

# Ch. 3 New Directions in Headship Education in Scotland

---

**Joan Mowat (University of Strathclyde)**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6034-2518>

## Abstract

High quality leadership at all stages of the system is identified as one of seven key drivers of school improvement in Scotland within the context of creating equitable, inclusive school systems. This chapter traces the influences on the development of a headship preparation programme in Scotland - Into Headship (the middle stage of the Specialist Qualification for Headship); the learning theories which underpin it (relating this to Philpott 2014) and the process by which aspiring headteachers take on the identity of headship, drawing from empirical data. This takes place within the context of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, calling for contextually sensitive innovation in practice and research-informed learning and practice.

## Foreword

This chapter is written in memory of Professor Carey Philpott who shared an office with me when he wrote his first book - the inspiration for the chapter.

The importance of high quality school leadership in effecting school improvement has been long acknowledged within the literature (MacBeath, Dempster, Frost, Johnson, & Swaffield, 2018) and within the Scottish policy context (International Council of Education Advisers, 2017b; Scottish Government, 2016b). Central to achieving this aim is high quality leadership education (Hamilton, Forde, & McMahon, 2018; Mowat and McMahon, 2018) and, in particular, preparation for headship (Schleicher, 2015), with implications for research-informed learning and practice for aspiring and novice headteachers<sup>1</sup> (denoting the role of School Principal in Scotland).

Arising from the Donaldson review of teacher professional development in Scotland, 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (Scottish Government, 2010), and revisions to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) professional standards for teachers in 2012, a framework for educational leadership and new pathways for

headship preparation have been developed. To this point, whilst there is an emerging literature about the rationale for such developments (Forde & Torrance, 2016, 2017; Hamilton et al., 2018), there has been little empirical research focussing on the student experience as it pertains to cohorts of prospective headteachers who have undertaken Into Headship, other than the initial survey undertaken by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL)<sup>ii</sup>.

The chapter will explore the genesis of the Specialist Qualification for Headship (and, in particular, Into Headship) and the drivers at the international and national level which have led to its development. It will then explore key aspects of the programme, drawing from the perspectives of a sample cohort of Into Headship students at a Scottish university/Higher Education Institution (HEI)<sup>iii</sup>, here given the pseudonym, the University of Inverleven. It will examine the ways in which participation within the programme has shaped their understanding of the role of the headteacher and formed their identity as a prospective headteacher. The chapter concludes with a fuller discussion of the most pertinent professional learning theories which have shaped and underpin the development and delivery of the course and the implications for research-informed practice and headteachers' learning.

### **The influence of international drivers in shaping Scottish education policy**

Over the past decade, the impact of the OECD in shaping educational policy globally has become increasingly evident (Lingard & Sellar, 2014; d'Agnese, 2018) and made manifest with regard to policy relating to teacher professionalism and educational leadership. This, in turn, is increasingly being aligned with the quest for equity, inclusion and social justice (Gomendio, 2017). It is reinforced by UNICEF's Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is "to ensure inclusive and equitable

quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (Goal 4) (UNICEF Office of Research, 2017), aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The above configuration is reflected in a raft of Scottish Government educational policies over the past decade focusing on building capacity in the system through high quality professional development (Black, Bowen, Murray, & Zubairi, 2016; Scottish Government, 2010, 2014); the promotion of excellence and equity (Scottish Government, 2016b); and high quality leadership at all levels of the system (Scottish Government, 2010, 2016b).

### **The genesis of the Specialist Qualification for Headship**

An evaluation of provision for headship preparation in Scotland (Watt et al., 2014) concluded that there was a lack of coherence across pathways. Whilst the programmes were valued by headship students and local authorities, they were not necessarily perceived as equating to readiness for headship nor considered by the local authorities as essential for appointment. Key recommendations arising from the evaluation were the need to develop coherent and flexible leadership pathways across the career span, from initial teacher education onwards; to introduce a mandatory qualification for headship; and peer learning.

### ***Expectations held of Headteachers***

Expectations of schools and their leadership teams have increased over time. This is reflected in three iterations of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) Professional Standards and in a raft of Scottish educational policy such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Forde and Torrance (2016) identify structural barriers (such as

the tension between autonomy and accountability) which can make it difficult for headteachers to fulfil these expectations.

Recent changes in the governance of Scottish schools, arising from the Governance Review, 2016 (Scottish Government, 2016a, 2017b), have led to the establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives. These have brought together groups of local authorities to focus on school improvement. The Bill to the Scottish Parliament proposed a strengthening of the role and functions of headteachers, including greater powers over the recruitment of staff. However, it was subsequently rejected by the Scottish Parliament, necessitating a more collaborative approach between all parties in moving forward. The GTCS has engaged in a further review of the professional standards to ensure that they meet contemporary imperatives [GTCS Conversation](#). All of these negotiations have significant ramifications for the future direction of headship education in Scotland.

### *A paradigm shift*

Bush and Glover (2014) draw from Gunter (2004) who identifies a shift in labels used within the field from administration, to management to leadership. The movement towards shared, collaborative and distributive forms of leadership which is evident in the literature is indicative of a broader movement away from understandings which locate leadership within the individual to leadership within the collective. For Spillane (2013), leadership resides within the interactions between leaders and followers and their situation, and within the cultural tools which characterise and arise from them. As such, Lewis and Murphy (2008) argue: ‘If leadership is seen as a function of interactions within a system, then leadership development is a much more complex process than just the development of individuals.’ (143) A range of commentators (Greany, 2017; International Council of Education Advisers, 2017a; Jäppinen,

Leclerc, & Tubin, 2016; Lu, Jiang, Yu, & Li, 2015) argue for the importance of collaborative approaches to school improvement, furthered through communities of practice.

This paradigmatic shift, coupled with the change in focus from management functions (which largely characterised the former Scottish Qualification for Headship) to a leadership orientation and the globalisation of educational policy, means that aspiring headteachers of today require a much more sophisticated and strategic understanding of school leadership.

### ***Brief Summary***

There has been a convergence across a range of spheres which has led to the need for new understandings of leadership education in Scotland and, within this, preparation for headship. This has highlighted the need for research-informed and evidence-based practice which takes account not only of current imperatives within the policy context but theoretical understandings of what educational leadership constitutes, particularly within the context of leading a school. The following discussion charts some of these developments and outlines the nature of the new qualification focussing specifically on Into Headship.

### **Towards coherent leadership pathways in Scottish education**

Hamilton et al. (2018), having appraised a range of leadership education systems across the world, argue for a coherent pathway which meets the demands of the system whilst enabling flexibility and choice for individuals. The different components of such a pathway would bring together a leadership framework with the professional standards, built on a model of professional learning and facilitated by SCEL.

The model of professional learning underpinning Scottish Education has recently been updated (cc. figure 1). The new model focuses on three aspects of professional learning – *learning by enquiring*, *learning-as-collaborative* and *learning that deepens knowledge and understanding*. It is research-informed, drawing on theoretical and empirical study within the fields of leadership for learning (Forde, 2011; MacBeath et al., 2018) and teacher leadership (Frost, 2016). The focus on *learning by enquiring* is an explicit acknowledgement of the increasing emphasis on evidence-based practice which is a key element of the National Improvement Framework. However, within Scottish educational policy, there is little acknowledgement of the complexities of achieving this end, a problem highlighted more generally in the broader UK context by Philpott and Poultney (2018).



