

## Big Ideas Presentation (May 2009)

***“Stirring the pot: What are you doing for professional development? How is it making a difference?”***

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## Research study informing this presentation

*Practice Potentials: Impact of participation in professional development and support on quality outcomes for children in childcare centres (2008)*

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## “Practice Potentials”: Steps in the research study

1. Background orientation through an analysis of existing national data and literature on professional development and support.
2. Online survey made available to all federally funded long day care centers yielded **534** responses from directors/managers nationwide.
3. Nine focus groups were conducted – one in each state/ territory in Australia plus one in rural NSW; each focus group comprising of about 7 participants, led to a total of **61 ccc directors/managers** throughout Australia.
4. Sixteen child care centres were visited; two in each state/ territory, including 4 in a rural / remote locality. Involved conducting a 1:1 interviews with up to 6 participants at each centre, making a total of **89 participants** around Australia.
5. Presentation of the report with 20 recommendations.

## OECD's assessment of PD & in-service training for EC practitioners

- In **Belgium & Italy** = practitioners use non-contact time to do PD
- In **Korea** = PD funding is statutory obligation of local authorities
- In **Hungary** = state funded PD is available; individuals are obligated to do at least 120 hours over 7 years

(Tayler, 2006: 168)

## OECD's assessment of PD & in-service training for EC practitioners in AUSTRALIA

“There is neither a statutory requirement to fund a minimum level of staff development nor recommendations regarding annual hours of in-service training.” (Tayler, 2006: 270)

Accordingly, it was concluded “that comprehensive in-service training at a range of levels for staff in this sector is necessary.” (Tayler, 2006: 272)

## Contesting Professional Development .....

Erica McWilliam (2002: p.2) wrote that

“... professional development can be read as both a **site of knowledge production** and a **system of power relations.**”

She added:

“The **developer’s knowledge** is already assumed to be what leads to progress, not the **knowledge of the developee.**”

## Evaluation of PD&S by childcare centre directors/managers

(Waniganayake et al, 2008)

### MOST useful aspects:

- Up-to-date information
- Practical application
- Theoretical information
- Meets needs
- Allows for staff growth
- Discussion & networking
- Validation of practice
- Follow-up resources & support

### LEAST useful aspects:

- Out-dated information
- Not targeted
- Poor skills of presenter
- Lack of time for discussion & networking
- Lack of follow-up: how to integrate training into everyday practice



## Key findings from Practice Potentials based on online survey of 500 LDC Directors/Managers

(Waniganayake et al, 2008)

### ACCESS to professional development:

- Most PD&S undertaken in the past 15 months addressed **mandatory training** = average of 4 topics
- Pedagogical practice = average of 2.5 topics
- Management & leadership = average of 1.5 topics
- **Areas of priority requested:** pedagogical practice, business management, leadership & communication, team building.

**i) Effectiveness of PD&S = noticeable changes  
(Waniganayake et al, 2008)**

**1) Enhancement of children's learning outcomes**

Having a PD consultant working with staff at the centre, one participant stated she was "blown away with some of the conversations xxx had with the children. That kind of modelling really works – it made me come and listen in depth to what the children were saying. Sometimes you can miss what they (children) say & xxx really inspired me."

**2) Positive feedback from satisfied parents**

"It's made a huge difference. It's helped my son's development in his language area... and has made me feel more confident as a parent too...." (p.115)

ii) Effectiveness of PD&S = noticeable changes  
(Waniganayake et al, 2008)

**3) Practitioner satisfaction and growth in self esteem:**

“I feel a lot more confident in my work, and I can explain why we’re doing things. It just makes me feel a lot more at ease and I can speak to parents...”(p.116)

**4) Creation of a team approach and/or learning culture within centres:**

“Wow, it got through to them. They can critically analyze what they’re learning. They’re not just going along and saying ‘oh yes, we’ll do that’ or ‘I don’t like that idea’.”  
(p.114)

## So what's missing in our current approaches?

1. Lack of **agreement about what is PD** (although there IS agreement that PD is important for quality service provision.)
  - understanding the purpose of participating in PD&S
  - establishing objectives/goals for practitioners & services
2. An understanding of the **connectivities between diverse types of PD&S opportunities**: (emphasis is on one-off training on legislated or mandatory aspects)
  - selection and participation in a mix of PD&S approaches
  - opportunities for reflection and evaluation, as individuals & groups

## ii) Missing in our current approaches.....?

### 3) Realistic assessments about issues such as.....

- a) **WHO should lead PD&S?** Not everyone is a teacher/leader. Content knowledge is not enough to teach/lead PD
- b) **FUNDING - who should pay for PD&S?** Is this the responsibility of the individual employee? Employer? Government? Other?
- c) **WHAT WORKS?** The nature and type of PD&S that is available and is accessed by practitioners. Is the program content appropriate/necessary? Is the timing/frequency of access workable?



