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Professional Learning as Policy Enactment: The Primacy of Professionalism

Ian J. Hardy

The University of Queensland
Australia



Wayne Melville

Lakehead University
Canada

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Abstract: In this article, we draw upon notions of occupational professionalism and organizational professionalism to interrogate the complex, and sometimes contradictory, teacher learning practices that characterize educational policy enactment. We apply these understandings to the Growing Success assessment and evaluation policy in Ontario, Canada, and in relation to how five educators in varied positions in a regional school district made sense of this policy through professional learning. Our research considers how the interactions between professionalism and teacher learning can be deployed to better understand policy enactment as part of educators' work and learning. The research reveals that organizational professionalism, characterized by hierarchical modes of decision-making, standardized work practices, external regulation and accountability processes, limited teachers' learning. However, at the same time more occupational professionalism cultivated forms of professional learning necessary for productive enactment of educational policy. In relation to teacher learning for policy enactment, more

occupational professionalism was characterized by, inter alia, commitment to student learning, the generation of dialogue about teachers' assessment practices, coherence in relation to the whole reform agenda, a focus upon the immediacy of practice, and accountability to one another. The research indicates that even as more organizational professionalism is clearly evident in policy reform, the occupational cultures fostered by districts and schools can have significant beneficial effects for how teacher learning is expressed as a form of policy enactment.

Keywords: educational policy; policy enactment; teacher professional learning; professionalism; occupational professionalism; organizational professionalism

El aprendizaje profesional como promulgación de políticas: La primacía de la profesionalidad

Resumen: En este artículo, utilizamos las nociones de profesionalismo ocupacional y profesionalismo organizacional para interrogar las prácticas complejas, y a veces contradictorias, de aprendizaje docente que caracterizan la promulgación de la política educativa. Aplicamos estos entendimientos a la política de evaluación y evaluación de Crecimiento exitoso en Ontario, Canadá, y en relación a cómo cinco educadores en posiciones variadas en un distrito escolar regional dieron sentido a esta política a través del aprendizaje profesional. Consideramos cómo se pueden implementar las interacciones entre profesionalismo y aprendizaje de los docentes para comprender mejor la promulgación de políticas como parte del trabajo y el aprendizaje de los educadores. La investigación revela que la profesionalidad organizacional, caracterizada por modos jerárquicos de toma de decisiones, prácticas laborales estandarizadas, regulación externa y procesos de rendición de cuentas, aprendizaje limitado de los docentes. Sin embargo, al mismo tiempo, más profesionalismo ocupacional cultivó formas de aprendizaje profesional necesarias para la promulgación productiva de la política educativa. En relación con el aprendizaje del profesorado para la promulgación de políticas, el profesionalismo profesional se caracterizó, entre otras cosas, por el compromiso con el aprendizaje del alumno, la generación de diálogo sobre las prácticas de evaluación de los docentes, la coherencia en relación con toda la agenda de reformas, un enfoque sobre la inmediatez de la práctica. y rendición de cuentas el uno al otro. La investigación indica que, a pesar de que un mayor profesionalismo organizacional es claramente evidente en la reforma de políticas, las culturas ocupacionales fomentadas por los distritos y las escuelas pueden tener efectos beneficiosos significativos en la forma en que el aprendizaje de los maestros se expresa como una forma de promulgación de políticas.

Palabras-clave: política educativa; promulgación de políticas; aprendizaje profesional docente; profesionalismo; profesionalismo ocupacional; profesionalismo organizacional

Aprendizagem profissional como promulgação de políticas: A primazia do profissionalismo

Resumo: Neste artigo, usamos noções de profissionalismo ocupacional e profissionalismo organizacional para interrogar as práticas de aprendizagem do professor complexas, e por vezes contraditórias, que caracterizam a implementação de políticas educacionais. Aplicamos esses entendimentos à política de avaliação e avaliação do Sucesso Crescente em Ontário, no Canadá, e em relação a como cinco educadores em posições variadas em um distrito escolar regional entenderam essa política por meio do aprendizado profissional. Nossa pesquisa considera como as interações entre profissionalismo e

aprendizagem de professores podem ser implementadas para entender melhor a promulgação de políticas como parte do trabalho e da aprendizagem dos educadores. A pesquisa revela que o profissionalismo organizacional, caracterizado por modos hierárquicos de tomada de decisão, práticas de trabalho padronizadas, regulação externa e processos de responsabilização, limitou a aprendizagem dos professores. No entanto, ao mesmo tempo, mais profissionalismo ocupacional cultivou formas de aprendizagem profissional necessárias para a promulgação produtiva da política educacional. Em relação à aprendizagem de professores para a implementação de políticas, mais profissionalismo ocupacional foi caracterizado, inter alia, pelo comprometimento com a aprendizagem do aluno, pela geração de diálogo sobre as práticas de avaliação dos professores, pela coerência com toda a agenda de reformas, pelo enfoque da prática imediata, e prestação de contas uns aos outros. A pesquisa indica que, mesmo que mais profissionalismo organizacional seja claramente evidente na reforma de políticas, as culturas ocupacionais fomentadas por distritos e escolas podem ter efeitos benéficos significativos sobre como a aprendizagem do professor é expressa como uma forma de promulgação política.

Palavras-chave: política educacional; promulgação de políticas; aprendizagem profissional de professores; profissionalismo; profissionalismo ocupacional; profissionalismo organizacional.

Professional Learning, Professionalism and Policy

How teachers and educators working in schools and schooling systems engage with one another is vital to fostering enhanced learning amongst teachers and consequent improvements in student learning. This is particularly important during times of significant policy reform. However, the nature of the forms of teacher engagement that sometimes transpire during periods of reform can be problematic. In this article, we understand such engagement in response to policy reform as reflective of particular kinds of professionalism within particular educational sites and systems. Drawing upon Evett's (2009) concepts of occupational professionalism and organizational professionalism, and the associated literature on teachers' learning and policy enactment, we seek to analyze the nature of a particular instance of teacher professional learning as a form of policy enactment. We apply these understandings to an assessment and evaluation policy – *Growing Success* – in Ontario, Canada. In this way, our research seeks to better understand the interactions between professionalism and teacher learning, and how such interactions can be construed as a form of policy enactment.

In conducting this research, we draw upon the insights of five diverse educators occupying varied positions in one regional school district (“board”) in Ontario. These educators were well-regarded members of the particular schools/school board in which they worked, with most having extensive experience engaging with a myriad of policy reforms over time. Through the perspectives of these educators, we reveal how policy enactment reflects evidence of these educators' learning, and how such learning is enabled and constrained by the particular conceptions of professionalism that are brought to bear in response to the professional learning opportunities in which educators engage.

Our article is in six sections. The first section establishes the theoretical framework through a discussion of literature pertaining to and linking policy enactment, professional learning and professionalism. The second section provides the context for our work, while the third section outlines and justifies our methodology. The fourth section evidences our findings and presents a

preliminary analysis, which is then discussed further in the following discussion section. The final section delineates our conclusions and the implications of our work.

