Translate into practice</td>
<td>Practise teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of packages</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal trials</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal workshops</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation phase</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table headings from Loucks-Horsley et al. 1998: 46)

In the remainder of this report I will explore how successful we were in providing effective professional development for those teachers involved in the project and their colleagues through closer examination of one of the sub-projects, the *Cultures of Learning* project. In the following chapter I discuss in more detail the package that was developed to tackle these issues and the findings of the *Clients Project* that motivated it.

### Notes

1. The term ‘migrant’ rather than ‘immigrant’ is commonly used in Australian English.
2. Background and further information on the AMEP Research Centre can be found at [http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au](http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au).
Chapter 3

Addressing cultures of learning

Insights from the Clients Project

As we analysed the data from the Clients Project, it became evident that there was often an apparent mismatch in the expectations of teachers and students on how to approach language learning in a classroom (see Yates and Williams 2003). For the sub-project Cultures of Learning, we elected to focus on differences in expectations related to teacher and learner roles, punctuality and absenteeism. As noted in Chapter 2, our aim was to develop a professional development package that would help both groups become more aware of the issues.

As discussed in the previous chapter, students in the AMEP are adults from very diverse cultural and language backgrounds. Unlike primary and secondary schools, where students have longer to acclimatise to different ways of working, learners in the AMEP have little prior experience of life in Australia and must adapt relatively quickly to Australian ways in the classroom. Many are refugees who may suddenly find themselves in an environment which is very different from anything they have experienced before, and the AMEP is often their first opportunity to engage with aspects of their new learning environment. The three groups whose experiences form the basis of the analysis (reported in Yates and Williams 2003) came from China, Horn of Africa and Iraq, and therefore from cultures of learning that were very different from those generally found in the AMEP.

It became evident in the Clients Project that some of these learners had some difficulty understanding the purpose and direction of some of their classes and felt the need for a more obvious plan. Others wanted more correction by the teacher and felt the need to prepare the vocabulary and read through material for lessons in advance as they had in their previous experiences of education. There was bemusement and sometimes confusion at the informal tenor of the teacher–student relationship they found in their classes. Those from rather more authoritarian educational systems expected to find more explicit concern about homework, lateness and absenteeism, and they saw attention to such matters as an indication that their teachers cared about their learning rather than an unwelcome intrusion into their lives. While some students were regular and punctual attendees, others – particularly those from the Horn of Africa – did not seem to fully understand the importance of punctuality and regular attendance. Perhaps, as Yates and Williams suggest, this came about because of ‘a general misperception that AMEP classes were more relaxed, and therefore less serious than those of their previous educational experiences’ (2003: 215).

Many students were not familiar with the learner-centred approaches used in their language classes and were more used to classrooms in which the teacher was the authoritative expert. Sometimes they were not clear about what was happening in lessons that were less teacher-centred, and so they did not always appreciate the goal or the value of activities. They also did not seem fully aware of the disruption to their own learning and to that of others caused by lateness or absenteeism. For their part, some of the teachers who participated in the study did not always make the goal of an activity as explicit as it needed to be for their learners. They were also reluctant to take on some of the more ‘authoritarian’ aspects of classroom management and did not want to appear to be ‘policing’ the students, whom they felt were adults and should not be unduly regulated.
It seemed that both groups were operating according to norms and expectations that were not always clear or explicit to the other. These expectations may encompass ideas on a range of issues including how learners and teachers should participate in a lesson and what the ultimate goal of education should be. These norms and expectations become frameworks through which people interpret what is happening in the classroom. As they appear self-evident and ‘natural’ to members of a culture, they may not be subject to critical examination (Cortazzi and Jin 1999: 196; and see Yates 2003), and yet their role as a prism through which classroom activity is filtered means they can impact seriously on attitude, motivation and ultimate success in learning. It is therefore crucial to understand and acknowledge their existence so that any cultural gaps can be bridged. Since a recent study undertaken with Horn of Africa students also indicated that their lack of familiarity with approaches to learning in the AMEP was their greatest barrier to learning (Barber 2002), we decided to tackle these issues explicitly with both learners and teachers through the notion of cultures of learning.

Research on cultures of learning

There is now a growing body of research related to cultures of learning. This has increased our understanding of classrooms as communities of practice which reflect both the particular culture of learning jointly constructed between teacher and students, and the wider social environment (see for example Phillips 1972, 1990; Poole 1992; Duff 1995; Duff and Uchida 1997; Hall 2002). While each classroom community has its own goals, resources, and norms of participation, nevertheless, since each operates within a wider cultural context, it is also shaped by the social, economic, and political culture in which it is embedded (Hall 2002: 85). Prevailing views in the community at large on what a text is, why and what we learn to read and write, what childhood is, and so on, will have an impact on how learning and teaching are approached in classrooms, and the types of activities and roles seen as appropriate and useful. These will influence the communities of practice in classrooms, and sustain ‘cultures of learning’ that will therefore differ in different parts of the world.

Research suggests that expectations about teaching and learning are likely to vary considerably across cultures (Spencer-Oatey 1992; Ellis 1995; de Courcy 1997; He 1997; Littlewood 1999, 2001; Scollon 1999). Thus learners may have different expectations about, for example, appropriate patterns of communication in the classroom – such as whether and when a student speaks up (see for example Phillips 1972, 1990; Sato 1990), what constitutes a good teacher (Cortazzi and Jin 1999; Hadley and Evans 2001), what teaching relationships should be like (Stephens 1997), and the best way to learn a language (Gu 2003). What may be considered a strength in one culture, therefore, may be perceived as a weakness in another (Holliday 1994: 84).

Cortazzi and Jin (1999), for example, compare Chinese and Western views of the good teacher and find them to be different in some major ways likely to fuel misunderstanding in cross-cultural situations. Similarly, Holliday (1994: 84) highlights the difficulties that teachers experimenting with discovery approaches to learning may encounter in Egypt where there is a very strong tradition that teachers should be the expert and teach their students in a more expository style. Hadley and Evans (2001) also illustrate some of the problems that can arise when teacher and students do not share cultural assumptions about teaching and learning, and how some minor changes to the conduct of classes can have extremely successful results.

Teachers can play an important role in socialising recently arrived participants into new ways of interacting and learning (Duff and Uchida 1997: 452). However, exactly how ‘new’ these are likely to be to learners will not always be clear to those who are teaching on their home turf since such differences are usually more clearly seen by those who have to operate outside of their home environment.
It must be stressed that the issue here is not that any particular culture of learning is better than any other, since any approach to learning must be understood within its context, and what works in one culture will not necessarily produce the same success in another (Gu 2003). Rather, the point is that teachers can benefit greatly from a more focused awareness, not only of the previous educational and cultural influences on their learners, but also of their own cultures of learning and the need to make them explicit. While we should be wary of the cultural imperialism inherent in trying to impose our methods on those with different values and experiences, it is nevertheless a fact of life for AMEP teachers that they will have to deal with cultural difference. Their classroom is, in effect, a meeting place in which different cultures of learning will co-occur and at times collide (see for example McDevitt 2004), and if these are not made explicit, misunderstandings are likely.

Our aim in this sub-project was to raise teachers’ awareness of this phenomenon through both process and product. We hoped not only to help teachers involved in the project become more aware of these issues and develop a range of other skills as they did so, but also to refine some resources that could be used by teachers throughout the organisation.

The project and the materials

The final Learning Cultures package developed to tackle these issues included a two-hour professional development workshop session and classroom materials designed to raise awareness of differences in cultures of learning. In particular, they offered strategies for tackling issues related to understanding learning, time-management, absenteeism and lateness. The workshop session introduced the motivation for the package and the rationale behind the materials. The materials consisted of ten worksheets or ideas for activities accompanied by a brief, half-page guide to how each might be used. They were designed to be used with very low-level students (Level 1 CSWE, see Chapter 2), including those with limited experience of formal education or with literacy difficulties resulting from a lack of familiarity with English script or limited literacy in any language. The worksheets and activities and the rationale for each are summarised briefly in Table 2, and samples of each can be seen in Appendix 1.

