

Values-practice dissonance in professional learning in schools

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Outline of lecture

The Problem with the Professional Development Effects Research

Ineffective PD



Teachers learn

Effective PD



Teachers don't learn

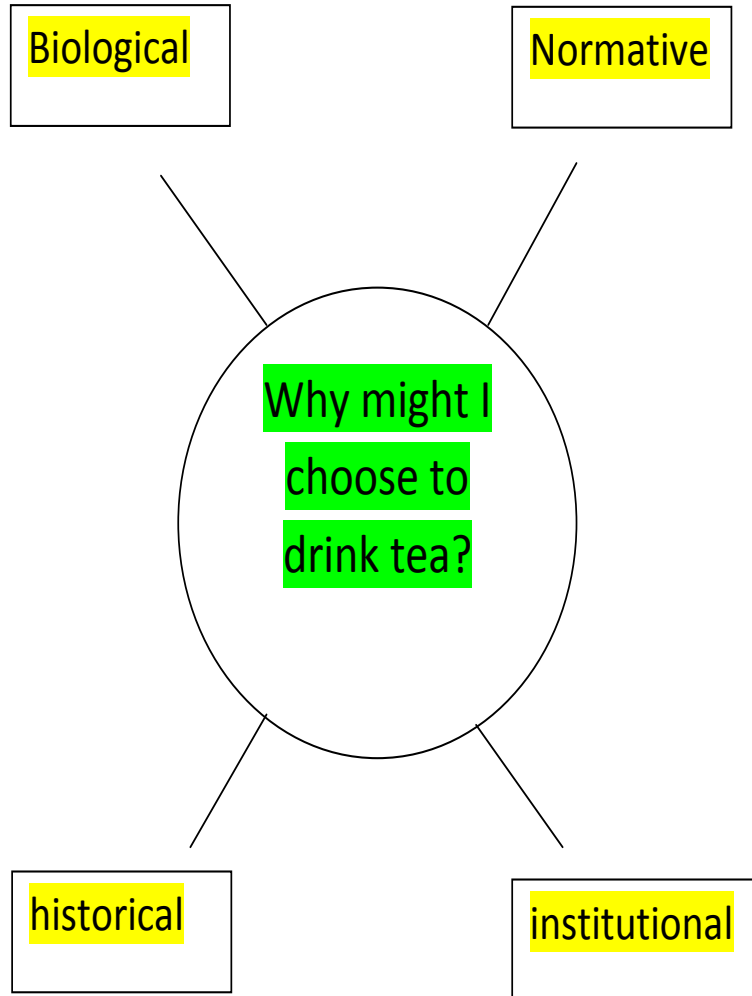
Why?

Form

Structure

Location

From Cause-Effect Approaches to a focus on Causal Explanation



Causal Explanation

Under what conditions?

Why?

How?