Figure 1: The revised national model of professional learning 2018 (Education Scotland)

### The Specialist Qualification for Headship – Into Headship

The Specialist Qualification for Headship is a Masters degree which constitutes three levels (as set out in figure 2) of which [Into Headship](#) is the middle stage. Into Headship is subsidised by the Scottish Government. It will be mandatory from August 2020 for appointment to the post of headteacher in Scottish schools. It was developed by a SCEL design group constituting representation from SCEL, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and local authorities with the first cohort of students embarking on the qualification in 2015. It sought to build on what had been considered to be the strengths of the previous programmes. It should be noted that, as Course Leader and principal tutor, I represent the University of Inverleven within the National Design Group.

Into Headship is delivered over two modules (60 and 120 SCQF credits<sup>iv</sup> respectively) by seven HEI providers with either face-to-face provision or online delivery over a one year period. Whilst the intention had been that students embarking on Into Headship would initially have undertaken Middle Leadership, the vast majority of headship students nationally on the programme enter at the Into Headship stage and only a small minority have proceeded onto In Headship<sup>v</sup>.



*Specialist Qualification for Headship – Masters Pathway*

Figure 2: Diagrammatic representation of the Specialist Qualification for Headship (Education Scotland)

A range of actors come into play in delivering the programme – University Course Leaders and tutors, Local Authority Co-ordinators, Mentors (normally the

headteacher of the headship student) and Professional Verifiers, experienced headteachers within the local authority. The Course Leader plays an important role in co-ordinating these functions and in training Mentors and Professional Verifiers, the latter of whom verify the account of the headship student, ensuring that they meet the Standard for Headship. Course assessment is ultimately the responsibility of the HEIs working in collaboration with the Professional Verifier.

Potential candidates for the programme must have a realistic chance of being appointed as a headteacher within two to three years of commencing the programme. Recruitment to the programme is undertaken by local authorities, working in partnership with SCEL. SCEL delivers online modules which focus on the management aspects of the role of headteacher. SCEL also facilitates the *Emotional and Social Competency Inventory* (360° questionnaire) which students complete on commencement of study, informing their learning plans.

The programme is research-informed, drawing on a range of pedagogical approaches including experiential, work-based learning. The initial module has two principal components: firstly, a strategic analysis of the international and national policy contexts combined with a situational analysis of the school; and, secondly, a self-evaluation against the Standard for Headship, creating a personal learning plan. The former leads to the identification of, and rationale for, a Strategic Change Issue to be taken forward by the candidate. The second module focuses on the creation of a strategic plan and proposal to take forward a Strategic Change Initiative (SCI) to address the previously identified issue. Students are required to carry out an interim evaluation of progress addressing issues of sustainability. In their assignment submission, they have to demonstrate that they meet the GTCS Standard for Headship and create a professional portfolio to evidence this.



The following discussion homes in on a case study of practice, undertaken by myself as Course Leader and tutor, for which ethical approval was sought from the School of Education for a three year period commencing in session 2017- 2018. As such, this chapter reports on interim findings drawn from a single cohort of students. It will explore how the programme was developed at a Scottish HEI - the University of Inverleven.

### *Course development at the University of Inverleven*

In taking forward Into Headship at the University of Inverleven, I adopted a research-informed approach. Having been invited to take on the role of Course Leader at very short notice, I had not been involved in the initial development of the course at national level nor did I have the opportunity to co-construct the course with students. Working from the course specification emanating from the SCEL design group, the ‘Teaching for Understanding Framework’ was used to develop the course as illustrated in figure 3. This derives from the work of Professor David Perkins and his colleagues at Project Zero, Harvard University (see Wiske, 1998).

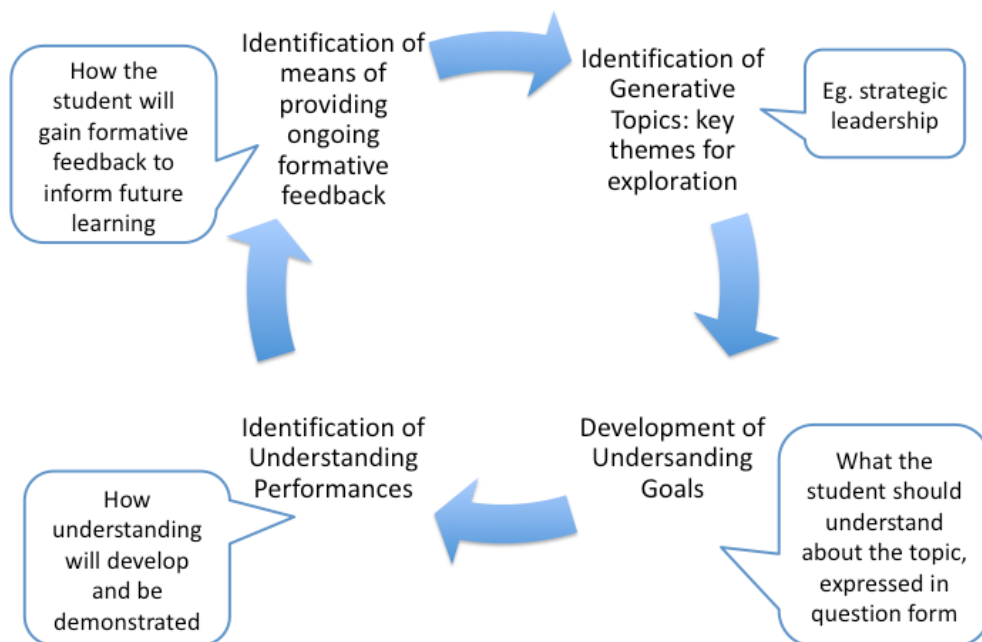


Figure 3: Illustration of the ‘Teaching for Understanding Framework’

I initially identified broad themes for exploration (throughlines) which would enable students to develop and deepen their understanding of educational leadership and what headship entails. Thereafter, these were expressed through a series of understanding goals, posed as series of questions. For example, the throughline, *The school and its wider community*, examined through the understanding goal, *How can the school work together with its community to build and sustain a shared vision of strategic improvement?* These were then used to frame all aspects of the course design.

### ***Delivery of the Programme***

There is a degree of flexibility afforded to HEI providers in the delivery of the programme, recognising the unique context of each. For example, delivery by HEIs serving remote communities is principally online. The course at the University of

Inverleven is delivered through full-day seminars held during the working week as it was considered that this offered greater opportunities for peer learning, higher levels of student support and the opportunity for students to interact with a range of external speakers. In order to provide more individualised guidance and support to students in taking forward their Strategic Change Initiatives within their schools, directing them towards an appropriate literature, and to build strong relationships with students, we introduced a group coaching session<sup>vi</sup> facilitated by tutors. A presentation to peers and tutors on the final teaching day has been substituted for a proportion of the final assignment on the basis that one of the national criteria for the course is that students should be able to communicate effectively ‘in a range of ways for a variety of audiences.’ The coaching session and presentation are unique features of provision for Into Headship at the University of Inverleven.

