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## 'Being in' and 'feeling seen' in professional development as new teachers: the ontological layer(ing) of professional development practice

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## **‘Being In’ And ‘Feeling Seen’ In Professional Development As New Teachers: The Ontological Layer(Ing) Of Professional Development Practice.**

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*Abstract: Dominant discourses on professional development for teachers internationally are increasingly geared to the priority of ensuring individual teachers are meeting prescribed standards-based performance benchmarks which we call ‘performativities’ in this paper. While this intent is invariably played out in individualised performance management meetings and ‘fly by’ professional development workshops, our research into a NZ primary school discovered a counter-movement at work rejecting imposed standards and preoccupations with instrumental performativities and replacing these with teacher co-constructed and contextualised capacity matrices immersed within an ‘open’ and ‘seeing’ professional learning culture of support. Within manifestations of a rich and enabling culture of professional development the ontological nature of professional development within the school offers understandings which show the experiential nature of ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in professional development with consequent implications for improved classroom practices. The purpose of this paper is to discuss these issues.*

### **Background**

Current dominant policy discourses on educational professional development and tertiary teacher preparation programs focus on producing the ‘quality’ teacher. To this end, technologies of performativity are brought into play under the guise of imposed teacher standards to ensure teacher quality can be measured and assured through making individual teachers more accountable for their performance. According to Ball (2003, p. 216), "performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)". Performativity technologies are at work in standards. According to Celik (2011) standards describe actions and performance thus outlining the functions of individuals within a profession. For teachers, standards attempt to define quality teaching:

*[r]anging from generic to subject-specific attributes, they outline what a teacher should know and be able to do. Standards are used in many performance appraisal schemes to evaluate and guide teacher development (Kennedy, 2010), with a general agreement that standards and a shared*

*understanding of quality teaching are foundations of any effective appraisal system (OECD, 2013, p. 9)*

Checks on teacher quality using the technologies of performativity within the standards are invariably played out during individualised performance management or appraisal meetings between the teacher and a school leader. Our research has located a New Zealand Primary School where the ontological nature of professional development practice can be seen and felt. Our research has opened understandings that show the experiential nature of 'being in' and 'feeling seen' in professional development and their contribution to building teacher and leader efficacy across the school. These stories show the ontological nature of professional development as a *mattering* of 'being in' and 'feeling seen' in professional development in an embodied and holistic way.

Importantly, the nature of a school's and a teacher's way-of-being matters to professional development and teacher quality. Implications exist for school leaders, teacher educators and tertiary teacher education programmes in relation to the priority of experiential stories for understanding professional development practice, the need for re-balancing a concern for professional knowledge and practice with a school's and a teacher's way of 'being in' and 'feeling seen' in professional development, and the pedagogical implications of evoking sensitivities and attunement within professional development practices.

### **Some Understandings around Professional Development for New Teachers**

Developing student teachers' and new teachers' understandings and pedagogical practices are a central concern for schools and teacher education programmes. In so doing, teacher education programmes and schools variously prioritise different forms of professional development. The skills and understandings surrounding effective professional development and the strategies to impact teacher quality through the use of prescribed 'official' standards appear to be the dominant discourse (Connell, 2009; Elliott, 2001; Elmore, 2007; Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2003).

Such a discourse objectifies the teacher, the learner and professional development to a causal and quantifiable interaction which names and measures the impact of professional development on improving teaching quality within a logic that views the interaction as having a consequent 'flow-on' effect for student learning. This interaction has consequences for what counts as valued professional development and tertiary teaching. Within the standards discourse trajectory, professional development that enhances teacher quality, as defined by the standards, constitutes worthwhile and valued professional development. Performativities within the standards work to produce the 'quality teacher' who is then systemically sanctioned. However, we contend that often standards-based professional development practices reduce teacher learning to measurable 'performativity' aspects of teaching performance without due attention to the collaborative and collegial process of professional learning and the recognition of individual teacher's professional engagement in their own learning (Connell, 2009).