Complex systems

Various dynamics at work

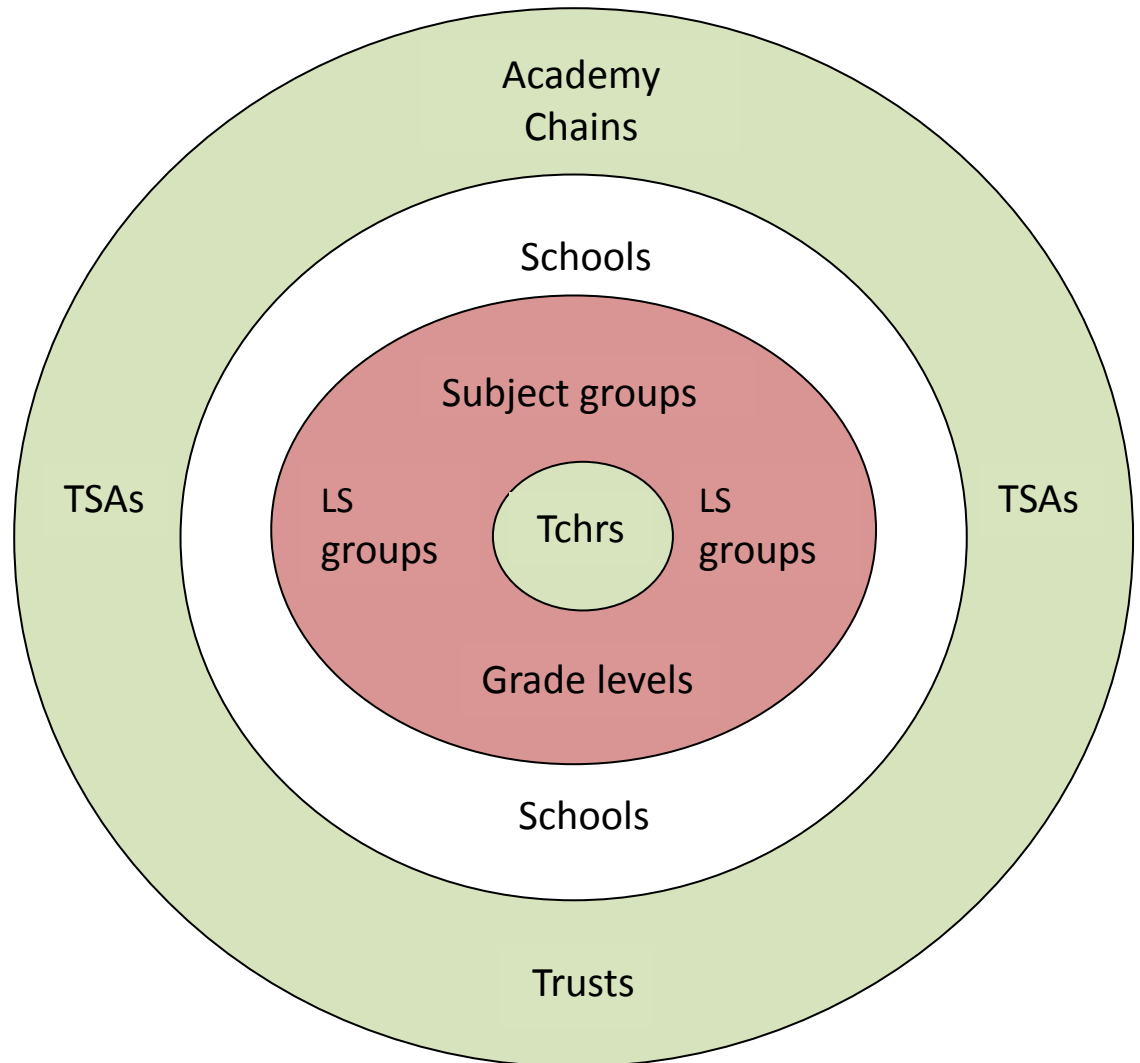
They interact and combine

Even the simplest decision can have multiple causal pathways

Underplaying the complexity of Teachers' Learning

Focus on the micro context: individual teachers, individual activities or programmes