### ***Support for Student learning***

Outlined below is a discussion of the approaches which the Course Team has adopted to promote research-informed headteacher learning, in keeping with Philpott’s (2014) focus on theories of professional learning. How the cohort of students who constitute the sample at the University of Strathleven has experienced this in practise is explored within the presentation and discussion of findings to follow. A key aspect was to build a team of experienced tutors by building on my networks and appointing new staff to support the work of students and to supplement my role as principal tutor.

Student learning is supported by Participant Booklets, devised by myself as Course Leader, which encompass pre- and post-session readings and tasks. These are extensive and incorporate a wide range of current literature and policy documentation from the international to the national. The programme is delivered principally by HEI tutors with additional inputs from external speakers. Additional tutors support the

work of groups of students by providing formative feedback on their learning and ultimately assessing their summative work. This enables tutors to gain insight into the professional context of the student and fosters positive relationships.

### ***Research-informed practice***

At various points during the course students are asked to reflect on their learning, integrating insights gained from engagement with theory and experiential learning as they bring theory to bear on their practice. This is captured at the end of the course when students undertake a plenary activity in pairs or triads addressing the following questions:

1. In which ways has participation within this course challenged your thinking?
2. How has this informed your understanding of yourself as a prospective headteacher?
3. How has it impacted upon your practice as a prospective headteacher or inform your future actions?
4. How will it inform your future development as a leader?

Students are then invited to complete an evaluation (in the form of an open-ended questionnaire) which focuses on the ways in which their understanding has been furthered (Q1), the quality of support for student learning (Q2-4) and the key insights which they will take away from the course to inform their journey towards headship and shape them as a headteacher (Q5).

### **Methodology**

The study of the Into Headship programme at the University of Inverleven is a naturalistic enquiry conducted within a single setting – a case study. The case is defined as the cohort of students undertaking Into Headship at the University of Inverleven in session 2017-2018 and the key organisations and personnel which/who support their study (as previously described). It draws on no other material other than

what constitutes normal teaching practice. It was stressed that there would be no detriment to students who did not wish to take part in the study and that they could withdraw at any point. All students chose to participate.

### ***Analysis of Data***

The following data-sets were analysed:

1. Quantitative data relating to student demographics
2. Qualitative data derived from the plenary activity (PA)
3. Qualitative data derived from the student course evaluations (CE).

Data were analysed by means of thematic analysis (see King & Horrocks, 2010, Fig 9.1, p. 153). Initially descriptive comments précising student responses were generated. These were then translated into descriptive codes which could be generalised across the data set. Thereafter, these were classified, sorted and pruned to generate analytical codes. A similar process was then adopted to generate overarching themes.

### **The nature of the population**

#### ***Student demographics***

Students in cohort 2017 are drawn from five local authorities in the West of Scotland. Thirty-three students commenced the course in June 2017, three of whom are from an ethnic minority background. The demographics of the cohort are set out in figure 4. There are more Primary than Secondary students (21:12), more female than male (2:1) and the mode age range is 40-44.

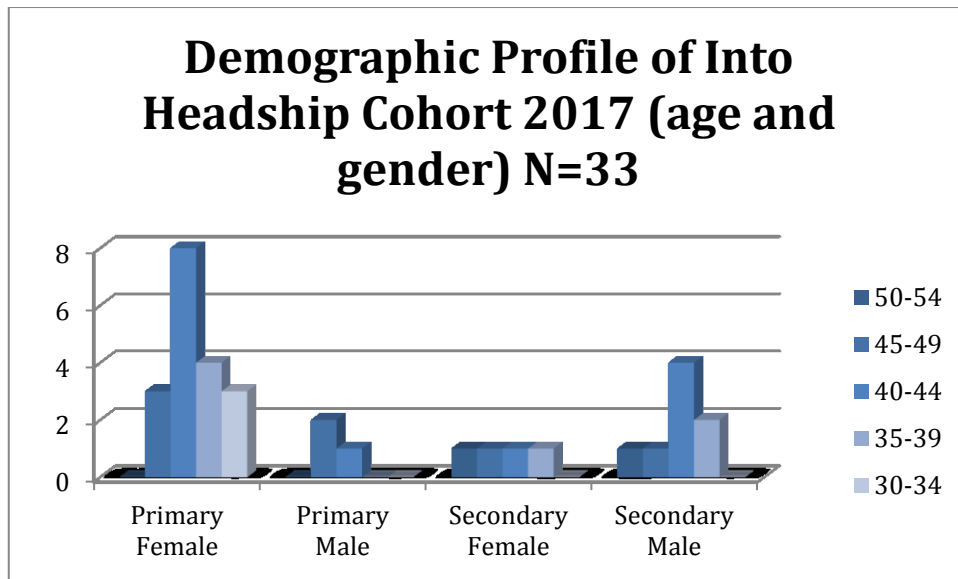


Figure 4: Student demographics for Into Headship cohort 2017

#### *Academic aspects*

No students within the cohort registered previous credits (ie. they had not undertaken Middle Leadership). One student withdrew on gaining a headship post, four students entered Voluntary or Academic Suspension for personal or professional reasons. All other remaining students successfully completed the course. No students from the cohort, to this point, have undertaken In Headship.

#### **Area of focus of Strategic Change Initiatives**

Figure 5 illustrates the areas of focus selected by students to take forward a Strategic Change Initiative within their school. These largely reflect Scottish Government priorities to address the poverty-related attainment gap through the Scottish Attainment Challenge but are reflected also in international policy imperatives.