Table 2: Summary of learning cultures project worksheets and activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worksheet/Activities</th>
<th>Description/ Rationale</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultures of Learning</td>
<td>Visual basis for explicit discussion of different ways of learning</td>
<td>Teacher use these to encourage class to talk about how they have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overheads (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>learned in the past and expectations in the AMEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock face</td>
<td>A blank clock face to help students take stock of when and how much time they have</td>
<td>Students mark their daily activities at the appropriate time in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>available to study English</td>
<td>segments of the clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs analysis</td>
<td>A proforma to help students identify their goals and learning styles and needs</td>
<td>Students complete forms which are then used as basis for planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cont...
As can be seen from Table 2, each activity was designed to raise awareness among learners of some aspect of learning and classroom expectations, and through this to help them become more aware of the learning culture prevalent in the AMEP:

The Cultures of Learning overheads consisted of a set of visuals that teachers could use to stimulate awareness and discussion of different cultures of learning in students’ home countries and in Australia, and to pave the way for more focused attention on the learning objectives of different kinds of activities.

The Clock face activity sheet was designed to help learners (and their teachers) become more conscious of how they spent their time and where language study could be fitted into their often overcrowded days.

It was projected that the Needs analysis form would help learners become more conscious of how and what they liked to learn.
The *Daily lesson record* would help them reflect on what they had learned during a lesson and thus become more aware, not only of what they had done, but also of how they had done it.

The *Folder organisation* activity addressed a very basic issue highlighted in the findings from the Clients Project: learners used to a school book or completely unfamiliar with formal study may have very little idea how to organise and keep track of the materials that they received during their classes, and this does not help them revisit or build on what they have covered.

The *Learner personal record* and the class Assessment check list were tools designed to help the learner and the teacher keep track of what learning outcomes had been achieved. This was thought to be particularly important in helping students understand the curriculum and how it is assessed, and therefore the objective of various classroom activities.

*Absence notes, Late notes* and the *Sign in/out attendance sheets* were designed to address issues of punctuality and attendance. Because the teachers interviewed in the earlier Clients Project had been resistant to the idea that they should pay closer attention to such ‘policing’ matters, these were targeted as much at teachers as their learners. There appeared to be a view, corroborated by the anecdotal accounts of curriculum coordinators and other key people in the provider, that teachers felt they should not intervene in such matters as their learners were adults and therefore responsible for their own learning. However, as discussed above, many students are used to the idea that regulation of such matters is a central part of a teacher’s role, and may misunderstand the apparent lack of regulation in their AMEP classes as slackness and a negative reflection on Australian culture. Although they may be reluctant to criticise their teachers openly, they may also see this apparently casual attitude as a dereliction of their duty.

It was therefore hoped that the workshop session accompanying the materials would help to persuade teachers that their students would benefit from a closer regulation of attendance and punctuality. Emphasis was given to the fact that lateness and irregular attendance eat into a student’s 510 hour entitlement, and that students should also be helped to acculturate to the norms that might be expected of them in the workplace. We anticipated that the regular use of sheets in which students took responsibility for their times of arrival and absences would not only reinforce these values in students, but also allow the teachers to reflect on their role in attending to these issues and offer them some strategies for doing so. How far we were successful in influencing teachers’ attitudes to this and other areas of their approach to cultures of learning will be discussed in Chapter 5. In the next chapter, I explore the literature on effective professional development activities for teachers.
Chapter 4

Professional development and research

In this chapter I draw on the literature to consider the ingredients of effective teacher professional development and then suggest a framework against which professional development activities may be evaluated. As I will argue, many of these ingredients can also be salient features of collaborative research projects, making them potentially very powerful opportunities for teacher development.

Professional development typically involves the notion of a change in attitudes and behaviours and – in the general educational literature – the intended change is typically assumed, although not always stated, to be a fundamental, long-term change in the direction of more constructivist approaches to learning (see, for example, Loucks-Horsley et al 1998; Fullan 2001(b)). In this report, as I am concerned principally with professional learning among TESOL teachers in the adult sector, my definition is more modest and less prescriptive. I understand professional development to mean some sort of desirable change in both teachers’ practice and in the way they think about their practice; that is, both the restructuring of their beliefs about teaching and learning, and experimentation with new behaviours. Professional development activities are some kind of intervention in their lives designed to encourage this change. I do not a priori imply a change in any particular direction, but simply some kind of relevant and desirable change.

Effective professional development activities

Change of any kind often demands careful management, partly because people do not know how to manage or cope with it (Fullan 2001(b): xii), but also, perhaps, because of the natural tendency of systems to resist it (Loucks-Horsley et al 1998: 38). The question of how best to manage change in education has produced a burgeoning literature in professional development which explores contextual factors (such as characteristics relating to the teachers themselves, the educational setting and the degree of institutional and collegial support) as well as factors relating to the nature of the program itself – the relevance of the content, the types and duration of the activities, the types of learning opportunities offered, the degree of follow-up included and so on.

As the contexts and circumstances of teachers and teaching differ widely, so too do their needs and goals for professional development. This means that different professional development strategies may be more successful for different purposes and at different times or stages in a program or project or of a teacher’s development. Moreover, professional development may target different types of teacher learning. Some may have the aim of raising teacher awareness or building knowledge, while others may have as their primary goal specific aspects of teaching practice or reflection on and innovation in that practice (see discussion in Chapter 2). As the cliché goes, there can be no ‘one size fits all’, and there is therefore no definitive list of what the components of successful professional development should be.

The features of effective professional development activities have been explored by a number of authors who have sought some underlying principles (see for example Bellanca 1995; Joyce and Showers 1995; Kennedy 1998; Loucks-Horsely et al 1998; Hawley and Valli 1999; Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis 2005). There are, of course, trends and movements that vary with context and theoretical developments that lead some authors to emphasise particular elements over others. The relative role of reflection, for example, is less emphasised by
Extending teacher repertoires: Professional development and research in TESOL

some (for example Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis 2005), but is seen as the lynchpin of quality professional development by authors such as Le Cornu and Peters (2005), Schön (1983, 1987, 1988), Kemmis and McTaggart (1982, 1988) and Hoban (2002) (see discussion below).

This said, however, there is general agreement in the literature on a number of features which appear to work well and are therefore desirable in professional development. There is widespread agreement that professional development is more effective when it:

- includes an element of follow-up support and feedback to teachers (Bellanca 1995; Joyce and Showers 1995; Hawley and Valli 1999; Fullan 2001; Ingvarson, et al 2005)
- involves reflection and self awareness (Clair 1998; Freeman and Johnson 1998; Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Burns 1999; McMillan 2000; Edge 2001; Hoban 2002; Le Cornu and Peters 2005), particularly where teachers are actively involved in their own learning (Ingvarson et al 2005; Hawley and Valli 1999)
- provides opportunities for engaging with new conceptual content over time (Joyce and Showers 1995; Loucks-Horsley et al 1998; Hawley and Valli 1999; Fullan 2001; Hoban 2002; Ingvarson et al 2005)
- is context-relevant so that it is both credible and useful (Freeman and Johnson 1998; Loucks-Horsley et al 1998; McMillan 2000; Crowther and Cannon 2002).

There is agreement, also, that collaboration with colleagues and others within a culture of enquiry and learning enhances the effectiveness of professional development (Clair 1998; Freeman and Johnson 1998; Hawley and Valli 1999; McMillan 2000; Crowther and Cannon 2002).

The ingredients above constitute a kind of checklist against which professional development activities can be evaluated

Follow-up

Reflection and self awareness

Active involvement

New conceptual inputs

Context-relevance

Collaboration

This FRANCC listing offers a quick checklist against which the likely effectiveness of a professional development activity might be evaluated. As we shall see below, there are also strong parallels here with Burton’s (1998) characteristics of what constitutes good research in TESOL. First, however, I will briefly consider what each of these elements can contribute to quality professional development activities.

Follow-up

It has long been understood that effective learning needs some kind of reinforcement, and that revisiting something that has been learned in some way enhances the effectiveness of that learning. Professional development is no different. Like any other kind of learning, it is more effective if it is not rushed and is followed over time by some kind of activity or support. Indeed, Joyce and Showers argue that teacher take-up rates can be as low as 5–10 per cent, even among enthusiastic volunteers, where the original professional development activities are not followed up in some way at some later date (Joyce and Showers 1995: 14).

Recent support for the importance of follow-up in designing professional development programs comes from the 2005 large-scale quantitative study by Ingvarson et al of the
factors that influence the effectiveness of such programs. They surveyed 3250 teachers at least three months after their participation in a range of different activities, including online learning, workshops, mentoring, accredited courses and action learning. They defined follow-up as the provision of a period of time or some kind of assistance to implement what they had learned during the initial stages of the program or opportunity to use it in their practice. Along with content focus and active involvement (see below), they found that follow-up was consistently and directly related to growth in teachers’ knowledge and their sense of professional community – bearing out the supposition in their model that follow-up is, indeed, crucial to the success of any professional development program. Since, as Hoban (2002) notes, teacher change is a process and not an event, time and ongoing support will be an important ingredient in supporting professional development.