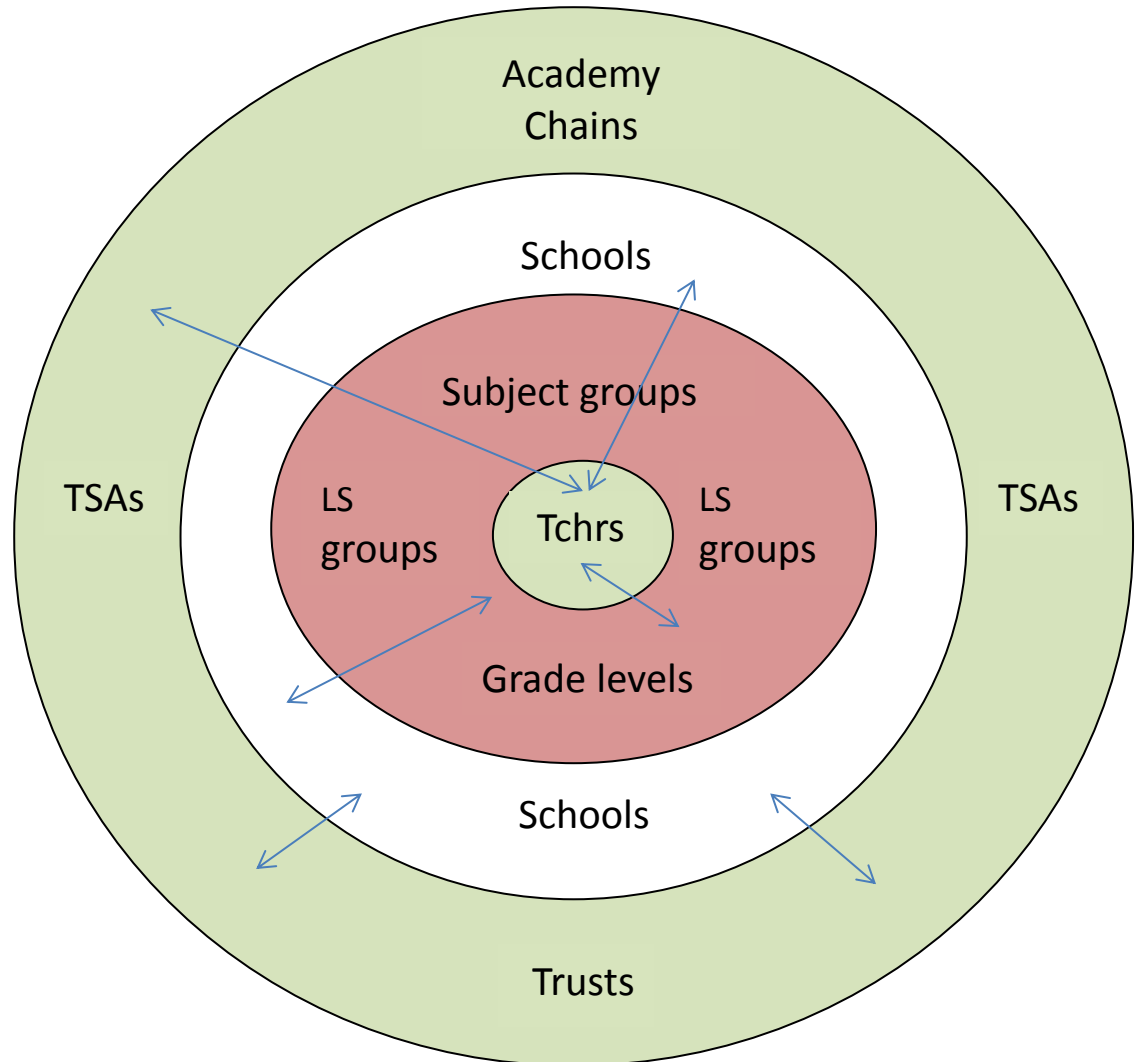
Meso and macro contexts are neglected



What is the complexity of Teachers' Learning

a nested system:
systems within systems

Systems and sub
systems are inter-
dependent and
reciprocally influential



TL is realised through the activities of autonomous entities:
teachers, collectives, and sub-systems within grander unities

Further implications for studying teachers' learning from a complexity thinking perspective

1. All nested levels of complex systems are learning systems
2. TL is a complex system representing recursive interactions between systems and elements that coalesce in ways that are unpredictable but also highly patterned.
3. Therefore, learning and change in any particular part of the system can result in change in other parts.
4. Teachers' learning is therefore intimately connected to learning at other levels of the system.
5. An explanatory theory of TL as a complex system therefore, requires variable inclusive (not control) strategies of research

Key questions to ask in order to explain teachers' learning

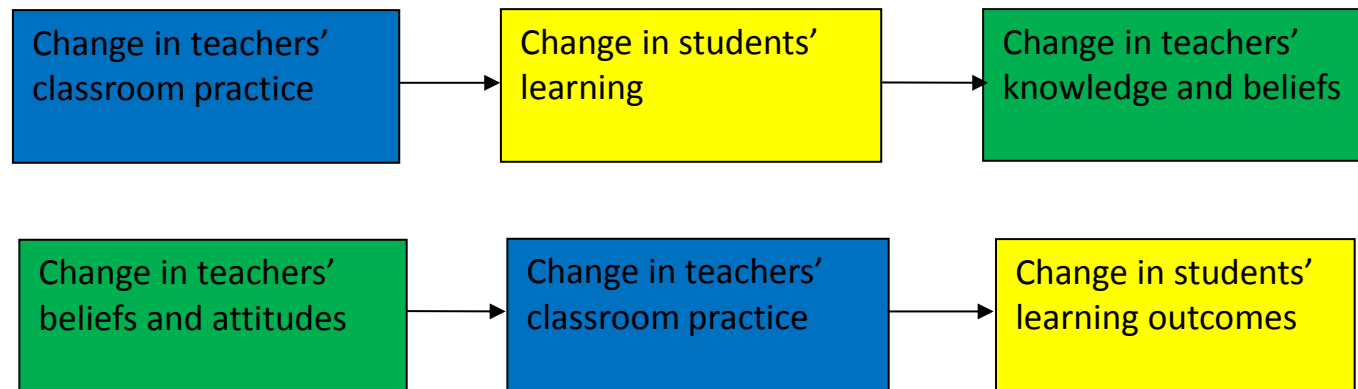
1. What sort of local knowledge, problems, routines and aspirations shape and are shaped by individual practices and values?
2. How are these then framed by the other systems involved?

Systems involved in Teachers' Learning

- Teacher Learning Activity System
- The individual Teacher
- The School

Correlational Research on Teachers' Professional Learning Activity effects

Disagreement



Consensus on effective Professional Development Activities (1)

Time:

Sustained and intensive, not brief and sporadic

Pedagogic activity that:

- requires teachers to engage with materials of practice
- is school- and classroom-based and integrated into the daily work of teachers
- is active and provides opportunities for reflection
- Involves research-informed learning and practice development
- Involves collaboration with other teachers

Consensus on effective Professional Development Activities (2)