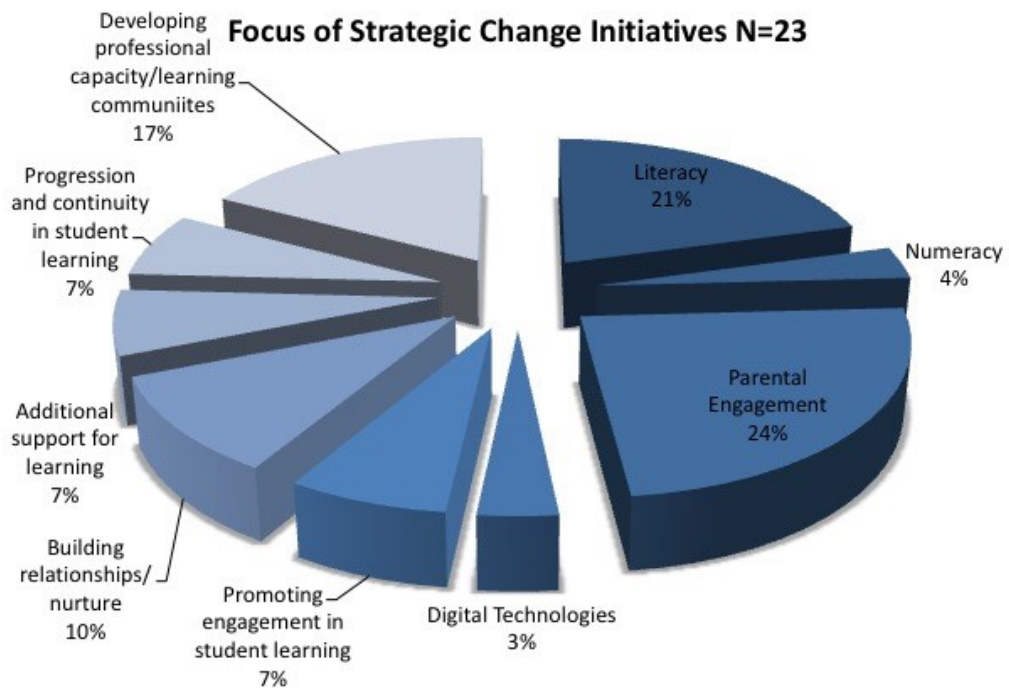


Figure 5: Focus of Strategic Change Initiatives for cohort 2017-2018

## Findings and Discussion

### *Reflecting on student learning: the plenary activity and the student evaluation*

In analysing the data from both data sources, four over-arching themes emerged (cc. figure 6). As the quality of the student experience is so bound in the quality of pedagogy, for the purposes of the analysis they are considered as a single theme. The affordances of Into Headship are determined by the quality and nature of student understanding which, in turn, is dependent on the quality of the student experience and pedagogy.

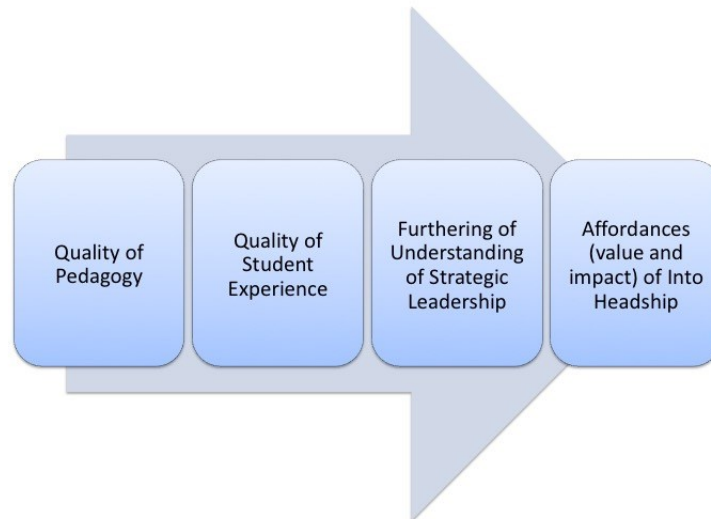


Figure 6: Illustration of over-arching themes

***The quality of student experience/pedagogy***

The principal themes to emerge are illustrated in Figure 7 below. Whilst the themes are distinctive, they are also inter-related. What became evident is that student responses are almost overwhelmingly positive.

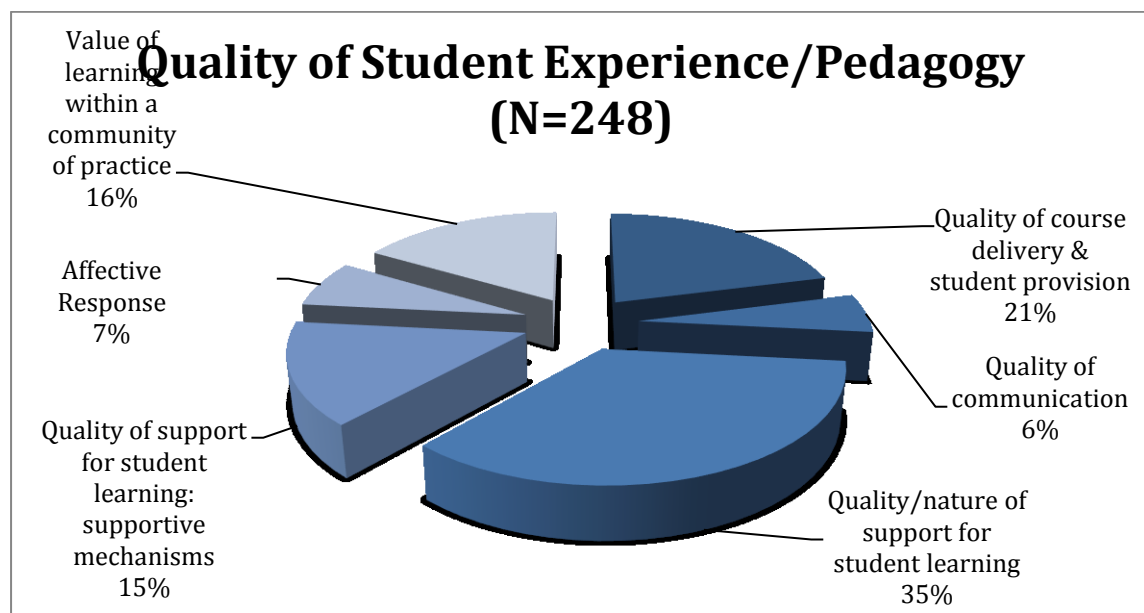


Figure 7: The Quality of Student Experience/Pedagogy



The *quality of course delivery and taught provision* was cited in around one fifth of responses. This ranged over the professional attributes of tutors and speakers; the mode of delivery, balance of activities and pace; the interest, relevance and range of content; and the structure of the course: ‘The quality of learning and delivery throughout the modules was first class. The programme was well thought out and carefully presented to best suit our needs’ (Response 27 CE Q2).

When considered together, *the quality of support for student learning* together with the *mechanisms* for such support (for example, coaching sessions, mentor support, participant booklets, 360% questionnaire facilitated by SCEL) accounted for 50% of responses. Teaching was closely aligned to student needs, building on prior learning and fostering a critical approach. Whilst expressing appreciation of the academic support offered, a few students would have liked additional support in academic reading and writing.

*Communication* with the Course team and administrator was prompt and efficient but a malfunction of the online platform led to a delay in accessing student results, causing upset and consternation.

A key aspect of provision for many students was the *fostering of a learning community* in which students benefited from collaborating and networking with each other (across sectors and different local authorities) and the opportunities which this provided for professional dialogue and peer support: ‘I think that the discussions and dialogue with peers and other professionals has given me greater understanding of the skills and qualities needed to be an effective headteacher’ (Response 30 CE Q5).

There were fifteen statements expressing *appreciation of the provision* and/or *enjoyment* of the course:

I really enjoyed the taught days, the content was thought provoking and stimulating and was presented in a really clear and considered manner. ... I am so glad I have had the

opportunity to participate in the course and meet and work with great people. (Response 28 CE Q1)

### *Furthering understanding of strategic leadership*

The key themes to emerge in relation to this over-arching theme are illustrated in Figure 8. Once again, whilst the themes are distinct, they are also inter-related.

