The dynamics, implications and effects of knowledge creation in professional learning communities: Three case studies.

A Dissertation submitted by

Marian Lewis

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ABSTRACT

Australia faces many challenges in a globalised and rapidly changing world. Schools are increasingly being given responsibility for ensuring the future economic, social and political wellbeing of the nation and its successful transition into the knowledge age. Teachers have the responsibility of educating their students for an as yet unknown future. To meet these complex professional challenges, teachers need to become creators rather than consumers of knowledge. Through engaging in knowledge creation work teachers can re-image their work, reconceptualising the meaning of teacher professionalism.

The study explores understandings of knowledge creation that emerge from the experiences of three Queensland schools engaged in IDEAS, a process of whole-school renewal which focuses on the work of teachers. In each case, through collaborative effort, the teachers created new knowledge. How this happened, what was achieved, the dynamics of the relationship between individual and group learning, and the subsequent impact on practice varied from case to case. The nature of the knowledge created was strongly influenced by contextual factors such as the dominant organisational paradigm, socio-emotional climate, cognitive processes, leadership and organisational coherence.

In each school extensive data were gathered through in-depth interviews, artefact and document collection, and participant observation, particularly of IDEAS related activities. The story of each school and its engagement with IDEAS – constructed from the accounts of the teachers – is told to provide a basis for understanding knowledge creation in each context. In the final stage of analysis, cross-case comparisons are made to provide a more generalised understanding of knowledge creation processes and the factors which impact on the nature of the knowledge produced. The findings indicate a link between the creation of knowledge in the three schools and a re-imaging of teachers’ work.
CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate   Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor   Date

Signature of Supervisor   Date
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