A particular challenge to this discourse within the focus of teacher standards geared to ensure teacher quality, comes from critical and humanistic concerns for professional development practices to foster growth in teachers' learning and their holistic formation as a person (Crooks, 2002; Freire, 2000 [1970]; Shapiro, 2005). This shift in thinking gives greater attention and priority to the teacher learning process alongside former concerns for teacher quality (Absolum, 2007; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Clarke, Timperley, & Hattie, 2001; Harlen, 2007). As a consequence of this changing discourse and what we are seeing as

evidence of counter standards movements in schools and tertiary educational programs, and in accord with social constructivist underpinnings, initial teacher education programmes and schools working with new teachers are reshaping professional development towards a greater concern for the importance of enabling professional development cultures to flourish in order to build teacher efficacy (Elmore, 2002; Little, 2006; Sachs, 2001). A renewed interest in sustaining a central focus on the teacher as a learner (being in) and noticing (seeing) their learning, and the associated and critical role for supporting new teachers in their learning, shifts the discourse on teacher quality to how school leaders and teachers can work together to build enabling school professional development cultures that foster professional growth (Harris et al., 2003). More recent developments in professional development have moved the discourse towards a more integrated view of leaders and teachers being immersed in professional development called "job-embedded staff development" (Huffman, Hipp, Pankake, & Moller, 2001, p. 1). This latter expression moves the discourse on ensuring teacher quality to the notion that teacher quality should always relate to a school or an educational program's culture of professional learning. By culture we find the following definition provided by Peterson and Deal to be helpful.

*Culture exists in the deeper elements of a school: the unwritten rules and assumptions, the combination of rituals and traditions, the array of symbols and artefacts, the special language and phrasing that staff and students use, the expectations for change and learning that saturate the school's world. (Peterson & Deal, 2011, p. 9)*

The focus on teachers' professional learning is found in official documentation as a priority for ensuring teacher quality. Often this focus does not preference the underlying ontological layering of culture that is unique to every school. This is because standards are generic, imposed from 'above' and as a consequence, non-contextual. This is played out in Australia within *The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). Within the policy document, professional standards for teachers are positioned as a guide for professional learning, practice and engagement to facilitate improvement in teacher quality and contribute positively to the public standing of the profession.

New Zealand's version of Standards was announced in April 2007 and involves schools making and reporting judgements about the reading, writing and mathematics achievement of children up to Year 8 (the end of primary school). Thrupp and White (2013) express a concern for how the standards regime will impact the culture of schools, teacher efficacy and the official view of the 'good' New Zealand teacher. Within their extensive and recent *Research, Analysis and Insight into National Standards (RAINS)* research project, they argue that understanding:

*why the National Standards policy is creating the conditions within which teachers will 'do it to themselves', and the various implications of this development, are the most important aspects of this report. We conclude that there will only be a shift in teacher preoccupations and use of energies away from the damaging excesses currently emerging when a different way to be a 'good' New Zealand teacher becomes sanctioned by policy. (Thrupp & White, 2013, p. 2)*

In relation to New Zealand, we claim the enactment of these curricular standards given their current preoccupation with target setting for student learning, may significantly impact the professional learning space for teacher training and schooling. How this space

presents in relation to the dominant forms and content of professional development in schools and tertiary education institutions will become clearer in the years ahead. We are concerned that the current focus on professional development within the standards era, heralding the design and use of more sophisticated technologies of teacher control, promotes the growth of performativity cultures. There is potential for damage to school and tertiary school education cultures and as a consequence, detrimental impacts for the student learning experience. We wonder why policy logic designed to improve teacher quality can actually have such an adverse effect.

### **Locating Ourselves**

As teacher educators, we affirm recent shifts in some teacher education programmes and schools towards more of a critical and humanistic priority going 'against the grain' of international public policy standards-based discourses. While attention is given to the development of professional knowledge and professional practice in relation to professional development, we have found ourselves wondering whether we are taking for granted some essential understandings of the professional learning experience. Our wonderings are a consequence of our own experiences as students, teachers and teacher educators and the stories we recently elicited from interviews with 30 teachers and leaders in a New Zealand Primary School, which we give the pseudonym name *Intrepid Primary*.

Bev brings to our wonderings her extensive secondary school leadership and teacher experiences and her scholarship in professional collegiality, dialogue and inquiry. David brings to our wonderings his primary/secondary teaching experiences and his interests in educational leadership and phenomenology, and Andrew brings his interests in socially just schooling, teacher development and networked learning communities. An ongoing dialogue has emerged between us as to the nature of professional development practice that manifested in our interviews with teachers and leaders at Intrepid Primary. While sharing a similar approach to adult teaching that seeks to provoke students' thinking and open conversation, we found that we were also caught in a professional dialogue about the gathered experiential stories provided by the teachers that opened understandings about the experiential nature of professional development.