Policy Enactment

Drawing upon her earlier work, and that of Anagnostopoulos and Rutledge (2007), Coburn (2016) defines policy as “a set of rules, often supported by resources, that attempt to constrain or channel behavior in particular directions through regulative, normative or cognitive means” (p. 466). Different actors respond differently to the particular policy conditions within which they find themselves. Coburn (2016) argues that all conceptions of policy enactment are premised on particular assumptions about action, and the nature of the agency at play. However, it is important not to make assumptions about the nature and influence of agency, or to over-emphasize agency, in relation to policy enactment (what she refers to as “implementation”). In relation to policy, such a view tells an incomplete story. While various principal-agent approaches foreground how individuals seek to maximize their interests, other approaches foreground the sociality that necessarily characterizes enactments.

It is true that teachers engage cognitively and actively with policy, but they are not completely coherent, consistent, or autonomous actors in those engagements. Engagement with policy does not occur in a vacuum; rather, economic, political, historical and disciplinary forces act on teachers (Hardy & Melville, 2013; Melville & Bartley, 2013). Teachers’ engagement with policy is, therefore, constrained within the “discursive possibilities available to them” (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins 2011a, p. 612). The kind of policy, and the meanings, and associated practices ascribed to policy, can play important roles in this enactment (Ball et al., 2011a).

These more sociological accounts include various network approaches. Coburn (2016) refers to some of her earlier work in the US context in this regard, but there is also a considerable tradition in the English context vis-à-vis network approaches (e.g. Ball & Junemann, 2012). Rigby (2016) also flags how social relations through social networks are significant for influencing how neophyte principals influenced access to instructional leadership. Jabbar (2016) reveals a much more ‘structural’ response to the way in which a school district was reconfigured in post-cyclone Katrina New Orleans. Drawing upon neoinstitutional theorizing, Woulfin (2016) reveals more normative and cultural configurations of responses, influenced by the institutional circumstances within which reading coaches undertook their work; the conditions within which they worked significantly influenced how these teachers worked with coaches. Similarly, März, Keltchermans and Dumay’s (2016) account of the sensemaking of mentors under particular institutional conditions (neoinstitutional theory) reveals how the nature of mentoring significantly influenced how mentors thought about their work in their school, at the same time as those influenced creatively responded to these circumstances. Bray and Russell (2016) also draw upon neoinstitutional theory, but also structuration theory, to reveal how special education students’ IEPs (Individual Education Plans) acted as a ‘dominant script’ structuring dialogue about these students’ educational needs, but also how there were opportunities for more active engagement amongst participants beyond these formalized documents and attendant language.

Policy Enactment and Teacher Professional Learning

At the same time, Coburn and Stein (2006) argue that, increasingly, policy enactment needs to be understood as teachers’ learning. Consequently, an understanding of teacher professional learning is necessary for understanding policy enactment. In her synthesis of the literature on professional learning and professional development, Webster-Wright (2009) highlights that

professional learning can be characterized as a long-term pursuit within a supportive community of practitioners, and in contrast with more short-term, traditional (frequently workshop-based) approaches, often described as professional development (PD). Such professional learning engages “individuals in actively working with others on genuine problems within their professional practice” (p. 703). Further, societal and economic changes in recent decades have highlighted an increasing emphasis on critical reflection, as it is “through challenging implicit assumptions and questioning taken-for-granted practices that [professional learning] can lead to changes in practice” (Webster-Wright 2009, p. 703). For Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, Faubert, Zeichner, and Hobbs-Johnson (2017), key foci for professional learning in Canada (and reflecting broader reviews of relevant literature) include the need for: evidence informed approaches; subject specific and pedagogical knowledge (particularly in relation to diverse learners’ needs); focus on student outcomes; a balance between self-directed and system directed professional development; active and variable learning; collaborative learning opportunities; job-embedded learning; ongoing learning opportunities; learning that is sufficiently resourced, and; supportive and engaged leadership (p. 8).

In contrast, the “stated aim of much ‘PD’ is a more limited conception of improvement in practice toward competent or even “accomplished” practice” (Webster-Wright, 2007, p. 704). Even as teacher learning can benefit from engagement in professional development activities, it appears that professional development is still characterized as “filling up’ a reservoir of knowledge in a professional’s mind that will run dry if left too long” (p. 712). Such a perspective is grounded in the perception that professional learning cannot be left solely to educators, as they possess an incomplete form of professional knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). As such, there is a need to continue to learn through professional development opportunities offered by “experts” from universities, ministries and administrators. Teachers are not “knowers who can teach one another” but rather learners who need to be taught by “experts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 126). Similarly, Cibulka and Nakayama (2000) describe that one of “the most grievous faults” of current professional development efforts is that “the goals and content of these efforts is prescribed for teachers, rather than by them” (p. 6).

Educational Policy, Teacher Learning and Professionalism

The distinction between professional learning and professional development, and their relation to policy enactment, shed light upon the nature of teachers’ professionalism, how it is supported, the discourses that are encouraged, and reflections on the positions it espouses. Learning opportunities that are perceived as a narrower construal of ‘professional development’, in which knowledge and policy prescriptions are externally imposed, could reduce teachers’ power to decide on goals and methods and effectively make them into technicians following someone else’s designs’ (McCullough, Helsby, & Knight 2000, p. 82). Conversely, learning opportunities in which teachers are actively engaged with situated questions of practice, reflect a belief that teachers “are viewed ... less as *consumers* and more as *providers* of knowledge concerning teaching. Teachers are portrayed less as *followers* and more as *leaders*” (Yager, 2005, p. 18; emphasis original). Notions of ‘followers’ and ‘leaders’ highlight the importance of considering power and its relation to learning.

Furthermore, not all policies are created equal, nor afford the same kinds of opportunity for teacher professionalism. As Ball et al., (2011a) discuss, standards related ‘disciplinary policies’ force teachers into the role of passive actors “whose practice is heavily determined by the requirements of performance and delivery” (p. 612). The coercive power associated with this type of policy requires teacher compliance, limiting the capacity for teachers to make sense of policy – rendering them ‘consumers’ of a fixed knowledge product. The emphasis on compliance with policy creates pressures on teachers’ practice to ‘focus’ on the object of the policy (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman,

& Hoskins, 2012). These pressures may negatively impact the professionalism of teachers and “produce a ‘consensual culture’ rather than a ‘learning culture’” (Ball et al. 2011a, p. 614). Further, the pressures to conform with policy can be “linked to a concomitant set of negative emotions anxiety, worry, stress, nervousness and panic” (Ball et al., 2011a, p. 614).

