

## Leadership for professional development and learning: enhancing our understanding of how teachers develop

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The educational research community has made great strides in clarifying and enhancing our understanding of professional development and how it occurs. Yet in relation to one question – How do people develop professionally? – this knowledge base falls short, for while much research has been directed at addressing the question, findings have tended to lack the specificity that offers the kind of elucidation that may usefully inform professional development-focused leadership policy and practice. In particular, the micro-level cognitive process of professional development – what occurs inside an individual’s head in order for her/him to experience a professional development ‘episode’ – remains under-examined in educational research. This article makes a contribution towards addressing this short-fall. It presents the author’s conceptual analyses of professionalism and professional development – revealing the multidimensional componential structure of each – and examines how understanding of this multidimensionality may help school leaders promote and facilitate professional development.

**Keywords:** professional learning; professionalism; headteacher standards; leadership standards; workplace learning; continuing professional development

### Introduction

It is consensually accepted that educational leaders should promote and facilitate professional learning and development in their schools. In England, the teacher appraisal system is centred on professional development – specifically, teachers’ right to it throughout their careers, and the requirement for headteachers to ensure its provision (Department for Education [DfE], 2012). Reinforcing this requirement, preparation and training for – and professional standards expected of – school leaders often include foci on how they may contribute effectively to the development of others. The UK’s National College for Teaching and Leadership, for example, incorporates professional development-related issues into the curricula of two of its three national qualifications programmes; ‘Leading and Developing Staff’ and ‘Leading Professional Development’ are elective modules in the curricula of, respectively, the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership and the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership. The UK’s Department for Education similarly recognises headteachers’ professional development responsibilities:

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‘[h]eadship is about building a professional learning community which enables others to achieve. Through performance management and effective continuing professional development practice, the headteacher supports all staff to achieve high standards’ (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2004, p. 8).<sup>1</sup> More specifically, ‘Continuing professional development for self and all others within the school’ is identified as one of four professional qualities to which headteachers in England should be committed; they are expected to be able to: ‘Develop, empower and sustain individuals and teams’, and ‘Challenge, influence and motivate others to attain high goals’ (DfES, 2004, p. 8). These are translated into actions expected of a school leader who meets the national standards for headteachers in English schools (DfES, 2004).

The Welsh Government (2011, pp. 10–11) holds parallel expectations of headteachers in Wales: ‘Leadership involves building professional learning communities which enable all to achieve. Through performance management and effective continuing professional development, leaders enable all staff to achieve high standards.’ The Welsh professional standards for leaders include several that focus explicitly on professional development, recognising that the effective leader: ‘develops, empowers and sustains effective teams’ (standard 26); ‘creates an environment in which others can grow professionally’ (standard 27); ‘develops and nurtures leadership potential in others...’ (standard 28); and ‘develops and maintains effective strategies and procedures for staff induction, early and continuous professional development...’ (standard 31) (Welsh Government, 2011, p. 11). In Scotland, too, a developmental focus is incorporated into expectations expressed in the standard for headship: headteachers ‘develop the trust and support of staff, and develop and maintain effective strategies for staff induction, professional review and development, staff welfare and career development. This includes the development of staff by coaching and mentoring’ (Scottish Executive, 2005, para. 5.2.2).

The developmental facet of school leadership responsibility is similarly recognised in many other developed countries; ‘developing self and others’ is, for example, listed as one of five key professional practices of principals of Australian schools (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011, p. 4). It is observed that, in this national context:

Principals work with and through others to build a professional learning community that is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Through managing performance, effective continuing professional learning and regular feedback, they support all staff to achieve high standards and develop their leadership capacity,

and should: ‘[d]evelop and maintain effective strategies and procedures for staff induction, professional learning and performance review [and] [s]et personal targets and take responsibility for their own development’ (AITSL, 2011, p. 9).

Yet for educational leaders professional development responsibilities are not always simple and straightforward to discharge, for they require understanding of how teachers develop. As Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002, p. 947) point out: ‘If we are to facilitate the professional development of teachers, we must understand the process by which teachers grow professionally and the conditions that support and promote that growth’. It is on this understanding that this article focuses. Arguing that there remain gaps in our research-informed understanding of the process whereby people develop professionally, I contribute towards augmenting the

knowledge base by presenting my own theoretical perspectives that relate to the central question addressed in my discussion below: What do school leaders (at all levels) need to know, to better understand how to develop teachers effectively? Specifically, I present my conceptualisation of professional development, and my perspective on how it occurs in individuals. Before doing so, I sketch out the current professional learning and development-focused knowledge landscape.

### **What we know and don't know about professional learning and development**

Over the last two decades the educational research community has made great strides in clarifying and enhancing our understanding of professional development and how it occurs. This understanding has sometimes been drawn from relevant work in related fields and disciplines, through analyses located within theoretical frameworks derived from, *inter alia*, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and their hybrid and specialised sub-fields, as well as ecology, neurology and biology (Davis & Sumara, 1997). We have established that effective professional learning is not necessarily confined to intentional development opportunities and events. We have accepted that it is often 'situated' (Hoekstra, Beijaard, Brekelmans, & Korthagen, 2007; Hoekstra, Korthagen, Brekelmans, Beijaard, & Imants, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sawyer, 2002) and can occur implicitly (Eraut, 2004, 2007), often in unanticipated – and sometimes even unrecognised – ways, through social interaction (Adger, Hoyle, & Dickinson, 2004), including 'communities (of practice)' (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Printy, 2008; Pugach, 1999; Wenger, 1998; Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2009). Marsick and Watkins (1990) and Smylie (1995) refer to this as 'incidental' learning, that 'takes place in everyday experience and occurs without intention, from "doing" and from both successes and mistakes. People may not be conscious of it' (Smylie, 1995, p. 100). More recently, empirical research findings have served to heighten the potential efficacy of coaching and mentoring as professional development tools (Dimitrovich et al., 2009; Neuman and Cunningham, 2009; Stanulis, Little, & Wibbens, 2012; Zwart, Wubbels, Bergen, & Bolhuis, 2007).