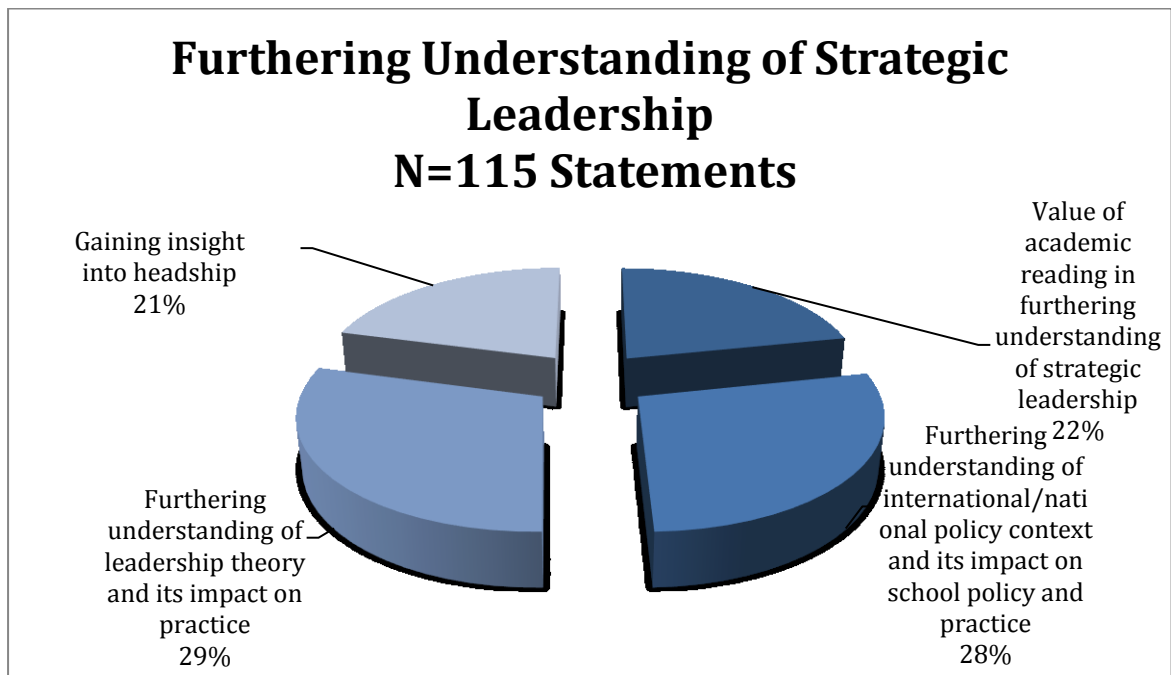


Figure 8: Furthering understanding of strategic leadership

*Engaging in academic/professional reading* was identified as being a key benefit of participation within Into Headship. It was considered to be current and highly relevant to the students' professional context. It served to further understanding of leadership theory; the policy context; and research-informed practice: 'Having the theory behind my practice has made a huge difference' (Response 27 CE Q1).

Students had *furthered their understanding of the international and national policy context*. They had gained insight into the nature of policy and the complexities of the policy process; the drivers of policy at the international and national levels; the impact of policy at the local level; and the implications of such for the role of

headship: ‘The impact of various policy imperatives on practice, often in a way that can become lost within a school and enacted unthinkingly’ (Response 5 PA Q1).

They had *furthered their understanding of leadership theory and its impact on practice*. Engagement with theory had encouraged a more considered and reflective approach to the strategic leadership of a school: ‘(It has) also encouraged a more discerning approach to what we do in schools – what we’re trying to achieve and the relationship between our actions and the intended, and unintended, consequences’ (Response 6, PA Q1). Students had gained insight into models/styles of leadership; the importance of understanding the context and culture of the school in building capacity and a shared vision for change; and of building community through partnership working. In the process, they had developed an understanding of how to manage people and teams effectively, build relationships and manage conflict.

The final theme –*gaining insight into headship* - is more personal to the student. It relates to their developing sense of identity as a prospective/novice headteacher; their growing understanding of the role of the headteacher and the complexities of headship; gaining insight into their own leadership style and the desired attributes of headship; and gaining insight into the moral purpose of headship and their own personal values: ‘Vision and values – (the) importance of living the life of the school through these’ (Response 19 PA Q4).

### ***The Affordances (Value and Impact) of Into Headship***

The key themes to emerge in relation to this over-arching theme are set out in Figure 9.

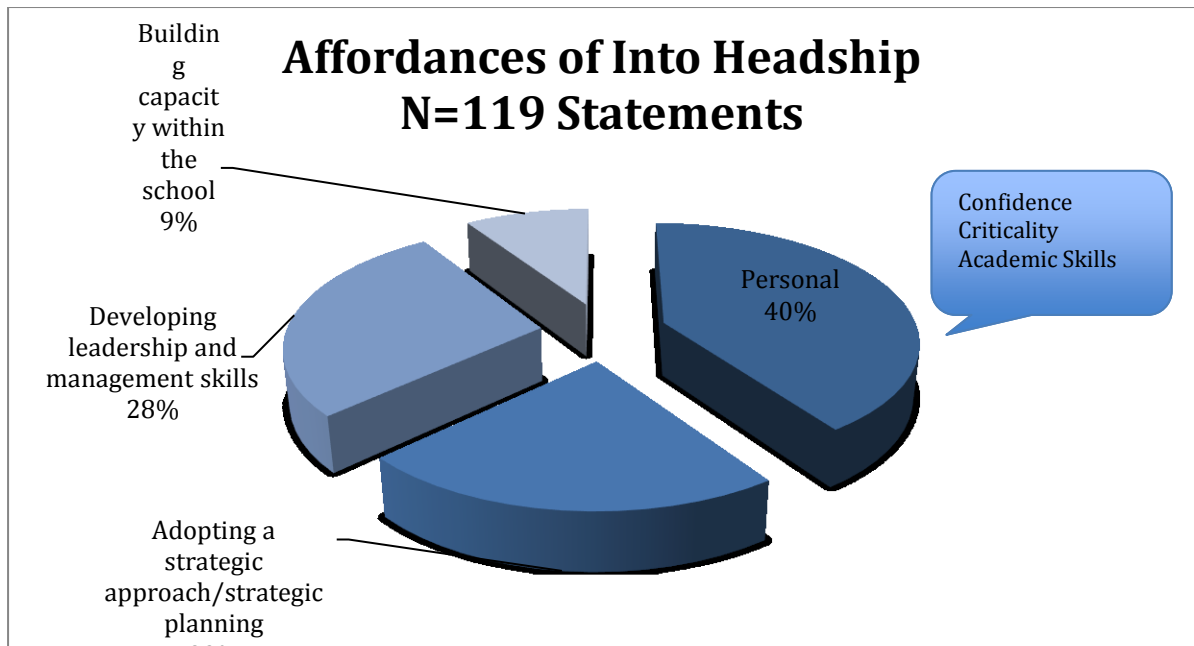


Figure 9: Affordances of Into Headship

The respects in which students identified *personal benefits* to be accrued from the programme related to greater confidence in their capabilities, developing greater criticality and academic skills and fostering lifelong learning.