Such approaches reflect more ‘new public management’, ‘organizational’ conceptions of professionalism. Such ‘organizational’ professionalism is characterized by: discourses of control; various forms of ‘rational-legal’ authority and strictly hierarchical modes of decision-making; ‘standardized’ work practices and procedures; external regulation, and the imposition of various forms of accountability associated with setting targets and reviews of performance; and is deployed to control the practices that transpire (Evetts, 2009, p. 248). During the past 30 years, such standardization and accountability agenda have entailed something of a commodification of professional work, leading to changed relations and an emphasis upon monitoring, assessing and auditing professional work:

The commodification of professional service work entails changes in professional work relations. When practitioners become organizational employees then the traditional relationship of employer/professional trust is changed to one necessitating supervision, assessment and audit (Evetts, 2009, p. 261).

Organizational professionalism encourages managerial discourses, hierarchical authority, standardization and external accountability. Such approaches are not simply the ‘product’ of policy, however, and actively promote educators as policy “transactors,” and involve them engaging with policy that is construed as “having to be done”, and for which accounts have to be provided (see also Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011b, p. 629). Policy transactors may produce, but also reflect a low trust policy environment, and in the context of controlling forms of occupational professionalism, systems of accountability which require significant time and resources “can undermine the very performance that is ostensibly being measured or assessed” (O’Neill, 2013, p. 5).

At the same time, the professional conditions within which policy is enacted have been influenced by a focus upon quantifying educational performance and outcomes, particularly in relation to standardized measures of literacy and numeracy. This emphasis, together with calls for accountability in meeting centralized educational objectives, has produced a form of educational governance characterized by “policy as numbers” (Ozga & Lingard, 2007). The growing political acceptance of quantification and accountability allows for the devolution of responsibility for educational provision while simultaneously tightening control over the outcomes of such provision. Such managerial approaches to accountability, however, as purported solutions to concerns about professional ineptitude and inefficiency, may be counter-productive, given “that complex systems of accountability and audit actually damage trust and reduce the time practitioners can spend with clients” (Evetts, 2009, p. 259).

In contrast with more disciplinary policies and conditions are the developmental approaches which afford potentially greater opportunities for teacher learning. Such approaches may afford teachers opportunities “to bring judgement, originality and ‘passion’ ... to bear upon the policy process” (Ball et al., 2011a, p. 615) and offer the potential for them to be producers, rather than consumers, of knowledge. This focus on knowledge production is important as it opens a variety of discourses to teachers and increases opportunities for ownership of the enacted policy through the:

... co-production of materials, organisation and practice. Practice often emerged as a bricolage of inventions and borrowings from diverse sources. Here the teachers are engaged in the production of original local texts, methods, artefacts and pedagogies which generate a sense of policy ‘ownership’ (Ball et al., 2011a, p. 615).

Arguably, such emphases reflect a more occupational professional approach at play, characterized by much more trust-oriented relations between employers and practitioners. The subsequent authority is not based on coercion, but upon: autonomy; discretion and judgement on the part of practitioners; controls as exercised by professionals; and strong work cultures and occupational identities (Evetts, 2009, p. 248).

We argue that teacher learning as a form of policy enactment does not occur in isolation but reflects the specific conditions of professionalism within which such learning transpires. At the same time as teachers exercise agency, they are simultaneously influenced by the conditions within which they work. Such conditions may reflect more ‘organizational’ conceptions of professionalism, encouraging more managerial practices. However, such conditions may also reflect more ‘occupational’ conceptions of professionalism. While efforts to focus more empirical attention upon the nature of agency is laudable, we argue here that deeper engagement with different conceptions of professionalism, as sociological phenomena, are important for better understanding the nuances that attend policy enactment. In this article, we seek to put these ideal types of professionalism ‘to work’ to explore their usefulness for understanding how teacher learning may be understood as a form of policy enactment in relation to a particular assessment policy in Ontario, Canada. We also show how ‘ideal’ type conceptions of policy (e.g. as more disciplinary or developmental) need to be understood as much more nuanced in relation to actual policy enactment.

Context: *Growing Success* and the School Board

The Policy: *Growing Success*

Since 2010, the *Growing Success* policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010) has become an increasingly important focus of attention in schooling in the province of Ontario. The policy sits within the broader *Student success strategy/Learning to 18* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003) policy framework, which was designed to enhance graduation rates from high school. Emphases upon literacy and numeracy were an important part of this broader policy framework. *Growing Success* itself focuses explicitly on the use of assessment to enhance students’ learning. Its key objective is to “ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of learning for all students” (p. 6). In terms of teachers’ learning, the policy is clear about the need for educators to understand, and operationalize, the difference between assessment *for* and *as* learning, and assessment *of* learning:

Assessment for learning and as learning requires that students and teachers share a common understanding of what is being learned. Learning goals clearly identify what students are expected to know and be able to do, in language that students can readily understand ... Success criteria describe in specific terms what successful attainment of the learning goals looks like. ... Evaluation is based on assessment of learning that provides evidence of student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/course, often at the end of a period of learning (pp. 33, 38).

At the same time, there was also significant provincial government focus upon literacy and numeracy. This was most evident through the establishment, in 2004, of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat within the Ministry of Education. This body was mandated by the province to ensure enhanced literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students (including as measured against more standardized tests, conducted by Ontario’s Education Quality and Accountability Office). Provincial support for literacy and numeracy was evident in the development of a range of resources, including

materials designed to be used in districts and schools to promote capacity building and professional learning amongst teachers and principals (e.g. Campbell & Fullan, 2006).

The School Board

The research presented here was undertaken within a regional school board in northern Ontario. The board was a fully funded public entity, and part of the broader Ontario public education system. With approximately 13,000 students, the board falls within the remit of the Ontario Ministry of Education, which educates 2 million students in almost 5000 schools across the province. A board of trustees is responsible for overseeing the educational activities within the 25 elementary schools, 4 secondary schools, and the adult education center that comprise the board. The board is one of 31 English-language public boards in Ontario (which also funds separate Catholic and French-language boards for families wishing to send their children to these schools).

The school board had a long-standing history of support for professional learning, including in the form of various “Professional Learning Communities” (PLCs), even before the term was popularized in the mid-1990s (e.g. Hord, 1997). Within the Board, a range of PLC structures had developed over time, depending on the perceived needs of the Board, and school administrators. In some cases, PLCs were developed to respond to provincial or Board mandates, while in others, more school-based approaches influenced their development; in secondary schools, and reflecting dominant disciplinary structures and the socialization of teachers into discipline-based work arrangements, subject departments were often conceptualized as PLCs.

In operationalizing these PLCs, the Board designed, and undertook, a number of training sessions for education officers, school administrators and subject department chairs to provide guidelines for the establishment and development of the various PLCs. Those mandated by the Board often reflected the broader provincial initiatives, especially in relation to literacy and numeracy. These sessions made use of existing administrative structures within schools and the Board: school-based “Cabinets” and the Board-based “Program Fora.” Cabinets consisted of school administrators and department chairs, charged with enacting school improvement plans approved by the Board. The Program Fora primarily comprised personnel from the Board who were specifically charged with working with Board and school personnel to develop professional learning activities relating to broader Board initiatives across schools.