### **What Have We Taken For Granted In Our Professional Development Practices?**

The questions we have been wondering about are these;

- What have we taken for granted about the content and priorities in professional development for new teachers in schools?
- What have we been privileging?
- What have we neglected and, does it matter?

The teachers and leaders at Intrepid Primary indicated that professional development programs in many NZ schools emphasised the development of professional knowledge and practice of teaching through fortnightly curricular or year level meetings, one-off professional learning workshops and in some schools, mentoring and team teaching arrangements. A key finding from our interviews with the teachers and leaders was their sense of being "privileged" to be situated within an "enriched learning culture" in comparison to many of their teacher colleagues who they considered were placed in other schools offering diminished (from their view) professional learning opportunities. Across all of our

interviews, we found a very different professional development thread at work at Intrepid Primary. New teachers (and all staff) were *immersed* in affirming and valued professional development approaches on a daily basis and ‘felt’ being seen and supported by colleagues in this immersion as an efficacious teacher development experience.

This affirming ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ professional development immersion experience manifested in team teaching arrangements, recruitment of ‘teacher experts’ from outside of the school to mentor all teachers, and ongoing whole school involvement in the co-construction of their own teaching standards called ‘capability matrices’ which showed *next step* teaching practice progressions, supported by regular in-class observations of practice with follow-up appreciative collegial conversations about how best to improve teaching practices, with the professional conversation predominantly led by the observed teacher. The power within these conversations was handed to the observed teacher rather than held by the observers. Hence, the observed teacher could experience some professional control over the unfolding conversations personalised to their own professional development needs. This caused us to wonder whether Intrepid Primary’s professional development approach has taken for granted the experiential and ontological nature of professional development, that is, teachers’ and leaders’ experiences of ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in professional development. In this way, professional development might be understood as a lived experience; teachers and leaders ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ within professional development. Thought of in this way, professional development is not a thing or an event, but rather a continuous open relational encounter that draws upon teachers’ sensibilities and attunement in noticing, valuing and supporting each other’s teaching practice.

We contrast our thinking of an ontological layering of professional development with attempts to objectify professional development practices through performance management meetings centred on the standards in Australia stressing performativity for quality assurance. We found teachers at Intrepid Primary were always ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in the experience of noticing and attuning their being during teaching towards students and each other and the nature of their activities and understandings. We wonder then, when is a teacher not learning? This is not to suggest that all teachers are deeply attuned to student’s learning at every moment but rather to signal the notion that professional learning relates to a quality of knowing, doing and ‘being in’ and ‘being seen’ in learning with others. Here we wish to highlight that ‘feeling seen’ at Intrepid Primary was not a performativity code of surveillance but rather an authentic and welcomed collegial code of building and supporting the growth of each other’s teaching practice.

Our experiences as teachers and students and the lived experiences of professional development storied by our interviewees suggest that professional development is a professionally enriching and enabling experience of ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in teaching and learning with others. ‘Being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ at Intrepid Primary manifests in teachers noticing colleagues, themselves and the students they teach in relation to how they are *in* their learning, and acting on what they are seeing (Bell & Cowie, 2001). Focusing on students’ learning, and each other’s learning, teachers at Intrepid Primary can be found seeing and reading children, seeing and reading each other in teaching while students and teachers can feel that they have been seen. van Manen (2002b) suggests that “being seen is more than being acknowledged. For a child it means experiencing being seen by the teacher” (p. 31). In a similar way, ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in professional development at Intrepid Primary has a characteristic of teachers being attuned to colleagues, students, their relationships, their learning (Hawk, Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland, 2002) and their co-constructed Capability Matrices. Being attuned to students and colleagues in this way relates to the way teachers have an embodied sense about the experience they find themselves in (Dreyfus, 1991; Giles, 2008; Heidegger, 2001). Sometimes the experience of ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in

professional development involves being surprised; moments when what we notice or experience is completely unexpected (Bell & Cowie, 2001; Giles, 2008). In this way, professional development practices are an embodied experience of ontologically attuning to others. Such experiences are immersion-like and, in particular, relational and were certainly foregrounded in the interviews that we undertook at Intrepid Primary.