The impact of teachers' professional development on pupil learning and achievement (Bredeson, Kelley, & Klat, 2012; Desimone, 2009), through its impact on teachers' practice (Dimitrovich et al., 2009; Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Kuijpers, Houtveen, & Wubbels, 2010; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallager, 2007), has also been examined. In this respect, professional learning and development have often been considered and examined in relation to school effectiveness and improvement; indeed, this generative feature of professional development is a pervasive focus of most American research and scholarship, to the extent that it is explicitly or implicitly incorporated into conceptualisations and definitions of professional development. In other geo-cultural contexts, the professional development of teachers is considered a justifiable end in itself – a worthy focus of study, irrespective of whether or not it may be seen to lead to gains in relation to pupil learning. Such work (e.g. Edwards & Ellis, 2012; Ellis, 2007; Evans, 2002a; Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & McKinney, 2007; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Mitchell, 2013; Postholm, 2012; van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005) – evidently more likely to be carried out by European than by North American researchers, reflecting inter-continental differences in prevalent epistemic trends – variously incorporates a

distinct focus on conceptualisation, definitional precision, and theoretical understandings of what professional development is, what does or does not constitute it, and how it occurs.

Over the last two or three decades, a collection of what are presented as models of professional development has accumulated, and whose contribution to the knowledge base – in relation both to elucidatory scale and magnitude – is very varied. Models tend to be either conceptual or processual in focus, relating respectively to the conceptualisation of professional development (i.e. what it is), and to the process(es) of achieving it (i.e. how it occurs). Conceptual models vary in relation to specificity and detail, while processual models vary in relation to their location on a hypothetical theoretical–atheoretical continuum, ranging from those that claim the universal applicability (and hence context-independence) that is a prerequisite of theory (propositional knowledge about why or how something occurs; Evans, 2002b), and those that are highly context-specific and simply illustrate what is likely to ‘work’ in practice (often on the basis of its being considered to have ‘worked’ – however this is defined).

Incorporating nine principles, the ‘integrated professional development model for effective teaching’, presented by Kuijpers et al. (2010), is an example of a practice-focused model of what is considered effective at developing teachers. Similar examples are Glickman’s ‘developmental supervision model’ that aims to help teachers improve their teaching competence, and which incorporates five elements: ‘pre-conference; observation; analysis, interpretation and strategy; post-conference; and critique’ (cited in Kuijpers et al., 2010, p. 1689), and Lovett and Gilmore’s (2003) ‘quality learning circle’ model of professional development, which ‘highlights features missing from many current professional development programs’ and ‘offers a promising alternative that teachers can use to help themselves’ (p. 193), essentially representing the design features of a specific professional development programme that has been found to have benefits.

I do not question the value of such work to practitioners; they could usefully adopt or adapt the processes identified for application to their own contexts. Yet such context-specific descriptions and analyses do not constitute theory – neither ‘substantive’ nor ‘formal’ theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32), nor, indeed, theory interpreted in the elitist sense (Evans, 2002b) – since they do not represent universally applicable propositional knowledge about why or how something (in this case, professional development) occurs. They widen the knowledge base, certainly; but they do not *deepen* it.

Representing a somewhat deeper analysis than is evident in context-specific, descriptive-focused models of professional development, Desimone’s (2009, p. 185) ‘path model’ incorporates five core features of ‘effective’ professional development: content focus; active learning; coherence; duration; and collective participation. Yet this model too offers limited elucidation of the process(es) whereby people develop professionally. It fails to tell us anything more than that if teachers participate in professional development activities or events incorporating the identified features that determine the model’s substance, they (teachers) are likely to end up knowing more, increasing their skills, and changing their attitudes and beliefs, which is then likely to lead to changes to how they teach, which, in turn, is likely to improve pupil learning.

Many processual models (including some of those referred to above) are generally based on under-developed – or, at least, inadequately explicit articulation

of – conceptualisations of professional development. This lacuna undermines the models' value and usefulness in elucidating how people develop professionally because it is often unclear how professional development is interpreted by the researcher proposing the model. Whilst her paper does in fact incorporate conceptualisation, what Desimone refers to as the 'conceptual framework' underpinning her model has limited potential as a conduit to the 'completion' – to paraphrase her – 'of our understanding of how professional development works' (Desimone, 2009, p. 185) because it fails to plumb the depths of analysis of what exactly is meant by 'effective professional development' and of how this occurs. The five 'core features' that she identifies tell us what aspects of professional development activities evidently work insofar as they lead to teachers' increased knowledge and skills and/or changed attitudes and beliefs, but the *bases* of their efficacy and potency remain unexamined. What this means is that this conceptual framework offers no reliable capacity for explaining, *inter alia*, deviance, atypicality, relationality and causality.

Desimone (2009) identifies context as 'an important mediator and moderator' within her model, and, drawing on the literature in the field, she highlights specific key mediating and moderating influences that are consensually recognised within the literature, such as 'individual teacher characteristics' and 'policy conditions' (p. 185). Yet simply identifying and recognising broad categories of mediating influences as a means of explaining away variance and diversity is not enough – which Desimone herself probably accepts, for she implies that her proposed conceptual framework should serve as a springboard for theoretical exploration, implicitly referring to it as a 'core' framework (p. 185).