What emerged from these Board training sessions was not a uniform understanding of the form and function of PLCs, but instead a myriad of different approaches and foci. In some cases, subject departments continued to operate as more traditional discipline-based entities. These departments were initially responsive to broader provincial policy directions (in relation to literacy and numeracy), but over time, exercised more autonomy, with some reverting to more discipline-based modes of operation. In the context of increased pressure to be responsive to provincial mandates, many already established PLCs took on a different character, and came to be seen more as vehicles to address school-based accountability demands associated with the literacy and numeracy requirements, especially as they related to standardized testing.

At the same time, further evolution of the PLC model involved the Board supporting the creation of the “Family of Schools” (FoS), which brought together math teachers from secondary schools with class teachers from their ‘feeder’ elementary schools (schools from which students were most likely to originate). The FoS referred to in this research was supported by an experienced secondary mathematics teacher who was responsible for facilitating conversations around math education, interpreting provincial standardized test results for teachers, and linking teachers to external experts – both disciplinary-based and more broadly pedagogical.

Methodology

Participants

The research draws on the insights of five participants, who were purposively selected (Bryman, 2012) to ensure a cross-section of perspectives from participants occupying a range of administrative and teaching positions within the Board, and in the context of our work with the Board over the past decade (Melville, Hardy, Weinburgh & Bartley, 2014). As a board administrator, “Paul” had overall responsibility for the enactment of the policy. As part of this work, he advocated for the Family of Schools (FoS). In establishing this structure, he worked closely with “Anthea”, a former secondary mathematics department chair who had been seconded to the Board office to support teacher professional learning. Similarly, ‘James’ was an experienced science teacher, who was appointed as a Learning Resources Teacher with responsibilities for literacy development, First Nation, Métis and Inuit education, and teacher professional learning more broadly. “Alec” was an experienced, highly regarded teacher within the Board, with more than 20 years’ experience as a secondary science, mathematics and information technology teacher. At the time of our data collection, he was teaching all three subjects. Finally, “Mitch” worked as an occasional teacher for the Board, and also taught undergraduate Education courses at a local university as a contract employee, on a casual, year-by-year basis.

Data Collection

We developed the data set through the use of semi-structured interviews, which allow interviewers to “explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). The key questions for the five participants were developed from our earlier theoretically-informed empirical research into policy enactment, and follow a broadly “thinking with theory” approach to think anew why and how particular practices come to pass (Jackson & Mazzei, 2017), and particularly as this relates to teacher professional learning (Hardy & Melville, 2013). Both authors conducted the audio recorded interviews with the educators at times and places of their choosing, with each interview lasting approximately 80 minutes. Each participant was provided with opportunities to review the verbatim transcript and critique the initial drafts of this article. All research activity was conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements of the authors’ respective universities, and the participants’ Board. Pseudonyms are used throughout the article.

Analytical Approach

Methodologically, our work has been guided by the use of the educators’ accounts or narratives around their work and perceptions, where narrative is “increasingly seen as crucial to the study of teachers’ thinking, culture and behavior” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 214). In working through the data, the narratives of all five participants informed the study. In order to interrogate these perceptions, the iterative analysis of narrative method outlined by Polkinghorne (1995) was used. This *a priori* strategy requires the analysis of data using concepts “derived from previous theory ... and applied to the data to determine whether instances of these concepts are to be found” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13). For this article, these concepts include our understandings of policy enactment, professional learning and professionalism as reflective of organizational and occupational prerogatives. The iterative nature of the analysis involved the authors working through the data to identify salient themes, in light of the extant theorizing and literature. This process revealed three broad themes, relating to these two key modes of professionalism, and in the context of understanding policy enactment as a form of professional learning.

Findings

While the policy was seen as potentially enabled by, and enabling of, collaborative teacher professional learning, such collaboration existed in different modes, reflective of different forms of professionalism, with varying results. The research revealed three broad themes in relation to collaborative learning within the school board around the enactment of the policy and associated professionalism. The first referred to the challenges of orchestrating teacher learning through the PLCs that came to develop within the Board, particularly at the school level, and in which more organizational forms of professionalism seemed dominant. The second related to efforts to foster more substantive, occupational professional forms of “true” PLCs to help facilitate more authentic, ongoing teacher learning opportunities within individual schools. The third theme related to the Family of Schools (FoS), as a more overtly occupational professionalism-oriented initiative designed to promote learning across schools – specifically between secondary schools and their elementary feeder schools.

The PLCs: Orchestrating for Teacher Learning?

In keeping with the importance of context on policy enactment (Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011), existing structures and arrangements associated with the PLCs that had been promoted earlier by the Board as vehicles to enhance teachers’ learning, exerted influence. These earlier PLCs were construed in multiple ways by educators in the Board. The PLC structure was often determined by the superintendent, principal, or at the chair-of-department level. Consequently, there was a sense of hierarchy in both the early PLCs, and the relations between the board, schools and departments:

At times the superintendent will meet with the administrators and state, “Here is what the PLC is, [or] it is open.” Then the school administrators decide on the direction that they will give their chairs. They either give specific direction, or leave it a little more open, to address individual subject needs (Paul).

Even if departments had more autonomy over their practices, more problematic effects of a broader sense of “control” were evident in the expectation that they would evidence their decision making to administrators:

Administrators [principals] then have chairs report back to them on either the agenda or the minutes of what the PLC did. I think that takes away from the creative “aha” moments that come out when you get a group of people together (Paul).

There was recognition that trying to cultivate later PLCs using existing formalized structures, such as chairs, was not easy work. The Board’s earlier and wider literacy and numeracy focus, and the use of teachers as “lead learners” to facilitate training in these areas, were seen as limiting the potential for learning. These lead learners were paid for by the Ministry and constrained to work on literacy and numeracy related initiatives. Consequently, and as a result of such external control, the diverse learning needs as understood by the chairs themselves in very different schools were not readily met; this meant efforts to foster more coherent learning across schools in these original PLCs was challenging:

In the last five years as a PLC, we have had “lead learners” [in literacy and numeracy]. We used our Program Forum structure to drive the PLC learning and were always trying to get back to the heart, [which is] student work. It worked, and

then it didn't work; it was struggling. The chair structure in itself never was revisited until this year; so, we used that forum because it was a built-in structure to drive the PLC learning, to ensure that they would go back to their schools and to help facilitate their own PLCs. But we have found that all of the chairs that would come would have different needs; departments have different needs; the gap between where one school is and another school is; and departments wanted to meet with their like-groups. And so everybody just had so many different visions of what they wanted, whether for the PLC or for their chair grouping (Anthea).

The complexity of providing productive professional learning opportunities for teachers was encapsulated in Anthea's acknowledgement of the challenges surrounding the Program Forum and the original school-based PLCs: "So part [of the work of assessment for learning] is still being developed in the [school-based] PLCs ... hopefully it is just part of the process for the [school-based] PLC and what they are doing for students" (Anthea). Given these issues, there were efforts at the Board level to ensure particular structures enabled cross-fertilization of ideas about assessment for learning. This was particularly the case in relation to the school-based Cabinets and Board-based Program Fora:

At the Program Forum there's time for the school to meet us, and it is almost like a small Cabinet because the vice-principal attends the Program Forum. We'd sit with their team and they would have direction on the school's focus and trying to make it consistent to the school's improvement plan (Anthea).