I found the critical analysis to be a very valuable experience. I found it difficult to engage with the literature at first but the class sessions, and presenters we heard, made this more manageable. Knowing how to properly access and evaluate literature will have a significant impact in the future. (Response 19 CE Q2)

Participation within the programme had also highlighted for some students the importance of continuous professional learning:

I will make a concerted effort to keep lifelong learning at the top of the professional learning agenda. Genuine reflection on practice, awareness of the wider policy landscape and responsive methods of planning improvement will continue to shape (my) progress as a leader. (Response 27 PA Q4)

Other benefits were *professional* in nature and related to *the development of leadership and management skills*: ‘Importance of building relationships amongst the team – “the power of little things”’ (Response 2 PA Q1); ‘As a leader, developing distributive leadership more – supporting –

stepping back’ (Response 18 PA Q4); ‘The importance of the school and teams – no more heroic leadership’ (Response 9 PA Q2); *the adoption of a more strategic approach to school leadership and building capacity within the school*: ‘School is not in isolation – building stronger communities/building capacity/building learning for everyone’ (Response 18 PA Q2).

### **Reflections on Findings**

It is seemingly evident from the findings that, from the perspective of the students themselves, the programme has been highly successful in forming their understanding of what headship entails and in shaping their professional identities as prospective/novice headteachers. An extensive range of facilitators to student progress has been identified through the analysis and some impediments to progress, principally relating to students’ readiness to engage with Masters-level academic study. Perhaps as the course consolidates and prospective candidates are encouraged to undertake Middle Leadership, this concern may dissipate over time.

### **Discussion**

It is incontrovertible that headship, at a global level, is becoming increasingly complex; that the pace of change, expectations of schools and the accountabilities on headteachers are growing exponentially. Schools reside within a wider macrocosm in which the ethical dilemmas facing society are becoming increasingly complex and in which we are largely ‘educating for the unknown’ (a reference to Perkins, 2014). As such, the pedagogies underpinning the programme (and underlying theories of professional learning) need to be sufficiently rich to capture this complexity as education systems throughout the world require headteachers who are critical, intelligent, responsive, principled, courageous and strategic in their approach (whilst

also having the compassion, empathy, integrity, drive for social justice and skills to take people with them).

Philpott (2014), in his critique of professional learning theory, poses a series of insightful questions which, although contextualised with regard to initial teacher education, provide a valuable lens through which to examine the professional learning of students on their journey to headship. One such question concerns the extent to which the emphasis should lie with the process of learning as apart from its substance. Perkins (1992) is adamant that ‘our most important choice is what we try to teach’ (p.69): being clear about what we want students to do (and the knowledge and understanding which underpins this) is crucial to effective learning.

It follows that if potential headteachers are to be critical in their approach, they need to be exposed to material (and pedagogy) which fosters this criticality and see it modelled by their tutors. For example, at the University of Inverleven, students (in pairs) are invited to critique an article in the *Times Education Supplement* using a critical frame (see Wallace and Wray, 2011) and then draw on Brookfield’s four critical frames – epistemological, experiential, communicative and political (see Brookfield, 1995, Ch9) – to devise a series of questions which they can they can subsequently use to critique the literature and policy context.

Likewise, if the readings students undertake are to assume relevance in their working lives, there is a need to teach for transfer, encouraging them to ‘make the connections.’ In this specific case, this is achieved through a series of searching questions posed in the Participant Booklets; class activities which help to make the applications of the new knowledge explicit; and through experiential learning in the workplace where the new knowledge can be applied. It is about fostering intellectual dispositions (such as strategic thinking) which lead to the development of ‘intellectual

character' (Ritchhart, 2002). It is the synthesis of subject knowledge with pedagogical knowledge which is of the essence. This aligns with the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as initially conceived by Schulman (see Philpott Ch 3).

A further question posed by Philpott (2014) relates to the extent to which professional theories of learning should emphasise the learner as an individual or as a social being. Students in this sample cohort have engaged with a range of theories relating to reflective practice from those of Kolb, Schön and Brookfield to the more recent work of Zwozdiak-Myers and Cochran-Smith. Philpott (2014) highlights the potential pitfalls of experiential learning and reflective practice as being that they do not take sufficient account of the socio-cultural context and the role of identity, values and emotions in learning. However students are not undertaking this activity in isolation. The learning of students is mediated by others and by the cultural tools which facilitate this, in line with a social constructivist perspective (see Daniels, 2001, on Vygotsky).

Wenger (1998) (building on the earlier work of Lave and Wenger, 1991) provides a further lens through which professional learning can be understood which conceives of learning as *social participation within communities of practice*, allied with the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation* (the means by which one becomes included within the community of practice). For Wenger, learning constitutes *community* – learning as belonging; *identity* – learning as becoming; *meaning* – learning as experience; and *practice* – learning as doing. This theory is highly relevant to those undertaking Into Headship whose legitimacy comes from their endorsement by acceptance onto the programme and their roles within their schools, with their work within the school being facilitated by mentors acting as a role

model for them. As such, learning is situated within a particular socio-cultural context which shapes the learning and identity of the learner.

The findings from this case study suggest that students have become immersed within the community of practice which is the HEI cohort and tutors associated with it as they have formed bonds and working relationships. This then shapes their individual identities, reflecting the differentiated nature of learners and the different experiences they bring to their learning.

Philpott and Poultney (2018) identify a range of barriers to the achievement of evidence-based practice (see p.106-107) amongst which are *pedagogisation* (the use of ‘research based’ practices without understanding their philosophical and theoretical underpinnings), leading to routinised practice; and practice based on untested assumptions, such as Brookfield’s *causal* (if A, then B) *prescriptive* (if A, B should be the case) and *paradigmatic* (grounded in our world view) (see Brookfield, 1995, Ch1).

With regard to the former, students in this programme are encouraged to extend their literature to the field of enquiry relevant to their Strategic Change Initiative. For example, one student (from cohort 2016-2017 and now a highly successful headteacher) drew inspiration from the work of Philpott and Oates (2015) on learning rounds in taking forward a more organic approach to school improvement (cc. Figure 10<sup>vii</sup>). Tutors play an important role, particularly through the group coaching sessions, in directing students towards an appropriate literature.

With regard to the latter, headship students engage with Brookfield’s work to identify examples of *causal*, *prescriptive* and *paradigmatic* assumptions in their own practice as a starting point for conducting a situational analysis of their school.



# Improving Learning and Teaching Through Quality Teacher Collaboration

## Teacher Collaboration- proposal

- Improve quality of learning and teaching by providing increased opportunities for teacher collaboration
- The aim is to improve outcomes for young people whilst also seeking to encourage a more strategic approach to teacher professional learning
- Facilitate a shift from the existing culture of 'traditional' teacher self-evaluation
- Competency based, checklist approaches to evaluating teaching as a set of standardised skills is dated and a shift to a 'teacher learning' model is much more appropriate and beneficial to improving learning and teaching processes. A more collaborative and lateral, rather than hierarchical approach to self-evaluation of learning and teaching is the desired model where the focus is on pupil learning rather than simply observing teaching.

