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That continuing professional development, or learning, for teachers is a good thing seems beyond question. However, broad agreement with the sentiment does not necessarily recognise the complexity of the situation, and the multiple perspectives that position teacher professional learning as good, or indeed as fundamental. It quite clearly serves a wide range of purposes, which might be placed along a spectrum from performative to developmental. 'Usefulness' is therefore understood in relation to the underpinning perceived purpose of the learning. Under a performative focus, the professional learning serves as a form of external accountability, and the usefulness of the learning is related to the extent to which it can be seen to satisfy externally-imposed accountability measures, often associated with system-wide reform priorities. Under a developmental focus the professional learning is much more likely to be perceived as useful if an individual teacher or establishment views the learning as appropriate to their own needs, in a specific place at a specific time. This contrast reveals an age-old tension in relation to who and what professional learning is for.

In her 2009 review article, Webster-Wright (2009) argues that the literature on professional learning suffers from conceptual bias; she suggests that developments in both research and in practice tend to prioritise the organisation, delivery and outcomes of professional learning, at the expense of a focus on the experience of the professional learner across the professional life-course. While I am not entirely convinced that this argument is perhaps as convincing today, her conceptualisation of professional learning research is very helpful. She goes on to draw on some of her own research across different professional contexts, reporting on 'the identification of a significant dissonance between the reality of participants' experiences of learning and the rhetoric of stakeholders' expectations about PD' (p. 725). This seems to suggest a mismatch, or indeed a conflict, between personal experiences of, and aspirations for, professional learning, and the system-wide professional learning imperatives with which individual professionals must engage.

The job of journals such as *Professional Development in Education* is to provide a forum for communication of work which focuses on both of these levels of practice: the national, and indeed global, policy level, and the individual/school-based level. This particular issue does that well, and represents work from nine separate national contexts. Reading any of these articles in isolation will prove interesting and stimulating, but reading them together, and considering the articles in this issue alongside others in this and preceding volumes, helps to paint a picture of the concerns and interests of researchers in the field. However, the literature published in PDiE is in sharp contrast to

some of the other movements in the field, in particular the growth of government-funded studies in some countries which seek 'rigorous quantitative studies' (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) to provide evidence of causal relationships between teacher professional learning and student achievement. The number of small-scale projects, many of which are perception studies, represented in PDiE, suggest a paucity of large-scale, longitudinal studies which evaluate improvements in the teacher workforce using a range of different measures, rather than relying on the quantitative, attainment-based studies as the 'gold standard'.

Returning to the articles in this issue, they provide insight into professional learning activities and developments in at least nine different national contexts, exploring a range of different models of professional learning. In introducing the individual articles I want to consider explicitly how they address the issue discussed above – for whom (and what) is the professional learning useful, and how are tensions between system-wide mandates and individual aspirations accounted for

The issue opens with an article by Leonard which draws on social theory to analyse the current policy trajectory of teacher professional learning Australia. He then compares this with a specific professional learning initiative which has been driven by an issue-based development entitled 'Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative'. Leonard's analysis of the extent to which this collaborative professional inquiry project fits with the performative direction of national policy produces conclusions that are recognisable, to various extents, in many other national contexts. It opens up discussion of the tension between performative-focused national policies which focus on standards-based outcomes, and issue-driven professional learning which occurs in order to enhance knowledge and understanding of, in this case sustainable practice,

Anwaruddin and Pervin's contribution focuses on a different national context and a different form of professional development – they explore Bangladeshi English language teachers' engagement with research. The agenda promoting teachers' engagement with research in this context seems to come principally from academic researchers themselves, pointing to some potentially conflicting notions of motivation to engage between academics and teachers. Anwaruddin and Pervin report on a small-scale, qualitative inquiry which interestingly seems to mirror the range of reasons given for lack of engagement with research in contexts beyond Bangladesh too. Importantly, they acknowledge that the individual teachers' engagement with research is not the only factor under consideration, but that 'effective utilization of research knowledge is dependent on a supportive organizational culture that encourages researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to collaborate and assist each other in improving practice'. This conclusion raises interesting questions about not only the purpose of professional learning, but also the 'target'.

Reichenberg, Avissar and Sagee report on a study of new teacher educators' experiences of being mentored by more experienced colleagues in a formal professional development programme as part of their work in teacher training colleges in Israel. They provide an interesting perspective on the views of these new teacher educators who are positioned simultaneously as 'tutees' and as the mentors' colleagues. The professional development programme is situated in a School of Professional Development at which members of staff in several teacher training colleges study. The explicit aim of the programme is to enhance teacher educators' professional learning including supporting the development of professional identity, enhancing collaborative working and enhancing teacher educators' awareness of their students' learning needs. The purpose of the professional learning is clearly articulated as supporting the function of the teacher training colleges, while at the same time being sensitive to the individual needs of the teacher educators. The study reported is a small-scale mixed methods investigation which raises some really interesting issues about the development of communities of learners from across religious, gender and cultural groups.