However, in spite of these efforts, teachers still struggled to see how what they were doing was related to these Board foci:

Sometimes they [teachers] feel that they are divorced from [the Board foci]; they feel that the small change that they're doing in their class does not affect the Board plan. Sometimes they don't see that it does, and so they dismiss what they're doing. But underneath it all is student success ... and that's how you are effecting change (Anthea).

Given this concern, there was a constant emphasis upon student learning as the rationale for the professional learning occurring across schools: "So we are revisiting the schools' training in how PLCs should run, and we remind them that students' work is at the heart of it and that [should] drive what happens at the PLC" (Anthea).

Reflecting teachers' sense of dislocation from broader Board priorities, for an experienced teacher in one school, these original school-based PLCs were discrete undertakings, confined to five half-days per year, and reflective of Board or Ministry initiatives/policies. Even as it was sometimes difficult to ascertain the origins of particular initiatives, there was a sense in which teachers' learning was largely seen as heavily orchestrated by broader Board priorities: "All of our learning now happens in the PLC ... Everything that we're learning comes down at us from the Board office" (Alec). The focus on assessment for learning was framed as one of the 'top-down' initiatives to be addressed within the original subject-based PLCs in his school. This learning occurred as part of various 'cycles' of diagnostic testing which focused on particular skills and activities. For this experienced teacher, the subject-based PLC was seen as being imposed, and not very effectively. In relation to assessment, the PLC seemed dominated by the perceived needs of the principal – specifically, the collection of data at particular points in time vis-à-vis diagnostic, predicted, and subsequent test results:

These cycles are required for every teacher, every subject and every class. In a cycle, you do diagnostic testing for certain skills, tasks or curriculum areas, and then you have to put down the results for every student. And then you have to teach them using multiple strategies and [then] re-test them on the diagnostic ... multiple times and record it all. Basically, under the threat that these things are going to be demanded by the principal, and we have to submit them. That's the focus of our PLC, and our professional development for the whole year. And then we have to sit around as a math department, discuss the results, bring examples of student work, and discuss strategies as to how to improve. I mean, I'm sure it has value, but I'm finding it pretty tiresome because it's a lot of extra work (Alec).

This “demand by the principal” is reflective of how school leaders can adopt a more bureaucratic orientation (Evetts, 2009) in response to the task of educating a large and diverse body of students (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

A similarly more reductive rendering of learning about assessment within these subject-based PLCs was also evident in the way in which they were seen as being appropriated for more performative purposes in other school settings. For Mitch, an occasional teacher, these PLCs were time consuming and involved ‘a very top down approach’: “My experience with [subject-based] PLCs have been all the time and none of the autonomy. So I get the impression that how they have run is not how they're supposed to run.” For this teacher, the PLCs had the potential to be beneficial, but there was a sense that “we weren't doing them right.” It was not student learning regarding assessment that was the guiding locus of control, but overt surveillance of teachers' practices:

We did moderated marking - so we would all bring a piece of student work and we would compare and contrast how we had assessed their work and the approach we took to it. I felt like we weren't doing the PLC right ... this was not a community of people coming together and deciding what we needed to do to help students with their learning. This was “big brother is watching us,” and we need to jump through all the hoops properly. After we got done doing that, we were ... out of time, jaded and exhausted to do something meaningful. That's kind of harsh, but that's kind of how I feel about it (Mitch).

Despite intentions to the contrary, the original, school-based PLCs were often associated with compliance, rather than substantive engagement; this flowed through the school administration, to the subject chairs, to how teachers engaged at the departmental level. In keeping with more organisational modes of professionalism (Evetts, 2009), accountability to what were perceived to be administrative prerogatives and pressures to be seen to be engaging with the PLCs, were seen as dominating over opportunities to cultivate teacher learning for student learning:

I feel that the PLC very quickly descended into, “Let's get through all the stuff we need to do and make up the fake minutes so that the administrators will stay off our backs.” And at some point, they're going to come by and we've got to look like we're doing what we were told we were to do (Mitch).

The way in which this teacher described how the PLC “very quickly descended” into a “fake” practice to keep administrators “off our backs” reveals a sense of the relative worthlessness of these activities in comparison with their potential. The production of “fake minutes” was a particularly poignant example of the effects of organizational professional conceptions of accountability (Evetts,

2009), and how these could limit the potential for more substantive learning in relation to assessment policy reform.

“True PLCs”: Facilitating Learning Opportunities within Schools

These teachers’ ambivalence contrasted with participation in later PLCs, which were described by the senior administrator in the Board as “true PLCs,” and which were seen as more localized vehicles to generate relevant, focused dialogue, responsive to particular, localized needs. Such productive approaches did not typify the original PLCs, with their more controlling logics:

True PLCs generate questions, generate dialogue and then generate solutions to problems. However, quite often the [traditional/original] PLCs are structured and people are told what to be looking at. That is a huge limiting factor ... when teachers are told ‘The PLC today will be looking at this particular item’ (Paul).

For Paul, ‘true’ PLCs were not about ‘telling’ teachers what to do, but about providing the opportunity for teachers to enquire into their own practice and endeavouring to solve problems collaboratively. However, the structure of some earlier/original PLCs made them instruments for addressing predetermined goals around other aspects of schooling – such as literacy and numeracy. In this way, a form of ‘external’ influence was brought to bear on the work of those engaging in schools, and more traditional PLCs were operationalised in ways that seemed divorced from the more ‘generative’ approach to inquiry recognized as characterizing the most effective learning communities (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006).

For the subject chair in a local school, the ‘local’, was articulated as the subject department, and in contrast with broader Provincial foci:

Everything I learned at that PLC forum¹ was that departments should choose what they are working on, and what they wanted to pursue ... what their SMART² goal was going to be, and so I went into it with that sort of mindset. And then when my hands were tied by this focus [Provincial emphasis on literacy and numeracy] that was to happen in the [school-based] PLC, that didn’t leave much room for lateral movement or a departmental focus (Dan).

Nevertheless, and even as there was a sense of being accountable to the principal for the time spent during the school-based/original PLCs – “I owe him minutes based on what went on in the PLC” (Dan) – there was an over-riding sense of professional engagement which guided this educators’ practice. This was reflected in anxiety to ensure PLCs were enacted effectively:

I’ve never lost my nervousness in trying to plan an effective PLC and it’s probably a good thing. I spend tons of time on it because I want it to be worthwhile for my staff (Dan).