### **What Do The Stories Elicited From Teachers And Leaders At Intrepid Primary Reveal About ‘Being In’ And ‘Feeling Seen’ In Professional Development?**

A particular influence on our thinking as teacher educators came from the teacher and leader stories of professional development at Intrepid Primary that appeared to us as showing the experiences of teachers ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in professional development. Here we offer two storied recounts from relatively new teachers, one in her first year of teaching and the other in her fourth. Using a hermeneutic method illustrates this ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in professional learning within a learning culture that actively encourages an affirming professional experience. We have changed the names to maintain anonymity.

#### ***Josie’s story– a fourth year teacher***

*...when you are a Swimming Teacher, I was always interested in up-skilling ... **but you are on your own within those 4 walls**, and I think there’s a perception out there that a school teacher is **on their own within those 4 walls** as well; but here (this is the only place I’ve got any experience of) that’s not true.*

*So, **you’re not on your own**. I’m **part of a team** teacher team and 24 classroom teachers and then a lot of people around. A lot of our management are experts in teaching; and you **have support staff**, so it’s a **team effort**. Whereas my self-employment – my Swimming School was me – you know, I was everything. Whereas here, you are **part of a team**. Even to the little things - like notes home to the parents come from the office. I mean, **that’s a miracle for me!** You know – every single thing I had to do alone. So, I think coming from self-employment into school, I really do appreciate **working as part of that team**.*

Josie casts her mind back to an experience of *being alone* in teaching *within four walls* in her previous job. She indicates a feeling of being grateful that now she is part of a teaching team at Intrepid Primary that supports and embraces team effort. For her, the *experience of team* has become a *miracle* taking her into a renewed and invigorating teaching experience.

*Yes, you know, when I speak to other teachers that I’m friends with (I have quite a lot of friends that are teachers). They say you are **so lucky to have that PD every week**... I kind of feel like it would have taken me a couple of years to get to where I am in say, Reading, that I’ve gotten to in 3 Terms because of all that assistance. It would’ve **taken me a long time to get there on my own** if I was in a school without that support.*

Josie reflects upon her teacher friends who tell her how *lucky* she is to have so much professional development available in her work. She recognises that for her, being in the team-based professional development culture of Intrepid Primary has advanced her

professional journey and this would have been very different, if she, like some of her friends, was working in another school that didn't offer this kind of support.

*... I am really open with the children about their learning. I'm going hold on –  
I didn't know how to do this – I didn't know these strategies – I'm still learning it – and oh, you've taught me something. I think it's that **culture of learning** and how important it is, and I think it's quite important within the School and I think **the kids really pick up on that**. And, that learning is not something negative – it's not something that you just do at School – **it is how you live your life!** You are **constantly learning**. I emphasise that to my kids all the time – it's not like you become a teacher and you know everything and then I can tell you everything – you know, I'm going to be able to tell you what to do. We get things wrong; we don't know. And all the teachers are **quite open with their kids** about that – certainly in the ...the discussions we have.*

Here Josie recognises how the school's open culture of professional support has helped her to be *openly* honest with her students about things she does not know. She feels that she can disclose aspects of her professional being, her strengths and weaknesses, with students; such is the culture of the school that she has no fear in doing this. She acknowledges that other colleagues are similarly *open* with their students and that the school's culture of learning has infused the lifeworld of being a student in learning at Intrepid Primary. She situates learning within the ontology of life for students and calls upon her students to consider how learning is found not just inside the classroom, but rather, is available everywhere.

*I think it's actually because of that **culture of learning** within the teaching staff – that **constant reflective practice**, and that thinking about what you are doing, the effect it is having, I think **that's why the children are so aware of their thinking and their learning**, because it's reflected back onto them from what we do. They do – and there are **constantly those conversations**; and **staff share a lot of their experiences** with each other, in the classroom – oh I was doing this and then the children did this – and then I figured out this is not the way they're going to get it, we need to do it this way – and there's a lot of that within – there's a **desire** – in general – I can't see every member of staff – but there's an **overall school desire to be just constantly improving and getting better**.*

Josie recognises that the school's *culture of learning* promotes *constant reflective practice*, which she describes as *thinking about what you are doing*. She notices how this is *reflected back onto* the students and the teaching staff in all of their work together. This embodiment of *reflective practice* and way of being is captured in her talk about *constant conversations* which she believes *helps the children to be so aware of their own thinking and learning*. She then indicates that staff members *desire* to help each other do things better. This speaks to the cultural phenomena of life as a teacher within the Intrepid Primary community. Here, the staff are noticed by Josie for *continually sharing* their learning *experiences* and explaining to each other why these experiences are making such a



difference in the classroom. Josie tells us they actively *share* because they want teaching and learning for all members of the school community to be continually *getting better*.