**Context relevance**

Learning of any kind is often more successful when it starts close to the needs of the learner, and teacher learning is no different. This means that working outwards from the particularities of a context towards more general issues can often be more rewarding in professional development activities (even if the aim is to develop more general skills or knowledge) because working in this way establishes an immediately recognisable and relevant context and frame of reference within which learning can take place.

As noted in Chapter 1, teachers are primarily concerned with their own practice and how to improve it. As notions of teachers as reflective professionals supplant more technical, craft-oriented conceptions of teaching, the role of context is increasingly regarded as crucial, and teachers are the experts when it comes to the particular context in which they work. They may therefore reject as too ‘decontextualised’ research findings from outside that immediate context. Indeed, traditional technical rational approaches to professional development activities, in which outside experts provided prescriptions on how to teach, have been eclipsed by approaches in which teachers are more centrally involved in their own professional development (see for example discussions in Freeman and Johnson 1998; Hoban 2002; Reeves et al 2002). Thus professional development activities with a strong focus on context have often been of the social-constructivist variety; that is, reflective and collaborative in which teachers create rather than simply consume knowledge rather than input-oriented (see for example Clair 1998).

Whatever the professional development activity, however, it is important that the content and focus of professional development is closely related to teachers’ priorities. Ingvarson et al (2005), for example, found that, across a whole range of different activities, a factor they called ‘content focus’ was consistently related to growth in both teacher knowledge and a sense of professional community as teachers. Their definition of content here is crucially linked to concrete, practical issues relevant to teachers’ contexts, ‘the content they teach, how students learn that content and how to represent and convey that content in meaningful ways’ (Ingvarson et al 2005: 8).

Thus, regardless of the type of activity – whether one-off and aimed at a short, sharp intervention or a longer-term, reflective project – professional development seems to be more effective if it addresses issues directly related to a teacher’s context.

**Reflection and self awareness**

Since the work of Dewey early last century (for example Dewey 1904), and more recently Schön (1983, 1987, 1988) and Kemmis and McTaggert (1982, 1988), reflection has come to be regarded as crucial to the development of the professional because real changes in practice cannot be limited to superficial behaviours but need instead to be underpinned by fundamental
changes in underlying beliefs and attitudes. Such changes can only happen where there is time and opportunity for reflection and active engagement. Reflection provides a means to self-awareness which in turn can promote a recognition of ‘ambiguities and uncertainties’, thus triggering the intellectual unrest that can promote change (Hoban 2002: 169).

In education generally, reflection has therefore become increasingly respectable as a basis for theorising and improving practice by helping to liberate teachers from the straightjacket of their assumptions. Le Cornu and Peters (2005), for example, emphasise the importance of reflection by both teachers and students in collaboration. They identify reflection in terms of three processes: ‘technical reflection’ on actions; ‘practical/theoretical reflection’ on reasons for actions, and ‘critical reflection’ which addresses assumptions and ethical issues (p 55). Recent approaches to teacher education and development have focused on teachers as reflective professionals who need to understand themselves, their knowledge, and their beliefs about learning and teaching and how these affect what they do in a classroom as a prelude to any critique of or change to their practice (Freeman and Johnson 1998). Reflection has therefore been a popular and effective ingredient in TESOL professional development since the late 1980s (for example Nunan 1993), even if sometimes TESOL managers are less enthusiastic (see for example Waites 1997). Reflection, of course, is most productive when it is directly linked with action.

**Active involvement**

The importance of active participation in learning is a recurrent theme in the educational literature generally, and so it is not so surprising to find it features prominently in discussions of effective teacher learning. In their examination of the essentials of effective professional development, for example, Hawley and Valli (1999) highlight the motivational pay-off for teachers of identifying their own professional development goals and the processes by which they will achieve them. Moreover, recent quantitative evidence from Ingvarson et al (2005) supports the general point that active involvement is not only appreciated by teachers but results in more effective learning. They found that active learning – that is, the opportunity to actively reflect on their practice, identify new areas for improvement and try out innovations – had an impact on factors likely to influence teachers’ confidence and ability to meet their students’ needs and was therefore more effective than changes in practice alone (p 14). Thus the combination of action with reflection seems to be particularly powerful.

An influential approach to combining reflection and action has been action research, which combines research and professional development through reflection, action and experiential learning (Burns 1999; Edge 2001). Typically, an action research approach to professional development involves the development of a focus for research by the teachers themselves who develop some action to address a perceived need and then try it out in practice following a cycle of action and reflection. Classically, action research involves:

- trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching, and learning. The result is improvement in what happens in the classroom and school, and better articulation and justification of the educational rationale for what goes on. Action research provides a way of working which links theory and practice into the one whole: ideas-in-action. (Kemmis and McTaggart 1982: 5).

Since its inception, action research has taken many forms and been practised in a range of fields and contexts. As professional development, it offers at least three ways of learning: through an individual’s experience; through their intellect; and through the formulation and expression of their ideas (Edge 1992: 8). There is plenty of evidence that action research can promote transformative change in teachers (Burns and Hood 1995, 1997, 1998; Burns 1999). The successful ingredients include not only the opportunity to reflect but also the fact that teachers are actively constructing, rather than simply receiving, knowledge. This
knowledge is all the more precious as it relates to matters of direct concern to teachers and relevant to teachers needs. However, it is also important to illuminate a context from outside; that is, to embrace new ideas and knowledge which can complement and expand internal perspectives.

**New conceptual inputs**

Alongside reflection and action, effective professional development activities also need to introduce new ‘conceptual inputs’ – the knowledge or new ideas that encourage any group of professionals to move beyond their experience (Hoban 2002). Turbill (2002: 97–100) distinguishes *outside-in learning*, or learning from contact with the theory and practice of others, from *inside-out learning* in which teachers reflect on what drives their teaching, make explicit their tacit knowledge and gain a sense of their own understanding and needs. Both, she argues, are important for teachers, and it is where they intersect that deep and lasting learning happens. Both encourage intellectual unrest and therefore enquiry and in combination they allow teachers to become active learners and truly engage with knowledge and practice that is likely to engender real change. Thus the learning from reflection and action relevant to their everyday experiences is enhanced by relevant input from outside the teacher.

New conceptual inputs for professional development can be of many different kinds, including both disciplinary content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1987). Recent large-scale reviews of professional development among school teachers have supported the importance of the former. Thus, as we saw above, Ingvarson et al (2005) found, among other things, that the most successful programs were those which offered a strong knowledge base (p 16), especially research-based knowledge about student learning of content (p 15). Similarly, in their analysis of more than 1000 maths and science teachers in the US and the aspects of professional development that most increased their skills and led to classroom changes, Garet et al (2001) stress the importance of a focus on subject matter alongside active learning and integration into daily school life as one of the three core features of good professional development. Yet, as Hawley and Valli (1999: 140) suggest, teachers may be reluctant to identify either subject matter knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge as a priority for their own professional development, as their professional credibility and self-esteem rests on their status as experts in these matters.

In TESOL, too – current debates about the priorities and the relative role of our source disciplines notwithstanding (see Yates and Muchisky 2003) – it is clear that teachers need to continue to build their knowledge throughout their careers. This knowledge includes not only knowledge about the language they are teaching and how it is used in different contexts, but also about learners and how to support learning as well as about issues relevant to how languages are learned and what facilitates this process.

While new conceptual inputs can certainly be generated from within a workplace or group working collaboratively (see for example Clair 1998), inputs from outside sources help to guard against the danger that professional development activities might simply reinforce unhelpful routines and behaviours ‘constrained by the limitations of the experiences of the participants’ (Hoban 2002: 167). This danger is very real, since each of us lives and works by different myths or beliefs we have about good and bad behaviour in different contexts. These beliefs are individual, largely private but important because it is through these that we interpret the world (Myers 1993). We therefore tend to see any feedback from the outside world – in teaching as in other areas – in terms of these myths so that they are likely to be reinforced rather than challenged by our experiences. Where myths about our teaching and learning remain unexamined and unchallenged, our practice can become automatic and resistant to change. Knowledge that can really promote learning from outside is therefore crucial in helping to disconfirm old myths and build new ones.
Collaboration

The opportunity for collaboration, whether with peers or with others outside the workplace, is an important ingredient in effective professional development activities because although teachers work closely with learners, they work less often and less closely with each other (Crookes 1993; Fullan 2001), and this isolation can reinforce the private and unexamined nature of the assumptions and beliefs that drive our teaching. Reeves et al (2002: 72) use the image of an egg carton: each teacher works in their little section of the egg carton without necessarily having either the need or the opportunity to see what is happening in other sections. They thus remain essentially isolated in their day-to-day practice. Collaboration can provide teachers with a useful means to counteract the negative effects of this isolation and the professional space and motivation to talk about what they do and why they do it in this way. This opportunity to articulate what they think increases their opportunities for learning. As Edge (1992:7) reminds us, it is often only when we have to express our thoughts that we actually clarify them for ourselves. This opportunity to open up individual reflection to other influences (Crookes 2003: 182) and ‘de-privatise’ practice (Ingvarson et al 2005) is useful because once ideas are in the public domain, they can be developed, shared and critiqued much more productively than when working in isolation.