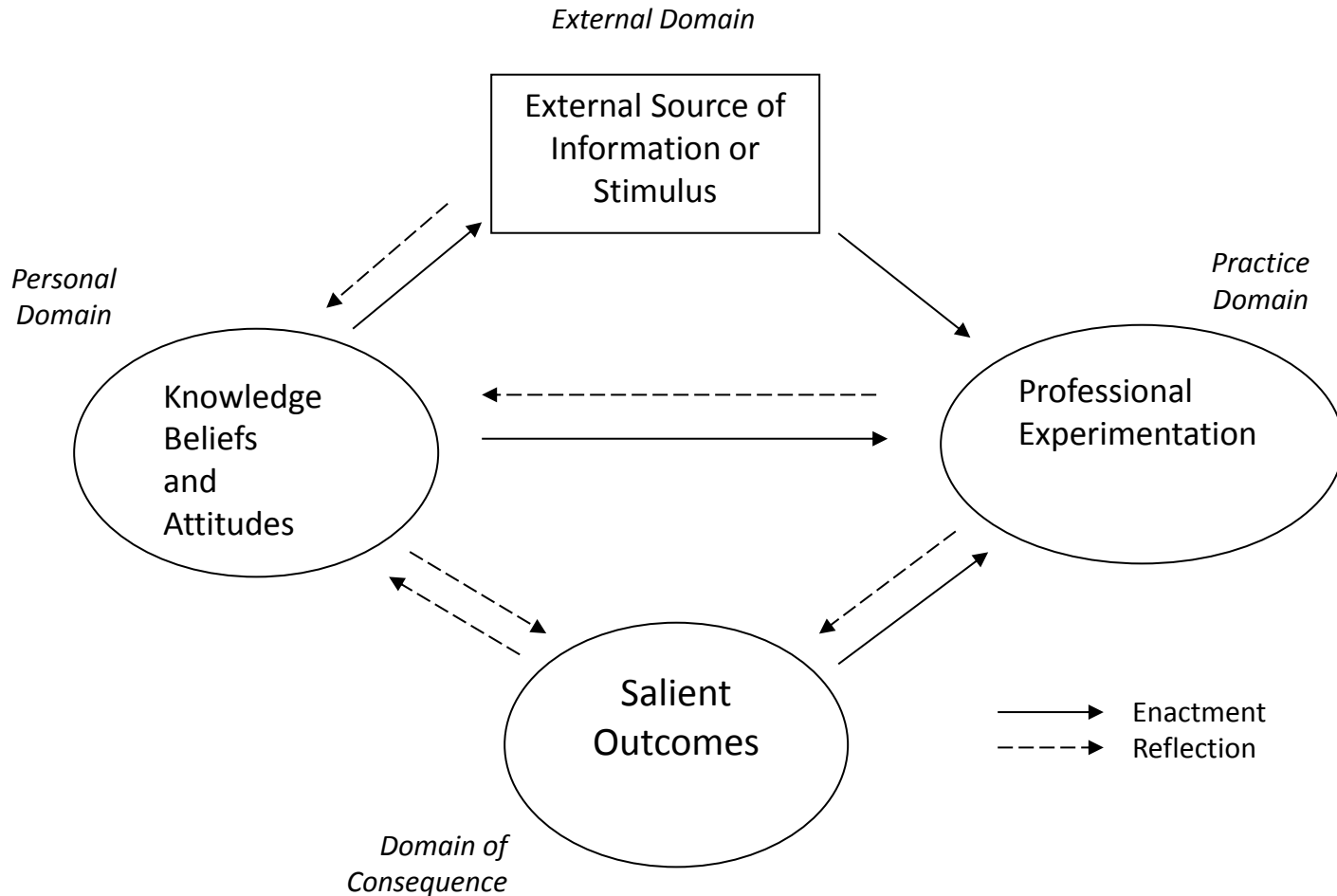
Collaboration

1. Collaborative CPD —————> teacher and student change
2. Communities of practice: individuals, communities of teachers and specific contexts for improving teachers' learning come together

BUT

3. The Goldilocks Principle (Nuthall and Alton-Lee, 1993):
too much leads to conformity and lack of inventiveness
too little leads to teacher isolation and inhibits growth
just enough and teachers receive stimulation and support from colleagues necessary for learning and change.