*I've had teachers that have been here about 10 years say to me, oh you can teach me about this ... – you can come and help me. It's nice to have that kind of reciprocal relationship – especially as a new teacher – to have other teachers treat you as if you have got something to contribute and to bring...we are quite aware and I haven't been here a long time, but I can tell you who I could go to for help with this area, or that area, who is really good at Science, at Thinking; because they're also given responsibility to also work with us. ...There's that desire to grab that knowledge that other people around you have got, and you know, boost your own. It's seen as an opportunity I think – that breadth of skills that you get in a school this large.*

Here Josie notices how despite her inexperience, even experienced teachers have *noticed* what she knows and does well and will seek her out for advice on particular teaching areas. Such is the learning culture of the school that years of experience do not hinder experienced teachers from revealing their learning needs. Challenging our expectations, new teachers can show insight and understanding that more experienced teachers may not have previously seen (Dunne, 1997; Field & Latta, 2001). Such moments are a reminder that we need to notice, see, attune and focus on the “way” new teachers are being and “how” they are relating to their learning experiences. She likes how this reciprocal relationship of contribution is non-hierarchical but rather works on a deep ontological level of wanting to help others. Seeing the culture of sharing as an opportunity for learning growth, she delights in how the size of the school enables her to *grab that knowledge* from other colleagues as well.

#### ***Jennifer's story– a first year teacher***

*I'm very fortunate. ...When I started here I had heard good things, and I'd heard it was a tough school – high expectations and all of that – but hadn't had any experience. Oh, I think that they have high expectations on teachers and students, and they don't settle for National Standards – they put Intrepid Primary (their own) standards, and teachers are continually doing PD and sometimes it's not just one thing they are focussing on – there are a lot of things across the year to focus on. Just that it's very busy and from what I'd heard, that wasn't the case at other schools, as well – that perhaps they didn't do as much.*

Jennifer reflects on how *fortunate* she has been to win a job at Intrepid Primary. She calls the school *tough* because of its high expectations around teaching and how she has *noticed* the school was not prepared to *settle* with the National Standards. Here Jennifer uses the word *settle* to mean comply or work from the Standards, the implication being that they are not offering life into how the school is being “in” professional development. She then talks about how teachers are constantly *doing* PD as if the PD never stops. The busy-ness of Intrepid Primary that she speaks of relates to what she has heard from teachers in other schools in terms of their professional development space.

*...but having done 1 year at Teachers College ...I didn't want to be left alone; I didn't want to figure out everything for myself, because you can get into habits very fast, and if they're bad habits, they would be very hard to*

*undo; and if no-one's watching you, then – you know – so I didn't think that ending up in a 2 teacher school in the country or in a place where I wasn't going to get the support would be very good for me, and I do like to have guidelines and know what I can and can't do; and when I've got experience from other people later on, then I can go and change my things or I think they're quite good at honing your focus a little bit more, because you can take one and really just concentrate on that. So, for my PD next Tuesday, one of our tasks is take something that you want to get better in, and go and watch someone – just watch that bit – just really focus on that one thing.*

Jennifer is grateful that she is not being *left alone* as a new teacher and that she is being *watched*. In saying she doesn't want to figure everything out for herself, Jennifer is recognising the complexity of being a first year teacher and the need for support to avoid what she calls *developing bad habits*. She is thankful that Intrepid Primary is organised and offers clear *guidelines about what she can and cannot do*. She feels more secure as a beginning teacher to know how the school expects her to professionally 'be'. When she talks about *one step focus*, she means that the school offers concentrated depth in their professional development support that she finds enabling. Jacqui acknowledges that later in her career, she can take more professional ownership of her next steps but at this early career stage, next steps support is what Jacqui really wants and is getting. When Jennifer talks about *they're quite good at honing your focus a little bit more*, she is referring to the Intrepid Primary School capability matrices and how they make clear what beginning teachers should *concentrate on* most during their beginning teaching journey. At Intrepid Primary School, one of the capability matrices focuses on the teaching of mathematics which is a mandated focus for development for beginning teachers (following writing and reading). Each matrix is divided into four stages of novice, apprentice, practitioner and expert. In the teaching of maths capability matrix, an example of an element of planning at the practitioner stage is "plans deliberately for knowledge and strategic connection and can adapt within the teaching based on student responses". In addition the category of planning, other sections include teacher knowledge, teaching in action and assessment. The school makes Jennifer feel secure and less anxious as a beginning teacher by providing her with a way of focusing on particular elements of the matrix—supportive *next steps* which she can use and get help with from the more experienced others. She, like Josie, is grateful to be working at Intrepid Primary because of its large and experienced staff and what this group of teachers can offer her in terms of her learning journey.