Engagement of this type was allowing some of these original PLCs to pursue the enactment of the policy more effectively at the departmental level, specifically in contextualizing the policy into practice:

My view of myself is as an instructional leader which is like taking on the role of a facilitator in the classroom. That philosophy can be applied to the PLC and my staff. For almost every initiative, [such as] assessment practices, I take on a modelling role so that others say, ‘I get it; I see what he’s after.’ I would say that everyone in the

¹ A reference to an external professional development workshop about professional learning communities.

² SMART goals - an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely.

department is pretty comfortable using “learning goals” [and] “success criteria” right now. How you’re using feedback and goal setting is kind of where we’re at (Dan).

Specific concepts, such as learning goals and success criteria, which originated from the policy, were also understood through active professional learning opportunities involving students:

I have my students working in those areas, and I had teachers sit in with my students and listen to the sharing of a rich assessment task, and then the feedback that was given as part of that process. I’m modelling that learning, and the teachers are also seeing students being successful with the process (Dan).

There was a sense in which these original/school-based PLCs were recognized as valuable, and the sense of ownership associated with occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2009) was evident in how teachers wanted to continue with this work, even after formal activities were complete:

It’s not unusual when we get together to debrief the conversation and the observations that the bell will go and we will still be there for 10-15 minutes. They want to keep talking and I think that’s the value for what’s going on (Dan).

For a less experienced teacher, as for this more experienced colleague (Dan), these more traditional, school-based PLCs had clear potential, and were construed as valuable when engaged with more substantively. These PLCs were seen as useful for cultivating professional learning associated with assessment practices supported through the *Growing Success* policy. The development of ‘descriptive feedback’ on individual students’ assessment tasks was seen as beneficial, and associated with what the original PLCs could have been like:

In certain PLCs, we were doing similar things to moderated marking. Everybody brought a piece of student work, we watched this video [on feedback] and then practiced descriptive feedback on the work. So that’s very much in the vein of *Growing Success* and that was good; useful (Mitch).

For James, the Learning Resources Teacher, and unlike how it was understood by the occasional teacher, these original, school-based PLCs were characterized by a great deal of freedom, and this in itself was considered problematic. These PLCs could be successful, but may also not be sufficiently bounded to be optimally useful for participants:

We needed to make sure that the instructional strategies were based on good assessment practices, and my job as a facilitator of the [school-based] PLC was to make sure that gets embedded. We don’t want the binder approach like, “Here, take this hand-out, and this is an awesome lesson right here.” So, we are using evidence based instructional strategies. And the way my brain works is that any evidence based instructional strategy is actually based on a solid assessment strategy. And I can weave that into it if that’s not explicit with whoever is presenting that strategy at the time (James).

Again, such concerns reflect more “occupational professionalism,” involving an educator taking control of his circumstances, and perhaps reflecting the experiences of someone whose work at the Board level meant he had an overview of the practices occurring within many schools in the Board, some of which were more productive than others. However, in spite of the challenges, there was a sense that the original, school-based PLCs could be substantive vehicles for teachers’ learning. For

the Learning Resources Teacher, efforts to foster teacher learning through specific target students – students needing additional assistance to succeed – were seen as valuable:

The [school-based] PLCs I run are focussed on teachers identifying target students; coming up with an instructional strategy that they want to try; attempting that strategy; and looking at the student work to see if it improved. What I did last year was to say, “Why don’t we run extra PLCs [meetings]?” So instead of one every eight weeks, we run one every three or four. And half of your PLC time is devoted to [school-needs based] PLC work and the other half was devoted to [literacy and numeracy] assessment and training for your whole of department. In reality I wove the two together, and sometimes we focused way more on assessment, and then the next session, they were able to do more of the PLC work more specifically because they are similar but they are still different (James).

On these occasions, broader provincial attention around literacy and numeracy could be addressed, but in conjunction with specific issues of assessment as these pertained to specific subject departments and teacher and student needs.

James also expressed a sense that there was not a clear understanding of the traditional PLCs, but also that these original PLCs could be made more effective as learning vehicles for teachers to learn specific strategies to employ with their students as part of the process of enhancing assessment practices:

There are discrepancies across the Board, but the idea is that we want teachers to look at what they’re doing, see if they can make changes, and see if that change makes improvement. That’s really the bedrock. [School-based] PLCs are not supposed to be PD sessions per se. However, some of us have been pretty adamant about the fact that you cannot get a teacher to try something new if (a) they don’t have the PD to learn how to do that and (b) they don’t have the support structure to try it in a reduced risk environment. With those in place, I think the assessment-for-learning PD last year worked so well because we planned strategies. Sometimes we had two or three teachers doing that lesson together in the class, and then they would go back and debrief it (James).

In this way, some school-based PLCs came to be fora within which teachers’ immediate needs could be met through providing more traditional PD (often in relation to content (Webster-Wright, 2009), as well as setting up circumstances whereby teachers learned about the assessment reform in a safe, trust-oriented environment (Evetts, 2009), and actually practised these learnings through specific strategies, in collaboration with one another.

The Family of Schools (FoS): Cultivating Learning Opportunities across Schools

While there was a sense that some of the professional learning opportunities around the policy that were driven by the Program Fora were not perceived as very successful because they were seen as being “parachuted” into the Board from the Ministry, typifying more control-oriented organizational professionalism (Evetts, 2009), some Program Fora efforts at the Board level were seen as unreservedly beneficial. In particular, the Family of Schools (FoS) initiative, involving school teachers working and learning together in order to address issues around the transition of students from elementary to secondary schools, was seen as productive. Using the *Growing Success* policy as a framework for addressing assessment practices, teachers involved also engaged with curriculum issues and used standardized testing data to highlight content areas that were of concern to

particular cohorts of students. In particular, the FoS was concerned with a broader-based focus on assessment for learning. This focus was construed as more substantive than the Board's more piecemeal approach of focusing upon individual 'practices' associated with the policy per se. As discussed above in the more traditional school-based PLCs, this included attention to descriptive feedback – one of the key practices elaborated within the policy (alongside developing learning goals, identifying success criteria, eliciting information about student learning, and developing individual goal setting (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, pp. 33-35). However, and while these foci assisted teachers some of the time (e.g. as reflected in Mitch's comments about how attention to descriptive feedback were useful), there was a relative lack of attention to how these practices cohered to foster a more holistic sense of "assessment for and as learning":

Our learning in the FoS was around assessment-for-learning, while the Board was stressing learning around descriptive feedback. They were divorced from each other. And then we saw that you can't really have them in isolation ... teachers were working on each of these things individually like they were just pieces of a puzzle, never putting them together. When you do en-masse training like that [descriptive feedback] or an initiative just gets 'parachuted' into your Board, it is left to us [members of the Program Fora/Board] to make connections and fine tune it (Anthea).

In this way, Anthea construed her role as connecting the broader policy and Board mandates, and the work of teachers. Anthea understood that professional learning for policy enactment requires a "learning culture" (Ball et al., 2011a, p. 614) characterized by opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning. Such an environment is crucial in supporting professional learning – for creating strong work cultures and occupational identities (Evetts, 2009). Further, such environments are not chance occurrences, but need to be actively developed.