Collaboration with peers can also provide a supportive environment for change. Indeed, for a number of reasons, changes in practice are very difficult to put into operation without the support of peers (Reeves et al 2002; Turbill 2002; Ingvarson et al 2005). Workplaces often provide the primary professional reference group for teachers and therefore play a crucial role in developing and maintaining professional identity. If teachers change their practice without any reference to their peers, they may appear to be challenging their colleagues and find themselves under pressure not to stand out from the crowd. This feeling of difference may encourage them to either pretend that they are not doing anything different (in which case their practice cannot really change) or otherwise keep quiet about what they are doing. In either case, change will be inhibited. Without social support, innovation may not get the time or space that it needs to blossom, mature and reproduce (Reeves et al 2002: 63–73).

However, as Fullan (2001) warns, collaborating only with like-minded colleagues can sometimes simply reinforce old habits: ‘collaboration is powerful, which means that people can do powerfully wrong things together’ (p 24). Collaboration which is too inward-looking runs the risk of simply trying to fit new ideas into the existing practice, encouraging a kind of ‘cosy collegiality’ in which teachers are merely ‘recycling poor practice’ (Reeves et al 2002: 96–7). It can often be more helpful, therefore, when this opening up takes the form of some kind of challenge, as it is often when our beliefs are challenged that we learn the most.

In this regard, collaboration between teacher and researcher can potentially offer useful insights from both inside and outside. In fact, collaborative projects of this kind offer the potential for activities with all the essential ingredients listed in the FRANCC framework: teachers are encouraged to reflect on their work and become actively involved in matters of relevance to their teaching context. This also offers the opportunity to engage with new conceptual inputs from outside that immediate context and can happen over an extended period that allows for follow-up.
Collaborative research and professional development

Burton (1998:427–30) suggests 14 characteristics of good collaborative projects in TESOL, many of which are clearly related to the FRANCC ingredients found in effective professional development activities discussed above. These are:

- **Reality** The research must be a plausible.
- **Reasonableness** It must be coherent and reveal any bias.
- **Recognition** It should be recognisable by those outside the research process.
- **Reflection** It should stimulate reflection on practice and lead to action.
- **Relativity** It should relate to what is known about teaching.
- **Relevance** It should be of interest to teachers.
- **Reliability** It should be trustworthy.
- **Respect** It should respect the rights of individuals and institutions.
- **Responsibility** It should be supported.
- **Responsiveness** It should respond to practical needs.
- **Revelation** It should lead us to learning about teaching.
- **Review** There should be evaluation beyond the immediate teaching context of the study.
- **Richness** It should report detail about context.
- **Robustness** It should make a lasting contribution.

Thus the characteristic of reflection is an important ingredient in both quality collaborative projects and quality professional development activities, and is also linked directly with action in Burton’s framework. Involvement in research projects can offer teachers the opportunity to actively reflect on an aspect of their work in a context-relevant but focused way, and can take a variety of forms, ranging from teacher-led research (Freeman 1998), ‘exploratory language teaching’ (Allwright 1993) to involvement in basic descriptive or professional development projects relevant to the teaching context (for example Wigglesworth 2000, 2003; Yates and Wigglesworth 2005).

Context-relevance and the imperative that research be accessible to teachers can be found in Burton’s insistence on reality, recognition, responsiveness, relevance and richness in collaborative projects. Moreover, the role of research projects in both the consumption and creation of new conceptual outputs is suggested in her notions of relativity – that projects make use of new conceptual inputs from what is already known – and revelation – that they should lead to learning about teaching; that is, seek to produce them. Indeed, collaborative research projects can not only offer teachers the opportunity to explore issues of direct relevance to them, but also to locate what is already known about these issues. And this kind of professional development can be infectious: as teachers build on their own experiences and those of others through participation in projects, they can often also engage and stimulate their colleagues.

Collaborative research projects can be designed in various ways and take a range of approaches, so that it is possible to structure them to explicitly include the features of effective professional development discussed above, and incorporate both inside-out and outside-in learning. While some collaborative research projects have adopted action research approaches (see for example publications in the Teachers’ Voices series: Burns and Hood 1995, 1997, 1998), others have offered teachers opportunities for active engagement and reflection in research projects from other perspectives using a range of methodologies (for example Wigglesworth 2000; Yates and Wigglesworth 2005).
Whatever the approach, my argument here is that carefully designed collaborative projects can yield both tangible research outcomes and professional development benefits for the teachers involved and for the organisations in which they teach. The extent to which these objectives were met in the *Cultures of Learning* project are considered in the following chapter.
Chapter 5

Extending teacher repertoires on cultures of learning

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Extending Teacher Repertoires project was designed to allow as many teachers as possible to actively engage with the findings of the Clients Project in ways that would promote the different types of learning discussed in Loucks-Horsley et al (1998); that is, developing awareness, building knowledge, translating into practice, practising teach-ing and reflecting. We chose to do this through the development and trial of three packages that could be used in professional development activities and by teachers.

Our assumption was that both the process and product of this kind of project – in which activities and materials are based on research findings but developed in collaboration with researchers by teachers for teachers – would be a useful way of introducing new concepts that were context-relevant. If the content of the packages engaged teachers, then it would be adopted and adapted for use in the classroom. We were therefore aiming at reculturing, in the sense that we wanted teachers to understand the ‘deep meaning’ (Fullan 2001: 38) rather than simply to introduce some superficial behaviours or new materials. Thus, it was not only the activities themselves but the attitudes surrounding their use that were the ultimate goal of the professional development. In this chapter, I will explore the level of teacher learning and engagement in one component of the Extending Teacher Repertoires project – the Learning Cultures sub-project.

Assessing the impact of professional development

It is by no means straightforward to assess the professional development impact of any activity. Some approaches have looked at change in teachers’ uptake or use of an innovation (for example Joyce and Showers 1995), others have looked for institutional change (for example Bellanca 1995; Fullan 2001) or changes in student outcomes (for example Bellanca 1995; Fullan 2001; Ingvason et al 2003). Moreover, the professional development impact of a project changes over time so that different types of feedback may be appropriate at different stages (Loucks-Horsley et al 1998). In this project, data on impact were collected largely in the form of teacher self-report.

As described in Chapter 2, the project was conducted in three phases: a development phase in which professional development packages were put together by teachers in collaboration with researchers; a rehearsal phase in which these were piloted in a workshop for teachers and refined in the light of their comments; and an evaluation phase in which they were trialled for a seven-week period in classrooms. In the analysis that follows, I draw chiefly on what the teachers said about the materials and their involvement in the project.

Data were collected from a total of 66 participants by various means appropriate to their level of involvement, both during and after completion of the project. In order to have an overall perspective on how useful the project had been to teachers and the organisation, the curriculum coordinator who coordinated the project within the provider was interviewed 18 months after completion.

The three teachers who were centrally involved in designing, developing and refining the package in the development phase were also interviewed at about this time. They were encouraged to reflect upon and articulate what (if anything) they felt they had learned through participating in the project, and to reflect on the longer term benefits of their involvement in the project and of the project as a whole.
Data from the teachers who attended the workshop during the rehearsal phase were collected immediately after the workshop by anonymous questionnaire while the developing views of the teachers who trialled the package during the evaluation phase were collected through interview, reflective journals and focus groups during the period of the evaluation. In these data collection activities, teachers were asked for feedback on the materials in the package and what they felt they had gained from their involvement in the project. A summary of the data collection activities is given in Table 3, and copies of the questionnaires used can be found in Appendixes 2 and 3. Copies of the materials can be seen in the Appendix 1.