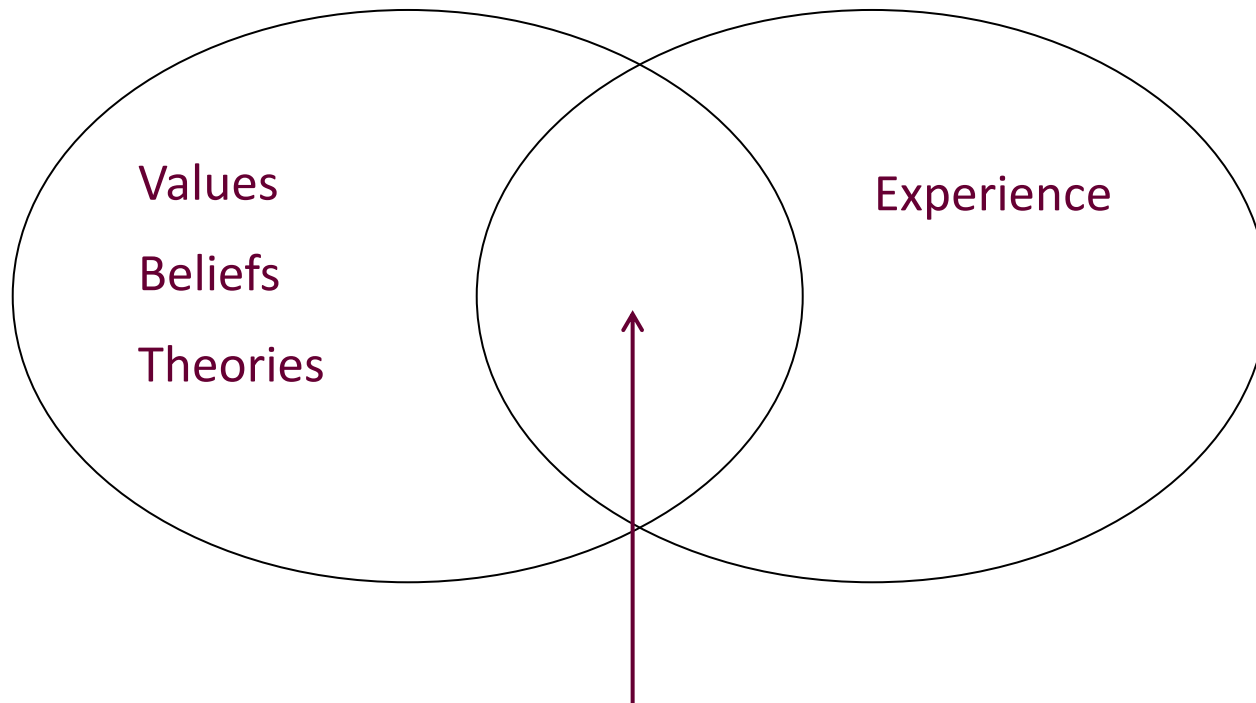
The cyclic nature of learning and change processes



Implications for Research aiming to explain and predict Effective TL and Teacher Pedagogic Change

1. Expand our causal assumptions about the features of professional development by recognising that features may collectively work together in different ways under different circumstances in different contexts.
2. Recognise the important role of variation in intensity of the features (the Goldilocks Principle).
3. Expand our causal assumptions beyond the features of the learning process or activity to consider reciprocal relationships that exist between the systems of activities in which teachers engage and the systems that mediate and moderate these activities, teacher learning and change.

A Teacher's Orientation to Learning



Teachers' decisions and their willingness to learn

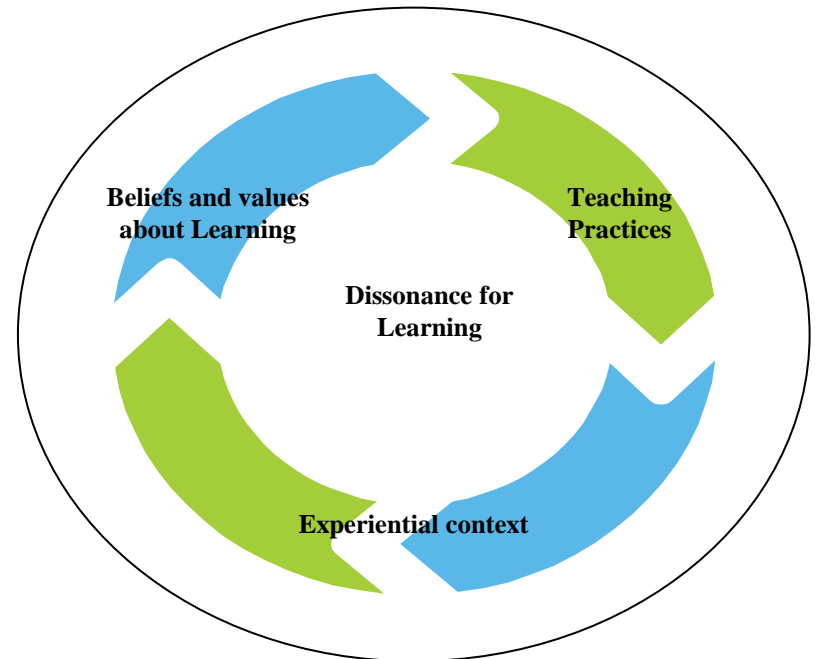
When does dissonance serve as an impetus for change?

Conflicting interplay between an individual teachers' practices, experience, knowledge and his or her beliefs and values within his or her orientation to learning system.

Dissonance between personal expectations and sense of efficacy.

Cognitive conflict in teachers' thinking (or challenges to teachers' approaches to their thinking).