Unlike many of the earlier, school-based PLCs, the FoS was considered particularly useful by teachers. Alec, who as discussed earlier had a problematic relationship with his school-based mathematics PLC, found the FoS very valuable. This perception was based on his concerns for student learning, actual student success and engagement with other teachers on questions of practice in relation to students' learning:

We have the Grade 7 and 8 math teachers from our elementary schools, will come to my school and they will meet with the Grade 9 teachers. So, there will be about six or eight of us, and that's actually extremely valuable. Our work is very specific to math, and we might talk about strategies that work for students, so the elementary teachers might share what they do with students. From that, Anthea might show us collectively a whole different range of ways we can teach [to address that issue]. I'm not certain if the policy is driven from the Ministry, it's more on a practical level, in terms of what we can actually do in class to help improve ... ultimately it's all about student success (Alec).

Significantly, even as Alec claimed to not be aware of the broader policy milieu within which his work was undertaken, the way he foregrounded student learning – "student success" – reveals how the policy did indeed have impact at the level of schools, and enabled trusting relations between the Board facilitator and teachers – evidence of more occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2009). The experience of working with elementary teachers from across schools was an "eye-opener," particularly in relation to the incredible variability of students' needs:

What can we do to improve [teaching and learning] - it's just an eye-opener because the elementary teachers are with 30-34 students ranging in ability from the highest special needs student, to students who are geniuses. And I just can't imagine doing that (Alec).

In Alec's case, the FoS provided an opportunity to engage in a form of occupational professionalism that addressed his real concerns about student learning and success. The more trusting relations between school and Board were evident in how Anthea, the facilitator of the FoS, was a constant presence for Alec, and a leader for whom he had great respect: "She and I are chatting all the time, or she comes by and visits us in our classrooms. The credibility and the experience Anthea has is key. I think that's actually number one" (Alec). For Alec, this credibility and level of collaboration meant that the FoS was spoken about favourably in the staff room, but not the more traditional, school-based PLC. With the diagnostic test approach encouraged through the traditional PLCs, there was a sense that the teacher was "on their own". With the FoS approach, there was a much more collegial, interactive relationship formed around what teachers considered to be beneficial to their needs in relation to assessment reform, and those of their students.

Discussion

The enactment of the *Growing Success* policy seemed to exhibit characteristics of the effects of both "disciplinary" and more "developmental" policies (Ball et al., 2011a). However, it was the centrality of various conceptions of professionalism in fostering teacher learning as policy enactment, through various forms of collaborative learning communities (PLCs, FoS), that was perhaps most significant in relation to understanding the relations between such learning and enactment. Not only was policy enactment expressed as teacher learning (Coburn & Stein 2006), but this teacher learning was evident in varied, and sometimes conflicting ways, revealing how varied conceptions of professionalism played out in practice. In this way, our research contributes to the literature on policy enactment in general, and in relation to teacher learning as policy enactment in particular, by emphasizing how different conceptions of professionalism are particularly useful for understanding how these enactment practices actually play out.

The way in which the original, school-based PLCs were construed as vehicles for the cultivation of particular policy prescriptions deemed important at the time within the Ministry, reveals how more organizational prerogatives were at play. These included in relation to the increased Ministry focus upon literacy and numeracy outcomes. These broader influences were evident in how more senior educators referred to how various "lead learners" within the province focused upon literacy and numeracy, and how the more traditional, school-based PLCs that became established did not reflect the sorts of active, teacher-led inquiry into substantive aspects of their practice for enhanced student learning that characterizes the literature (Campbell et al., 2017; Stoll et al., 2006). More explicit references to "true PLCs" as opposed to some other collaborative learning communities within the Board, also reflected such concerns. Even amongst very experienced teachers, such as the subject chair (Dan), there was a sense of being limited by the focus upon literacy and numeracy; "my hands were tied by this focus that was to happen in the [school-based] PLC." Such responses reflect instances of centralization and control, associated with more organizational professionalism, dominating over a more occupational professional sense of ownership over learning. In this case, the way in which school-based PLCs were initially determined by attention to provincial concerns about literacy and numeracy, was reflective of a form of

commodification of learning, with such commodification altering professional relations, and seen as “necessitating supervision, assessment and audit” (Evetts, 2009, p. 261).

This was similarly expressed more broadly by some of the teachers who referred to the provincial prerogatives as something to which they had to attend, and how this limited the potential of collaborative learning: at times, some teachers felt “under threat, basically” (Alec). For those working in classrooms (Alec; Mitch), the preferred professional learning opportunities were those that stressed their learning needs and work contexts, rather than policy prescriptions that were imposed or “parachuted in.”

For some teachers, the learning in relation to the policy was difficult to ascertain, particularly if it was associated with standardized measures of learning; in such instances, more centrally-controlled, organizationally-oriented PLCs were evident. For one experienced teacher (Alec), the school-based PLCs were not construed as fora for productive learning. There was a nebulous understanding of the broader assessment policy, and instead a more localized rendering of ‘being done to’ by policy, and of policy as simply something to which those in schools had to respond; a sense of agency was tenuous at best. Generalized references to “diagnostic testing” seemed attenuated from the broader aims of fostering assessment *for* learning, and instead there was a tendency to emphasize the forced circumstances in which this learning was occurring. Under these circumstances, a much more “compliant” disposition was evident, dominated by concerns to be seen to be doing what was required. Arguably, teachers’ protestations in these circumstances revealed they were not simply “receivers” (Ball et al. 2011b), but also “combatants” within a broader field of contestation (Bourdieu, 1990). More organizational concerns about managing and controlling learning dominated occupational concerns about active participation (Evetts, 2009), in relation to teachers’ learning.

For an occasional teacher, there was recognition and valuing of professional learning associated with the policy when it was construed as relevant and based on a genuine community of teachers seeking to interrogate their practice in relation to student learning – “a community of people coming together and deciding what we needed to do to help students with their learning” (Mitch). This focus on student learning was similarly expressed by an experienced teacher, who reinforced the significance of working “on a practical level, in terms of [what] we can actually do in class to help improve ... student success.” However, this contrasted with the bureaucratic/organizational requirement to produce minutes of the school-based PLC meetings, as acknowledged by both Board personnel (Paul), and teachers themselves (Mitch). The actual requirement to produce minutes – “to make up the fake minutes” (Mitch) – was done explicitly “so that the administrators [principal] will stay off our backs” (Mitch). Here, managerial organizational demands, associated with regulation and imposition of particular kinds of accountability (Evetts, 2009), overrode teachers’ perceptions of the professional possibilities for such learning, even as these possibilities were themselves acknowledged by teachers. The production of “fake minutes” reflects how excessive bureaucratic control can lead to resistance and resentment on the part of teachers, dampening motivation (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