Table 3: Data collection activities for assessing the impact of professional development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in the project</th>
<th>Role in the Cultures of Learning sub-project</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Data collection method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development phase</td>
<td>Developed and informally trialled materials; one ran rehearsal and evaluation phase workshops; all gave informal workshops in their workplaces</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviews after project completion by research assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal phase</td>
<td>Attended workshop introducing draft materials, ideas and rationale of package</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Questionnaire immediately after workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation phase</td>
<td>Attended workshop introducing revised materials, ideas and rationale of package</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Questionnaire immediately after workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used materials in their classes over a seven-week period</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Interviews, reflective journal, focus group during period of evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total evaluation phase</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Project coordinator within provider</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview by research assistant 18 months after completion of the project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In assessing the impact of the project I examine the data from the teachers involved in each of the phases of the project. I will start with the curriculum coordinator’s overall assessment of how useful the project had been to teachers and the organisation.
Professional development impact on teachers

Ripples in a pond: The overall impact on the organisation

The curriculum coordinator, ‘Jenny’, was unreservedly positive in her verdict on the professional development benefits of the Extending Teacher Repertoires project overall, including the Cultures of Learning sub-project, both for the teachers involved and for the organisation as a whole. Assessing it as ‘one of our most useful projects’, she reported that it had had an impact on classroom practice and syllabus development across the state in what she described as a ‘ripples in the pond’ motion. To continue the rather watery mixed metaphor, she felt that it had brought ‘a whole raft of other benefits which flow on to teachers, our staff, and ultimately to the learners as well’ (project data). That is, from relatively modest beginnings, the impact of the various parts of the project had spread out far beyond the point at which it had been introduced. This experience had fuelled her conviction that the project exemplified a ‘really strong model’ of the way in which a research organisation (the AMEP Research Centre) and a provider could work together.

In particular, Jenny noted ‘tangible, on the ground benefits’ to the organisation. For her, the fact that the content of the project had come from the findings of a previous project conducted within her provider was a distinct advantage because it was relevant to the context in which teachers work. She saw it as ‘client driven’ – that is, focused on and arising out of the student group – and felt that this motivated and engaged teachers who were generally more enthusiastic about and responsive to learner perspectives than to directives from organisational or government sources. For her, one of the major successes of the project was that teachers had really incorporated research findings into practice: they had not only raised their awareness and built their knowledge, but gone beyond discussion and reflection to actively incorporate the findings of the Clients Project into their teaching practice. Eighteen months after the completion of the project she was confident that the materials were still being used. From her perspective, therefore, the deep learning occasioned by the project was widespread and extended well beyond those teachers originally involved.

When asked specifically about the professional development benefits for the three teachers, Sally, Tula and Tricia, who were involved in the development phase of the Cultures of Learning project, she noted ‘very strong benefits’. She saw these as being related to the process of developing the materials and working with conceptual frameworks to develop ‘ways of doing things in the classroom’. She saw benefits, too, in the opportunities they had to cooperate across teaching sites, in learning about and shaping the processes of developing and trialling materials, in running sessions and gathering evaluating feedback. The project gave them the time and opportunity to develop ideas which were already embryonic, to cross-fertilise and breed new ones. Jenny commented that, in particular for Tula and Tricia who had had little previous experience of research methodologies or giving presentations, involvement in the project seemed to have enhanced their confidence and encouraged them to take on activities outside their comfort zone. As we shall see below, however, the teachers themselves were less conscious of the ways in which they had developed.

An examination of what teachers who participated in the different phases of the project had to say about their involvement generally provides support for the views of the professional development benefits given by the curriculum coordinator, but also allows insight into some of the ways in which the effectiveness of future projects could be enhanced.
Impact of the development phase

As described in Chapters 2 and 3, in the development phase a small group of three teachers collaborated with AMEP Research Centre staff to develop a professional development package to address issues related to cultures of learning in the classroom. It was assumed that the experienced teachers involved in this phase already had a raised awareness of the issues to be addressed, but that they would build on their knowledge and reflect more deeply on them as they translated these ideas into practical professional development and teaching materials.

In their interviews with us after completion of the project, all three teachers voiced strongly positive opinions about how useful and enjoyable they had found their experience. They felt that it had been very worthwhile for themselves, their centres and other teachers. All three reported that the project had generally increased teachers’ awareness of the issues and saw the materials as a very useful springboard for reflection and discussion. Tula and Tricia, in particular, reported finding the opportunity to develop ideas cooperatively with others who had different approaches and experiences very beneficial, and that it helped to keep up the energy and resilience needed to see a project through. All were therefore very enthusiastic about the project and its outcomes. Tula proudly reported that teachers in her centre were still making regular use of the materials in ways that demonstrated that they were integrated into their routines.

Sally, who was perhaps the most experienced of the three, reported finding the experience of sharing her expertise ‘very satisfying’, but saw her own professional development benefits in terms of ‘fine-tuning’ rather than in changes of a more revolutionary kind. She had long been committed to the ideas underlying the project, and so her involvement simply reinforced this and gave her the opportunity to further develop her ideas and ways to implement them.

Awareness of own learning

The teachers were, in general, articulate about the benefits of their involvement in the project in terms of their activities, of its relevance to practice and of the opportunities it offered them to collaborate with more experienced colleagues or teachers from other centres. However, they seemed less conscious of their own individual development. They did not specifically mention gains in terms of new knowledge or opportunities for reflection presented by the project. This may have been because, as experienced, long-term teachers, they had already been aware of the issues before the start of the project. They seemed to see themselves as ‘teachers’ rather than ‘learners’ in the project; that is, they seemed to be more conscious of what they were giving to their colleagues rather than what they themselves were gaining in terms of professional development. Of all the teachers involved in the project, these three seemed to be least aware of any benefits they had gained personally. When asked directly what she had learned from her involvement, Tula, for example, appeared not to understand the question and then interpreted it in terms of very concrete skills, responding that ‘she had not had to learn any computer skills or anything’.

It may be, of course, that they did, in fact, gain little in terms of professional development, but this seems unlikely in view of the very positive comments they made about the value of their involvement in the project. Moreover, as noted above, the curriculum coordinator saw clear professional development benefits, and had volunteered specific comment on how Tula had grown as a teacher, in particular mentioning the gains she had made in her confidence and in her expertise in giving seminar presentations and her willingness to give them.

An alternative explanation might be that the gains these teachers experienced were more integrated in their practice as teachers, less concrete and therefore less consciously available to them than those made by other participants. There are advantages to this kind of professional
development ‘by stealth’: teachers feel that they are making a valuable contribution and this increases their confidence, and their ownership of an issue or program is likely to increase their commitment and motivation. However, it is also valuable for teachers to be able to focus and reflect on, and therefore be more conscious of, their own professional development. To return to the idea with which this report opened – that a good teacher is a good, perpetual learner – it is important that professional development activities help teachers not only to learn, but also to be conscious of their learning so that they retain and reinforce a view of themselves as learners as well as teachers. While the very experienced teachers contributed a lot to their colleagues and were clearly very positive about this experience, they did not seem to have reflected as much on their own development as teachers as would have been ideal.

There is also some indication that this sense of being ‘teachers’ rather than ‘learners’ in the project may have made them less accepting of feedback of a negative nature. At a final project meeting, the research team fed back a summary of the evaluative comments made by the teachers involved in the evaluation phase of the project, that is, from those who were using the materials for an extended period. It was noticeable that the reactions of the development teachers present were more reflexive than reflective; that is, their immediate tendency was to reject the critique of the materials rather than reflect on why it might have been offered. These insights suggest that their role in the project as expert developers may not have encouraged as much reflection at the deepest level as we had anticipated.

Implications for design of future projects

Despite the evident value of involvement in the development phase of this project, there are some implications in these comments for the design of future projects. First, it may be worth considering the criteria for the selection of teachers to take part in the different phases more deliberately. It may be that, from the point of view of their own development, teachers who are less familiar with the particular issues tackled by the package should be involved in this phase, so that they are challenged to reflect more deeply. This might encourage greater conceptual learning and reflective opportunities for the teachers involved, and any loss in expertise that this might entail could be offset by greater involvement of university researchers where appropriate.

Secondly, there could be more explicit targeting and awareness-raising of what the professional development benefits might be for the teachers themselves, as well as for their colleagues. While these might be varied and different for different teachers, time spent not only targeting but explicitly addressing relevant skills (for example, materials design, seminar presentations skills) might be time well spent so that participants become more conscious of their own learning.

A third recommendation would be to build in a more explicit reflective component, particularly in relation to final feedback comments from other participants so that even such ‘expert’ teachers are challenged in their thinking. In this way, greater openness to ongoing reflective development might be encouraged.