In relation to one question – How do people develop professionally? – conceptual and processual models such as those identified above, and, more widely, the professional development-related knowledge base, fall short, for while much research has been directed at addressing the question, findings have tended to lack the specificity that offers the kind of meaningful elucidation that those with responsibility for leading and facilitating professional development may find useful. In particular, what I call the micro-level cognitive process of professional development – what occurs inside an individual's head in order for her/him to experience a single professional development 'episode' – remains under-examined by educational researchers. Tennant (2005, p. 101) rightly reminds us of the 'need to take into account the complexities of context in order to understand the functioning of the mind in situ', yet relatively recent educational research often incorporates a preoccupation with identifying and examining the contexts within which teacher professional development occurs, at the expense of consideration of the cognitive process that represents development. This has created an imbalance in the knowledge base that, in some cases (including those of some of the processual models referred to above), implies an over-simplified interpretation and grasp of what professional development involves. Consequently, it does not go far enough in uncovering its nature and process; as Smylie observes:

To simply identify workplace conditions conducive to teacher learning is not the same thing as understanding in greater depth the complex, potentially interactive functional relationships of those conditions to learning. It does not shed light on the interactions between the work environment and individual cognitive and psychological states in the learning process. (Smylie, 1995, p. 107)

A key contributor to the knowledge base relating to models of teachers' professional development is Thomas Guskey (1986, 1995, 2002). He evidently shares my concern that we need to plumb the depths of analytical capacity in order to try to pinpoint more precisely and specifically how individuals develop professionally. Arguing that: 'the majority of [professional development] programs fail because they do not take into account two crucial factors: (1) what motivates teachers to engage in professional development, and (2) the process by which change in teachers typically occurs' (Guskey, 2002, p. 382), he proposes 'a model for viewing change in teachers in the hope of clarifying aspects of that change process' (p. 381).

Accordingly – and directed at informing 'professional development leaders' – Guskey's model of the process of teacher change is intended to portray 'the temporal sequence of events from professional development experiences to enduring change in teachers' attitudes and perceptions' (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). Specifically, the model identifies this sequence of events as: teachers' participation in professional development events; change in teachers' classroom practice; change in student learning outcomes; and change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Guskey explains:

According to the model, significant change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs occurs primarily after they gain evidence of improvements in student learning. These improvements typically result from changes teachers have made in their classroom practices, a new instructional approach, the use of new materials or curricula, or simply a modification in teaching procedures or classroom format. (Guskey, 2002, p. 383)

Whilst it has augmented the field's knowledge base – and, moreover, its focus on identifying the sequence that makes up the process of teacher change correlates with my pursuit of the micro-level process of professional development – from my perspective Guskey's model falls short because it fails to shed light on the cognitive sequence that constitutes individuals' professional development, which is key to understanding and explaining the disparity and variance in people's responses to stimuli and cues that have the potential to lead to their professional development. The essential problem is summed up succinctly by Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002, p. 947): 'models of teacher professional development have not matched the complexity of the process we seek to promote'; indeed, of the models that I have encountered in the literature, only their own 'interconnected' model of teacher professional growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) comes close to elucidating the micro-level professional development process that is my current focus.

Pointing out the limitations of superficial and over-simplistic path models of teacher professional development, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002, p. 950) present their own non-linear model, incorporating four 'domains' (the personal domain, the external domain, the domain of practice, and the domain of consequence), as a model that 'recognizes the complexity of professional growth through the identification of multiple growth pathways between the domains'. Their paper makes a very valuable contribution to the knowledge base, not least by addressing the 'why?' questions that are so important to understanding the motivation that prompts professional development. They ask, 'What were the mechanisms whereby change in one of the above dimensions triggered change in another?', and continue: 'We propose that only two mediating processes are required to account for such change effects: Enaction and Reflection' (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 953).



For me, however, their paper does not quite tick all of the boxes in relation to understanding how professional development occurs in individuals. Space restrictions preclude an expansive critique of their work, but I am uneasy, for example, about Clarke and Hollingsworth's proposal, presented above, of 'enaction and reflection' as the only mediating processes, for in relation to some of what I consider to be, and present below as dimensions of, professional development (e.g. values, perceptions, understanding), enacting change is not necessary to ascertain if it 'works'. Moreover, 'reflection' implies conscious, focused consideration, yet often recognition of something as a potentially 'better way' – what I go on to present below as a key component of professional development – occurs unconsciously and unintentionally, representing 'incidental' learning (Smylie, 1995, p. 100). Change in knowledge, beliefs or attitudes does not necessarily involve reflection; more often it occurs spontaneously, or it evolves imperceptibly over time.

In many – if not most – respects, Clarke and Hollingsworth and I seem to be pursuing the same jigsaw pieces of knowledge that will contribute to the complete, but elusive, picture of what professional development is and how it occurs. We appear to be thinking along the same lines; Clarke and Hollingsworth's 'change sequences' approximate to my 'micro-level development' (Evans, 2011, p. 864), referred to above and defined in the next section. Yet a key focus of my work, as I discuss below, is the *cognitive* sequence or process that constitutes micro-level development – the mental internalisation process. In relation to this, Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) work, in common with Guskey's (2002), fails to address some of the important issues and questions that I hope my theoretical perspectives, presented below, contribute towards elucidating.