This is not to imply that teachers were simply overwhelmed by the demands placed upon them; rather they adopted different roles in response to the professional learning opportunities that were available to them, and the broader conditions within which these occurred. In this sense, they had become “policy actors” engaged in “policy work” (Ball et al., 2011b). While more agentic elements were apparent in critiques of policy enactment processes on the part of some teachers, more occupational professional modes of autonomy were more clearly evident in the way in which teachers advocated that PLCs could and should be characterized by attention to substantive learning on the part of teachers, and focused upon student learning. Dan’s efforts to provide opportunities to

model good practice for his teachers in the school-based PLCs, to enable them to better understand the nature of learning goals and success criteria – key elements of the policy – reflect more overtly occupational professional ideals, including collegial authority, discretion and occupational control of work, and the construction of discourses about professional work within professional groups (Evetts, 2009). A sense of responsibility to colleagues – a more genuine form of professional accountability, “intelligent accountability” (O’Neill, 2013) – was evident in Dan’s “nervousness in trying to plan an effective [school-based] PLC.” His overt concern that it should “be worthwhile for my staff” reflects occupational professional ideals of autonomy, and a desire to maximize learning for staff as well as students. This was reciprocated by his staff, who continued to work together even after formal school-based PLC activities had ceased. This was in contrast with less authentic school-based PLCs, which were enervating for teachers, and left them “out of time, jaded, and exhausted” and unable to do “something meaningful” (Mitch). However, even for teachers who had experienced bureaucratic PLCs, there was recognition that ‘true’ PLCs operated very differently. Again, more collegial authority (Evetts, 2009) was evident.

The way in which the Learning Resources teacher (James) recognized the variability that attended the school-based PLCs further confirms the possibilities for these PLCs, even as they were sometimes construed as problematic. A much more agentic disposition was evident in James, who was arguably a “translator” (Ball et al., 2011b) of broader policy prerogatives, and worked hard to ensure these translations were understood by those to whom they were directed. Assessment for learning was able to be cultivated in a context in which teachers experienced more traditional ‘PD’ – such as learning different instructional strategies. But these were “wrapped” within a broader learning framework which blended across Board directives to engage in PLCs in relation to literacy and numeracy, as well as assessment *for* learning, and more localized concerns about teacher knowledge thresholds. This capacity to work between broader provincial foci, and the needs of specific teachers and subject departments, exemplifies the sorts of discretion and occupational control of work, control of professional discourse, and responsiveness to changing needs, more typical of occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2009).

The FoS represented a more unreservedly developmental policy response (Ball et al., 2011a), with its focus upon developing teachers’ capacities to respond to various reforms, and it is much more iterative and incremental attention to fostering teachers’ understandings. The facilitator of the FoS was explicit about the importance of coherence between the policy, broader Board enactment practices (such as “en-mass training,” for example, about descriptive feedback), and the work occurring in more ongoing and genuinely collaborative teacher learning arrangements (such as the FoS). The facilitator acted as a mediator between broad provincial concerns about literacy and numeracy, attention to discrete elements of the assessment policy at the Board level (such as ‘descriptive feedback’), and a fundamental emphasis upon assessment *for* learning that needed to occur in schools. As a result of Anthea’s work as a policy mediator, for teachers like Alec, while the school-based PLCs were more authoritarian and reductive in their approach to accountability, the FoS was characterized by autonomy, discretion, emphasis upon teacher judgement, and strong work cultures and identities – all markers of occupational professionalism in action (Evetts, 2009).

Conclusion and Implications

The research confirms policy enactment as a ‘messy’ reality (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012) characterized by a multiplicity of potential forces, and for which it may be difficult to determine a specific outcome. It also reveals how educators were agentic at times. However, the research also foregrounds how the nature of the professionalism that transpired in context was crucial to the

actual enactment of the *Growing Success* policy. Not only was there evidence of tensions between disciplinary and developmental aspects of the policy, but also how more organizational and occupational conceptions of professionalism were central to how the policy was enacted. Organizational professionalism was evident in increased accountability for teachers' practices, standardization of work practices, managerial control, and attention to external evaluation processes, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy, and constant pressure around performance. 'Occupational professionalism' was apparent in efforts to be more autonomous, attention to collegial authority, and professional ethics as a form of accountability.

The tensions between these positions were sometimes palpable, and our research reveals a complex relationship between policy, teacher learning and professionalism with educators not only undertaking differentiated policy work according to their roles, but also how this work was heavily influenced by the different manifestations of professionalism that characterized their workplaces. This consideration leads us to reflect upon the nature of the learning that characterizes policy enactment, and the work circumstances of educators, and whether these circumstances foster more occupational conceptions of professionalism in relation to policy, and challenge more organizational conceptions. Even as the educators and teachers in our research were enacting the *Growing Success* policy, the contexts of that enactment, and the forms of professionalism that were cultivated in those contexts, led to profound differences in their learning as engagement with the policy.

Consequently, when educators have the opportunity to be producers of knowledge, and not just the receivers of a policy text, their responses reflect circumstances in which various forms of 'occupational professionalism' have been fostered. These are evident in the ways in which educators engage proactively with policy, seeking to embrace policy for how it can foster teacher learning for student learning. Conversely, more organizational conceptions of professionalism are evident in how educators frame learning opportunities as little more than transactional exercises that encourage superficial engagement with policy prerogatives. More organizational professionalism is apparent in efforts to control teachers' learning, resulting in a diminution of the conditions needed for learning cultures to flourish. The overall implication for those interested in policy enactment is that tightening of accountability regimes associated with organizational cultures, rather than devolving power to policy actors – more in keeping with the best traditions of professional cultures – appears to be counterproductive to meeting the aims of policy. Significantly, while individual policies may be more disciplinary or developmental in orientation, it is not simply the nature of the policies that are crucial to how they are enacted. Rather, as evidenced in the research presented, the extent to which policies are enacted in contexts characterized by more or less organizational and occupational professionalism, has a significant impact upon their actual enactment, and their ultimate effects and effectiveness. The research indicates that even as more organizational professionalism is clearly evident in policy reform, districts and schools that seek to cultivate more occupational conceptions of professionalism will engender teacher learning cultures for positive and productive policy enactment. This includes, potentially, for all teachers, including those not recognized as teachers of record/distinction.

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About the Authors

Ian Hardy

The University of Queensland

i.hardy@uq.edu.au

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8124-8766>

Ian Hardy is an Associate Professor in the School of Education, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. Dr Hardy researches and teaches educational policy and practice, with a particular focus upon teachers' learning under current policy conditions. He is author of *The politics of teacher professional development: Policy, research and practice* (New York: Routledge, 2012). He has recently been researching the nature of teachers' learning in relation to curricula policy practices, and globalized educational reform practices more generally, in Australia, Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United States.

Wayne Melville

Lakehead University

wmelvill@lakeheadu.ca

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2621-2610>

Wayne Melville is a Professor of Science Education in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. His research interests are focused on the school science department, and how it shapes, and is shaped by, the professional learning of its members. Dr. Melville is also currently one of the Co-Editors in Chief for the *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, and the Chair of Undergraduate Education at the Faculty of Education.

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