Impact of rehearsal workshop participation

In the rehearsal phase of the project, teachers attended a prototype workshop in which they were introduced to the draft materials developed in the previous phase. Data from the 54 questionnaire responses returned after the workshop (see Appendix 2) were generally very positive about the overall benefits of the session and the potential positive impacts of the materials in the classroom. Participants indicated that they found both the session and the materials useful, and their responses suggest that this may have been due at least in part to the presenter, who was rated as excellent by almost every participant. Overall, 43 teachers
found the overview of the issues and aims of the materials clear, interesting and relevant. A small number (4) commented that they would have liked more information.

The teachers seemed to particularly enjoy the parts of the sessions in which they had the opportunity to discuss the issues – 48 explicitly commented that they thought the discussions were valuable and many noted that the different views present generated stimulating discussions. Some teachers noted that the discussions were enlightening and good reminders of the need to make efforts to bridge cultures. Comments indicated that some teachers were reflecting on how far the Australian culture of learning might need to be adapted to be more in keeping with the authoritarian expectations of some learners.

We also left space in the questionnaire for extra comments. These were very diverse, but indicated that teachers were spurred on by the session and the materials to reflect on how they could extend and apply what they had seen in new situations. For example, some saw the possibilities for several of the materials to be used in other ways, for example with volunteer tutors, and in other programs. Paradoxically, given the frequent criticism that workshops are superficial and mechanistic (see for example Hoban 2002; Reeves et al 2002), the session appeared to offer teachers a much-needed opportunity to reflect on what they do. As one teacher commented in her feedback: ‘[This] session forces you to think about issues affecting learners in depth. On daily basis there is never enough time for this!’ (project data).

Thus, although workshops are often much derided as a ‘quick and dirty’, superficial mode of professional development delivery, the workshop in this project seems to have been very well received and offered opportunities for collaboration and reflection within a limited time period. The quality of the presenter, Sally, who was perceived as a very experienced teacher with enormous credibility, obviously contributed to its success (however, as discussed above, she may have gained less benefit overall from her involvement herself because she was already so familiar with the issues). Another factor in the positive reception of the workshops seems to have been that the materials were seen as coming from the students themselves (that is, indirectly through the findings of the Clients Project) and were therefore perceived as responding to a real need. Although the participants were not explicitly asked to comment on this, it seems that the combination of research and pedagogical expertise lent the materials and their rationale an authority which enhanced their value.

A much smaller number of teachers took part in the evaluation phase in which teachers participated in an introductory workshop and then tried out the materials in their classes for a seven-week period. As discussed in the next section, in this phase we had the opportunity to explore in a little more depth how teachers engaged with the issues and the materials over a longer period, and the extent to which they felt that this impacted on their practice.

**Impact of the evaluation phase**

Eight volunteer teachers tried out the materials in their classrooms in the evaluation phase of the project. Participation in this phase had been designed to address all five types of learning; that is, we hoped that the teachers would develop their awareness of the issues and build their knowledge and translate this into their everyday teaching practice, and that this activity itself, together with the requirement to provide evaluative feedback on the materials to the research team, would promote reflection.

We collected the views of the volunteer teachers on this process through personal journals and regular, interviews – including, for five of the teachers, a final focus group. The interviews were semi-structured and designed to probe how much use the participants were making of the materials, whether and how they were adapting them and their views on how useful they were. Seven teachers were able to attend the professional development session on the package, and data from this workshop were collected through an anonymous response questionnaire (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire asked for their previous awareness of
learning cultures, to what extent their views had changed as a result of the session, their initial reactions to the materials in the package, and how well-prepared they felt to use them after the workshop session.

From the workshop questionnaire responses, it seems that for most of the teachers the conceptual inputs in the workshop were not entirely new, but had helped them to build on what they already knew and provided a basis for reflection. Six of the seven teachers who were able to attend workshop session reported that it had influenced their views, and the seventh reported that she was already familiar with some of the ideas through involvement in a previous project. Four commented that the session helped to clarify their views and offered strategies to help learners understand the learning approaches they would meet in their classrooms, and two noted that they would now expect students to take more responsibility for their learning. One reported that the session had given her new insight into ‘all the cultural scaffolding to my expectations of students’.

Like the teachers involved in the development phase of the project, the teachers largely focused in their interviews and journals on the materials and their effectiveness with students rather than on their own professional development. I draw on these reflections to discuss what they appeared to have gained professionally from their involvement in this phase of the project. Their pseudonyms and the interview data gathered from each are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of evaluation phase participants and interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petra</td>
<td>1 interview, focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>1 interview, focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>1 interview, focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>2 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsha</td>
<td>3 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serina</td>
<td>2 interviews, focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherina</td>
<td>2 interviews, focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>3 interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approach taken to trialling

From what the teachers told us, it is clear that they actively engaged with and reflected on the materials from the outset, but although they were positive about many of the materials, this did not always mean that they had ‘bought’ all of the concepts behind the package in the way intended by the developers. Teachers varied in their response to the task in hand (trialling the materials), and most were selective in the activities they invested in, resisting those elements that did not mesh with their teaching philosophies. For example, while Serena trialled all the materials as requested – and continued with them even when she saw student engagement fade and felt herself that they had done their job (LCFG) – Rose and Marsha seemed to select only those materials that they thought related directly to a learning outcome that the students were due to do. That is, they did not see a role for those materials that did not relate directly to the areas of the curriculum that they were covering (LCT4 Rose i).

Impact on teachers

Explicit comment on how the project had impacted positively on them as teachers frequently centred on how they now had a raised awareness of their students, their past learning experiences and their current daily lives. Marsha, for example, reported thinking differently about learning cultures in the classroom and appreciated the way in which the Cultures of Learning overheads allowed whole class discussions to tackle issues explicitly (LCT5 Mars iFG). Catherina and Rose noted a difference in their awareness of their own teaching style and how it differed from those of the schools in which their students had studied before (LCFG 6; LCT4 Rose i). Mary singled out the clock activity as particularly revealing of the very busy lives of her students (LCT2 Mary i).

Although the concepts behind the materials were not particularly new to some teachers, the materials themselves were seen as helping them to be more consistent and systematic in the way they addressed the issues because, as Marsha put it, they could be worked through as ‘papers not ideas’ and this ‘keeps you focused and keeps them [the students] focused’ (LCT5 Mars iFG). This opportunity to put into practice measures that explicitly addressed the issue of learning cultures was very welcome. As Veronica noted, the materials also served as a reminder of a number of areas that ‘we forget to tell our students’, like the importance of timeliness and politeness formulae, the need to apologise for being late and so on (LCT3 Ver i). Whereas they may have been aware of these in a background way, the package offered a means of actively doing something with this awareness. As Catherina (FG) noted:

it’s good to address it and sometimes we jump into a class and you sort of don’t address it with new students, I think; so that, that helped doing that, making them and making myself more aware that that’s not the style they are used to…

Although there was some discussion of the challenges of using the Cultures of Learning overheads, the teachers clearly found they raised their awareness of the differences in educational cultures in the classroom and helped them reflect on how these differences might impact on their students. Serena, for example, found the discussion that followed the use of the overheads quite shocking: she learned of the strictness of the education systems her students had experienced and was quite distressed at the heartbreaking revelations occasioned by discussion of past experiences of schooling. She therefore found the discussion informative and useful, though draining (LCT6 Ser i1). Rose, on the other hand, found the topic less stressful, though draining (LCT6 Ser i1). Rose, on the other hand, found the topic less stressful, though draining (LCT6 Ser i1). Rose, on the other hand, found the topic less stressful and reported that the discussion was a good way to get to know the class and ‘would set the tone of the class to a certain extent’ (LCT4 Rose i). Marsha and Catherina appreciated the way in which the presentation raised important concepts that they could refer back to (LCT5 Mars iFG; LCT7 Cat i2) even when some of the students had missed the original presentation (LCFG). For Melissa, the presentation caused reflection on exactly what it was that students needed from their teachers (LCT8 Mel i1).
Impact on learners

Several of the teachers noted an impact on the students. Serina, for example, noticed that the learner personal record sheet seemed to encourage students to take more responsibility for their progress, and using the sign in/out attendance sheets helped raise awareness of the need for punctuality. Rose identified a more general change in the classroom atmosphere, noting:

there was certainly a different kind of feel in the classroom. The students are starting to realise that Marsha and I are expecting things from them and are teaching in certain ways that we get a maximum teaching effect. (LCT4 Rose i)

Rose felt that they were beginning to cooperate in groups and help each other more rather than expecting everything to go through the teacher. She also felt that the students, too, were more aware of what they should do. Marsha, her co-teacher, however, was slightly less confident of having seen change in the very same class, largely, it seems, because the effects of continuous enrolment meant that by the end of the trial, the class was composed of very different students from those who had started it.6

Ongoing modification of material

There was evidence that the teachers were reflecting on the materials and suggesting ways in which they could be adapted for use more widely by teachers. Veronica, for example, suggested modifications to the teacher information sheet that accompanies each activity as she felt that not all teachers were aware of how important the kinds of cultural issues tackled in the materials were for students and needed more insight into the purpose of each and how to use it (LCT3 Ver i). Serena made modifications to the Sign in/out attendance sheet to cover one week instead of one day so that she did not have to remember to put it out on a daily basis. Marsha suggested how the materials could be distributed and made available in centres (LCT5 Mars iFG). As Mary notes in the final focus group, a real advantage of the materials was that they offered ‘another repertoire of stuff’ that teachers could use in situations and in ways that they found appropriate.

