Methodological Processes and Preliminary Findings from an Australian Qualitative Multi-site Case Study: How does on-site professional development contribute to improved teacher practice? This workshop will focus on an aspect of a broader study. It will describe how a five stage methodological coding process led to the generation of themes and theme components. It will also present preliminary findings regarding the influence of school and system leadership on teacher practice, and how the experience of a Professional Learning Community influenced teacher practice.

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This workshop will report elements of a broader study that is set in Australia within an era of national and state educational reform. One of these reforms, namely the Smarter Schools National Partnership (SSNP, 2010-2013,) focussed on low SES schools and utilised on-site professional development. This approach included the creation of Teacher Educator positions in primary schools to work with teachers and leadership teams as a catalyst for change by improving teacher practice.

The context of this study is the fourteen primary schools engaged in the SSNP reform within the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney. To provide maximum variation for the multi-site qualitative case study, five of these schools were selected through purposeful sampling. The participants were Principals, Assistant Principals, Teacher Educators and teachers.

The research problem is that on-site professional development, designed to improve teacher practice, requires a change in practice for teachers and leaders. The nature and the significance of this change have not been researched.

The research purpose is to explore how on-site professional development, through the establishment of professional learning communities, contributes to change in teacher practice. The contribution of this study will be to the wider understanding about the meaning of on-site professional development as a generic construct. It explores the nature of on-site professional development and how it contributes to improved teacher practice.

The research sub-questions are:

• Did the exercise of leadership in the school and system influence teacher practice and if so how?
• Did the experience of a professional learning community influence teacher practice and if so how?
• What was the particular contribution of the Teacher Educator to teacher practice?
• Did the nature of the on-site professional development influence teacher practice and if so how?

This research is positioned in an epistemology of constructionism and recognises that an interpretative theoretical perspective using a multi-site case study methodology leads to greater insight. The research questions were addressed through a two phase research design. Data was gathered through group interviews, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and a pre-interview self-reflection tool. Phase One included a five stage process of qualitative analysis of the data collected through semi-structured and group interviews. To verify the interview data, Phase Two involved document analysis of individual self-reflection statements from Teacher Educators, and analysis of pre-interview self-reflection tool data from all participants.

This workshop will pay particular attention to the analysis of Phase One data. It will provide an explanation of the methodological process that was undertaken for the coding of all interview data and a demonstration of how this five stage process led to the generation of themes and theme components. Preliminary findings from the first two research sub-questions will also be presented.