Moreover, with respect to conceptualisation and definition of professional development there is divergence between Clarke and Hollingsworth's work and mine. My definition of professional development incorporates and reflects a wide conceptualisation of it – wider than the conceptualisation implicit in Clarke and Hollingsworth's work. And whilst no one definition or conceptualisation may claim superiority over an alternative, well-formulated, one, processual models or analyses derived from different conceptualisations will inevitably differ. Unaware of their paper when, several years ago, I began clarifying my own conceptualisation and formulating my own definition of professional development, and my processual model of how it occurs at the micro level, I now consider myself to be travelling in the same direction as Clarke and Hollingsworth, making approximately the same level of progress, along a pathway that often runs parallel to, and from time to time converges with, theirs. Our pathways nevertheless cross different terrains, affording slightly different vantage points and views of the landscapes traversed. In terms of an interpretation of how, at the theoretical level, professional development occurs in individuals, the conceptual model that I present below, along with my developing processual model, is therefore intended as an alternative to, rather than a replacement for, Clarke and Hollingsworth's valuable work.

### **How does professional development occur?**

The failure of any of the published models of professional development to elucidate fully the internalisation process that occurs in individuals in order to prompt them to adopt this or that new practice or process – the cognitive process that leads directly to individuals' professional development – is unsurprising, for this process is

recognised as extremely complex by those who have seriously tried to get to grips with it (e.g. Guskey, 1995; Jarvis, 2005; Smylie, 1995). Indeed, Guskey (1995, p. 117) argues that it is impossible to find a single ‘right answer’ that explains how teachers develop professionally:

the uniqueness of the individual setting will always be a critical factor in education. What works in one situation may not work in another ... [R]eforms based upon assumptions of uniformity in the educational system repeatedly fail ... The teaching and learning process is a complex endeavor that is embedded in contexts that are highly diverse. This combination of complexity and diversity makes it difficult, if not impossible, for researchers to come up with universal truths.

Contrary to Guskey’s assessment, I believe it is possible to develop a theory (i.e. universal truths) of what prompts individuals to develop professionally. While Guskey is justified in raising the issue of the difficulties presented by the myriad of permutations of different contextually-based circumstances surrounding individuals’ professional development, it is important to remember that theory, being universally applicable, must always be context-free. Yet in stripping away the contextual specificity in order to arrive at a level of generalisability that is universally applicable (Evans, 2002b), the resultant theory or theoretical perspectives may end up being of limited use to practitioners.

My purpose in this article, however, is not to present a theory of how individuals develop professionally; rather, it is simply to shed a little more light (than has hitherto illuminated it) on the cognitive process that I call micro-level development, and which I define as: *the enhancement of individuals’ professionalism, resulting from their acquisition, through a consciously or unconsciously applied mental internalisation process, of professional work-related knowledge and/or understanding and/or attitudes and/or skills and/or competences that, on the grounds of what is consciously or unconsciously considered to be its/their superiority, displace(s) and replace(s) previously-held professional work-related knowledge and/or understanding and/or attitudes and/or skills and/or competences* (Evans, 2011, p. 864). This process incorporates what Vygotsky (1978) calls internalisation, and what Illeris (2005, p. 87) refers to as ‘an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration in which new impulses are connected with the results of prior learning’. It corresponds with what Ball (2009, p. 50) explains as ‘how the information presented ... in a professional development program can move from an interpsychological plane, where there is a social exchange in which more informed others encourage learners to consider conceptual innovations, to an intrapsychological plane’. It therefore constitutes knowledge that is useful to those whose role involves, or who wish to make, a contribution to developing others, and who, in doing so, practise leadership for professional learning and development.

By ‘micro-level’ professional development I mean the individual, singular ‘episodes’ that constitute, as far as they are discernible, the unitary components of ‘bigger picture’, or wider scale, professional development. Micro-level professional development – to illustrate the minuteness of its scale – involves what Miller and Silvernail (1994, p. 46) refer to as ‘private epiphanies’, such as those representing a teacher’s discovering a better way of teaching the use of apostrophes, rather than his becoming an overall better teacher of English, or a primary school teacher’s breakthrough that leads her to find a better way of teaching a struggling child how to add together two numbers. Only by breaking down professional development as a



cognitive process into such minute singular units of activity do we have any chance of increasing our understanding of how it occurs, by scrutinising those units of activity. Tillema and Imants (1995, p. 142) observe:

The restructuring of knowledge is not simply a matter of replacing old concepts with new ones ... through the lens of pre-existing conceptions, teachers decide which new knowledge elements to accept and integrate. The question remains: When precisely do teachers integrate new knowledge and restructure their existing knowledge?

My work on professional development has been focused on a slightly differently worded key question: what is involved in the mental internalisation process that I call micro-level professional development in individuals?

Though my work on a processual model remains on-going, I have so far progressed to the extent of having identified as a key processual component, or stage, of micro-level professional development the individual's recognition of something as a 'better way' of 'doing' things (applying a broad interpretation of 'doing' to include mental as well as physical activity): better than what preceded, and than what is superseded by, the newly-accepted and adopted professional practice (again, applying a similarly broad definition of practice to include mental activity) which, by my definition, represents the manifestation of professional development. Applied to a rather broader context, this recognition is explained by Holloway (2005, p. 47, emphasis added):

What seems to occur is that a point of view works for us, answers our questions, helps us to operate in life, so we use it until it no longer does the job it was designed for. We come to realise that our viewpoints were not pieces of concrete truth that we discovered and logged permanently into our minds; they were practical ways of dealing with what lay before us, problem-solving devices. *And when better ways of doing and explaining things came along, we transferred our loyalties to them.*

This recognition – or realisation, to use Holloway's term – is crucial to micro-level professional development because without it there is no perceived rationale for a transfer of loyalties, or for change. In some cases, the 'better way' may involve the addition of 'new' (to the individual in question) forms of activity, or perspectives or attitudes, or skills and competences to her/his professional practice repertoire; it need not necessarily be confined to the enhancement of *existing* skills or knowledge or understanding. In such cases – where it injects novel features into practice – what constitutes the 'better way' is the knowledge, the capacity or the understanding that was previously absent: this represents a 'better' state than that where it was absent.