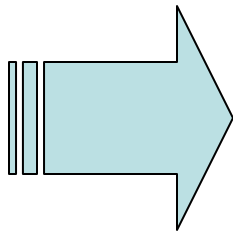
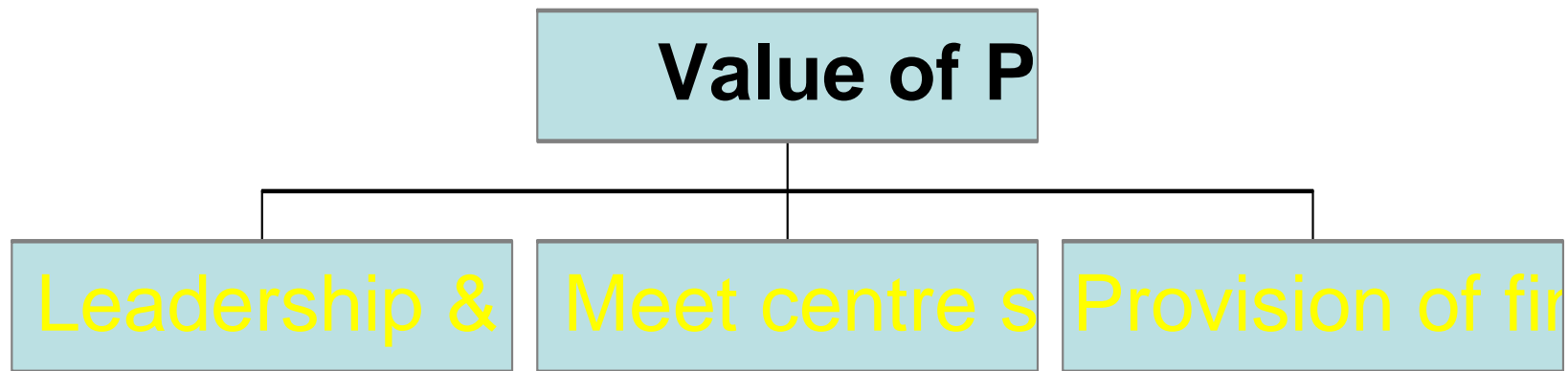
**Learning & sustainable change**



### iii) Missing in our current approaches.....?

- 4) **Follow up action & reinforcement**: limited opportunities to see theory-practice connectivities in meaningful ways
  - limited information on use of and evaluation of learnings from PD&S in everyday practice
  - discontinuity between presenters and participants after participation in PD sessions
  - practitioner capacities to facilitate follow up within own services difficult to predict and assess
  
- 5) A comprehensive system of **national endorsement/ policy** on PD&S for children's services practitioners
  - ECA has a policy statement on PD; QIAS incorporates PD&S;
  - responsibility within the complexities of privatised markets
  - no national government policy as with school education

**Perceived value of PD&S by childcare centre directors  
(Waniganayake et al, 2008)**



**Creation of an organisational culture  
committed to PD&S**  
(ie, organisational processes for learning)



## i) Approaches to development through self awareness

- Reflection-**IN**-action = thinking while doing it; stimulated by surprise/puzzles in practice
- Reflection-**ON**-action = thinking about the understandings implicit in actions, feelings that guided behaviour & structured the response to a situation. Then use this knowledge to effect change in future action.

(Schon: 1983, 1987):

## ii) Approaches to Development through self awareness

- Reflection-**BEFORE**-action = don't start till you have thought through what and how you want to do x!

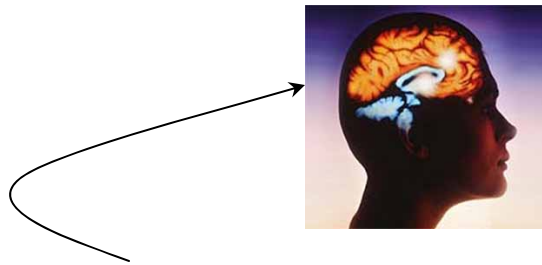
(Greenwood, 1993)

- Three aspects of **preparation** (Boud, 1992)
  - The personal = what learners bring & want
  - The context = constraints and opportunities
  - The learning strategies = how they learn