*And, they have a way of doing things. I'm in the Junior Syndicate and all the Juniors...have the same similar routines, so I know that most classes I go in, I'm not going to see anything out of the box, so I can go and say well I want to get better at this bit, so I go into here and I know they're going to do it. And, they're all open to me. Like, I said yesterday can I come in and watch your first opening modelling and shared writing next Tuesday, and they're like sure, that's fine. And I said, I won't stay for the whole thing, and they're like yes, that's fine. And they're not fussed about the whole thing – they don't go oh I don't know and they don't try and put on a show for me, which I like!*

When Jennifer says *they have a way of doing things*, she is indicating how the school lives its mission. The *similar routines* speak to the organisation of the school, opening for Jennifer opportunities to seek out other teachers who are grappling with similar things or

have artefacts to share. She speaks again about *openness* in similar ways to Josie as opening opportunity for sharing and learning with colleagues. Such is the openness of practice that Jennifer feels welcomed into any classroom at any time to watch and discuss how teachers' teach. This openness is a cultural phenomenon that is lived by teachers throughout the school in the form of 'Triples' which is a structured process for every teacher, each term, to be observed by two experienced teachers in the classroom while teaching. Each teacher discusses and determined the focus for the observation based on a self-assessment on a particular matrix. A follow-up dialogue occurs in which openness seems to mean *being open to feeling seen* and being happy and *not fussed* about being seen, manifesting in sharing, advising, critiquing, and learning together. When Jennifer speaks about observing others, and them *not putting on a show for me*, she seems to be indicating an authentic nature of the professional learning culture.

*...I just go and ask everyone, and they all will help me, and they stop and help me and they take time to do that. And, maybe that's partly my personality, and partly the School's personality as well. I'm not one to just sit in my room and wait for someone to come to me. If I need a new Maths game, I'll go and ask for a new Maths game, and go and see what other people are doing in their classrooms. And if I'm in a classroom and I see something on a wall, I'll just say, oh I'm going to take that, or I can I make a folder for that. But I think that's why I feel like I fit here, because they do seem to share things in that way.*

Here Jennifer speaks about a feeling of 'being in' the right place, essentially at home at Intrepid Primary. The school is seen as a good fit for her *personality* because of the school's *personality*. This right fit, right place, right personality presents to us as an ontological rendering of 'being at home' or 'in the right place' for Jennifer at Intrepid Primary. Jennifer appears to be intuitively aware and attuned with the daily activities of teaching and learning at Intrepid Primary. This sense of a right fit and right personality for Jennifer has been described by van Manen as pertaining to pathic principles like,

*...the atmosphere of the school and classroom, by the relational qualities that pertain amongst students and teachers, by the corporeal skills or embodied knowledge that teachers employ, and by the complex and subtle phenomenology of temporality and lived space of the school's hallways, classrooms, offices, and grounds. (van Manen, 2002a, p. 138)*

She experiences the culture of sharing as normed practice; real, open, and so authentic that she can walk into any classroom, borrow and use other teachers' classroom resources knowing that this is how teachers live their work. It's as if this is what being a teacher and doing teaching at Intrepid Primary is all about.