Dewey's (1938) model of experiential learning is built around the individual's search for solutions to a problem or difficulty, but this represents only part of the picture. The recognition of something as a 'better way' may indeed occur as a result of a deliberate search – such as where an individual is dissatisfied (no matter how slightly) in some respect with (a micro-element of) her/his practice and seeks improvement. In other cases, such improvement or 'better way' may present itself without having been sought, and without any prior recognition of deficiency or inadequacy; but, once discovered, it immediately reveals what was previously unrecognised: that the element of practice to which it now becomes acknowledged as superior must consequently *now* be considered deficient in some respect – however slightly. Professional development may therefore *be considered* dependent upon this

(usually unconscious) process of comparison (between the new, ‘better’, element of practice and what it replaces), but the situation is complicated by the multidimensionality of professional development; some components of professional development, I argue below, are dependent upon the individual’s recognition of something as ‘a better way’, but there are also occasions when other components of professional development may occur without such recognition. To clarify what I mean, it is necessary to consider the composition of professional development, in order to uncover its quiddity: what it is.<sup>2</sup>

### What is professional development?

Too often professional development is interpreted narrowly, as relating to what practitioners *do*, in the sense of physical action that is potentially observable. An even narrower interpretation, as I imply above, is prevalent in current American research literature, whereby professional learning or professional development in education contexts (e.g. schools or universities) is accepted as including a generative component: an impact on student learning. I find such interpretations rather problematic, not least because the causality that evidences generative impact is impossible to identify and pinpoint, and I appreciate the concern expressed by Fraser et al. (2007, p. 167) to present an analysis that ‘offers an alternative to measuring the “effectiveness” of CPD [continuing professional development] through pupil learning gains’. I conceive of professional development as relating solely to the practitioner; it may indeed have secondary beneficiaries, but they should not, in my view, be considered integral to conceptualisations or definitions of professional learning or growth or development. ‘New’ ideas or ways of thinking that have been planted within teachers’ consciousness may take time to blossom and to become gradually assimilated into their practice – and in the interim such ideas or perspectives may have been augmented (or diluted) through interaction with a myriad of other (often unrecognisable or unidentifiable) influences on practice. To assume that any generative impact of professional learning or development will be (immediately) evident represents over-simplistic reasoning that fails to incorporate consideration of the complexity and, I argue, the multidimensionality, of professional learning and development.

This multidimensionality is evident in my conceptualisation of professional development, which is of a tri-partite entity that incorporates behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual components (Evans, 2011). My current ‘umbrella’ definition of professional development (within which is located my definition of micro-level professional development, presented above) is: *professional development is the process whereby people’s professionalism may be considered to be enhanced, with a degree of permanence that exceeds transitoriness*. Within this definition the notion and importance of professionalism are pivotal, for we need to ask ourselves: what exactly is it that we are developing or changing when professional development occurs? I contend that it is people’s *professionalism* that is, or is intended to be, developed or changed (Evans, 2011). My contention appears to be shared – at least in part – by Smyth (1995, p. 72), who implies that we need to examine teachers’ professionalism before being able to address issues related to professional development; to do otherwise, he argues, is ‘to adopt a head-in-the-sand view of professional development’. Accordingly, I make a slight detour in order to present my interpretation of professionalism.

### **Professionalism: examining the concept**

Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall, and Cribb's (2009, p. 3) arguing for the 'need to work with plural conceptions of professionalism', reflects a widely acknowledged lack of consensus over its meaning. A range of views (Evetts, 2013; Freidson, 2001; Gewirtz et al., 2009; Nixon, 2001; Noordegraaf, 2007; Ozga, 1995; Troman, 1996) represent professionalism variously as, *inter alia*: a form of occupational control; a socially-constructed and dynamic entity; a mode of social co-ordination; the application of knowledge to specific cases; the use of knowledge as social capital; a normative values system that incorporates consideration of standards, ethics and quality of service; the basis of the relationship between professionals and their clients or publics; a source of specific identity/ies; and a basis and determinant of social and professional status and power. To these I add my own definition of professionalism as: *work practice that is consistent with commonly-held consensual delineations of a specific profession or occupation and that both contributes to and reflects perceptions of the profession's or occupation's purpose and status and the specific nature, range and levels of service provided by, and expertise prevalent within, the profession or occupation, as well as the general ethical code underpinning this practice* (Evans, 2008, p. 29).

Since, to me, professionalism is principally about people's modes of being (as) practitioners I interpret it as relating to and conveying: what they do (in the context of their working lives); how and why they do it; what they know and understand; where and how they acquire their knowledge and understanding; what (kinds of) attitudes they hold; what codes of behaviour they follow; what their function is: what purposes they perform; what quality of service they provide; and the level of consistency incorporated into the above. This list represents what I currently consider the key elements or dimensions of professionalism as a concept. My conceptualisation, represented in Figure 1, essentially deconstructs professionalism into such key constituent parts, labelled concisely and generically.

I identify three main constituent components of professionalism: behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual. Each incorporates further elements or dimensions, of which I currently identify 11, as indicated in Figure 1. (Their vertically-sequenced arrangement is necessitated by space restrictions and does not imply any hierarchical positioning.) In representing what I conceive as professionalism's ontological composition, the model demonstrates its (professionalism's) quiddity through its componential structure.

The *behavioural* component of professionalism relates to what practitioners physically do at work. I identify as its sub-components: the *processual*, *procedural*, *productive* and *competential* dimensions of professionalism, which relate respectively to: processes that people apply to their work; procedures that they apply to their work; output, productivity and achievement (how much people 'do' and what they achieve); and their skills and competences.