*'the traditional model of teacher evaluation has increasingly come under question and its adequacy questioned' (Mowat, 2014b, 3)*

*...it is assumed that improvement in teaching is a collective rather than an individual enterprise and that analysis, evaluation and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve... (Rosenholtz, 1989, 73)*

*'Teachers who work in cultures of professional collaboration have a stronger impact on student achievement...'* (Scottish Government, 2015, 132)

### Why focus on learning & teaching?

There is a significant amount of research on the importance of providing opportunities for meaningful teacher collaboration and the impact this can have on improving the learning and teaching process. High quality teachers are influential in closing the attainment gap and improving outcomes for all young people.

*'school improvement is concerned with enhancing student outcomes by focusing on the teaching and learning process' (Hopkins and colleagues, 1994 as cited by Chapman, 2014)*

*'low performers benefit from better qualified and better skilled teachers' (OECD, 2016a)*

*'There is widespread agreement now that all the factors inside the school that affect children's learning and achievement, the most important is the teacher, not standards, assessments, resources or even the school's leadership, but the quality of the teacher...'* (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, xii)

### Policy Context

#### Teaching Scotland's Future (2010)

##### Some key recommendations:

- Education policy in Scotland should give the highest priority to further strengthening the quality of its teachers and of its educational leadership.
- education policy should support the creation of a reinvigorated approach to 21st century teacher professionalism. Teacher education should, as an integral part of that endeavour, address the need to build the capacity of teachers, irrespective of career stage, to have high levels of pedagogical expertise, including deep knowledge of what they are teaching; to be self-evaluative; to be able to work in partnership with other professionals; and to engage directly with well-researched innovation.

#### Improving Schools in Scotland: an OECD perspective (2015)

- Teachers who work in cultures of professional collaboration have a stronger impact on student achievement, are more open to change and improvement, and develop a greater sense of self-efficacy than teachers who work in cultures of individualism and isolation (Scottish Government, 2015, 139)



**3 Policy areas:**  
Identifying and driving strategies to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy, providing high quality learning and teaching and developing professional learning and leadership at all levels



The National Improvement Framework identifies School Leadership, School Improvement and Teacher Professionalism as 3 of its 6 key drivers



Quality of teaching is the single most important driver of pupil attainment and a range of other positive outcomes. Maximising the quality of teaching through the effective deployment and development of teachers and teaching assistants will therefore be at the top of any school's priorities.

References: Mowat, G. (2014b). From within: Collaborative approaches to school improvement. A case of embedding into and enhancing? Paper presented at the 2014 Scottish Educational Research Association Conference, Glasgow. Hopkins, M.A., Edgerly, A. (2015). Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective. London: OECD. Hargreaves, M., & Fullan, M. (2012). The Learning Revolution: How the Power of Great Teachers Changes Everything. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Rosenholtz, S. (1989). Teacher's Work: The Social Organization of Teaching. London: Falmer. Mowat, G. (2014a). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014b). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014c). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014d). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014e). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014f). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014g). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014h). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014i). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014j). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014k). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014l). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014m). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014n). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014o). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014p). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014q). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014r). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014s). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014t). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014u). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014v). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014w). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014x). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014y). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Mowat, G. (2014z). The importance of teacher education in Scotland: A case study of a school improvement project. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

## Leadership Theory

**Transformational Leadership** focuses on cultivating a culture and community within the school conducive to innovative thinking that challenges leaders and followers to fully engage and to motivate others to produce beyond their current capacity. Clearly developing the capacity of all members of the school community to actively seek and share learning in the translation of vision to reality... (Hooper and Bernhardt, 2016, 14)

**Instructional Leadership:** "...responsibility to build the capacity of teachers to pervasively and consistently implement evidence based teaching practices that support improved student learning..." (Leithwood 2010; Leithwood et al 2004, as cited by Hooper & Bernhardt, 2016, 10)

**Integrated Leadership:** "...instructional leadership must be shared for a dynamic collaboration between teachers and their principals. When transformational leadership and distributed instructional leadership coexist in an integrated form, termed 'integrated leadership', the impact on pedagogical quality and student achievement is substantial." (Marks & Printy, 2003, as cited by OECD, 2016b, 52)

## Professional Capital (Scottish Government, 2015)

**Human Capital:** 'individual qualities and capabilities of teachers'

**Decisional Capital:** 'the development of judgement and expertise over time through practice and experience and through being challenged and stretched to extend one's repertoire as a professional.'

**Social Capital:** 'collective efficacy...collaboration, and collective responsibility'

## Research Based Approach 1- Lesson Study

### What is Lesson Study?

Lesson study is an inquiry cycle conducted by a team of teachers that is centered around a "research lesson"—an actual classroom lesson designed to investigate and improve the teaching of a particular topic (Lewis & Hurd, 2011, as cited by Lewis, Perry, Friedkin and Roth, 2012)

### Why Lesson Study?

...there is emerging evidence from a range of school-based networks to suggest that collaborative inquiry-driven approaches, underpinned by the intelligent use of performance and contextual data, can improve learning outcomes for students... (Chapman, 2014)

## Research Based Approach 2- Learning Rounds

### What are Learning Rounds?

...a method for collaborative professional development in which educators come together to observe teaching and learning across a number of classrooms in a single school. In a post observation debrief they use notes and other forms of recording, such as diagrams, taken during the observations to build up a detailed picture of teaching and learning in the school. (Philpott and Oates, 2015)

### Why Learning Rounds?

The intention is to use this to develop understanding of the teaching and learning practice in the school and make plans for what needs to be done next to develop that practice... (Philpott and Oates, 2015)

## Impact- 'Enhanced Visibility'

When teachers work together in teams, they all learn from each other's techniques and practices because they can finally see those practices (enhanced visibility); they are no longer hidden behind a closed classroom door. The visibility is enhanced even further when this becomes organisation wide rather than just among individual collaborating colleagues. (Hattie, 2009, as cited by Schleicher, 2015, 64)

... teachers place most value on CPD that involves experimenting with classroom practices, working collaboratively, and adapting approaches in the light of pupil/peer feedback and self evaluation... (Pedder et al, 2008, as cited by Frost, 2012, 208)

This case study, as a sub-set of the wider national programme – Into Headship, quite modestly provides direction for research-informed professional learning for aspiring headteachers. Its development at the University of Inverleven is underpinned by a range of theories of professional learning, including social constructivism. None of these theories on their own can fully account for the process by which students have begun to develop an incremental understanding of headship and have been able to take on the identity of a prospective headteacher, committed to the promotion of research-informed practice. Rather, a pragmatic approach has been adopted, drawing from theory to inform and shape practice as deemed appropriate.

It could be argued that, at a national level, the model for the Specialist Qualification for Headship, and its three-step process, is not currently realised in practice with the majority of students undertaking Into Headship as a stand-alone qualification. This brings into question one of the national programme's avowed intents to avoid the 'dash to headship' and provide a coherent, progressive pathway. It also means that students embarking on Into Headship without having initially undertaken Middle Leadership may lack the understanding of leadership theory and the development of academic skills and confidence which such study would have engendered to bring to their study of Into Headship, presenting greater challenges for them. As previously intimated, it may be the case that this problem will dissipate over time.