Owen focuses on teacher professional learning communities (PLCs), investigating both the teacher learning processes and the links between PLCs and teacher-reported student outcomes in three case-study schools deemed to be 'innovative contexts'. The article resists measuring student outcomes purely in relation to performance on standardised tests, and instead focuses on teachers' perceptions of student achievement, making an explicit case for the worth of these perspectives, while at the same time acknowledging the limitations of such an approach. The concluding statement speaks powerfully in relation to the fundamental purpose of the professional learning being discussed, that in these case studies, the PLCs served a clear developmental purpose, acknowledging not only technical competence in teaching, but the need for teachers to have positive emotional connection with their work.

Mischo investigates the transition between teacher education and teaching in early years settings in Germany. The study measures teachers' self-reported competence ratings prior to, at the end of, and after graduation. The issue of transition is an important, and sometimes overlooked, aspect of professional learning, and the study helps us to understand some of the contextual factors which impact on teachers' sense of competence. While the purpose of the professional learning under investigation is clearly to support students to become effective early years teachers, the focus of the

article is interesting in that it speaks to a range of audiences: student teachers, teacher educators and policy-makers.

Coaching for curriculum implementation is the focus of de Paor's article, which explores the tensions between invitation and intrusion in the context of external 'curriculum coaches' working with teachers in their classrooms. The concept of 'invitation versus intrusion' captures nicely the teacher perspective on performative versus developmental professional learning models in relation to coaching. The particular coaching in this article was mandated through the national Professional Development Service in Ireland, and explores elements of the national evaluation of the initiative. The fundamental purpose behind the professional learning initiative was to improve Irish pupils' capacity in numeracy and literacy, and illustrates both performative and developmental aspects. De Paor's conclusions echo the complexities of this tension, providing some useful ideas about factors which make such an approach to professional learning more invitational than intrusive.

Verhoef, Coenders, Piters, van Smaalen and Tall report on a study of seven secondary mathematics teachers involved in a four-year lesson study project. The focus of the professional learning is on a very specific aspects of mathematics, and the underpinning purpose seems clearly to be developmental rather than performative. The research reported here focuses on one year of the four-year project and draws on a range of data gathered over that time period. The authors conclude that the experience helped the teachers to reflect on how students make sense of learning, not only in mathematics but more generally, and the illumination of their professional learning over a whole year provides a fascinating insight.

Lovett, Dempster and Flückiger explore the issue of individual agency in school leadership learning, arguing that 'system provision over-shadows individuals taking personal responsibility for their own leadership learning'. Once more we see a situation where performative –focused systems are in tension with individually-driven developmental approaches to professional learning. Lovett and colleagues illustrate a heuristic tool to guide and map leadership learning on an individual basis, providing not only a helpful contribution to leadership learning, but a very useful prompt to stimulate thinking about teacher agency in professional learning more generally.

Finally, Ingelby discusses the needs of early years educators' in relation to CPD to support innovative use of ICT, highlighting the need for such CPD to be responsive to the educators' needs. This is suggested within a policy environment in which ICT policy in education is centrally driven by Government. Yet again, tensions between performative and developmental perspectives on professional learning emerge, and the link between policy, pedagogy and CPD is made explicit. This

small-scale, qualitative study concludes that the participants adopted a somewhat reactive approach to CPD, expecting it to be 'provided' by 'experts'. The article raises some interesting questions about the influence of Government policy on how practitioners position themselves as professional learners (in this instance, in the early years context).

Taken together, the nine articles in this issue provide insight into a rich and varied range of professional learning activities and initiatives taking place in schools and universities across the world. Importantly, they also highlight some of the tensions inherent in examining the underpinning purpose, or drivers, of professional learning. The journal provides an ideal forum for the publication of articles which can help us to drive this debate forward through developing increasingly sophisticated understanding of the complexities of professional learning policies and practices. In this regard I return to Webster-Wright (2009) and her plea for a greater research focus on understanding professional learning across the career-span, something which would enhance greatly our collaborative effort to understand professional learning, providing insight into how the contested notion of 'usefulness' might grow and change over time.

Reference

Webster-Wright, A. (2009). Reframing professional development through understanding authentic professional learning. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(2), 702-739.