The *attitudinal* component of professionalism relates to attitudes held. I identify as its sub-components: the *perceptual*, *evaluative* and *motivational* dimensions of professionalism, which relate respectively to: perceptions, beliefs and views held (including those relating to oneself, hence, *self*-perception and identity); people's values; and people's motivation, job satisfaction and morale.

The *intellectual* component of professionalism relates to practitioners' knowledge and understanding and their knowledge structures. I identify as its sub-components:

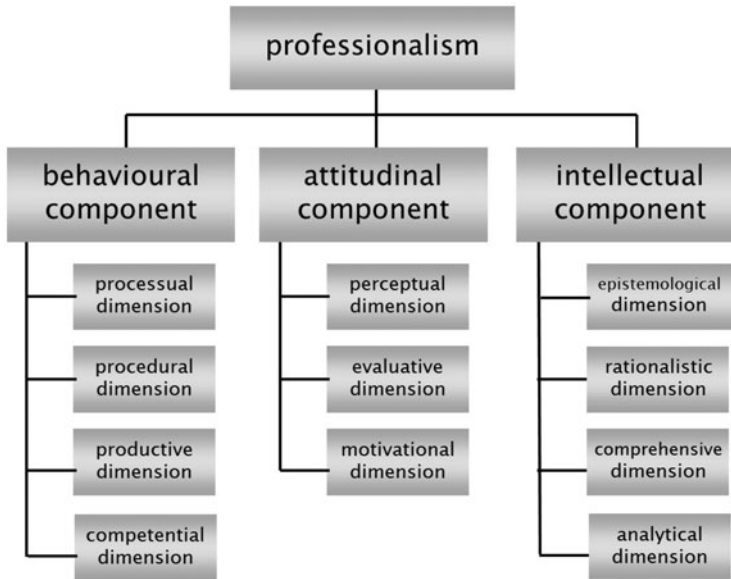


Figure 1. The componential structure of professionalism.

the *epistemological*, *rationalistic*, *comprehensive* and *analytical* dimensions of professionalism, which relate respectively to: the bases of people's knowledge; the nature and degree of reasoning that they apply to their practice; what they know and understand; and the nature and degree of their analyticism.

### ***Professional development: examining the concept***

Since it is one or more of the components and dimensions of professionalism that professional development is involved in changing, my conceptual model of professional development, illustrated in Figure 2, closely resembles that of professionalism, illustrated in Figure 1. The model illustrated in Figure 2 is distinct from my model of the componential structure of professionalism (Figure 1) only in relation to the terminology used to label the constituent elements: 'development' and 'change' are used instead of 'component' and 'dimension'.

Located within my 'umbrella' definition of professional development, presented above, I currently define each of behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual development as, respectively:

- the process whereby people's professional performance is modified, with the result that her/his professionalism may be considered to be enhanced, with a degree of permanence that exceeds transitoriness;
- the process whereby people's work-related attitudes are modified, with the result that her/his professionalism may be considered to be enhanced, with a degree of permanence that exceeds transitoriness;

and

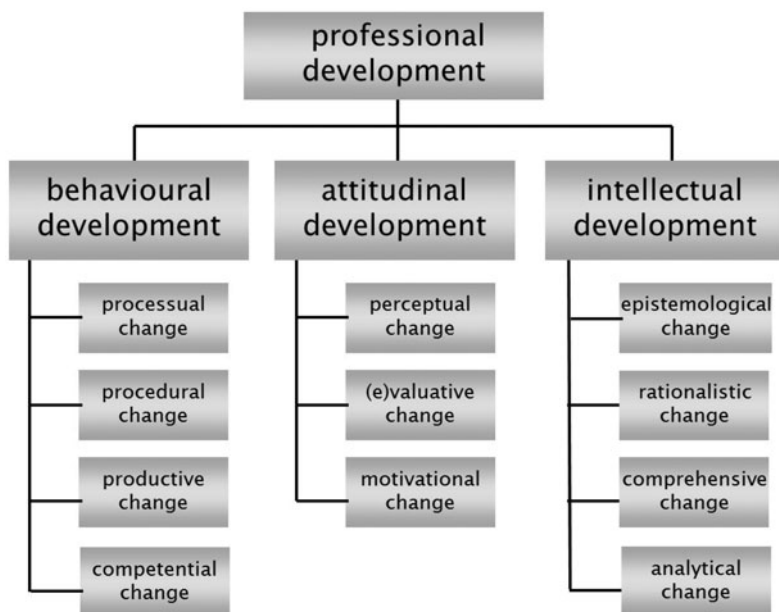


Figure 2. The componential structure of professional development.

- the process whereby people's professional-related knowledge, understanding, or reflective or comprehensive capacity or competence are modified, with the result that her/his professionalism may be considered to be enhanced, with a degree of permanence that exceeds transitoriness.

More specifically, *processual change* is about change in relation to the processes that constitute people's practice – how they 'do' or 'go about' things. *Procedural change* relates to changes to procedures within practice. *Productive change* refers to change to people's output: to how much they achieve, produce or 'do'. *Competential change* involves the increase or enhancement of skills and competences. *Perceptual change* refers to change in relation to people's perceptions, viewpoints, beliefs and mindsets – including those relating to themselves. *Evaluative change* is about changes to people's professional- or practice-related values, including the minutiae of what they consider important: i.e. what they value, and accordingly what they like or dislike. *Motivational change* refers to changes to people's motivation and levels of job satisfaction and morale. *Epistemological change* is change in relation to the bases of what people know or understand and to their knowledge structures. *Rationalistic change* is about change relating to the extent of and the nature of the reasoning that people apply to their practice. *Comprehensive change* involves the enhancement or increase of people's knowledge and understanding, and *analytical change* refers to change to the degree or nature of the analyticism that people apply to their working lives.