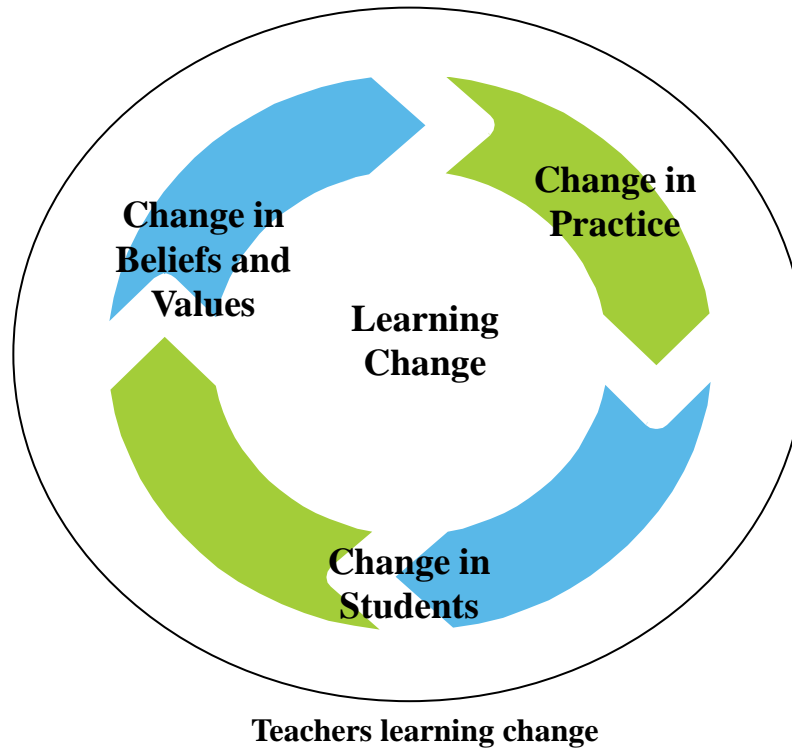
Dissonance in teachers' thinking is often required for unlearning.



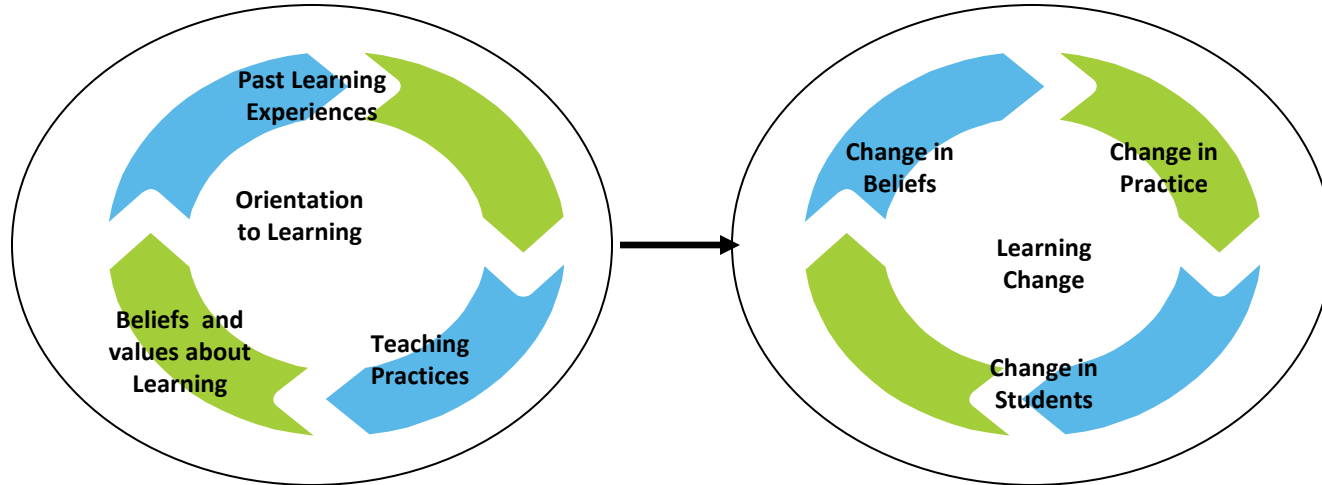
When does dissonance lead to rejection of change?

- When dissonance among beliefs, practices, knowledge and experience is too large, teachers may dismiss new ideas as inappropriate to their situations (Coburn, 2001)
- Since the resolution of dissonance involves the reconstruction of current values, beliefs and knowledge in ways consistent with change messages, dissonance may lead to rejection rather than adoption of new learning (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008)

Teacher Learning Change



The Influence of Teacher Learning Orientation on TL change



Dual scale survey format

ABOUT YOU How often is this true of your practice				Section A	ABOUT YOUR VALUES How important are these practices for creating opportunities for you to learn?			
Not true	Rarely true	Often true	Mostly true		Not Important	Of limited importance	Important	Crucial
				I carry out joint research/evaluation with one or more colleagues as a way of improving my practice.				

Dimensions of Teachers' learning orientation

1. Internal orientation

I experiment with my practice as a conscious strategy for improving classroom teaching and learning.

2. Research orientation

I read research reports as one source of useful ideas for improving my practice.

3. Collaborative orientation

I learn with one or more colleagues: we observe each other teach and offer each other feedback.

4. External orientation

I draw on good practice from other schools as a means to further my own professional development.