## iii) Approaches to development through self awareness

### Single-loop learning

*"thanks for giving me feedback. I'll keep it in mind."*

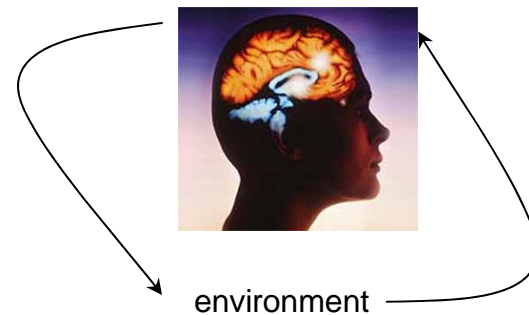


Environment

- ✓ *seeks minimum feedback*
- ✓ Ignore feedback and/or engage in defensive thinking

### Double-loop learning

*" thanks for that feedback. Perhaps I'm putting too much emphasis on getting the girls into block play. Being so focused on the girls, I didn't realise I was ignoring the boys involvement in block play."*



environment

- ✓ Keen to get feedback
- ✓ Use it to reassess and question the goals & values being stimulated

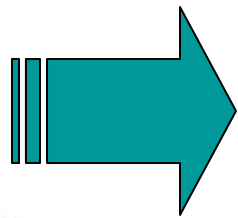
## Current approaches to PD&S

1. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
2. ACTION RESEARCH
3. PRACTITIONER INQUIRY



## Why these approaches?

- **DYNAMIC** teaching/learning strategies adaptable to the practitioner and/or the organisation
- **CONTINUOUS** teaching/learning over time (not about quick fixes, tips or tricks)
- **FOCUSED** on making a difference (medium to long-term vision)
- **INCLUSIVE** of multiple perspectives and understandings (creates a sense of belonging)



**STRATEGIC LIFE LONG LEARNING**

## One possible approach - SAM (Raban et al, 2007)

This is a **Self Assessment Manual** (SAM) that can assist early childhood practitioners to explore their professional learning capacities from a strategic perspective.

- SAM can be used as a **framework or tool for reflective learning**.
- **The** foundational principles of SAM are based on **self-assessment, documentation & guided learning**.
- Its uniqueness = **grounded in early childhood theoretical perspectives**.

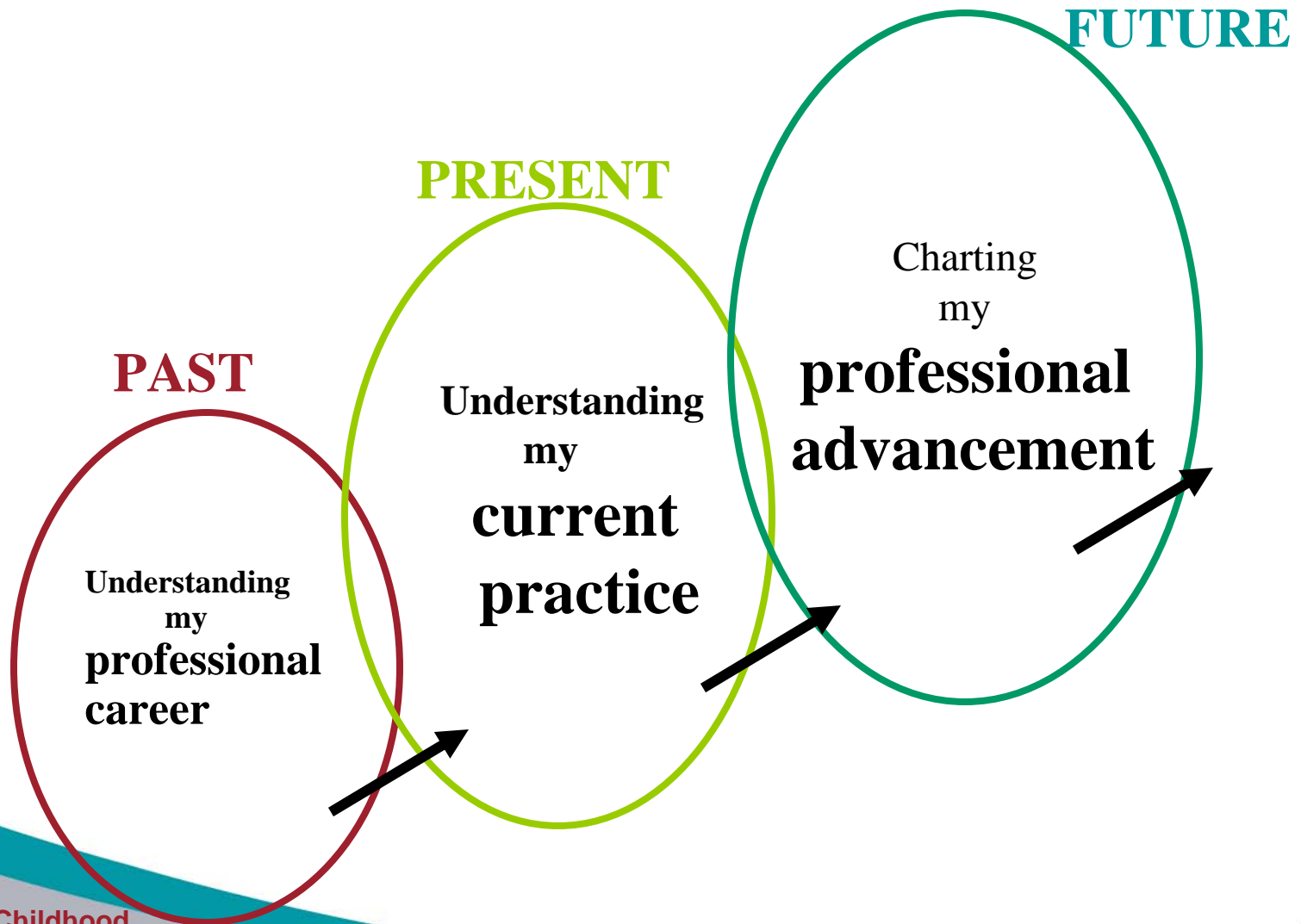
Reference:

Raban, B., Waniganayake, M., Nolan, A., Deans, J., Brown, J. & Ure, C.  
(2007) Building Capacity: Strategic Professional development for early childhood practitioners. Melbourne: Thomson Social Science Press.

## Principles guiding SAM

- ✓ **Focus on excellence** - for children, families & staff
- ✓ **Theoretically sound framework** - creation of “a practitioner profile”
- ✓ **Self-assessment and reflection** - continuously
- ✓ **Guided learning** - working with a mentor
- ✓ **Strategic planning** - linking past, present and future professional goals

## SAM: a planned approach



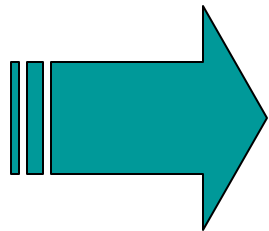
## SAM & The Practitioner Profile

Dimensions	Components
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Buildings and grounds</li> <li>2. Teaching/learning spaces</li> <li>3. Display of children's work</li> <li>4. Teaching/learning resources</li> <li>5. Environmental health &amp; safety</li> <li>6. Collection &amp; storage of resources</li> </ol>
<b>PEDAGOGY</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of theoretical knowledge</li> <li>2. Organisation of children</li> <li>3. Interactions with children</li> <li>4. Curriculum planning</li> <li>5. Curriculum implementation</li> <li>6. Curriculum evaluation</li> <li>7. Assessment and evaluation of children</li> </ol>
<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children's emotional &amp; social wellbeing</li> <li>2. Continuity of care</li> <li>3. Interactions with colleagues</li> <li>4. Information exchange with families</li> <li>5. Assistance to children with additional needs</li> <li>6. Staff professional development</li> </ol>

**(Raban et al, 2007: 10)**

## Impact of SAM through participants' voices...

- "After reflection & discussion it (SAM) has allowed me to set **myself some new goals** for my future career in childcare both in the workplace now & further down the track."
- "Has me **thinking about current practice**, how this related to different **theories & where my philosophy** fits in."
- "It has made me **interested in doing further education** in the Early Childhood field."



Sense of **empowerment** through **clarification, target setting & integration** of different aspects of their work lives

Sustainable change is more likely when individuals .....

- “receive ongoing staff development over an **extended period of time**;
- are involved in **assessing their own learning**;
- have opportunities to **apply their new knowledge and skills** in work settings; and
- have a trusted ‘**other**’ to **discuss their developing practice.**”

(Nolan, Raban & Waniganayake, 2005: p.222 )

## Thinking points on PD&S

- 1 What is your long-term strategy for PD&S?
- 2 Do you set PD&S goals to achieve for each session or for every year/semester?
- 3 What resources (people, materials, funding) do you need to achieve these goals?
- 4 To what extent are your PD&S strategies connected with the Centre vision and mission?
- 5 How do you utilise the learnings acquired through PD&S in your day to day practice with children and families?
- 6 How do you know PD&S has made a difference?



## Preparation Task

Please identify a professional development strategy that resulted in significant and/or noticeable change in centre/room practice.

1. What **kinds of changes** did you see in centre/room practice?
2. What were **the signs** that alerted you to the change in practice?
3. Were these changes **sustainable** over time? Please describe and also comment on
  - the time taken from participation in PD to seeing the changes in practice.
  - What made the difference in making the change possible in the first instance
  - then sustaining it over time?