My point is that whether or not recognition of something as a 'better way' is a prerequisite of individuals' professional development depends on which of these dimensions of professional development is/are at play, for it is important to

emphasise that a single episode of professional development need not – indeed, is very unlikely to – involve *all* of the 11 dimensions identified in my model. It is, however, likely to feature multiple dimensions, which may be drawn from more than one of the three main components: behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual.

Although recognition on the part of the ‘developee’ of something as a ‘better way’ is a prerequisite of micro-level professional development as I define it, it is not a prerequisite of professional development that is *imposed* upon people. Certainly, attitudinal development requires changes (for the better) to perceptions, or values, or to morale, job satisfaction or motivation, and any such attitudinal change must, by definition, reflect recognition that the newly developed attitudes represent a ‘better way’ than those that they replaced. The same argument applies to intellectual development and its dimensions. Behavioural development, however, is quite a different issue, for it is perfectly feasible that behavioural changes may be imposed upon individuals by others (such as employers, leaders and managers). Such imposed ‘professional development’ may not necessarily be considered *improved* practice – and hence, not necessarily professional development – by those upon whom it is imposed; if it is not accompanied by attitudinal change that allows the ‘developee’ to accept and support it, s/he may consider it deleterious, representing retrograde change. (In the interests of definitional precision it is worth pointing out that I see this distinction between the behavioural component and the other two components of professional development as the basis of any difference between professional *learning* and professional *development*; though I often use the two terms interchangeably, if I were asked to distinguish between them I would argue that professional development may be represented by behavioural development alone – and that this would not represent professional learning, which requires intellectual or attitudinal development.)

Incongruence between what is considered ‘a better way’ by those wishing or attempting to impose change on others, and perceptions and evaluations of the proposed changes on the part of the intended ‘developee’, is illustrated by the case of teacher, Louise<sup>3</sup> – a participant in one of my research projects that focused on teacher morale, job satisfaction and motivation.<sup>4</sup> In the English primary school where she was employed there was no love lost between Louise and the headteacher, Phil, and each regarded the other with disdain, masked by a façade of professional courtesy and civility. In her research interview with me, Louise related an incident involving classroom display: in preparation for a whole-school event, she had mounted a display of children’s drawings, only to have Phil ask her to take it down because the quality of children’s work was not of a sufficiently high standard. She explained:

They [the children’s drawings] were there for two days, pinned up [on the display board]. Then I stapled them one night, and the following morning he [Phil] came in ... and he was genuinely embarrassed ... and he called me out of the classroom and he said, ‘I’m sorry, but it’s not good enough, so it’s got to come down.’ And he said, ‘But, don’t worry [a colleague] is going to put some stuff [art work] there.’ ... He just said, ‘For Year 5 [9–10-year-old pupils], it’s not good enough; it’s not professional enough.’ And I realised that when I saw other people’s work, but I realised what they’d done ... they’d just taken the best. It has to be ‘top show’, and you’ve to pick out your best children and get *them* to do something. And ... I, personally, don’t like that ... because I don’t like ‘top show’. But, alright, the work produced was *super* ... but, again, it’s *knowing* what to do. I was just lost.



Based on this excerpt from, and other conversation during, Louise's research interview, I identify this reported incident as an illustration of the complexity of professional development and the process whereby it occurs in individuals. Had Louise shared the headteacher's values and perceptions on certain aspects of pedagogy and schooling, this specific interaction between them may have served as the catalyst or stimulus for a micro-level professional development episode with the potential to involve what I label perceptual, processual, procedural – and, feasibly, other – foci or elements of change. Coupled with Louise's subsequent observation (to which she refers) that her colleagues all followed a common procedure – that of selecting and displaying only the best examples of children's work – that differed from the one that she followed, the incident or episode might have led to Louise's recognition that selectivity of children's work on the basis of its quality is a 'better way': a better basis for making choices about which work to display than her practice of indiscriminate selection. Yet this did not happen, for although Louise thereafter followed the example of her colleagues and tried to meet the headteacher's requirements by displaying only what she selected as the best examples of children's work, she did so reluctantly and without conviction that it represented good practice. She may, particularly from the perspective of the headteacher, be considered to have been manifesting behavioural development – specifically, *inter alia*, perceptual, procedural and processual change – but no attitudinal or intellectual development is evident from this changed practice. In fact, Louise perceived it not as a 'better' way, but as a less satisfactory – and less satisfying – way of going about things. She did, however, undergo intellectual development – specifically, comprehensive change – as a result of this incident; she learned from it how to behave in the school in order to fit in with the prevailing professional culture, for this too – what Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) call 'micro-political literacy', and which is a facet of what Van Maanen and Schein (1979) refer to as 'organizational socialization' – is a valid category of professional development.

### **What school and college leaders need to know**

What, then, do school and college leaders need to know, to better understand how to develop others effectively? What does the above examination of professional development's constituency and processual features potentially offer them?

If I had to select one piece of knowledge that I consider essential for effective leadership for professional development it would be this: professional development – like the professionalism that it is intended to enhance – is multidimensional; it is not simply or narrowly about changing people's *behaviour* – how they do or go about things, or how *much* they do or produce, or what generative effect their changed practice has – it is also about changes to their attitudes, intellectual capacity and mindsets. Yet all too often it is behavioural change alone that is the focus of professional development efforts and initiatives.