Values – practice gaps

	Mean Values	SD	Mean Practice	SD	two-tailed <i>t</i> sig
Internal Orientation to Learning	83.55	11.7	80.88	13.7	0.000
External Orientation to Learning	76.91	13.4	75.69	16.5	0.000
Research Orientation	52.50	21.5	46.00	23.9	0.000
Collaborative Orientation	73.18	17.1	63.64	21.5	0.000

The 'Collaborative Orientation' Factor

This is about teachers learning together through joint planning, teaching together, carrying out joint research/enquiry and reflective discussions together about working practices.

Does the survey data indicate a gap between what we value and we actually do?

No	A bit	Definitely

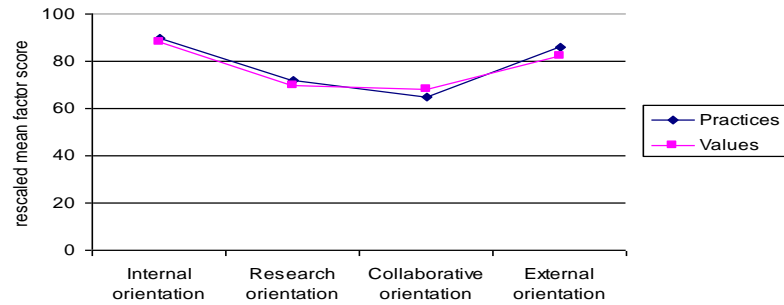
How do we explain this gap? Is this a problem? Do we need to take action?

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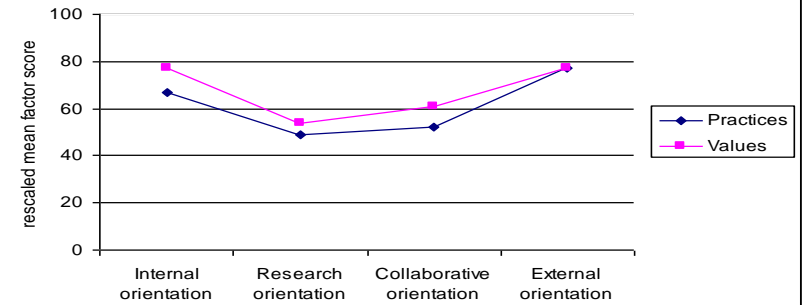
What kind of strategy could we adopt to address this problem?

Strategy

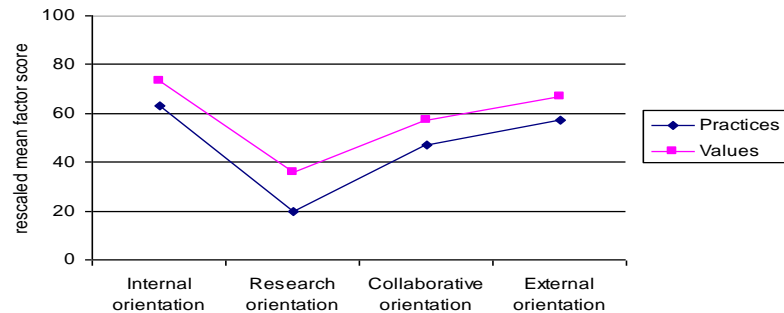
Teachers' Professional Learning
values and practices: Cluster 1
'Engaged Learners'



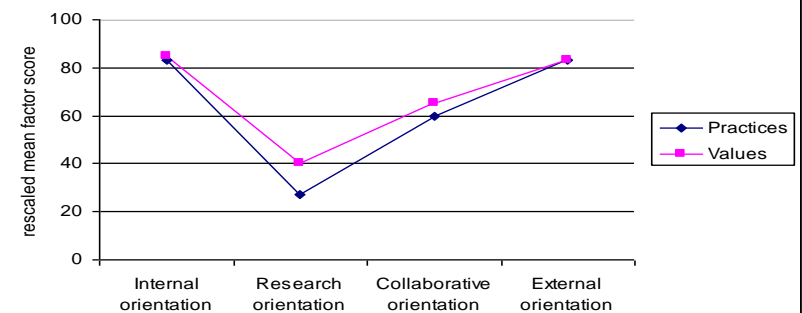
Teachers' Professional Learning
values and practices: Cluster 2
'Moderate Learners'



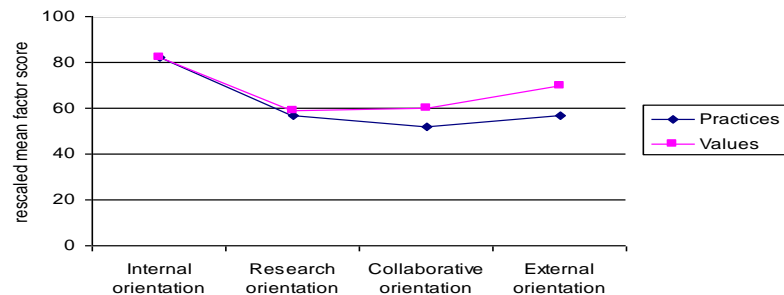
Teachers' Professional Learning
values and practices: Cluster 3
'Infrequent learners'