Reaction to regulatory materials

As already stated, one of our aims in creating the package was to raise awareness of teachers as well as students, not only of different ways of learning, but also of the importance of regular and appropriate punctuality and attendance patterns. While the teachers were generally very positive about the materials which tackled learning issues, it was less clear that the views behind the materials designed to encourage teachers to pay more attention to absenteeism, punctuality and homework were taken up by all the teachers. Some were very positive. Rose found that use of the materials made all kinds of expectations in the classroom generally more explicit and that, in particular, they raised awareness of the times at which students arrived and the expectation that they explain non-attendance (LCT4 Rose i). Veronica noted a positive impact on her students attendance (LCT3 Ver i). However, while Serena also noted an impact on attendance and carefully introduced the materials as a way of showing the importance of these issues, she nevertheless found that her class stopped using the Sign in/out attendance sheet activity once the relevant learning outcome related to the writing of the notes had been achieved. She also noted that the attendance of one habitually late student never improved.

It seems that those teachers who had very strong prior assumptions about the degree to which lateness and absenteeism were problems were not sufficiently persuaded by the workshop or their trial of the package to relinquish this view. Although we did not observe classes, there is some indication the teachers did not consider lateness and absenteeism to be particularly
problematic for them, and only Mary and Serina actually trialled every one of the more regulatory materials (Absence notes, Late notes, Sign in/out Attendance sheets).

Three of the eight teachers did not trial the Late or Absence notes and a fourth did not use the Late notes. Melissa was reluctant to try the Late notes because she saw them as an activity for ‘keeping them under control, rather than giving control to them’. Petra reported not feeling ‘comfortable’ trying any of these out with her class, and did not feel that lateness was a problem, even though she herself reported an anecdote that illustrated that this was not necessarily the case. Catherina, like Petra, felt that lateness was not a problem, that students did not want to use them and that when they were late they always had good reasons.

Four teachers did not use the Sign in sheets. Marsha experimented only once with the Sign in activity, but also felt that the students reacted badly and felt it was treating the students like children. It was interesting that Melissa was ambivalent about the usefulness of the Sign in activity, even though she reported some positive effects. Moreover, for some who used the Absence or Late notes in class (Serina, Veronica and Catherina), it was their value as a context-relevant way of practising the skills of writing notes that they appreciated rather than their role in changing patterns of behaviour.

Even from those who used these regulatory activities, there was some reservation about how long they should be used with classes. Mary felt they should be used only as long as they were useful, and did not want to insist on these attendance-related activities because students had decided themselves to study and she did not want to be seen as a ‘horrible old lady’ with a regulatory role:

if they are late and those things, it is generally legitimate and you can’t come down that heavy, fist on them, cos they’ll say ‘Oh ptt, urr, horrible old lady’s there! (Mary, LCFG)

In the final focus group, certainly, there was a feeling that the way in which the teacher approached using the materials was crucial and that anything that looked like overt ‘policing’ was unacceptable, as Petra commented:

Because they are adults and they certainly shouldn’t be watched or treated like children. I think once it becomes like that, then it’s very dangerous actually for attention issues. (Petra, LCFG)

It seems that some of the teachers did not perceive an urgent need for materials relating to punctuality and attendance, and they did fit in with their professional vision of who they are and what they are supposed to be doing.

**Summary of evaluation phase**

In summary, the teachers involved in this phase clearly engaged with the materials, reflected on them, translated many of the ideas into their practice and were able to adapt some of them for their own use in different ways. Their involvement in the project allowed them to build on their prior knowledge of the issues. However, some of those who held attitudes towards the more contentious areas that were rather different from those of the teachers who developed the package, were not persuaded differently through their participation in the project. For some this may have been because they rejected the rationale behind the relevant materials from the outset and so did not even use them so that there were therefore limited occasions for them to reflect on their usefulness. Just as the teachers in the development phase were not particularly receptive to their feedback, some of the teachers involved in the evaluation phase were not prepared to suspend disbelief and try out the materials.
Conclusion

The above analysis has demonstrated that the project was clearly perceived as extremely useful, both for the individual teachers involved and for the organisation. It generated successful professional development activities for teachers in the form of the materials and workshops as well as through participation in their preparation and refinement. The project seems to have left a lasting impression on at least parts of the organisation, such that the materials were being used and incorporated into everyday teaching practice well after the period of the project. However, we have also had some insight into the need for more carefully-structured opportunities for ongoing reflection and discussion, particularly in matters that are controversial. In the following chapter I reflect on the successes and limitations of this project in the light of the FRANCC checklist for effective professional development activities suggested in Chapter 4, and consider the implications for the design of future projects.

Notes

4 All real names of teachers have been changed.

5 This and other codes refer to document name and number. In this case, LC refers to ‘Learning Cultures’ and FG to ‘Focus Group’.

6 Under continuous enrolment, students may start and finish their period of study within a class throughout the term, not only at the beginning and end.
Chapter 6

Conclusions and future directions

As we saw in the previous chapter, the main aim of the *Extending Teacher Repertoires* project – to bring the findings of the *Clients Project* to as many teachers as possible – seems to have been achieved. If we include the total number of teachers who participated in all workshops, informal trials and phases of the project, over 100 AMEP teachers had some sort of introduction to the issues (see Table 1, Chapter Two) and, according to the curriculum coordinator, its impact spread out from the project to various parts of the organisation and was still being felt in syllabus design and classroom practice 18 months after completion. However, we are also able to draw on the views of participants to highlight some areas in which we may be able to further enhance the professional development benefits for teachers. In this chapter I will briefly reflect on the strengths and limitations of the model used for the project in the light of the FRANCC features of effective professional development suggested in Chapter 4, and make some recommendations for the design and conduct of future projects of this kind.

In Chapter 4, I noted that effective professional activities for teachers frequently involved the following: some sort of follow-up, relevance to context, opportunities for reflection and increased self-awareness, active involvement, the provision of new conceptual inputs and the opportunity to collaborate with others. I therefore proposed these as the FRANCC framework below, a kind of checklist of those features likely to promote effective professional development.

**Follow-up**

**Reflection and self awareness**

**Active involvement**

**New conceptual inputs**

**Context-relevance**

**Collaboration**

I will now consider how far the project was able to provide these major ingredients, and what modifications might be made to maximise them in future projects.

I argue in Chapter 4 that context-relevance is important for teachers in any professional development program, and this seems to have been the case in the *Cultures of Learning* project as all participants reported having found the content and materials both very and immediately relevant to their contexts. It was obviously a great strength of the project that the data used as a basis for the professional development packages had come from a previous research project conducted in classes run by the same provider in the same state. This context-relevance gave the package considerable face validity among teachers. It was seen as immediately usable, or rather adaptable, to their classrooms, and this seems to have encouraged active engagement with the topic. Face validity and relevance came, too, from the fact that it was teachers who presented the project workshops, and that the materials and activities were perceived as being the work of teachers.

Moreover, the project was seen as providing fresh perspectives or, in terms of the discussion in Chapter 4, new conceptual inputs. Although the *Clients Project* was conducted in the same program and provider, the findings and insights were perceived as coming from research rigorously conducted by outsiders, and this also gave them authority. The researchers
involved in the project remained, however, very much backstage during the development of
the packages in all three sub-projects, and these were very practical in nature and perceived
as useful way beyond the period of the project.

It would be unrealistic to expect that all teachers could be stretched to the same extent by a
project of this kind, or that the attitudes and approaches of all participating teachers could be
influenced to the same extent. Some of the concepts at the heart of this project were newer
to some teachers than to others, and some were more easily taken up than others. We saw in
the previous chapter that the teachers in the development phase were already familiar with
the concepts and therefore had less opportunity to engage with new content. As the concepts
were not new to the teachers, perhaps they offered less of a challenge. In future projects, it
might increase their personal gains as professionals if the teachers involved in this phase
were not experts in the issues tackled. Moreover, as argued below, the teachers might benefit
from more opportunities for joint reflection and discussion with teachers from the evaluation
phase who are actually using the packages on a daily basis for an extended period.