Educational leaders at all levels must take care to avoid narrow conceptions of professional development and of how and where it occurs. They need to recognise that professional development is not confined to designated or planned opportunities, such as workshops, courses, appraisal meetings or formal mentoring; it may occur in any context and, indeed, most frequently does so accidentally or incidentally, as part and parcel of daily (working) life and interaction with a myriad of stimuli that can spark off an idea or thought that leads (immediately or eventually) to enhanced

professionalism. In this way – as well as through designated, planned provision – teachers may be led towards, or arrive at, recognition of different elements of practice (applying a broad interpretation of practice, to include mental, as well as physical activity) as ‘better’ for them in their current circumstances.

The fact (if it is accepted as such) that professional development is multidimensional means that its ‘singular units’ – episodes of micro-level development – most often occur by a kind of chain reaction, whereby one change dimension leads to another, which then leads to another (see Evans, 2013 for an example of this). This may then spiral into further chain-reaction episodes, making for a cycle of successive chains; indeed, a teacher’s entire development over the course of her/his career will comprise a succession of countless such episodes, many of which merge into each other to the extent of being indiscernible as singular units. Perceptual change, for example, is often followed by evaluative change, which may then lead to processual change, which may then, in turn, be followed by competential change; this may then (either immediately, or after a time lapse) spark off subsequent perceptual change – or, indeed, a different change dimension, which may then be followed by another change dimension, and yet another, creating a new episode. (I do not imply that this specific sequence is a commonly occurring one; I simply present it as illustrative of how the different change dimensions interact with each other.)

In fact, any such sequence may only be estimated or conjectured and is impossible to identify with certainty, for whilst it may be possible to examine, retrospectively, professional development episodes such as that experienced by Louise (and that of another teacher, presented in Evans, 2013), and to make credible attempts at distinguishing within them the specific dimensions of professional development that each involved, without access to windows into people’s brains, the order in which those dimensions featured in the micro-level development process will remain elusive. This difficulty is recognised by Jarvis (2005, p. 12), whose observation that, in the human learning process, ‘[e]xperiences occur cognitively, physically and emotionally’ correlates with my identification of three first-tier components (intellectual, behavioural and attitudinal) of professionalism and professional development. He adds: ‘and usually they [the experiences] are so intertwined that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle them in the way that rationalist thought has done’ (Jarvis, 2005, p. 12). How much more difficult, then, must it be to try to disentangle the more numerous and more specific dimensions that I propose as second-tier components of professional development?

For practitioners such as headteachers and their deputies, heads of department, mentors and professional development co-ordinators, it is not necessary to disentangle professional development’s dimensions to grasp their significance for understanding how people develop, and for facilitating development. Yet by knowing *something* of these dimensions and their potential interaction with each other, school and college leaders may learn to recognise which particular forms of interventions and interactions with and between teachers most frequently lead to effective professional development that incorporates dimensions of attitudinal and intellectual, as well as behavioural, change. Without the first two, professional development will be superficial and shallow, lacking the vital ingredient for lasting change to which teachers may be committed: their recognition of a ‘better way’. Herein lies a key role for those in leadership roles in schools and colleges: remaining vigilant for opportunities to persuade or encourage teachers to recognise as a ‘better way’ those forms of practice that represent more effective teaching – adopting a wide

interpretation of ‘teaching’, to include attitudes to, and intellectualisation that underpins, the job – and that they (the leaders) wish to promote. In doing so, they may find themselves taking measures to encourage, for example, changed values and/or perceptions before hoping to effect productive or processual change, or trying to facilitate comprehensive or analytical change before expecting competential change.

Leadership for professional development requires flexibility, vision, resourcefulness and, above all, awareness of the importance of interacting with and considering teachers as individuals – what I have referred to as a ‘teacher-centred’ approach to leadership (Evans, 1998, 1999) – rather than treating them as a homogenous group. Evaluations of what does or does not represent a ‘better way’ will be highly individual, being closely tied to personal agendas, goals and priorities, and one ‘size’ will not fit all; as Day and Gu (2007, p. 427) point out, ‘Teachers in the same school may react very differently to the same stimulus ... There is no one way, time for or location for learning which is best’. The importance of winning over hearts and minds cannot be over-emphasised; teachers will seldom be fully engaged with and committed to ‘new’ or ‘different’ forms of practice – including ideas and ideologies – unless they perceive them as potential improvements (even if only partially) to existing practice, for, as Borko and Putnam (1995, p. 60, emphasis added) remark:

persons who wish to reform educational practice cannot simply tell teachers how to teach differently. Teachers themselves must make the desired changes. To do so, they must acquire richer knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy, and subject-specific pedagogy; and they must come to hold new beliefs in these domains. *Successful professional development efforts are those that help teachers to acquire or develop new ways of thinking about learning, learners and subject matter.*

Such commitment involves attitudinal and/or intellectual change, albeit sometimes in very small – scarcely perceptible – measure. Day and Gu (2007, p. 427) remind us that ‘[s]chools are the primary site for teachers’ professional learning. They provide favourable or unfavourable learning environments which may enhance or diminish teachers’ sense of space and energy to learn’. Creating the conditions and initiating the circumstances within which such change may flourish is therefore a vital role for school and college leaders who take their professional development responsibilities seriously. It is the essence of leadership for professional development.

## Notes

1. At the time of publication of this document the UK’s Department for Education (DfE) was known as the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).
2. ‘Quiddity’ is a little-known term that refers to the ‘whatness’ of something; what it is.
3. Pseudonyms are used in all references to my research participants.
4. Full details of the project, its design, and its findings are peripheral to the discussion presented in this paper, but they may be found in Evans (1998).

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