Headship education in Scotland is at a cross-roads. The future direction it will take is dependent on the convergence of a range of different policy imperatives at the international and national level and how these resolve and the challenges facing schools which, in turn are a reflection on wider society. To ensure that future

developments in headship education are research-informed, what is required is further empirical (principally qualitative) research tracing the development of Into Headship students as they take up their headship posts; more robust means of gathering data nationally such that accurate information can be gained to inform the future development of the programme; and engagement with developments in educational leadership globally.

## References

- d'Agnese, V. (2018). *Reclaiming Education in the Age of PISA: Challenging OECD's Educational Order* London: Routledge.
- Black, C., Bowen, L., Murray, L., & Zubairi, S. S. (2016). *Evaluation of the Impact of the Implementation of Teaching Scotland's Future*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/5736>
- Brookfield, S.D. 1995. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: what do we know? *School Leadership & Management*, 34(5), 553-571.
- Forde, C. (2011). Leadership for learning: educating educational leaders. In T. Townsend & J. Macbeath (Eds.), *The International Handbook of Leadership for Learning* (pp. 353–372). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Forde, C., & Torrance, D. (2016). Changing Expectations and Experiences of Headship in Scotland. *International Studies in Educational Administration: Journal of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management*, 44(2), 20-37.
- Forde, C., & Torrance, D. (2017). Social justice and leadership development. *Professional Development in Education*, 43(1), 106-120.
- Frost, D. (Ed.). (2016). *Transforming Education through Teacher Leadership*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.
- Gomendio, M. (2017). Empowering and Enabling Teachers to Improve Equity and Outcomes for all. *International Summit on the Teaching Profession*. Paris: OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.
- Greany, T. (2017). Collaboration, Partnership and System Leadership. In P. Earley & T. Greany (Eds.), *School Leadership and Education System Reform* (pp. 56-65). London: Bloomsbury.
- Gunter, H. (2004). Labels and Labelling in the Field of Educational Leadership. *Discourse –Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 25(1), 21-41.
- Hamilton, G., Forde, C., & McMahon, M. (2018). Developing a coherent strategy to build leadership capacity in Scottish education. *Management in Education*, 32(2), 72-78.

- International Council of Education Advisers. (2017a). Pedagogy, leadership and collaboration key to successful reform [Press release]. Retrieved 28/02/2017 from <https://news.gov.scot/news/international-council-of-education-advisers-3>
- International Council of Education Advisers. (2017b). Report of the initial findings of the international council of education advisers July 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-council-education-advisers-report-2016-18/>
- Jäppinen, A.-K., Leclerc, M., & Tubin, D. (2016). Collaborativeness as the core of professional learning communities beyond culture and context: evidence from Canada, Finland, and Israel. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 27(3), 315-332
- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE.
- Lewis, P., & Murphy, R. (2008). New directions in school leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 28(2), 127-146.
- Lingard, B., & Sellar, S. (2014). Representing Your Country: Scotland, PISA and New Specialities of Educational Governance. *Scottish Educational Review*, 46(1), 5-10.
- Lu, J., Jiang, X., Yu, H., & Li, D. (2015). Building collaborative structures for teachers' autonomy and self-efficacy: the mediating role of participative management and learning culture. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 26(2), 240-257.
- MacBeath, J., Dempster, N., Frost, D., Johnson, G., & Swaffield, S. (2018). *Strengthening the Connections between Leadership and Learning: Challenges to Policy, School and Classroom Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Mowat, J. G., & McMahon, M. (2018). Interrogating the concept of 'leadership at all levels': a Scottish perspective. *Professional Development in Education*, 45(2), 173-189. doi: 10.1080/19415257.2018.1511452.
- Murphy, D., Croxford, L., Howieson, C., & Raffe, D. (2015). What have we learned from the Scottish experience? In D. Murphy, L. Croxford, C. Howieson & D. Raffe (Eds.), *Everyone's Future: Lessons from fifty years of Scottish comprehensive schooling* (pp. 196-205). Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
- Perkins, D. (1992). *Smart Schools: Better Thinking and Learning for Every Child*. New York: The Free Press.
- Perkins, D. (2014). *Future Wise: Educating Our Children for a Changing World*. San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Bass.
- Philpott, C. (2014). *Theories of Professional Learning: A Critical Guide for Teacher Educators*. Norwich: Critical Publishing.
- Philpott, C., & Oates, C. (2015). Learning Rounds: what the literature tells us (and what it doesn't). *Scottish Educational Review*, 47(1), 49-65.
- Philpott, C., & Poultney, V. (2018). *Evidence-based Teaching: A Critical Overview for Enquiring Teachers*. St Albans: Critical Publishing.
- Ritchhart, R. (2002). *Intellectual Character: What it is, Why it matters, and How to get it*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schleicher, A. (2015). Schools for 21st-Century Learners: Strong Leaders, Confident Teachers, Innovative Approaches. Paris: OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.
- Scottish Government. (2010). *Teaching Scotland's Future - Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2011/01/13092132/0>

- Scottish Government. (2016a). *Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: a governance review*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government Retrieved from <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/empowering-schools/a-governance-review/>.
- Scottish Government. (2016b). *National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education: Achieving excellence and equity*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/01/8314>.
- Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill, 6 (2017a).
- Scottish Government. (2017b). *Education governance: next steps empowering our teachers, parents and communities to deliver excellence and equity for our children*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/2941>
- Spillane, J. P. (2013). The practice of leading and managing teaching in educational organisations. *Leadership for 21st Century learning, Educational Research and Innovation* (pp. 59-82). Paris: OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.
- UNICEF Office of Research. (2017). Building the Future. Children and the Sustainable Development Goals in Rich Countries *Innocenti Report Card 14* (Vol. 14). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti.
- Wallace, M., and A. Wray. 2011. *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*. London: Sage Publications
- Watt, G., Bloomer, K., Christie, I., Finlayson, C., Jaquet, S., & Blake Stevenson Ltd. (2014). *Evaluation of Routes to Headship*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government Retrieved from <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/03/8057/0>.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wiske, M. S. (1998). *Teaching for Understanding: Linking Research with Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

---

<sup>i</sup> Whilst acknowledging the varied nomenclature internationally, the term headteacher has been utilised throughout this chapter as it is the common term used in Scotland to denote someone leading a school.

<sup>ii</sup> Arising from the Governance review, SCEL has been incorporated into Education Scotland

<sup>iii</sup> I have chosen to refer to Higher Education Institutions throughout the chapter as not all Scottish universities are Higher Education Institutions

<sup>iv</sup> [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#)

<sup>v</sup> There is no national reliable data pertaining to the number of students who have undertaken Middle Leadership prior to Into Headship. Discussions at Into Headship Design Group Meetings indicate that it may only be a minority. Since the inception of Into Headship in 2015, 31 students nationally have successfully completed In Headship and a further 20 students are expected to complete in Autumn 2019.

<sup>vi</sup> On the basis of very positive student feedback, we are introducing a further group coaching session in Module 1.

<sup>vii</sup> Reproduced with kind permission of the former student.