*Because, those Triples really give you support as well. I've struggled with one of my readers this year – I thought it was really a struggle, and I thought I don't think I've set this lesson up really well, or I haven't done something because she's really struggled right through this book and it's like pulling teeth out. And after it, I thought I was going to get oh you should have done this and you should have done that. I thought I'd get a lot of that. But actually, they were very positive and said (and I came out thinking – and that's my personal exam mentality – nervous and think I'll fail miserably and*

*it comes out OK) ...And they really looked at the positives and not my deficit – and that's the thing about the Triples, they don't come out saying here's your deficit, they come out saying you did really well; here are the things that you are doing. And you look at it and go yeah, actually I am doing a lot. And actually the sheet they fill out is 2 pages of all the things you can do; and then there's a tiny box at the bottom that says here's some next things that you can go away and work on.*

Here Jennifer speaks about her experience of the Triples process as another part of the support that is on offer. She talks with reflective zeal about the learning that the observation and feedback of the Triples process offered her and her initial *nervousness* about being watched and critiqued. Professional observation experiences can show uncertainty at times (Bell & Cowie, 2001). She was surprised at the *two pages of feedback on what she can do* and the few recommendations for improvement to *work on* in preparation for the next Triple. She learnt that the process was an appreciative one that was sensitively given to help her to learn and build upon two or three aspects of her pedagogical repertoire. In the appreciative orientation of the feedback, Jennifer seems to be saying that the Triples process was indeed one of professional support and advice rather than an interrogation.

## Discussion

'Being in' and 'feeling seen' in professional development for these two teachers was experienced as a way of interacting with the words of support spoken and demonstrated by other more experienced colleagues. These were words and actions that were not scripted but arrived *in* the experience of 'being in' and 'feeling seen' in professional learning (Dunne, 1997; Gadamer, 1994; Giles, 2008). Had these teachers not been noticed, they may have experienced as they indicated in their storied recounts, greater teacher anxieties due to professional teaching uncertainty and longer periods of time in the acquisition of professional teaching capabilities. For them, their professional learning experiences had a lingering aspect that was felt and noticed (Gadamer, 1994; Rayle, 2006). New teachers cannot be expected to "see" and "notice" every aspect of the complexities of being a good teacher in the classroom without the support of more experienced colleagues. Rather, as teacher colleagues appreciatively notice their teaching, and the new teacher recognises that support is being given in authentic and appreciative ways, these affirming learning experiences are then played out in the classroom. New teachers become comfortable within themselves to teach and to enjoy the teaching process with students, unafraid to disclose of themselves to their students and colleagues. They teach from who they are and from what they are learning about who they are (Palmer, 1998). They enjoy their teaching and as a consequence their students feel this enthusiasm and passion and they too, enjoy the learning.

Josie who featured in our first teacher story, spoke about how in her former teaching role, she had not been noticed because there was no opportunity for this to happen. Both teachers welcomed being seen, being noticed *in* professional learning and teaching and understood that this was for their benefit. Here, professional learning was clearly linked to teaching practice through the architecture of the Capability Matrices and the Triples process. Being in the context of professional learning within teaching practice leaves the possibility of all teachers attuning to, and noticing how their learning tasks are being experienced. Both stories open an embodied and ontologically safe sense of being in learning, being seen in learning and being immersed in professional development opportunities. Buber (2002) suggests that "for the genuine educator ... concern is always the person as a whole, both in the

actuality in which he [sic] lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become" (p. 123).

### **What Might These Stories Mean For How Teachers Are “In” Professional Development?**

While particular forms of professional development are planned and delivered, as teachers, we are always *in* professional learning. At Intrepid Primary, all of the teachers and leaders we interviewed were not only *in* professional learning but also felt being “seen” appreciatively in the professional learning. In some schools and teacher colleges’ professional learning can be experienced as enabling, authentic and full of life, while other professional development attempts can have quite the opposite effect. But at all times, our way of being as a teacher is continuously sensing and attuning to an ontological layer that is *in* the experiences teachers have with their students and with each other. As a consequence, how we are in professional learning experiences matters as a teacher’s way-of-being influences the experience and outcomes of student learning.

What is critical here is the small word *in*—the way a teacher is *in* professional learning influences what is experienced and how this is experienced. We argue that the teacher-student, teacher-teacher and teacher-leader relationship are integral to professional learning (Bell & Cowie, 2001). We understand the stories presented to us by the teachers at Intrepid Primary cause us to consider the ontological experience of ‘being in’ and ‘feeling seen’ in professional learning as a privilege made available to the Intrepid teachers by a rich and enabling culture of professional development, trust and openness. For us, Intrepid Primary has worked to support the professional learning of new teachers by balancing concerns for *knowing* and *doing* with a concern for how teachers and students are ‘being in’ their learning. A rebalancing of priority towards the relational nature of professional learning experiences enables explorations of the value laden-ness of how we are *in* learning. Similarly, critical and humanistic imperatives to critique dominant discourses in every area of education would be opened through investigations of the taken for granted and experiential nature of learning (Freire, 2000 [1970]; Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999; Shapiro, 2005; Shor, 1992). One particularly rich source of data for new teachers to explore would be their own professional learning experiences. Phenomenological reflective activities can provoke attunement towards the nature and essence of learning experiences (Macintyre Latta, 2004). Experiences show learning as embodied and holistic that draws on all of the participants holistically. Being in learning involves senses, intuitions, hunches and emotions alongside rational and cognitive deliberations. As such, teacher’s dispositions and sensitivities are critical to the practice of ‘being in’ learning and ‘feeling seen’ in learning. Indeed these dispositions and sensitivities influence what we notice and attune to, and have significant consequences for others.