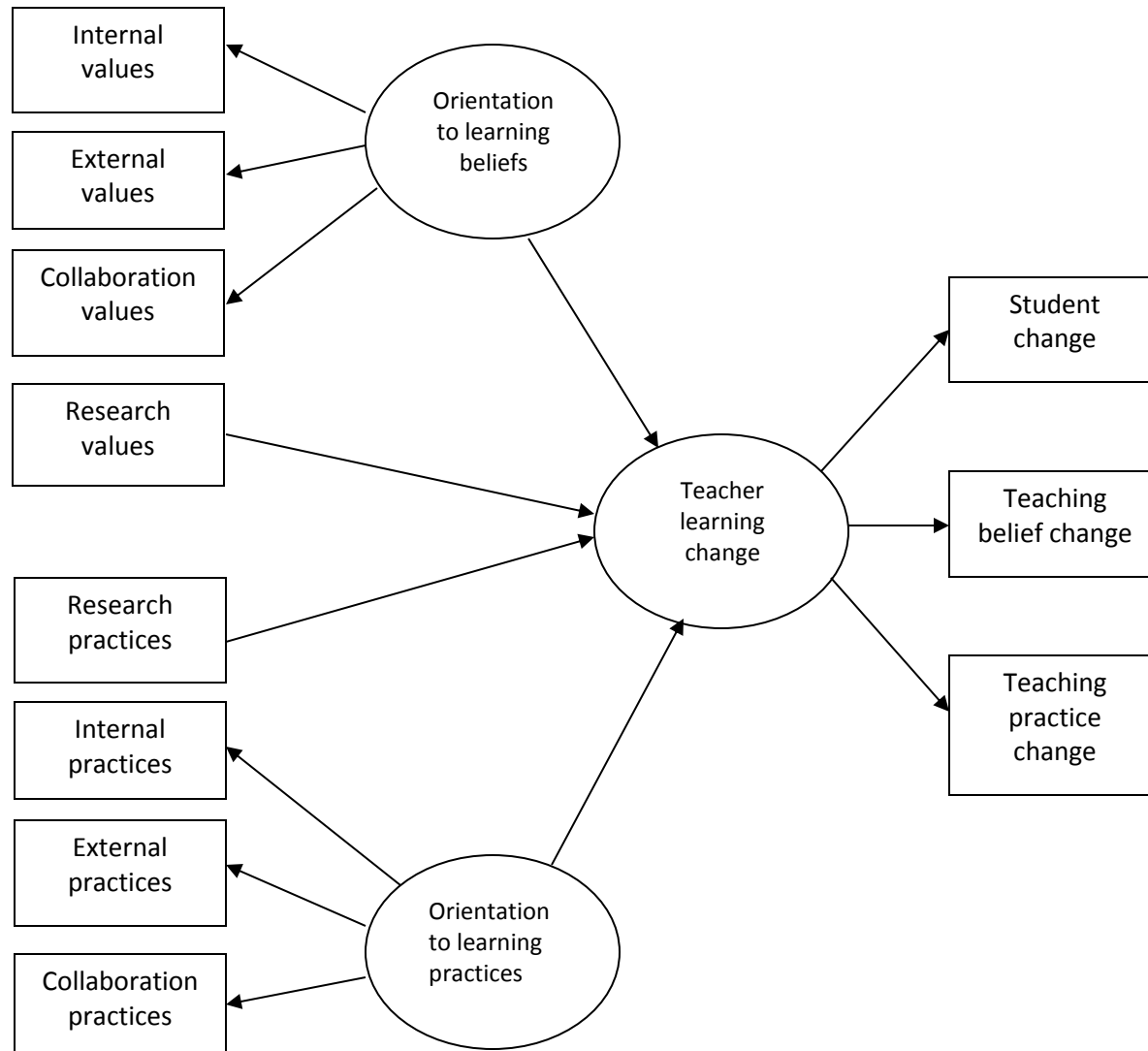
Teachers' Professional Learning
values and practices: Cluster 4
'Individual Explorers'



Teachers' Professional Learning
values and practices: Cluster 5
'Solitary Classroom Learners'



Complete structural model of teachers' orientation to learning influence on learning change



% Variance explained by path analysis: teacher orientation to learning values, practices and change

	Teacher Orientation to Learning Practices		Teacher Orientation to Learning Values	
	Internal, External & Collaborative Orientation	Research Orientation	Internal, External & Collaborative Orientation	Research Orientation
Teacher Learning Change	.45	.04	.33	.14

Conclusions

Where leadership teams in schools are aware of patterns of professional learning values and practices, they can develop and adapt policies that are more responsive to specific inconsistencies between teachers' learning practices and values which they consider important for achieving school development priorities.

Conclusions

Individual teachers need to balance externally focused search for new ideas beyond their own classrooms with internal reflection on practices and values tested and developed in their classrooms if they are to learn continuously instead of continuously complying with new ideas without effect. The high levels of internal- and external-orientation, together with the close alignment of values and practices, may provide grounds for at least some optimism in our findings.