There were plenty of opportunities for active involvement and reflection in the project,
although these were available to a greater or lesser extent in the different phases of the
project. Teachers in the development and evaluation phases were clearly actively engaged in
developing or trialling and reflecting on the materials. Although attendance at the workshops
was necessarily brief, feedback from these participants suggests that they also engaged with
the content and were starting to reflect on it.

Most teachers seem to have found participation in the project very useful and enjoyable as
well as worthwhile. This said, the analysis of teachers’ comments in Chapter 5 suggests some
areas in which opportunities for reflection and follow-up might be extended, and this might
be usefully achieved through the encouragement of collaboration with colleagues working
in the same centre.

Joyce and Showers (1995) argue that it is useful to provide structured opportunities for
 collaboration among teachers in the workplace so that they can iron out together any problems
 that may arise as they try out in practice ideas encountered in professional development
 activities. Perhaps, then, in the evaluation phase at least, it may be useful to focus on one
 particular workplace so that teachers can explore issues and develop solutions together, and
 in this way support and extend each other.

As discussed in the Chapter 4, collaboration is very important, not least of all because it
can be very difficult to make significant changes on your own, especially if the change runs
counter to the prevailing culture of the workplace. The regulatory materials, in particular, were
included in the package precisely because it was thought that many teachers were reluctant to
tackle issues of punctuality and absenteeism as they were, in this sense, counter-cultural. As
noted in the previous chapter, Tula, one of the teachers involved in the development phase,
reported that in her centre there was still extensive and regular use of the materials, including
the more controversial activities related to regulating attendance and punctuality, 18 months
after completion of the project. It is likely that an important factor in their continued use was
the opportunity for collaboration and collegial support within the centre.

Funds permitting, therefore, it might be productive to encourage groups of teachers to trial
the package together at the same time and place, and to open contentious issues out for
discussion among larger numbers of teachers in the same centre. The discussions that should
be encouraged through this collaboration could also include the teachers involved in the
development phase in what would be essentially a fourth follow-up phase. This could start
soon after the beginning of the evaluation phase. Teachers from both groups could meet and
discuss issues of implementation and philosophy, perhaps challenging each other to reflect
more deeply on the issues over which they did not agree and thereby increasing the benefits
for both groups.
In addition, the value of reflection and active involvement can also be enhanced if teachers are encouraged to be aware of the skills they are developing. As discussed in the previous chapter, although they were evident to others, not all teachers were equally aware of the skills they had developed through their participation in the project, perhaps because they related to activities outside the classroom rather than to direct teaching skills. Professional development activities for teachers regularly focus on the skills needed for teaching or dealing with students or the system within which they work. Those skills that are less tangible or immediately applicable in the classroom generally receive less attention and yet they are important in the development of a well-rounded professional capable of operating in many different roles in the organisation. Research skills, skills in liaison, collaboration, presentation to peers, project management and so on are areas of expertise that can be developed as an integral part of participation in aspects of research projects, but they need to be made more visible so that teachers are more conscious of their own learning in these areas.

In summary, the project seems to have worked in terms of both process and product: the teachers involved in the project found their experiences useful and the materials produced continue to be of use to teachers, but these benefits can be enhanced in future projects through increased reflective and collaborative components to widen and deepen the learning that takes place.

Finally, I have to confess to leaving a whole host of benefits unreported – those benefits experienced by the researchers. It would take another volume to cover these. I have personally learned a lot about teaching, learning, research and collaboration, and much more besides during my work on the project, and it has been a real privilege and pleasure to work alongside so many dedicated and hard-working professionals. I look forward to many more such professional development opportunities in the future.
References


**Appendixes**

Appendix 1: Cultures of learning classroom materials

Appendix 2: Rehearsal phase workshop questionnaire

Appendix 3: Evaluation workshop questionnaire
Appendix 1: Cultures of learning classroom materials

Activity 1: Learning Cultures mini-presentation of teacher–student relationships

Activity 2: Clock face
Name_____________________________ Date__________________
What I do everyday

Activity 3: Learner needs analysis
This exercise can be used as a dictation (to test spelling proficiency) or as a cloze (circle choice)

1. My name is ___________________________________________________________________

2. I live at ___________________________________________________________________

3. My phone number is ___________________________________________________________________
4. After my 510 hours I want to:
   • work as a ______________________________________________________________
   • study _________________________________________________________________
   • talk to my neighbour/my doctor/shopkeepers/friends/

5. In my country I was a _____________________________________________________

6. In my English class I want speaking/listening/reading/writing.


8. I like videos/course books/stories/excursions/grammar exercises/spelling tests/games/role-play.

9. In my English class I don’t like videos/course books/stories/excursions/grammar exercises/spelling tests/games/role-play.

10. I feel comfortable/uncomfortable when I work in groups.

11. What do you like to do in:
   a. class

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

   b. the ILC

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

   c. the computer room

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

12. What excursions would you like to go on?

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
Activity 4: Daily lesson record

Week Beginning:
| Monday |

How do you feel about your progress today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>very good</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>so so</th>
<th>not very good</th>
<th>bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>😊</td>
<td>☺️</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tick one ✔

Activity 5: Learner personal record

Learner Personal Record: CSWE I LO Achievement

To achieve CSWE I, learners must complete Module A and B and 3 electives.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can learn English in different ways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Can find information alphabetically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can give personal information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can fill in a form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Can write a short note or message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can participate in a short spoken transaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can speak on the telephone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Can give a spoken description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Can tell a short recount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Can give spoken instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>Can read short instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>Can understand a spoken information text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Can read a short information text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>Can read a short story or recount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>Can write a short recount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Can write a short letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Can write an opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td>Can understand whole numbers and do arithmetical operations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>Can understand fractions and percentages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J1</td>
<td>Can understand time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J2</td>
<td>Can understand temperature, length, mass and volume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1</td>
<td>Can understand simple maps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2</td>
<td>Can read simple tables and graphs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Refer to note on pp 48
### Activity 6: Class assessment checklist for just one Learning outcome module

**Module B: Beginner Communication Skills**

Learning Outcome 3: Can write a short note or message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions of assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. message has at least 3 pieces of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. learner is familiar with topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. learner can use a dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. some grammatical and spelling errors are okay but errors must not change meaning of message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. time limit: 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All conditions of assessment met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Includes in message or note: to, from, date, message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Uses content word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Expresses time and/or place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Uses capital letters, small letters and full stops properly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Refer to note on pp 48*
Activity 7: Class absence note

Class Absence Note
To: ________________________________________________
From: ______________________________________________
Date Absent: ________________________________________
Message: ___________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
Signature: __________________________________________

Activity 8: Class late note

Class Late Note
To: ________________________________________________
From: ______________________________________________
Date Absent: ________________________________________
Message: ___________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
Signature: __________________________________________

Activity 9: Sign in/out attendance sheet

Sign In/Out Attendance sheet
Start: ___________ Finish: ____________ Date: _______________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Time In</th>
<th>Time Out</th>
<th>Time Lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES

These activities relate to the version of the CSWE published in 2003 which was in operation at the time of the data collection. The Learning Outcomes in the version published in 2008 are slightly different. Readers are referred to the AMEP Fact Sheet ‘Different Cultures of learning’ which can be accessed from http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/amep_fact_sheets for versions of these activities based on the 2008 version of the CSWE.
Appendix 2: Rehearsal phase workshop questionnaire

Extending Repertoires project – Learning Cultures Pilot Professional Development Session Evaluation

We will be repeating this professional development session later this semester in another region so it would be very helpful if you could spend a few minutes giving some feedback on this session from your perspective. Could you comment on the usefulness of each aspect of the session below and make any suggestions on changes you think should be made for future workshops.

Many thanks.

1. Introduction/Overview of the project

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. Teaching/Learning Cycle Framework

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. Handouts

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
4. Exercise

5. Presenter

6. Other comments
Appendix 3: Evaluation workshop questionnaire

Extending teacher Repertoires project – Learning Cultures component
Feedback on Professional Development Session

What did you think about the LC in the AMEP before you came to this session?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Have your ideas on this topic changed as a result of this session? If so, how?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What are your first impressions of the materials you have been given?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How well do you think the session prepared you to use them?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Can you suggest any improvements to the session?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How do you feel the students will react to the materials? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________