### **What Do We Advocate?**

Through the experiences we have gathered from our interviewees, illustrated in our two teacher interview stories in this article, and cognisant of our ongoing dialogue over the nature of professional learning we advocate two particular outcomes.

- How might teacher education and school professional development programmes revisit students’ or teachers’ experiences of professional learning? We argue this revisiting, that at Intrepid Primary was made available through various processes

including matrices and triples, might attune them to subtleties within their own teaching practices. In so doing, teachers and student teachers might attend to the holistic nature of these experiences and their way of being in the experience. We would argue that a rational discussion of professional development experiences primarily serves theoretical knowing and limits teachers' deepening sensitivities to their own dispositions that might be accessed through a more reflective and contemplative approach to such stories.

- In a similar way, we would ask whether an experiential concern for professional development practice might re-balance a privileging of conceptual understandings and pragmatic skill development. Our position is to ask these questions of ourselves and other teacher educators that we might critically consider the actual and intended outcomes of our teacher education and school professional development programmes. What have we taken for granted about the content and priorities in professional development with initial teacher education courses and in schools with new teachers? What have we been privileging? And, does it matter? Perhaps the questions need to be lived out rather than be seen as a problem to be fixed along the way; that is, we need "to live and speak from within" the tension (Jardine, 1992, p. 126).

## Conclusion

Dominant discourses on professional development for teachers internationally are increasingly geared to the priority of ensuring individual teachers are meeting prescribed standards-based performance benchmarks which we call 'performativities' (Ball, 2003). While this intent is invariably played out in individualised performance management meetings and out-of-school professional development workshops, our research into Intrepid Primary School discovered a counter-movement at work. We found the preoccupations with instrumental performativities replaced with teacher co-constructed and contextualised Capability Matrices immersed within an affirming 'open' and 'seeing' professional learning culture of support within the structure of 'triples'. Within manifestations of a rich and enabling culture of professional development the ontological nature of professional development within the school offers understandings which show the experiential nature of 'being in' and 'feeling seen' in professional development, with consequent implications for improved teacher efficacy and classroom practices.

Improving teachers' learning is an ongoing embodied process that arises out of relational interactions between teachers and learners. In this paper we argue that the sensitivities and dispositions of teachers and their practice within an affirming culture of support are integral to *how* learning is noticed and 'good' teaching prevails. Being seen as a teacher *in* professional development was welcomed by beginning teachers (and all teachers in the school) as they came to understand the affirming learning opportunities provided by this professional development approach. Teachers *see* more than colour in their colleagues' and their students' eyes; they read colleagues and they read students and this assists in shaping and redirecting a teacher's and a student's learning.

We know that beginning teachers need to have a professional knowledge of teaching (knowing) and professional practices in teaching (doing). They are at their best in the classroom when they are supported by their colleagues in appreciatively supportive ways to know how best to improve and integrate their practice. Ontological considerations of a school's professional development culture and the experiential nature of 'being in' and

'feeling seen' within professional development suggests that teachers should also be able to show a professional way of being *in* learning. Becoming such a teacher is a journey of sensitising oneself to how we are *in* teaching and the professional learning that is needed to foster this. Such sensitivities are evoked through holistic considerations of the teacher as a learner that question taken for granted assumptions and understandings. Accordingly, teacher education programmes and school professional development approaches need to assist and evoke pre-service student teachers and beginning teachers towards a deeper appreciation and sensitivity to their way of being *in* teaching and professional learning. The teachers at Intrepid Primary are a case in point made possible by such an affirming and rich professional learning culture that they welcomed 'feeling seen' as part of their 'being in' professional learning.

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